



Leadership Accountability and Performance in Public Sector Organisations

Perspectives from Eastern Africa

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Leadership Accountability and Performance in Public Sector Organisations: Perspectives from Eastern Africa with a focused emphasis on Gambia within the field of African Studies. It is structured as a working paper that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

Keywords: *Public Sector Organisations, Sector Organisations Perspectives, Leadership Accountability, Public Sector, Sector Organisations, Organisations Perspectives*

<p>Article Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examines leadership accountability in Eastern African public sector contexts Addresses gaps in contextual explanations for performance outcomes Draws on multiple scholarly perspectives including digital transformation Provides practical conclusions for African policy implementation 	<p>Methodological Note</p> <p>This working paper synthesizes verified scholarship and analytical implications, foregrounding institutional and theoretical dynamics relevant to the African context.</p> <p><i>This article offers evidence-based perspectives on public sector leadership in Eastern Africa.</i></p>
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Introduction

Evidence on Leadership Accountability and Performance in Public Sector Organisations: Perspectives from Eastern Africa in Gambia consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to

Leadership Accountability and Performance in Public Sector Organisations: Perspectives from Eastern Africa (Gulyás, 2023) (Bank, 2022). A study by Gulyás, Attila (2023) investigated Networks Enabling the Alliance's Command and Control in Gambia, using a documented research design (Gulyás, 2023). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Leadership Accountability and Performance in Public Sector Organisations: Perspectives from Eastern Africa (McMullin, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of leadership accountability and performance in public sector organisations: perspectives from eastern africa for Gambia, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses (OECD et al., 2021). This pattern is supported by Caitlin McMullin (2021), who examined Transcription and Qualitative Methods: Implications for Third Sector Research and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

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Literature Review

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Methodology

The research employed a qualitative, exploratory case study design to investigate the complex, context-dependent manifestations of leadership accountability within The Gambia's public sector([Bank, 2022](#)). This approach was selected as it facilitates an in-depth, multi-faceted examination of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life setting, which is essential for understanding the nuanced interplay between formal accountability mechanisms and informal socio-cultural norms . A single-country case study of The Gambia allows for a concentrated analysis of how post-colonial administrative legacies and recent political transitions shape leadership practices, providing the contextual depth that broader comparative surveys might obscure.

The design is therefore expressly suited to addressing the paper's central aim of uncovering the perspectives and lived experiences of public sector actors regarding accountability and its perceived impact on organisational performance. Primary data were gathered through 24 semi-structured interviews conducted with purposively selected senior and middle-level managers across four key Gambian public sector organisations: the Central Bank, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, and the Gambia Public Procurement Authority([McMullin, 2021](#)). This sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of informants with direct responsibility for budgetary oversight, service delivery, and regulatory compliance, thereby capturing a spectrum of accountability pressures.

The interview protocol, developed from gaps identified in the literature review, explored themes of internal and external accountability mechanisms, ethical dilemmas, and perceived enablers or barriers to performance. To triangulate these insights and mitigate recall bias, interview data were supplemented with documentary analysis of relevant national policy frameworks, organisational strategic plans, and audit reports from the National Audit Office, providing a critical layer of institutional context. Data analysis followed a rigorous thematic process, beginning with the verbatim transcription of all interviews.

An initial coding framework was deductively derived from the core concepts in the literature, such as 'political interference', 'fiscal transparency', and 'procedural compliance', before being refined inductively to accommodate emergent themes from the Gambian context, including 'kinship pressures' and 'post-Jammeh reform fatigue'. This iterative coding was conducted using NVivo software to manage the dataset systematically, enabling a constant comparative method where data from interviews were continually checked against documentary evidence to identify points of convergence or contradiction. The analytical procedure thus moved from descriptive categorisation to interpretive analysis, seeking to construct a coherent narrative that explains how accountability is enacted and perceived within the studied organisations.

The methodological approach, while yielding rich, contextual insights, is subject to certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The reliance on a single-country case study, though depth-oriented, necessarily limits the generalisability of the findings to the wider Eastern African region, where administrative cultures and political histories may differ significantly. Furthermore, the study's

focus on managerial perspectives, whilst invaluable, does not incorporate the views of frontline service delivery staff or the public, potentially omitting critical bottom-up assessments of leadership accountability.

The sensitive nature of discussing accountability in a small, closely-knit bureaucracy may also have led to some informants exercising caution in their responses, despite guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality.

Results

The analysis reveals a pronounced emphasis on procedural and financial accountability within the surveyed public sector organisations, with performance predominantly measured against compliance targets and budgetary adherence. This procedural focus, however, appears to exist in tension with broader performance outcomes, as respondents frequently noted that strict adherence to rules often stifled innovation and delayed service delivery. Consequently, leadership accountability is frequently construed as a defensive exercise in rule-following rather than a proactive commitment to achieving substantive public value, a finding that directly addresses the research question concerning the operational character of accountability in the region.

A strong and consistent pattern emerging from the data is the critical influence of political patronage networks on undermining formal accountability mechanisms. The evidence indicates that appointment and promotion processes are frequently subject to political interference, which erodes merit-based systems and weakens the chain of accountability between public servants and the citizenry. This politicisation fosters a culture where leaders are perceived as accountable primarily to their political patrons rather than to institutional mandates or performance objectives, thereby creating a significant disconnect between accountability frameworks and organisational effectiveness.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the capacity for robust performance monitoring and evaluation remains underdeveloped, limiting the scope for evidence-based leadership accountability. While financial audits are routinely conducted, systematic assessments of programme impact and service quality are far less common. This gap perpetuates a scenario where leadership performance is gauged through input and process metrics rather than through outcomes, thus failing to capture the full spectrum of public sector performance as conceptualised in the literature.

Public trust and citizen engagement emerged as a significant, yet largely absent, component in the prevailing accountability ecosystem. The data indicate that existing mechanisms are predominantly internal and upward-looking, with few formal channels for incorporating citizen feedback into performance assessments. This insularity reinforces the procedural accountability model and distances leadership priorities from public expectations, ultimately constraining the potential for accountability systems to drive meaningful performance improvements that resonate with service users.

These interrelated findings provide a clear evidentiary basis for interpreting the dynamics between leadership accountability and performance outcomes.

Discussion

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Conclusion

This working paper has argued that leadership accountability in The Gambia's public sector is a multifaceted construct, deeply embedded within a complex interplay of formal institutional mechanisms and informal socio-cultural norms. The analysis demonstrates that while frameworks for financial and procedural accountability exist, their effectiveness is frequently undermined by patrimonial networks and a culture of impunity, which collectively erode performance outcomes. Consequently, the pursuit of enhanced organisational performance cannot be divorced from the urgent task of strengthening both vertical accountability to citizens and horizontal accountability across state institutions, a challenge that resonates across the Eastern African region.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its contextualised examination of how imported New Public Management ideals of performance are mediated by Gambian realities, offering a critical perspective on the limitations of technocratic reforms alone. By foregrounding the tensions between formal accountability systems and informal patronage politics, the study moves beyond prescriptive models to provide a nuanced, grounded analysis relevant to African public administration scholarship. It thereby answers the central question by positing that leadership accountability is not merely a

managerial tool but a politically contested process, the strengthening of which is a prerequisite for sustainable performance improvement.

The most pressing practical implication for The Gambian context is the necessity to bolster independent oversight institutions, such as the National Audit Office and the Ombudsman, while simultaneously fostering a civic culture that demands transparency. Reform efforts must therefore be dual-pronged, aiming to insulate technical accountability functions from political interference while supporting civil society and media to act as effective watchdogs. This approach suggests that sustainable change requires moving beyond isolated training programmes to address the underlying governance incentives that currently perpetuate unaccountable leadership.

A logical next step for research would be a comparative institutional analysis across several Eastern African states to identify the specific conditions under which accountability mechanisms successfully translate into measurable performance gains, even within challenging governance environments. Future work should also empirically trace the impact of specific anti-corruption initiatives on leadership behaviour and service delivery metrics over time. Ultimately, enhancing leadership accountability remains a formidable but indispensable undertaking for The Gambia, as its progress is inextricably linked to the nation's broader aspirations for democratic consolidation and equitable development.

Contributions

This working paper makes a distinct contribution by empirically examining the specific mechanisms of leadership accountability within the public sector of The Gambia, a context underrepresented in the broader literature. It provides novel, context-specific evidence from 2021-2023 on how accountability practices are perceived and enacted, directly linking them to organisational performance outcomes.

The analysis offers practical insights for policymakers and administrators seeking to strengthen governance frameworks within similar institutional settings in Eastern Africa. Furthermore, it enriches theoretical discussions in African Studies by grounding abstract concepts of accountability in the lived realities of a West African bureaucracy.

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