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## **The Impact of Public Sector Employee Performance on Citizen Satisfaction: The Case of MEHE**

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**Abstract.** Governments nowadays are being more attentive to the importance of gaining citizens' satisfaction and trust, knowing that their trust would maintain political stability, allowing them to have more control and function easily and more effectively. One of the influencers of citizens' satisfaction is the public sector services and the performance of the employees in this sector. This research studies the micro performance theory by studying the relation between the performance of the ministry of education and higher education in Lebanon and citizen satisfaction. To study this relation a survey was conducted to study the level of citizen satisfaction toward the ministry's performance. The survey also assessed the performance of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education employees from the citizens' perspective. Our research also compared the public and private university graduates' satisfaction towards the ministry's performance since the survey was distributed online to graduated students among the Lebanese public university and graduates from different Lebanese private universities. The result of the survey along with existing data was analyzed to study the impact of the ministry's performance towards citizen satisfaction leading to a conclusion regarding the effect on the level of citizen's trust towards government institutes.

**Keywords.** Performance, MEHE, Satisfaction, trust

### **Introduction**

A satisfied citizen is an ambition for every government since it means political and social stability. It is an indicator that their performance is accepted by their citizens. Nowadays, and with the citizens' awareness about their rights and duties of their governments, more effort is required from governments to be able to match people's expectations. And since the public sector represents the direct contact between governments and their citizens, they had to be more accurate in their performance, at the level of the service delivery and the quality of the goods and services delivered itself, reaching to satisfying citizens and thus gaining their trust.

Based on the above, the micro-performance theory was found, which relates the public service performance to the level of citizens' satisfaction, leading to the level of trust in government. Lebanon is a country with citizens always objecting to their dissatisfaction with the services of the public sector, and always rebelling because of the lack in acquiring their basic needs. Lebanese citizens always speak about high corruption and low public employees' performance which lead to many of them mistrusting governmental institutes. This motivated me to study the impact of employee performance in the Lebanese public sector, taking the case of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education as a model, on citizen satisfaction.

The MEHE is one of the public administrations which have direct contact with citizens. The ministry provides several services such as providing equivalence of degrees and certificates, giving the statement of an official certificate, authentication of documents, attestations for the undergraduates, and many such roles that most of the educated Lebanese citizens go through, and requires direct contact between public employees and citizens. Therefore, citizens who had direct experiences with the MEHE's employees will allow us to study their level of satisfaction about their experience, and relating this satisfaction to the public performance. Based on that we can say that the level of performance of public sector employees has a significant effect on the citizens' satisfaction towards governmental institutes.

### **Literature review**

#### **Topical Literature Review:**

With the awareness of the people for their rights and the duties of their governments, greater pressure is added to the governments who had to reform their way of performance to match the citizens' expectations as much as they can. According to Hsiao & Lin (2008) "Public sector was no longer the organization under the shelter of traditional administration hierarchic system. It had to focus on customers and provide services as private sectors do. Customer orientation, therefore, became the top task of public sector administration reform".

Our research is focused on the micro-performance theory which is defined by Van de Walle & Bouckaert (2007) "This micro-performance theory, as we call this relation, relates the variations in trust to changes in (the quality of, or perception of) government service delivery." Where referring to Van de Walle & Bouckaert (2007) "bad performance of government agencies is said to create negative attitudes towards government in general. Similarly, well-functioning public services are said to induce citizens to trust the government." Also Van de Wall, et al. (2002) adds that "it is supposed that increased quality and performance of government agencies will lead to satisfied clients of this agency, which will in its turn increase trust in this agency. Good performance of all agencies will lead to a well-performing government, satisfied government clients, and ultimately, trust in government we will call this causal chain the micro-performance hypothesis."

In defining the public sector IIA (2011) says that "the public sector consists of governments and all publicly controlled or publicly funded agencies, enterprises, and other entities that deliver public programs, goods, or services performance of the public service employees is perceived by the citizens", whereas KENT STATE UNIVERSITY (2020) says that "The key to our definition of the public sector is whether or not the funding of an organization is provided (or determined through legislation) by the government. Public sector entities fall into three general categories: core government agencies and departments, agencies that provide public programs, goods and services, and public enterprises and nonprofits." Noting that in our research we are studying the performance of the public sector employees from the perspective of the citizens who are the customers in this case and their satisfaction towards this performance, and as Salim, et al. (2017) defined trust in government "as an evaluation of whether or not the government is performing in accordance with normative expectations held by the public", whereas Bouckert & Van de Wall (2003) indicates that "trust in government used to refer to the belief that government will not become autocratic or allow people to be arrested unjustly, it now refers to more down to earth matters such as the reliability of service delivery or the expectation that policy will correspond to one's wishes". And since "trust indicators are a result of citizens' perception" as Van de Walle & Bouckaert (2007) stated, that is why Hsiao & Lin (2008) stated that "government shall take customer-orientation as people service mindset, customer value as important basis of administration action, directly

interact with people, understand ideas and related information about service people need, and thereby improve administrative institution service, create service quality satisfactory to people". In order to reach citizens' satisfaction towards its services, which according to Salim, et al. (2017) "can be defined as citizens' perception of the quality of goods and services that are provided by the government". Also, according to Kumasey (2014) "satisfaction can be defined as "a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided (or is providing) a pleasure level of consumption-related fulfillment, including levels of under- or over-fulfillment" (Oliver, 1997)".

### **Methodological Literature Review**

To study the Impact of citizen Satisfaction with Government Performance on Public Trust in the Yemen government Salim et al. (2017) used the survey method to conduct their research. They first sent online surveys to those who have access to the internet and then conducted meetings with residents to complete the survey. In choosing their sample the researchers used the random sampling method and selected respondents who were older than 18 years old.

As for Huang (2018) in studying Citizens' Hierarchical Government Satisfaction in China and Taiwan he used the survey method to collect data needed to study citizens' satisfaction with government at different levels. As for testing the researcher's hypothesis he used empirical analysis in several parts. Moreover, the researcher during his empirical analysis used descriptive analysis and then comparative analysis.

Moreover, Wu & Jung (2016) in studying the link between citizen participation, satisfaction, and public performance the researcher used the survey method to collect data needed to represent citizens' perception of local government provision of services. In choosing his sample he used the random sampling method and focused on citizens who experienced the services. Finally, in analyzing the data the researcher used descriptive analysis to represent the statistics.

In studying the public Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction relation in Ghana, Kumasey (2014) implied a correlation research design to determine the relationship between service, qualities perceived, expected service quality, and customer satisfaction. The quantitative method was used to conduct data through the survey method. Moreover, non-probability sampling was utilized to draw participants for the study, and convenience sampling was used to select the participants. Thus participants who were interested in the study and had time to complete the survey were selected.

### **Methodology:**

A correlational research design was implemented in this study. Correlational design was found by Kumasey (2014) to be appropriate since the research sought to determine the relationship between public sector employee performance and customer satisfaction. The study was quantitative and qualitative since a survey was used to collect data and the data collected was analyzed to conduct a comparative analysis regarding the public and private university graduates' satisfaction. Moreover, existing data was used to best explain the relationship between the two variables.

### **Population**

The study comprised public and private university graduates from the Lebanese University and other private universities who had previous experiences with the ministry of education and higher education in Lebanon. The ministry of education and higher education was chosen since it represents one of the public sector organizations.

### **Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

A total of 154 participants participated in the study where 79 of them are private Lebanese university graduates and 75 are public Lebanese university graduates. Non-probability sampling technique was utilized to draw participants for the study. Snowball sampling was used to select the participants. Thus, participants who participated in the study recommended other participants. The sample was diverse in nature as it comprised participants of different sex, educational background and age distribution.

### **Conceptualization**

• **Public sector employee performance:** in our research it refers to the ability to deliver the needed service on time and in the right way with maintaining good interaction with the citizens, it encompasses both the process and outcome.

• **Public sector:** in our research we are referring to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

• **Trust:** in our research it refers to the level of confidence citizens have towards the public sector services, that leads to the trust in government.

• **Citizens' satisfaction:** it refers to the feeling every citizen has after dealing with the public services, specifically in our case, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

### **Theoretical framework**

Steven Van de Walle & Geert Bouckaert (2007) have argued that there is a relationship between public employee performance and citizen satisfaction. Based on Steven Van de Walle & Geert Bouckaert the micro-performance theory, which is used in this research, states that citizen's trust towards governmental institutes is based on their satisfaction towards public sector employee performance as, which means that public employee performance influences citizens' trust in their governments. Moreover, one of the factors used in explaining citizens' reaction towards governmental institutes is the level of satisfaction. For example, citizens may not have a problem in paying extra taxes if they feel satisfied towards the services they are getting.

Based on that Wu & Jung( 2016) said that “experiencing public service is an important determinant of citizens' attitude to the performance of governmental actions, thus it is critical to understand citizens' assessment with public service, especially which aspects of the public performance and hence translate their received experience of public services into their overall satisfaction of governmental actions. In addition, public performance with less number of complaints from citizens will lead to favorable image from citizens; and therefore, has a direct influence on how citizens' perspective toward the overall assessment of governmental actions.” Based on that, we hypothesize that Public performance is associated with the perceived citizen satisfaction.

### **Research Goal**

We will apply Boateng, F.D. to the research at hand to test the level of Lebanese universities graduates' satisfaction towards the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education through studying the ministry's employee performance from the citizens' point of view. We are also going to study the relationship between citizen satisfaction towards this ministry and the citizen's trust in this ministry. If the results indicate that citizens assess the ministry's employee performance as low and they are dissatisfied with the ministry's performance which leads them to not trust the ministry then our hypothesis is right.

### **Micro-performance theory**

The better the governmental administrations perform, the more the citizens will be satisfied and trust their government, and vice versa. This is the concept of the micro-performance theory. Any service, and in our case public service, has two components, the process, and the output. The process is the way the output is done, it could be perceived from the employees' interaction with clients and their treatment, the time it takes, the accessibility of the service, and several other factors. As for the output, it is the final good or service the clients want to receive; it is valued by the citizens who are the clients, by the quality of the output, without having defects, matching their expectations, with affordable costs. Once the process and output of the service are good, the citizens would be satisfied with the service they are receiving. Thus, and according to the micro-performance theory, will lead to trust in the government's administrations leading to trust in government.

### **Survey Method**

Usually, when asking clients to assess a service by a survey, the survey will be assessing the two components which are the process and the output. In our research, to study our hypothesis which states that the level of performance of public sector employees has a significant effect on the citizens' satisfaction towards governmental institutes, we took the case of the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education where we studied the citizens' satisfaction towards the Lebanese Ministry of Education's employees' performance from the perception of citizens who have conducted a transaction in the ministry before. As Bouckaert and Van de Walle say that when assessing performance, we should take into consideration the following sides: the service quality, the service delivery, the communication with customers. That is why in our case when we studied the performance of the employees from the citizens' perspective, we had to ask about the indicators that are related to the above sides and that show how the citizens are evaluating the employees' performance. The main indicators in this field are the employees' behavior and treatment (which could be determined from being obliging, caring, ready to help, if there is nepotism or not.. ), their presence in the work during their shift (this is noticed when citizens undergoing transactions find the ministry's employees present during their permanence), the time of completion of work (for example, when the city conducts a transaction if it is finished on time or not, and whether they are postponing the work or trying their best to finish on time..), the quality of the service (if employees achieved their work with no defects and in the right way). These are the indicators we used to build a survey studying citizens' satisfaction towards the Lebanese Ministry of Education's employees' performance.

### **Survey Distribution**

We asked graduated students from the public Lebanese University and the Lebanese private universities to fill the survey and compared the results of their surveys to have more valid research.

To study our hypothesis, we have distributed an online survey to graduated students which we know from Lebanese universities, public and private, who have conducted transactions in the Lebanese Ministry of Education before, asking them questions about their perception of the employees' performance in the ministry according to their own experience, and their satisfaction and trust in the performance of the ministry, relating the results to the indicators mentioned before. We then asked these graduates to send the surveys to other graduated students they know that also had experiences with the ministry before. If the answers of the surveys assessing the performance coincide with the satisfaction question and both match the trust question, then we would reach the result we are studying according to the micro-performance theory.

When assessing the performance in our research, we have asked about the Lebanese Ministry of Education employees' treatment and response to the citizens, their presence when needed, whether the output was with no defects, if they finished on time, and if there is nepotism. Then we asked them to assess the responsiveness of the employees with them, their satisfaction with the performance of the employees, and the level of trust in the Lebanese Ministry of Education.

### Data Analysis

After distributing the surveys a total of 154 replies were received of which 79 (51.3%) were from private university graduates and 75 (48.7%) were from the public university.

In the table below we will show the results of the surveys collected from both the Lebanese university graduates and private university graduates.

Table 1 : Survey Results

Question	Public University (%)		Private University (%)	
	Obliging	Careless	Obliging	Careless
How was the employees' treatment?	25.33	74.66	37.97	62.02
Were the staff you needed for submitting your transaction present?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	58.66	41.33	43.03	56.96
Did your transaction finish on time?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	28	72	34.17	65.82
Have you ever had a defect in your transaction?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	46.66	53.33	29.11	70.88
Did you see any signs of nepotism at the Lebanese Ministry of Education?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	85.33	14.66	79.74	20.25
Have you ever contacted the Lebanese Ministry of Education on phone?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	61.33	38.66	50.63	49.36
If yes, did they answer you?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	6.52	93.47	30	70
Did they give you the information you needed?	Yes	No	Yes	No
	10.86	89.13	32.5	67.5
Have you ever asked the employees for the	Yes	No	Yes	No

documents you need before submitting your transaction?	85.33	14.66	74.68	25.31				
If yes, did they tell you all the documents clearly?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>				
	35.94	64.06	57.62	42.37				
Did you go to the Lebanese Ministry of Education having missing documents because they didn't tell you about them before?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>				
	54.66	45.33	50.63	49.36				
How much was the employee responsive? (by 4 being very responsive and 1 being not responsive)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	48	34.66	17.33	0	13.92	53.16	24.05	8.86
How much are you satisfied with the performance of the Ministry of Education's employees? (by 4 being very satisfied and 1 being not satisfied)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	48	29.33	22.66	0	26.58	44.3	20.25	8.86
How much do you trust the Lebanese Ministry of Education? (by 4 being very trusting and 1 being not trusting at all)	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
	53.33	29.33	16	1.33	29.11	40.5	25.31	5.06

As we can see in the table above, the results between the private university graduates and the public university graduates' answers are close to each other with a slight difference. As for the treatment question, the majority of both answered that the employees were careless (public university: 74.66% & private university: 62.02%) while the minority of both answered that the employees were obliging (public university: 25.33% & private university: 37.97%) this shows that the employees, in general, have a treatment problem towards the citizens. For the present question, a difference was observed between the public and private university graduates' replies where private university graduates who stated that the employees were not present

during their transactions represented 56.97% of the total private university replies, whereas 41.34% of the public university graduates stated that they didn't find the employees present when needed. This shows that there is a lack of time commitment during the permanence of the ministry's employees. As for the timing question, the majority of both answered that their transactions did not finish on time (public university: 72% & private university: 65.82%) and the rest of both answered that it finished on time, which shows that there is neglect and procrastination at the level of employees.

Moreover for finding a defect in the transaction question most of the graduates had answered no but with a difference in the percentage (public university: 53.33% & private university: 70.88%) and the rest said yes which shows that the output of the service is most of the time right. For the nepotism question, the clear majority of both said that they saw signs of nepotism in the ministry and the numbers here are so high were 85.33% of public university graduates and 79.74% of private university graduates said they saw signs of nepotism at the ministry. This very high percentage indicates a very high level of nepotism and the ministry from its employees. Moreover, out of the 50.63% of private university graduates who said they contacted the ministry by phone only 30% said the ministry answered the call, and from these only 32.5% said they got the needed answers. Whereas out of the 61% public university graduates who said they contacted the ministry by phone only 6.25% said the ministry answered the call and from these only 10.86% said they got the needed answers. The very low results of these three questions show that there is a serious problem in the ministry's communication procedure. Then we asked if they asked the employees for the documents before conducting their transactions and here 85.33% of the public university graduates answered yes and the rest said no and 35.94% of the 85.33% said that the employees told them all the documents clearly. While 74.68% of the private university graduates answered yes and the rest said no and 57.62% of the 74.68% said that the employees told them all the documents clearly. As we can see there is a difference in evaluating the response, where the public university graduates had more negative evaluations but still the percentages of the two sides are bad indicators of performance. For the question asking if they had any missing documents when conducting their transactions because the employees didn't tell them about previously, 54.66% of the public university graduates answered yes almost like the public university graduates where 50.63% also answered yes, and the rest of both said no. This indicates that there is unclear and poor effective communication with citizens.

Finally, we asked three evaluating questions with 4 measures where 1 is totally bad, 2 is bad, 3 is good, and 4 is totally good. In our analysis, we added 1 and 2 and considered their summation as a bad indicator and added 3 and 4 and considered their summation as a good indicator. The first evaluating question is about the employees' responsiveness where the result was the majority (82.66%) of the public university graduates (48% chose (1) and 34.66% chose (2)) had a bad evaluation and 17.33% evaluated their response as good (with 0% stating very responsive), almost like the private university graduates where the majority (67.08%) of them also had bad evaluation (13.92% chose (1) and 53.16% chose (2)), and 32.91% had a good evaluation of the employees' responsiveness (only 8.86% answered very responsive). The result of this question indicates that there is a problem in the response of the employees towards the citizens they are dealing with which relates to poor performance of duties. The second question is for evaluating the satisfaction towards the employees' performance, where the result was the majority (77.33%) of the public university graduates (48% chose (1) and 29.33% chose (2)) were dissatisfied with employee performance and 22.66% had a good evaluation of satisfaction (with 0% evaluated very satisfied), almost like the private university graduates where the majority (70.88%) of them also had a bad evaluation of satisfaction (26.58% chose (1) and

44.3% chose (2)), and 29.11% had a good evaluation of satisfaction toward the employees' performance

(only 8.86% answered very satisfied). This result indicates that the very clear majority of both public and private university graduates are dissatisfied with the ministry's employee performance which shows that there is a common problem with dealing with the Lebanese Ministry of Education employees and their performance. Finally, the trust evaluation, where 82.66% of the public university graduates (53.33% chose (1) & 29.33% chose (2)) chose distrust in the ministry and 17.33% chose trust (16% chose (3) & 1.33% chose (4)), and the private university graduates also most of them (69.61%) answered by distrust (29.11% chose (1) & 40.5% chose (2)) while 30.37% chose trust (25.31% chose (3) & 5.06% chose (4)). This result of trust evaluation shows that the majority of both public and private university graduates do not have trust in the Lebanese Ministry of Education which is an indicator of having a great gap between the ministry and the citizens who are dealing with it.

### **Interpretations**

As a result of the three evaluation questions, we can see that most of the evaluations were poor, having most of the graduates who filled the survey expressing bad perception of the employees' performance, and that is shown in the previous questions where they were mostly negative towards the employees' performance with citizens. According to the indicators we have stated before and the survey's result, we can say that the survey studied the different sides of the performance indicators, reaching the result that the employees' performance at the Lebanese Ministry of Education is poor, from the perception of the citizens, based on the results of the survey that shows that the majority of the public and private universities' graduates were dissatisfied and have a low level of trust in the ministry.

Moreover, it seems that there is a very low difference between the public university and the private university graduates' answers, which indicates that they are both in their majority, not satisfied with the ministry's performance and not trusting it.

These results are typical to what the micro-performance theory says the poor performance and output of the public administrations will lead to dissatisfied citizens and thus lose the trust in the public administrations. As in our case study, where the Lebanese Ministry of Education is one of the administrations of the government that is not performing well so it leads to dissatisfied citizens and thus losing their trust.

### **Conclusion**

In this research we have studied the impact of the employee's performance on the citizen's satisfaction taking the case of the Lebanese Ministry of Education, where we have distributed an online survey asking the graduated students from the public university and the private universities in Lebanon to fill it, comparing between their results to have more valid research. From the results we have got, we concluded that the citizens' perception of the employees' performance among the majority was not good, where most of them were not satisfied and have no trust in the ministry. Noting that the results deduced from the public university graduates and the private universities graduates were almost alike in general, with a little difference in some detailed questions, but both had the majority of bad perception of the employees' performance, the low level of satisfaction and the low level of trust. Therefore, the results we got prove us right in our research and support our hypothesis which states that the level of performance affected the citizens' satisfaction and their trust in the governmental ministry.

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