

## Responsiveness and the Influence to Public Trust: The Study on Local Government Service Delivery

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### Abstract

*Responsiveness is a principle of administrative accountability towards clients and customers. Indeed, local government service delivery is the main component in the government that exemplifies responsiveness function that connects the public and local authorities. Being the service provider to the public at their localities, fast response is an important ingredient to ensure public confidence and trust which simultaneously leads to work quality. Thus, responsiveness of local government affects the positive communion between these two stakeholders. This paper focuses on the influence of responsiveness towards public trust especially on local government service delivery in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. These two local authorities were chosen to conform whether they are "listening bureaucrats" which are sensitive and sympathetic to public outcry. This research found that there was a strong connection between responsiveness and public trust. Moreover, the findings confirm that speed on any queries and request of service by local government paying the heed in influencing public to trust local government and government in power. Thus, the result showed that responsiveness is important be it for the state or federal government, because responsiveness can gain public to trust the government*

**Keywords:** Responsiveness, Public Trust, Accountability, Local Government, Service Delivery

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### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, service delivery by the government has responded to the growing demand and interest by the people. This demand and interest produce efficiency, fairness, and adequacy of local government agency to perform and become more comprehensive in its scope. To participate effectively is an important ingredient resulting to an increase in production and service quality. Hence, to be responsive is to be accountable where in this context, accountability refers to the ways that local government agencies are able to deal with sets of expectations from internal and external environment and it comes from bureaucratic, legal, professional, and political accountability (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987).

In the environment of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, local authorities operate significantly in a driven change of millennia. The citizens putting a great emphasis to look up at the efficiency of service delivery. Hence, placing the citizens at the centre stage to determine the quality service by demonstrating the involvement and

participation by the local authority really influence towards public trust. It shows the level of responsiveness by the local authority towards the demands of the public meanwhile the public putting their trust towards the local authority. As Dwiyanto (2008) argued that public organizations need to be able to recognize the needs of society, setting up agenda, prioritizing services and create programs that reflects to the needs and hope of society. It is also being supported by Tangkilisan (2005) about this responsibility of bureaucracy that anticipates the indication of trust. Therefore, both need to cooperate with one another to ensure sufficient knowledge by the society on their needs that can be offered by government. This rather suggest that trustworthiness is the key requirement to ensure legitimacy and a central place between society and government institutions.

## **RESPONSIVENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Malaysia has practising democracy where it allows election to be held in response to the most popular local notables or potential opposition forces (Boix & Svulik, 2007) which later been given some say in policy making (Gandhi, 2009) and access to national parliament (Lust-Okar, 2006). It indicates the availability of responsiveness factor in serving the community where people has the right to say and it is the responsibility of the government to fulfil it. It is somehow examining whether this ground has a measureable impact on the activities involved between local authorities and the citizen.

Over the years, the most common strategy by the local authorities to become responsive is to treat it as a responsibility. As Wilson (1887) argued that the administrators should have a will in accomplishing his task where the scheme is structured with a chain of command where the constitutional officer at the top. As supported by Friedrich (1940) that bureaucratic responsibility comprised of technical knowledge and responsiveness to popular opinion where administrators would be judged by professional colleagues and then operationalized it in giving away their political responses to their actions and plan wisely for the well-being of the people. Although the responsiveness essence by the administrators was problematic in fulfilling their responsibility to the public, the passive instrument of this should be avoided in order to become more effective and efficient since that modernization can bring a better future.

According to Finer (1941), responsibility was a subsection to responsiveness where in assuring the bureaucratic responsiveness by means of stronger laws and procedures becomes the fundamental essence of responsibility in the expertise of professionalism in public administration. Hence, it gives the people comforting feeling

that this illusionary promise represented by the administrators enable them to focus and cope with the public interests where this reliance put too much emphasis onto administrative conscience. In response to individual public servants, public service performance has been improved, accountability has been strengthened and thus enhance the democratic government in fulfilling its responsibility towards the people. However, the weakening accountability happen in the stage of denial of the political nature in public management since that the public service managers who are relatively the ministers are elected for their political rather than managerial capabilities. Despite that, the position of professional managers seeks to be reinforced as accountable public servants and becomes a responsible government as a central tenet towards quality public service. Hence, to strengthen responsiveness is through making the local authorities become a responsible government that consequently increase a patronage with the move towards a quality public service delivery system. Both the ministers and the public servants should work hand in hand in ensuring the demands by the public can be fulfilled and thus it reflects to the efficiency of the public service too.

## **PUBLIC TRUST**

Potential implication of responsiveness viewed as influencing rules that bring trust after they have been initiated. It needs to be under the agenda of the agencies that signify important roles in the state and brings understanding by the society to put on trust on them. Responsiveness is operationalized in the structural and functional activities of the organizations. Hence, local authorities should be equipped with responsiveness role so that the pressure is extended to become the best element in giving good service to the society.

In the context of local government, the local responsiveness is a practical idea for the administrators to be open, able and willing to respond to unexpected and unpredictable demand by the community. In essence, listening helps to become a practice to promote responsiveness that supports the administrators to turn themselves in a humble way and develop modesty to comprehend capacities. The advantage to promote listening helps the administrators to be opened to understand and construct possibilities as facilitators appreciating harmony between them. When this situation is given attention and vividly evoke, possibility of trust among the society is in placed creating occasions for network and active collaboration between the local authorities and the community. In achieving policy objectives through administration, reactive management strategies on responsiveness will be the most tenet to be as closer to the community. Hence, trust relates to expectations and influenced by information that lead to whether or not to trust the government (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003).

According to Francois and Zabochnik (2005), mutual dependence of trust and political activities become codetermination of attitudes and economic outcomes. It exemplifies that trust is important for government to function well and its actions may affect the degree of trust. Thus, it is very important to have public cooperation in giving a feedback in enabling the local authorities to be more effective and induce trust among the community which signifies legitimacy of the government. As many argued that public trust is important which symbolizes the efficiency and strength of the government in securing the happiness of its community. Hence, the society is expected to engage in trust relations with government as trust is a fundamental to persuasive functions to run the government in the best interest of the community (Ward et. al., 2016).

## RESEARCH QUESTION

For this study we formulated the research question based on the experiences faced by the public when dealing with local government employees. Three questions posed; (a) Does responsiveness contribute to trust? (b) To what extend responsiveness build trust? (c) How it gives impacts towards trust?

## METHODOLOGY

The study focused on responsiveness among local government employees and how it influences public trust among citizen in Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Selangor local authorities. Simple random sampling was used in which it stated that “*every element in the population has a known and equal chance of being selected as a subject*” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013, 247). Selangor has twelve local authorities from which five were randomly selected to represent the city council, two for municipal council, and two for district council. In addition, each local authority has unequal number of staffs when compared to each other. Each sample size was determined by the number of staffs in that particular local authority. Thus, 1300 questionnaires were distributed and 708 were returned yielding 57.6% of accepted questionnaires. The study applied partial least squares modelling technique (SMART-PLS) which provided the answers as below:

## FINDINGS

This section presents the main research results. To assess the model developed, Smart-PLS was applied based on path modelling and then the bootstrapping of 1000 re-samples were used to generate the standard error of the estimate and t-values than 0.5 which is significant at  $p < 0.01$ . The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for both

constructs also exceeded 0.5. Whereas for Composite Reliability (CRs) were higher than 0.7 and the same goes to Cronbach alpha values where it is exceeded 0.7

### *Assessment of the Measurement Model*

For reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the scales, this section conducted confirmatory factor analysis as indicated in table 1. Most item loadings were larger than 0.5 (significant at  $p < 0.1$ ). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach alpha values were exceeded the threshold value and were accepted.

**Table 1: Results of the Measurement Model**

Model Construct	Measurement items	Loading	AVE <sup>a</sup>	CR <sup>b</sup>	Alpha
Public Trust	PT1	0.639	0.527	0.847	0.775
	PT2	0.692			
	PT4	0.745			
	PT5	0.752			
	PT6	0.793			
	Responsiveness	R1			
	R2	0.775			
	R3	0.638			
	R6	0.797			
	R7	0.823			

Note: <sup>a</sup> Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{( summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}

<sup>b</sup> Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/{(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}

Next step is the result for discriminant validity. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) the test on discriminant validity indicates the extent to which a given construct is different from other latent construct. As indicated in Table 2, the square root of the AVE was tested against the intercorrelations of the construct with the other construct in the model to ensure discriminant validity. The square root of the AVE exceeded the correlation with other variables.

**Table 2: Discriminant Validity of Constructs**

	Public Trust	Responsiveness
Public Trust	<b>0.726</b>	
Responsiveness	0.764	<b>0.810</b>

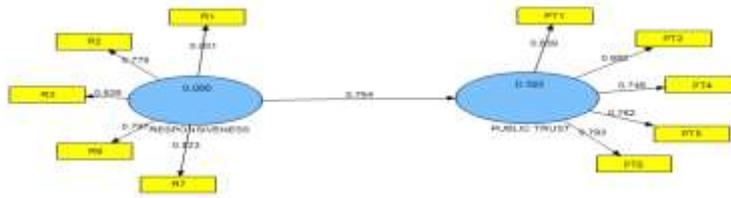
Note: Diagonal represent the square root of the AVE extracted while the other represent the correlation

**Assessment of the Structural Model**

Next is the assessment on the hypothesis as shown in Table 3 and Figure 1. H<sub>1</sub> (Responsiveness has positive effect towards public trust) was established based on the research model as shown in Figure 1. The hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) was found to be significantly related and supported.

**Table 3: Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	SE	T-value	decision
H <sub>1</sub>	Responsiveness → Public Trust	0.764	0.018	41.636*	supported



*Figure 1: The research model*

The research model as shown in Figure 1 is assessed accordingly using SmartPLS 2.0, based on path modelling, and bootstrapping (Chin, 1998).

**DISCUSSION**

This study aims to investigate the impact of responsiveness to public trust. The result of this study has indicated that responsiveness has significant impact to public trust. Past studies has also revealed that responsiveness of public sector employees in serving the public especially in service delivery would increase trust and enhance satisfaction among the public.

According to Tangkilisan (2005), in serving the public in the right way, the local authorities or any bureaucratic agencies should response to the expectations, desires and aspirations of the society and later decide the priorities and developing programs

accordingly. When the demands are taken care, it will create public trust among its people. It also has been supported by Dilulio (1991) highlighted that responsiveness is an evidence to the ability of the organizations to identify the needs and demands by the people, prioritize the services and develop programs of public servants in line with the aspirations of the society. Hence, it begins with performance-based accountability in which this system or tool indicates the measurement of inputs, outputs and outcomes for collecting performance data which later been compared with organizational goals and standards (Roberts, 2002). The performance information and data will solicit recommendations to meet those needs. It indicates the service quality provided by the agencies and critically determines the gap between the expectations by the people and the perceptions of what they actually received by the service provider. To operate in responsiveness manner does require managerial decentralization where each of the local authority officers put a greater emphasis on quality of service provided. Common expectations on communication, information, responsiveness and problem resolution have been taken seriously to account to create positive reinforcement for the agencies that resulted to satisfied clients and become more efficient and effective organizations.

In general, the local authorities in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur provide a range of services. It promotes the interests of local community including economic, environment, culture, social, community and general development of the area where its responsibilities lie on categories like housing, planning, roads, development incentives and control, environmental protection including rivers, lakes, air and noise, and recreation facilities and amenities. Thus, the local authorities are representatives of local communities, voicing out local concerns and responding to local needs. This study has measured responsiveness element measuring sincere effort in supporting residents who need help. It is very crucial to focus on efforts to boost morale among the clients or community to put on trust on the local authorities in giving their best besides having a good structure of organization. It has been supported by Rondinely (1990) that the bureaucratic organizations are trying to be competitive, responsive and adaptive in order to gain trust from the community and allows discretion, initiative and innovative ideas in putting efforts dealing with clients.

Developing a customer focus becomes a goal to ensure quality service provided by the local authorities with the three key priorities (Mike Donnelly & Edward Shiu, 1999):

1. Ensuring that the services provided are what customers need and want at an appropriate cost;
2. Extending the role of customers in the development of new services and in the continuous improvement of existing services;
3. Making sure customers have sufficient quality and amount of information to allow them to exercise their rights and choices.

Considering the keys above, the local authorities in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur respond to public request quickly and efficiently by providing a good avenue for feedback and welcomes feedback, the officers are approachable and helpful and allows criticism and suggestions for improvement as serious matters. The scores vividly imply to responsiveness measure that lead to trustfulness by the society or community. These indications to quality service ensuring the promised service is performed right the first time, on time and at the time promised by the service.

In supporting the strategy to be responsive and builds trust, the performance is measured by doing the job right, reliable and consistent focusing on satisfying customer's needs. To meet customer's needs, require a good process responsible to track these changes because they are constantly change from time to time. Thus, the local authorities have regulations and clear rules that apply to the provision of urban residential services. This management requirement assists in supporting the processes that satisfy customer's needs and simultaneously lead to trustfulness that been given away by the customers to the organizations which viewed as values to the organizations. This perspective symbolizes the organization success that comes through the customers and to deal with customer's expectations, a quick response to inquiries, information and communication system are required. In addition, rapid decision making also becomes a part of the process to become successful that may indicate requirement on empowerment or participatory management to serve customers well.

In response to changes in programmatic environment like new technologies, new business practices, economic changes and ecological developments bring to implications on anticipated formulation of policies in determining the following goals; clarify existing requirements, close loopholes or address other barriers to the accomplishment of policy objectives, revise substantive errors in existing policy and codify precedent established in the course of implementation (West, William F. & Raso, Connor). These may keep agencies significant to their existence and would be analysed as trusted agencies and leave confidence at high stage.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, improving responsiveness would become the most visible results that continuing to become more efficient and better government agencies. In ensuring its continuity, the agencies should deal with changes that might happen in many ways and they must be properly designed so that the result gives a greater significant not only to the organizations but also to the customers and society as well. The feedback on the quality and outcomes of public service are relied on tendency to distort customer's view. Hence, it is very crucial to determine and implement quality by practising the element of responsiveness which later build trust among the society. Production of

quality influences values which associated to productivity. And by raising productivity, it can be viewed as a success in its sense which may build satisfied customers and elevate trust among them.

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