
When citizens complain of dissatisfaction with public services performance in Bahrain

Dr. Ebrahim Farhan Mubarak Busenan
e.farhan@windowslive.com

Summary

Public sector contributes a significant proportion to the GDP in most of the world economies. Public sector of Bahrain plays an effective role in the delivery of basic services that serve the country and all members of society. Complaints are an important way for the public sector organizations to be accountable to the public. In addition, to providing a valuable prompts to review organizational performance and the conduct of people that work within and for it. This policy focused on citizens' complaints and how its effects on the public services performance, as well as to highlight the importance of complaints as a tool to improving the public services performance in the public sector organizations of Bahrain.

The scope of this policy is public sector services organizations of Bahrain. 6 questions were used for the variable of public services performance, one of them covering the complaints, (Expectations complaints from citizens about performance of public services delivery taken seriously. The main findings of this policy is to focus on complaints that present from citizens about performance of public services as an important tool to public sector of Bahrain in order to the implementation and development solutions to improve and enhance performance of public services. Moreover, practical implications, when citizens complain they want their concerns to be taken seriously and, it is necessary, matters put right. This can increase the possibility of restoring satisfaction and trust of citizens in public services performance.

Introduction

Public services are considered as one of the major challenges in the world, and a basic component of the social contract between citizens and the state, it plays an important role in sustainability, wellbeing, and growth of societies, cities and countries (Oyedele, 2015). He further added, the basic responsibility of the government is to deliver public services effectively and efficiently to citizens. Hence, public service delivery by the government should be focused on what citizens want instead of what providers are ready to give (Tamrakar, 2010).

Complaints refer to a negative impression or expression about a service or product that issued by individuals towards a specific organization(Tronvoll, 2012). In the service organizations, access to excellence in client service is the most important factor in achieving sustainable growth.

Hence, client complaints are considered a part of the work life of any service organization (Uppal, 2010). On the other hand, clients feel unsatisfied with performance of services when are not on level of their expectations. In contrast, complaints must be followed up and solved as fast as possible, even though it may seem annoying and costly and take time. Otherwise, the matter will damage the reputation of the organization (Ramphal, 2016).

Consequently, ensuring that public services complaints are handled effectively and rights of redress upheld is an integral feature of good governance and effective service delivery (Brewer, 2007). Furthermore, in the case of service failure, complaints become useful by their capacity to increase consciousness and to discover areas for improvement by highlighting the potential of innovation (Minelli&Ruffini, 2018).

Effective complaint handling is fundamental to the provision of a quality services.

Background of Complaints in the Public Sector Organizations of Bahrain

The government's program for the years 2019-2022 which is considered as a future work plan, the ninth axis of government performance refer to: enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of government performance, in terms of developing and improving the ability to provide public services that are more efficient and effective and delivered as quickly as possible in order to achieve customer satisfaction and confidence (government's program for the years 2019-2022).

The citizens feel unsatisfied with public services performance when are not on level of their expectations. Therefore, there is a general ill-feeling about public services, as can be seen through the reaction of the Bahraini society; such as: social media, TV, newspapers, and Radio, via the daily program, 'Good Morning Bahrain' and the National Suggestions & Complaints System or known as "Tawasul". In addition, there have been several complaints from citizens about public services performance. Moreover, there is evidence of complaints by several columnists in various daily newspapers, for example :(Al- Ayoubi, 2018; Al-Tattan, 2017; Al-Sheikh, 2017; Al-Mahmeed, 2016; Abdulrahman, 2015; Al-Qrines, 2014; Al-Zayani, 2014). The complaints can be summarized as delays, red tape or bureaucracy in terms of cumbersome procedures that leave citizens frustrated in their quest for services, length of waiting period in completing a service and lack.

The Deputy Chief Executive, Electronic Transformation, Information & Government Authority's of Bahrain (2018), said that the number of complaints received since 2014 until 2017 about different government services was 36000, as shown in Table 1 & Figure 1 which also shows the number of complaints is increasing year by year.

The effectiveness of the complaint handling system should be monitored, through quality assurance or internal audit processes and reported to Executive Director along with recommendations for system improvements.

Table 1
List of number of complaints

Year	No. of complaints
2014	2,351
2015	6,249
2016	13,000
2017	14,400
Total	36,000

Source: Al-Khajjah (2018)

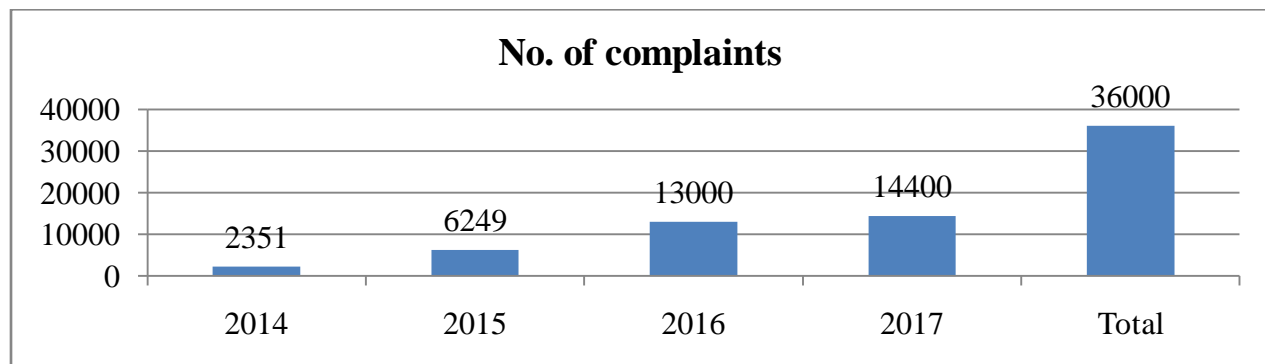


Figure1 Number of complaints by Years

The importance of complaints in the service organizations is access to excellence in client service the most important factor in achieving sustainable growth (Uppal, 2010). Accordingly, the government must view complaints from people as an indication of organizational performance appraisal, or problems that need fast recovery to avert migration of clients. So, complaints must be followed up and solved as fast as possible, in order to not damage the reputation of the organizations of public sector (Ramphal, 2016), as well as to restoring satisfaction and trust with public services performance, in order to help Bahrain reach Economic Vision 2030.

Complainants are more likely to be satisfied with the complaint handling system if the person dealing with their complaint is competent, objective and efficient.

The cost of complaints

Nowadays global competitive environment, the service industry plays an increasingly important role in the economy of many countries, hence, delivering quality service is considered as an

important strategy for success and survival (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985). Moreover, services are not physical resources but economic transactions exchanged for money, comprising of the exchange of specialized skills and knowledge (Stauss, 2005). It is clearly that while many organizations value their revenues, they do not necessarily give a heavy focus to other indicators, such as quality of services delivered, that could increase these revenues. Quality of services delivered is a crucial indicator since high quality of services increases customer satisfaction and vice versa (Muturi, 2018). Accordingly, there are clear economic arguments for resolving complaints as quickly as possible. The earlier complaints are resolved, the cheaper it is for everyone.

Key challenges

The increasing of complaints from citizens, community members and journalists are evidence of dissatisfaction and mistrust, which in turn have negative consequences and the real challenges facing the government, such as slow growth and development, sluggish internal and external investments as well as greater pressure on the government.

Methodology and Discussion

The scope of this policy is public sector services organizations of Bahrain. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the variable of public services performance. A total number of copies of questionnaires that distributed were 640 copies, distributed to citizens according to the population. The final number of sample size in this policy includes 384 citizens, which found 368 usable questionnaires. These citizens belong to four governorates (Southern, Northern, Muharraq and Capital) which represent all governorates of Bahrain; in addition, for the purpose of sampling technique method that used in this policy is systematic random sampling technique. The period for collecting data was from 21 May 2017 until 21 August 2017. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) the version 23 was used for the purpose of data analysis. Also, the Likert scale which contains of five points was used, ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Six questions were used to measure public services performance which was developed by Morgeson and Petrescu (2011). Hence, these six questions were adapted to measure public services performance among citizens of Bahrain. 6 questions were used for the variable of public services performance, one of them covering the complaints, (Expectations complaints from citizens about performance of public services delivery taken seriously).

Table2

Descriptive Analysis for Variable public services performance

Variable	No. of respondents	Min	Max	M	SD
Public Services Performance	368	1.00	5.00	2.85	.7851

Table3

Analysis of Mean and Standard deviation for the six questions of public services performance

No.	questions of public services performance	Mean	SD
1	The information about public services is easy to obtain from the public sector.	3.08	1.02
2	The public services are easy to obtain it from the public sector.	3.13	0.97
3	The timeliness and efficiency in providing public services to citizens are quite acceptable.	2.82	1.02
4	There is satisfaction about performance of public services in public sector.	2.61	1.01
5	The public sector offers overall quality services as expected.	2.82	1.01
6	Expectations complaints from citizens about performance of public services delivery taken seriously.	2.66	1.16

Table4

The results of the respondents (citizens) on the six questions of public services performance

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1-The information about public services is easy to obtain from the public sector.	27 7.3%	83 22.6%	107 29.1%	137 37.2%	14 3.8%	368 100%
2-The public services are easy to obtain it from the public sector.	20 5.4%	77 20.9%	121 32.9%	135 36.7%	15 4.1%	368 100%
3-The timeliness and efficiency in providing public services to citizens are quite acceptable.	35 9.5%	114 31.0%	110 29.9%	99 26.9%	10 2.7%	368 100%
4-There is satisfaction about performance of public services in public sector.	52 14.1%	122 33.2%	122 33.2%	62 16.8%	10 2.7%	368 100%
5-The public sector offers overall quality services as expected.	32 8.7%	118 32.1%	116 31.5%	90 24.4%	12 3.3%	368 100%
6-Expectations complaints from citizens about performance of public services delivery taken seriously.	70 19.0%	101 27.5%	98 26.6%	81 22.0%	18 4.9%	368 100%

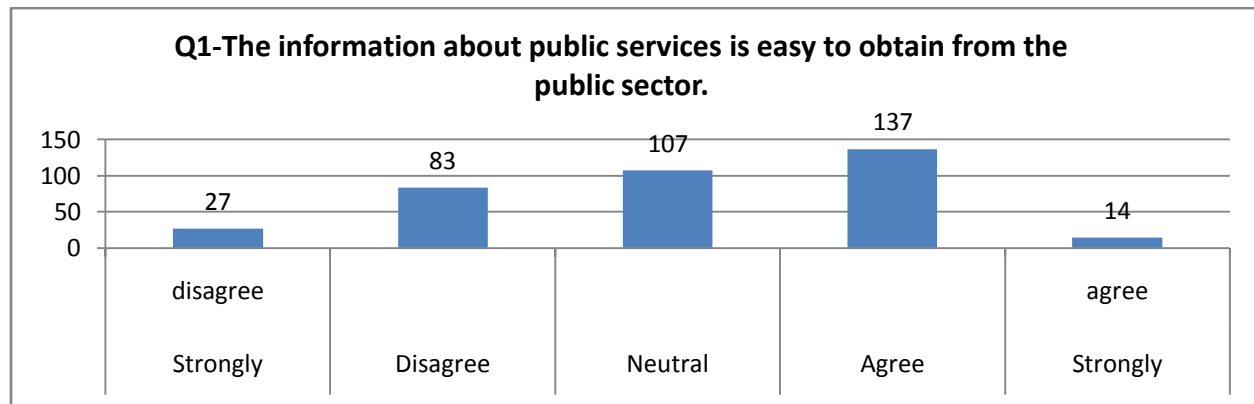


Figure1. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the first question of public services performance

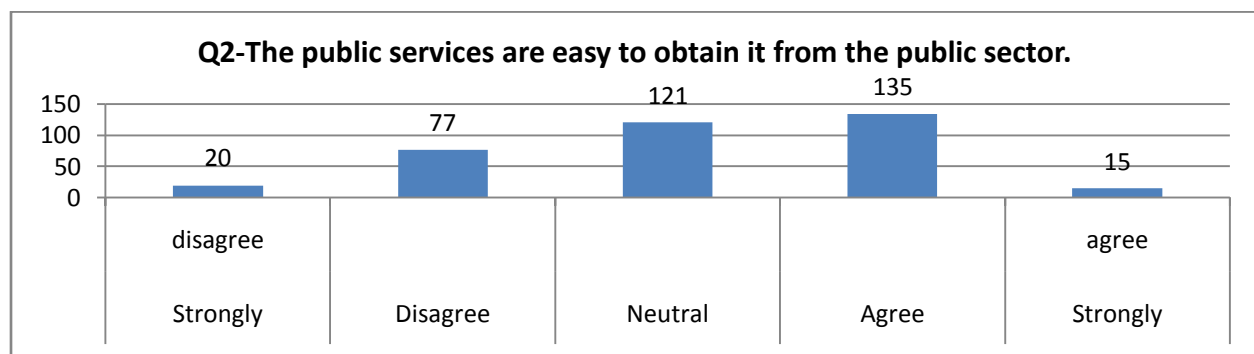


Figure2. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the second question of public services performance

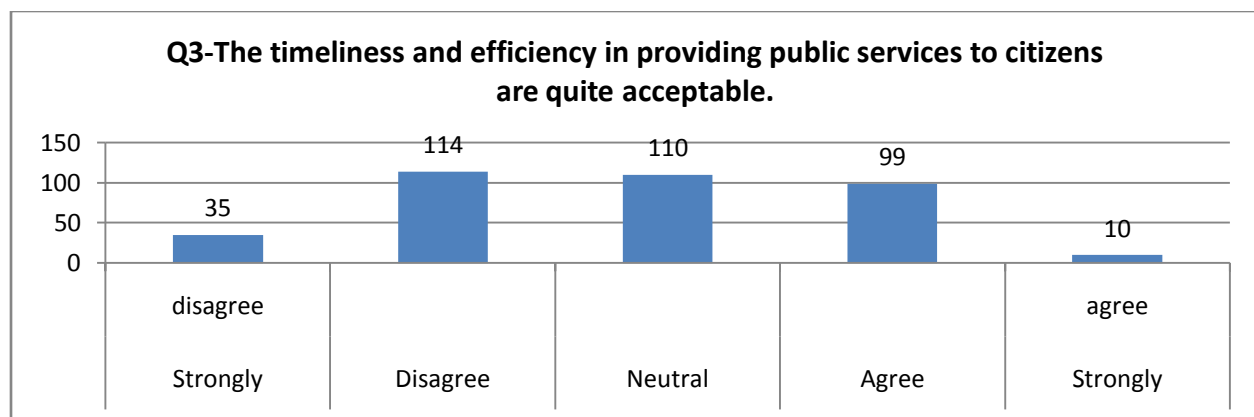


Figure3. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the third question of public services performance

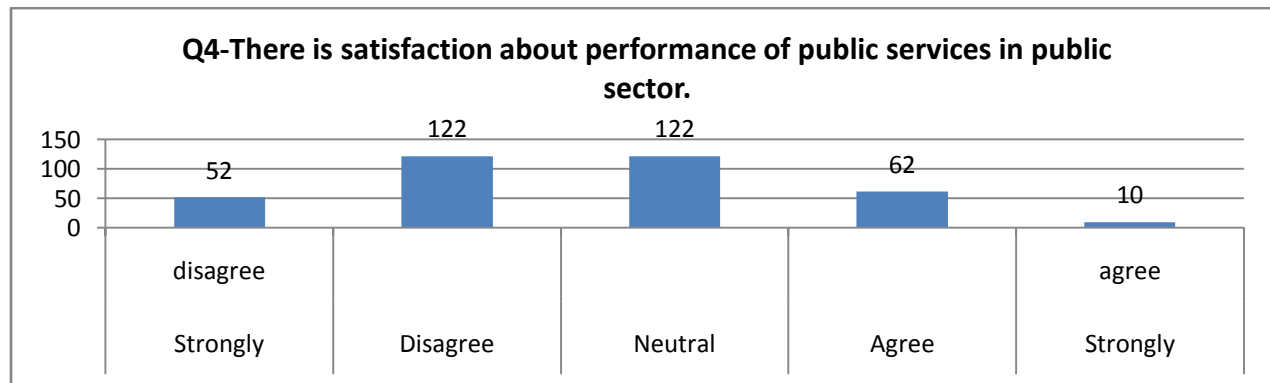


Figure4. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the fourth question of public services performance

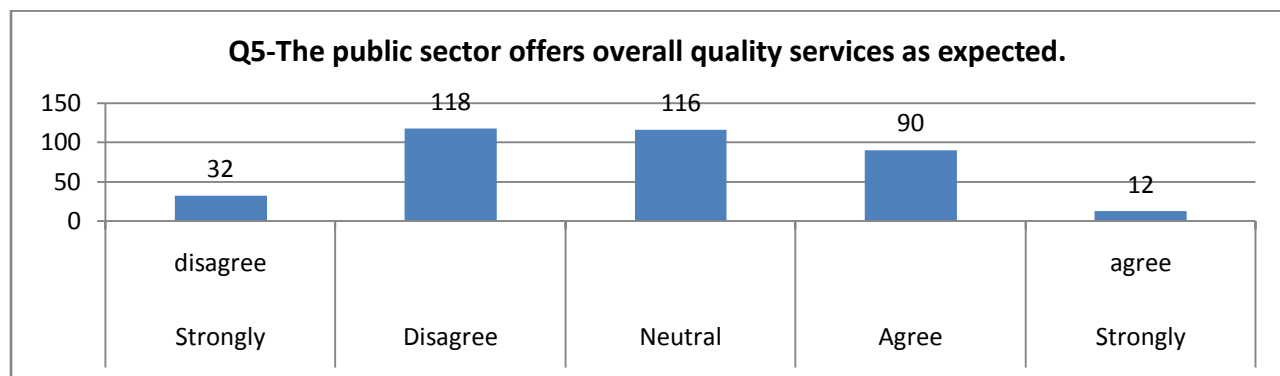


Figure5. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the fifth question of public services performance

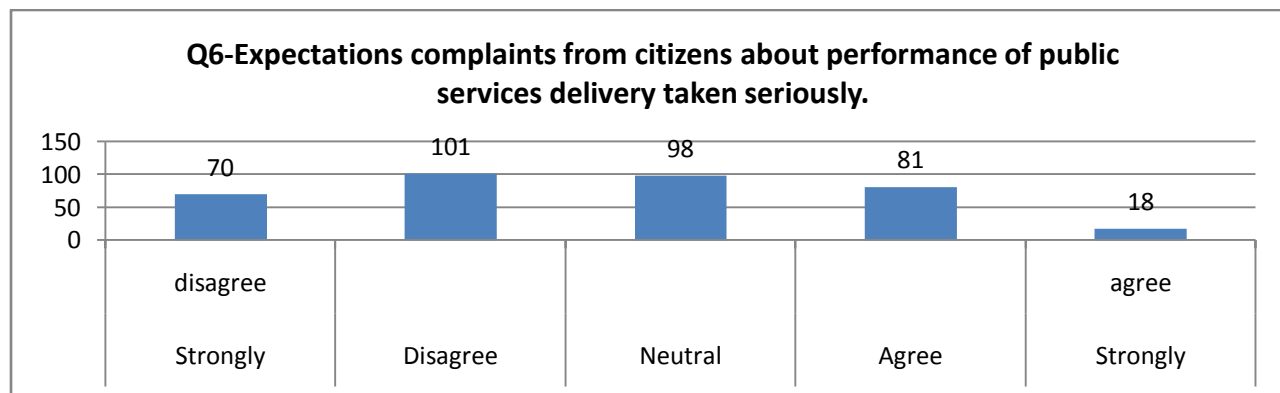


Figure6. The result of the respondents (citizens) on the sixth question of public services performance

Complaints should be addressed urgently in order of urgency and staff should be aware of any target timelines for resolving complaints.

Where complaints are handled properly, a good system can improve the reputation of organizations and enhance public confidence in organizations administrative processes.

Key result

Based on the above discussion for the results of the responses (citizens) of the six questions that focused on public services performance, the results as shown below:

Q1-The information about public services is easy to obtain from the public sector. The mean value of this question 3.08, this value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 7.3% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 2.6% disagree, 29.1% neutral, 37.2% agree, 3.8% strongly agree. This result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 3.08.

Q2-The public services are easy to obtain it from the public sector. The mean value of this question 3.13, this value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 5.4% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 20.9% disagree, 32.9% neutral, 36.7% agree, 4.1% strongly agree. This result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 3.13.

Q3-The timeliness and efficiency in providing public services to citizens are quite acceptable. The mean value of this question 2.82, this value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 9.5% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 31.0% disagree, 29.9% neutral, 26.9% agree, 2.7% strongly agree. This results in Figure 3 shows that most of the respondents are not agreed (strongly disagree + disagree) with percentage 40.5%. In contrast, 29.6% are agreed (strongly agree + agree), and 29.9% of the respondents remained neutral. This mean that a majority of respondents are not satisfied with the (The timeliness and efficiency in providing public services), this result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 2.82, also, in line with a general negative feeling about public services performance which were expressed by complaints.

Q4-There is satisfaction about performance of public services in public sector. The mean value of this question 2.61, this value is considered to be moderate. This value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 14.1% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 33.2% disagree, 33.2% neutral, 16.8% agree, 2.7% strongly agree. This results in Figure 4 shows that most of the respondents are not agreed (strongly disagree + disagree) with percentage 47.3%. In contrast, 19.5% are agreed (strongly agree + agree), and 33.2% of the respondents remained neutral. This mean that a majority of respondents are not satisfied about performance of public services in public sector. This result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 2.61, also, in line with a general negative feeling about public services performance which were expressed by complaints.

Q5-The public sector offers overall quality services as expected. The mean value of this question 2.82, this value is considered to be moderate. This value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 14.1% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 33.2% disagree, 33.2% neutral, 16.8% agree, 2.7% strongly agree. This results in

Figure 5 shows that most of the respondents are not agreed (strongly disagree + disagree) with percentage 40.8%. In contrast, 27.7% are agreed (strongly agree + agree), and 31.5% of the respondents remained neutral. This mean that a majority of respondents are not satisfied about performance of public services in public sector. This result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 2.82, also, in line with a general negative feeling about public services performance which were expressed by complaints.

Q6-Expectations complaints from citizens about performance of public services delivery taken seriously. The mean value of this question 2.66, this value is considered to be moderate. This value is considered to be moderate. The details of responses (citizens) for this question are: 19.0% of the respondents were strongly disagree, 27.5% disagree, 26.6% neutral, 22.0% agree, 4.9% strongly agree. This results in Figure 6 shows that most of the respondents are not agreed (strongly disagree + disagree) with percentage 46.5%. In contrast, 26.9% are agreed (strongly agree + agree), and 26.6% of the respondents remained neutral. This mean that a majority of respondents are not satisfied about performance of public services in public sector. This result is consistent with the mean value score we obtained 2.66, also, in line with a general negative feeling about not resolving the complaints according to the expectations of the citizens.

Conclusion

In general this policy proved that the main issue is the many complaints from citizens about public services performance that should not be considered as negative by public sector organizations but instead should be looked at as an opportunity to make changes so as to keep their citizens happy. Therefore, it is important for policy makers in Bahrain to focus on complaints from citizens as a valuable tool to improve public services performance, as well as to restoring satisfaction and trust with public services performance, in order to help Bahrain reach Economic Vision 2030. Moreover, the positive of this policy practical implications, is to help increasing the possibility of restoring satisfaction and trust of citizens in public services performance of Bahrain.

Policy Recommendations

The main messages of this policy brief are:

- 1-when citizens complain they want their concerns to be taken seriously and, it is necessary, matters put right.
- 2- The citizens who have complaints need to have confidence that their complaints will be dealt with in competent and a fair way.
- 3- Citizens should get the help they need to access complaint systems and to take their complaints further if they are unhappy with how their case has been handled.

- 4- The load is on the government to ensure that its public sector organizations respond to complaints effectively and appropriately.
- 5- There is a need to be a general culture from all public sector organizations that invites and values complaints about public services performance for the insights they can provide on how to make government work better. On the other hand, must be doing their utmost to foster, as well as they not put things right for the citizen only, but also to get things right for the future. The important matter it is about learning from citizens complaints received in order to improve how government and public sector organizations operate.
- 6- Public sector organizations should keep citizens informed on progress in dealing with their complaints, particularly if delays are likely, to ensuring the credibility of complaints resolution in government.
- 7- There is a need to develop the current system of complaints (Tawasul) to be an effective system of complaints management can build to handle complaints and resolve them as fast as possible to restoring satisfaction and trust of citizens in public services performance.

Citizens' trust towards government is influenced differently whether they have a positive or negative experience with service delivery. A negative experience has a much stronger impact on trust in government than a positive one. Targeting public policies towards dissatisfied citizens will therefore have a stronger impact on trust in government (Kampen et al., 2006).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Bahrain Institute for Public Administration (BIPA) for encouragement to publishing this policy brief.

REFERENCES

- Abdulrahman, A. (2015, June 17). Several reasons for bureaucracy. *Akbar Al-kahleej*, p.1.
- Al-Ayoubi, A. (2018, June 4). Do service ministries have boldness to referendum the citizens about performance of services? - *Akbar Al-kahleej*, P13.
- Al-Khajah, Z. (2018, April 18). The number of complaints received since 2014 until 2017. *Al-ayam*, P8. Retrieved from www.alayam.com/alayam/local/723496/News.html
- Al-Mahmeed, M. (2016, August 18). Bureaucracy and severe delays in the completion of citizens transactions. *Akbar Al-kahleej*, P7.

Al-Qrines, K. (2014, April 10). Press investigation with citizens about public services. *Akbar Al-kahleej*, p13.

Al-Sheikh, E. (2017, August 2). We need to be improved in services for routine transactions. *Akhbar A-lkhaleej*, P.20.

Al-Tattan, H. (2017, October 23). Delay in the completion of public transactions of citizens. *Al-watan*, P24.

Al-Zayani, H. (2014, April 24). Complex Bureaucracy leads to corruption. *Al-watan*, P18.

Brewer, B. (2007). Citizen or customer? Complaints handling in the public sector. *International review of administrative sciences*, 73(4), 549-556.

Government's program for the years 2019-2022. Retrieved from <https://mopa.gov.bh>

Kampen, J. K., De Walle, S. V., & Bouckaert, G. (2006). Assessing the relation between satisfaction with public service delivery and trust in Government. The impact of the predisposition of citizens toward Government on evaluations of its performance. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 29(4), 387-404.

Minelli, A., & Ruffini, R. (2018). Citizen feedback as a tool for continuous improvement in local.

Morgeson, F. V., & Petrescu, C. (2011). Do they all perform alike? An examination of perceived performance, citizen satisfaction and trust with US federal agencies. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 77(3), 451-479.

Muturi, E. R. N., & Ongiti, O. K. (2018). EFFECTS OF CUSTOMER COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT ON REVENUE WITHIN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN KENYA.

Oyedele, S. (2015). The Nigerian public service and service delivery under civil rule, *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law*, 7.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. & Berry, L. (1985). A Conceptual Model of Service Quality and Its Implications for Future Research. *Journal of Marketing*, Volume 49, Issue 4, pp. 41-50.

Ramphal, R. (2016). A Complaints Handling System for the Hospitality Industry. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, 5 (2).

Stauss, B. (2005). A Pyrrhic victory: The implications of an unlimited broadening of the concept of services. *Managing Service Quality*, Volume 15, Issue 3, pp. 219 – 229.

Tamrakar, R. (2010). Impact of Citizen Charter in Service Delivery: A Case of District Administration Office.

Tronvoll, B. (2012). A dynamic model of Customer Complaint Behaviour from the perspective of service dominant logic. *European journal of Marketing*. 46, ½, 284-305.

Uppal, R. K. (2010). Customer complaints in banks: Nature, extent and strategies to mitigation. *Journal of Economics and International Finance*, 2(10), 212-220.