

ARTICLE

## Public Service Management: An Emerging Research Trend

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### ABSTRACT

Public service management is a way to provide better service to users, increase efficiency, and increase knowledge and experience in public service delivery. This research aims to identify the shift of public service management research focus. The systematic review method decreases bias by identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant studies on a particular topic and making significant contributions to answering the research question. This study demonstrates that public service management research does not rely on creating efficiency and effectiveness through applying private sector business and management techniques, particularly in government agencies. In addition, public sector leadership, partnerships and collaboration, digital transformation, public participation and engagement, and public service delivery are all areas that play significant role to the development of service efficiencies and experiences. Public service is a process that involves various actors, from politicians and bureaucrats to citizens and the private sector. Public service management is critical to ensuring services operate efficiently and effectively and provide public value. The management principles allow the government to focus on service quality, equity, and ease of use. Appropriate public service management can contribute practically to the delivery of public service implemented in government institutions. This is possible by considering the fundamental management principles and research findings that contribute to service development in the future.

## A. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, efforts to optimize government public services have become a debate and have developed in public administration studies (Massey, 2023). The government or the private sector can directly provide public services to the community, securing financing through a cooperative mechanism. For this reason, excellent management will produce quality service. Creating quality services requires government consistency to encourage organizing institutions to change the orientation of services. The shift from solely organizing to creating public value, applying management principles, and utilizing technology is crucial. The success of many government institutions in delivering high-quality public services through the adoption of private-sector service techniques offers to be observed examples. This demonstrates that government reform also aims to enhance public services as part of its reform agenda (Tian & Christensen, 2020).

In the context of public service management transformation, management makes e-government successful in its implementation by coordinating the use of resources, managing relationships, and empowering strategic partners (Novianto, 2023). Public service management

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transforms the delivery of services (Latupeirissa et al., 2024). Public service management can manage the complex activities of various types of organizations in the implementation of public services (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022; Hiedemann et al., 2016). For this reason, public service leaders need to develop new skills and adopt new perspectives as the boundaries between public, private, and voluntary organizations become increasingly blurred.

Management tasks can overcome the ambiguity of an ever-changing world. At its simplest level, public service management is the management of systems (inputs, processes, people, and resources) through a transformation process to produce goods and services. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia assessed the implementation of public services by government agencies among a total of 586 entities surveyed in 2023. Of these, 414 (70.70%) were in the green zone, 133 (22.66%) were in the yellow zone, and 39 (6.64%) were in the red zone. Meanwhile, in 2022, the number of entities will be 586; the number of green zones will be 272 (46.42%); the yellow zone will be 250 (42.66%); and the red zone will be 64 (10.92%) (Ombudsman RI, 2023).

Public service management contributes to service transformation and strives to modify the delivery of services (Tian & Christensen, 2020; Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022). Its goal is to provide efficient and effective public services with moral values, ethical standards, and the capacity of a motivated workforce to do so. In addition, the practice of managerial and leadership activity enhances motivation and becomes one of the most frequently suggested interventions (Ritz et al., 2016). Then, Osborne (2021) argues that the key elements of the service management approach include a managerial, rather than an administrative or professional, approach to public service delivery. In practice, public service management positions can modify actions and require more than top-down initiation, employee skill development, and cooperation (Graves et al., 2021). Ultimately, service management can improve service performance and outcomes, not only from the customer's perspective but also through the design, control, and integration of the service organization's activities.

Although public management research lacks the integration of service management theory, three prominent public management scholars, including Tony Bovaird, John Bryson, and Zoe Radnor, have contributed to the public management field's efforts to provide reasons and foundations for thinking about service management. The public service management study has contributed to the production of quality service over the last decade. For instance, service experience informs the conceptualization of service management (Jaakkola et al., 2015). The need for service focuses on not only internal efficiency but also external value creation (Virtanen & Tammeaid, 2020). The digital revolution in service has changed the paradigm of public service management internally and administrative culture externally (Oszlak, 2022). Some of these studies focus on the application of service management in the private sector that provides public service. Government institutions are also interested in learning and adopting the practice of the private sector.

Various studies that have been explored have led to a shift in the focus of public service management research. The first phase of public service management research discusses state, governance, non-profit organizations, and public service management. The second phase discusses public service managers, public service organizations, public service sectors, the market, and civil society. The third phase discusses the ideas of diversity, complexity, and dynamics in public service management (Hodgkinson et al., 2017). From 2004 until 2014, public service management research discussed new public management model, public service management, organizational characteristics, performance, governance, ethical aspects, local government, job satisfaction, change, and innovation in the public sector (Juliani & de Oliveira, 2016).

On the other hand, there is little research available that illustrates the trend of public service management research that focuses on service initiation in government institutions. Therefore,

it is crucial to examine the trends in public service management research to expand on the existing information. The aim is to generate knowledge and apply public service management strategies to enhance service quality, particularly in government institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to answer RQ1: How does public service management logic work? and RQ2: What are the research trends in public service management?

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The development of public management theory alters the design of public administration, governance, and public expectations. Theory aids in comprehending the application of public management and guidance for public administration reform in government activities (Shafritz & Hyde, 2017). Public sector managers often use a combination of these theories to navigate the complexities of the public sector and address current challenges. Hansen & Ferlie (2016), (Shafritz & Hyde, 2017), and Eppel & Rhodes (2018) said that the relevance of the theory would provide insights to answer public management challenges such as Classical Administration (scientific management and bureaucracy), Behavioral approaches (integration of individual and organizational goal), Public Choice Theory (influential theories that had long dominated thinking about government and the economy), New Public Management (generic public management was being supplanted by the performance management movement), Governance and Collaborative Management (government, private sector, and society paradigm), Public Value Theory (strategic management in government entitled creating public value), Digital Governance and e-Government (transformation administration with technology information).

Hansen & Ferlie (2016) provides an argument for using theory to navigate the complexity of the public sector, depending on the type of organization involved. The concept is less appropriate in traditional organizational settings but more relevant in autonomous service delivery organizations, similar to the private sector. Furthermore, applying management theories in public services can help manage budgets appropriately, manage personnel, develop innovative programs and cooperation, open up new investment opportunities, and manage relationships with service recipients and other stakeholders.

Public service management fundamentally relies on the requirement for state legitimacy in service, creating public value, effective management and collaboration, and implementing service reform. Moreover, underlying needs like budget rationalization, service quality, and innovation validate these reasons. For instance, initiating service reform can improve service quality. Service reform restructures process and service system from traditional to modern (digitalization). The government undertakes this effort to enhance its function and ensure equitable satisfaction of citizens' needs and rights. In Indonesia, service reform has become an obligation of every institution, including investment, population administration, health, and other sectors.

Early 20th-century organizations sought public administration principles for processes and management to achieve optimal performance of public services (Osborne et al., 2015). In the early 21st century, governments prioritized the effective, efficient, and responsible delivery of public services. Delegation of authority to third parties is one of the most commonly used tools in the management of public services (Osborne et al., 2015; Taponen & Kauppi, 2017). Meanwhile, public management focuses on government administration, implementing private sector management, and performance audits (Læg Reid, 2014; Hodgkinson et al., 2017).

Public service management is an effort to plan, manage, implement, and control. Hodgkinson et al., (2017) emphasizes the development of services for the general public. Public service management combines interdisciplinary knowledge of economics, sociology, organizational theory, and law with characteristic elements of the public sector, such as motivation, bureaucracy, and governance (Matei & Antonie, 2014). According to Læg Reid

(2014), the most prominent aspects of public service management are the reduction in government size, decentralization, and emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, and economic factors. De-bureaucratization in bureaucratic reform indicates that slow and convoluted bureaucratic performance will lead to bureaucratic pathologies. On the contrary, de-bureaucratization aims to produce effective and efficient performance.

At this time, there is a change in the service paradigm that describes the separation of political aspects in administration through a new public management paradigm. The emergence of new public management aims to provide government service to private organizations by prioritizing efficiency and effectiveness, and streamlining procedures in service provision (Matei & Antonie, 2014; Grönroos, 2019; Osborne, 2021). Management creates value by focusing on services and how to apply service logic. Osborne (2015; 2021) reminded us that public service management that focuses on intra-organizational processes is not appropriate when the reality of public service delivery is inter-organizational. However, service management theory focuses on customer-oriented management practices and is relevant to marketing, organizational behavior, and human resource management. Fundamentally, the general approach to public service is more accurate, reflects the reality of modern public administration, and refers to a more appropriate substantive service theory for public administration (Vitalija & Nora Johanne, 2021).

On the other hand, service management theory discusses the problem of service experience peculiarities, the nature of public service delivery between organizations, the problem of consumer roles, and service evaluators. However, principles and practices prioritizing order, uniformity, and justice underpin the management of public services, heavily relying on consensus and political support (Glennon et al., 2018; Lorenzo, 2018). This phenomenon has led to an increase in the number of studies on topics such as new public management (Lægneid, 2014; Matei & Antonie, 2014), new public service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Rivera & Knox, 2023), public service management (Juliani & de Oliveira, 2016; Taponen & Kauppi, 2017), and public service organizations Hartley et al., 2017; (Glennon et al., 2018). Additionally, from the beginning of its history to the present, the political system directly influences public institutions' various functions, structures, and administrative levels (Lorenzo, 2018; Grönroos, 2019). Thus, public sector's ability to improve management, innovate, and make systemic transformation is limited.

### C. METHOD

This study employs systematic review technique. The design aims to locate, evaluate, and combine the most compelling evidence for a research question, offering insightful, evidence-based responses. A systematic review involves a detailed and comprehensive plan and search strategy to reduce bias through identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant studies on a particular topic. This method also seeks to define new theories and concepts for systematic further development. Systematic reviews also contribute greatly to answering research questions (Dickson et al., 2017).

Systematic reviews and meta-analysis procedures are applied to maintain the quality of searching for relevant literature sources (Owens, 2021; Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Rethlefsen et al., (2021) provides these guidelines: 1). Developing the checklist; 2). Checklist; 3). Writing explanation and elaboration. It synthesizes knowledge to connect theory and evidence developed through fundamental analysis and argumentation. In addition, careful selection of criteria can ensure the rigor of systematic reviews. The reason for choosing this method as a preliminary study is to understand research trends in public service management.

## D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Public Service Management Logic

Recent developments in public service management combine public management and service management. Osborne (2015; 2021) has applied service management discussions to the public sector, emphasizing the diverse nature of service users' service experiences. Public service management guarantees the effective and efficient delivery of public services to the community. This concept involves using management principles that have proven successful in improving the quality of public services. This matter creates opportunities for public sector organizations, is service-oriented, and is simple to use. However, the lack of competition mechanisms often causes public managers and policymakers to lose focus, leading to inefficiencies in administration, leadership, and culture.

Distinguishing the market mechanism (profit) within government public services presents unique challenges. This difficulty occurs due to a lack of theoretical understanding and differences in services provided by the private sector. These limitations have led many public leaders to seek to improve service quality, as in the private sector. This is good, but the government's role is to provide and fulfill the social rights of the community equitably. However, bureaucratic reform initiation offers a logical basis for the service the government should provide; restructuring the system, changing services orientation, creating justice value, and restructuring institutions are some reform actions.

Vargo & Lusch (2016) established the fundamental tenets of service logic: (1) service serves as the foundation; (2) numerous actors, including beneficiaries, co-create value; (3) the integration of social and economic resources; (4) beneficiaries always determine value uniquely and phenomenologically; and (5) institutional actors and arrangements coordinate service values. However, public service logic deviates from the assumptions made by New Public Management (NPM) regarding the characteristics of public service management. Although NPM has brought some important developments in public administration, it has limitations and weaknesses, including limited resources and public service delivery. Therefore, there is a need for a managerial approach to public resource allocation and public service delivery.

Osborne (2021) argues that public service logic is a significant step forward in enhancing our understanding of public service production. For this reason, Osborne (2021) provides information on the key elements and implications of public service logic, illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Key Element and Implication Public Service Logic

Element	Implication
Non-transferability of public service ownership	Limited ability, capacity, and resources of citizens to influence public service.
Public service as intangible process	The role of prior expectations of public services; The central role of public service user experience on public service quality and outcomes; The menace of challenging the internal processes of public services rather than external outcomes.
Heterogeneity of public services	Public service is a policy mandate that must be implemented; There needs to be a balance between equity and justice in production and response to citizens' needs.
Simultaneous production and consumption of public service	Public service is not a linear production system, but rather a complex and dynamic ecosystem; Public service production is experiential and occurs when public service users interact with the service;

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Perishability	<p>The public service user experience is integral to the production of public services as it occurs in 'real-time';</p> <p>Public service user experiences shape the quality and outcomes of public service;</p> <p>Public service failures require a service recovery system continuously.</p>
Co-production	<p>Public service is real-time because it is enacted in the service ecosystem, although this is different from public services using information technology.</p> <p>Involuntary co-production can be conscious or unconscious and involves user and provider to influence on the design and public service delivery.</p> <p>Voluntary co-production is always conscious and seeks to achieve better outcomes in terms of specific service design and outcomes.</p>

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Source: Osborne (2021)

Many arguments elaborated the implications of public service management, and they have the potential to enhance current public service framework. For example, government organizations have not fully implemented service processes, whereas private organizations prioritize service quality. However, many government organizations are working to improve public service quality using various measurement instruments. Much of current literature on public service logic focuses primarily on service users' roles. Cepiku et al., (2020) and Osborne (2021) argue that the interaction between service users and professionals is equally important in public service process and directly impacts the quality of service interaction and community actions as a whole.

Public management ideas and practices continue to be adopted to produce service tailored to reform requirements (Dan et al., 2024). Considering their proven influence, management principles offer a better way of working for service production. Management principles work on predetermined operational standards, such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. These interrelated principles prioritize managerial skills over technical abilities, emphasizing their proper management. According to Krogh & Triantafillou (2024), institutions build collaboration, create external relationships, and maintain internal relationships to achieve desired service standards from the new public governance perspective. For this reason, a manager should implement division of labor, authority, discipline, unity of command, collective interests, remuneration, equality, and initiative.

For example, under the good governance concept of public services, government institutions widely adopt satisfaction surveys to control the roles of public service users in service delivery and measurement. Furthermore, the public can submit complaints and reports in the form of public service supervision in accordance with the rules through various government portals.

The role of the society, whether relatively passive or active, in public service will change the nature of their relationship with service providers. This has the potential to increase or eliminate mechanisms that the community can use to foster improvement. On the other hand, the service provided is also based on applicable standards and policies. Policies are essential because they set the parameters of rules and resources in public service and because they position service providers and communities in specific roles about each other. The argument is that effective public service management requires an understanding that service is a service, not a product. Therefore, public service management must focus on value creation as its foundation.

Service organizations must create structural conditions to support the team in building internal and external relationships. At the same time, the need for administrative and control processes cannot be ignored. Implementing new frameworks and using new instruments can contribute to organizations' interrelated relationship solutions. To achieve sustainable quality service, organizations need to focus on customer value and innovation so that they can create a long-term competitive advantage. The logical practice of management thinking consists of data sources and targets, which serve as process management and integration modules. On the other hand, logical thinking management will empower leaders and employees to analyze complex situations, identify problems, design effective strategies, and make the right choices.

### State of Research on Public Service Management

Public service management is a broad and dynamic field of study that focuses on managing, organizing, and delivering public service. It covers many topics, including public policy, organizational behavior, public finance, public administration, and governance. Currently, research in public service management is focused on several areas, including:

Table 2. Public Service Management Focus in Research

Focus	Core Value
Digital transformation	How public services can be transformed and improved by using technology
Collaboration and partnership	Effective public service delivery often requires collaboration and partnerships between different organizations and sectors
Public sector leadership	Effective leadership is critical to the success of public service organizations
Public participation and engagement	The involvement of citizens in the design and delivery of public services is becoming increasingly important
Public Service Delivery	Service delivery is determined by the heterogeneous environment

Source: Elaborated by Author

There is an increase trend of utilizing digital technology for public service in government institution based on the notion that public service can be better with the help of the technology. Research in this field explores the use of technologies like artificial intelligence and big data to enhance the delivery of public services. [Novianto \(2023\)](#) offers a comprehensive analysis that links the digital transformation model of public services to external factors like the regulatory and legal framework, technology components like infrastructure and IT. architecture, organizational components like management and leadership, and citizen elements like participation and digital skills. At the moment, technology is a reliable model for achieving service quality.

The digital transformation has radically changed the practice of service delivery. The new approach to offering services has increased public expectations for public service implementation. The shift from a reactive to a proactive service delivery mechanism through technology offers an opportunity to better respond to user requests. Government involvement creates public value as part of the government's modernization and innovation strategy and makes public value through government involvement. According to [Latupeirissa et al., \(2024\)](#), the successful implementation of digital technology in the public service system yields numerous positive outcomes and enables the establishment of service objectives prior to the use of the technology. However, to achieve this, the government needs to better map, understand, and integrate the community's needs into the planning and delivery of public service strategies.

The study of information technology argues that technology can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of services and play a role in sustainable development (Sofyani et al., 2020). Using technology, the government needs a party to provide supporting infrastructure and training. The government cannot provide all these services independently. The investment, education, population administration, and health sectors are examples of how technology supports services by providing technology networks, applications, and maintenance. This form of collaboration and partnership allows each party to benefit.

Tom (2014) report notes that governments worldwide have adopted a collaborative approach to managing public services to address problems, improve services, and control costs. However, the evidence presented by the Tom (2014) and Brown (2019) studies reveals that the government must encourage effective management to support collaboration and partnership. The collaboration model emphasizes the principle of broader public-private cooperation. This means the collaboration must consider the relationship between the private and public sectors. However, other sectors, such as politics, social, economic, cultural, environmental, institutional, business, and technology, should be considered. The collaboration process has several phases, each requiring certain conditions to guarantee success. It allows for negotiation, decision-making, action, and evaluation to get the job done and build relationships between partners.

Effective public service often require collaboration and partnerships between organizations and other sectors to understand the factors that can enhance or hinder cooperation and identify best practices for building and maintaining partnerships. Brown (2019) stated that collaboration and partnership are the planning and coordination strategies for all performance management programs because collaboration can form better partnerships. Meanwhile, performance management can measure and evaluate public service performance to ensure accountability and improve service delivery. Research in this area examines various approaches to performance management, including results-based approaches and performance indicators. However, Leisink et al., (2021) reminds us that performance depends on the institutional context and public values that emphasize some aspects of public service performance over others.

Furthermore, leadership is critical to improving public values; studies on public leadership show that public sector administrative leaders behave differently than leaders in the business world (Virtanen & Tammeaid, 2020; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Changes in the roles of public authorities, public organizations, service users, and the media drive the difference in the role and approach of public sector leadership. As the world becomes more complex, the future of public sector leadership will look very different. Handling such change requires a new mindset based on cooperation, mutual trust, and learning. In public organizations, skills play a role in improving organizational performance and integrated leadership (Virtanen & Tammeaid, 2020; Ramdhani et al., 2024). For this reason, public sector leaders must be able to behave as transformational leaders, utilizing transactional relationships and emphasizing the importance of maintaining integrity and ethics in implementing their duties.

Research in this area explores the characteristics of influential public sector leaders and the challenges they face in managing complex organizations and navigating the political environment. Backhaus & Vogel (2022) emphasizes that leadership styles, administrative traditions, administrative subfields, and participatory and methodological factors can all contribute to the heterogeneity of public sector leadership performance. Various instruments, such as measurement indicators achieved within a specific timeframe and outputs that promote public participation and involvement in public design and services, can measure the success of such performance.

The impact of participation in service design allows citizens to participate in decision-making, fostering good governance in public service delivery. Mechanisms and processes can be carried out in formal or informal forums, such as consultations or suggestions for feedback.

Citizens, the government, and other stakeholders conduct public discussions to gather better feedback on policy and public service implementation. Osborne & Strokosch (2022) noted that participation is the main feature in implementing public services and considers things that can create value for individuals and society. Other studies also provide information that important elements of citizen participation affect organizational structure, organizational culture, and resources (Kurkela et al., 2024). In addition, management is an essential supporting element because citizen participation is considered a governance issue and a systemic part of public administration that requires management efforts.

Research in this field examines various public participation mechanisms, including consultation and deliberation. However, public participation frequently entails citizens co-opting and establishing “constructive cooperation” as the norm for involvement in policy-setting and execution (Glimmerveen et al., 2021). Citizen participation is any process that directly involves decision-making and gives full consideration to decision-making information. When conducting public participation, an institution will collect input from stakeholders, resulting in a range of views and concerns to provide fair treatment, meaningful involvement, and social inclusion for all people in the service that is part of public service transformation.

Integrating new technologies has been a major challenge in transforming public service, and disruptive models have enabled public authorities to manage different types of governance efficiently. Transformative process of providing public service involves political, economic, cultural, and social dimension and digital technology consideration. For example, an e-government implementation strategy is the foundation for regulating the public sector and services. Digital-based public service provides many benefits that can potentially and significantly improve governance and public satisfaction. In addition, public service delivery refers to how the government or public institutions provide services to the community. The essential things in public service delivery are transparency, affordability, quality, responsiveness, citizen participation, fairness, innovation, and accountability. Effective public service delivery is an integral part of good governance and plays an essential role in improving the quality of life for the community as a whole.

Therefore, a heterogeneous environment determines public service delivery. It refers to the extent to which the services a particular sector provides meet or exceed the expectations of beneficiaries (citizens). On the one hand, policymakers want to continue reforming service policy. On the other hand, citizens demand that the government continue to improve public service. Overall, research on public service management continues to grow, driven by the need to address citizens’ complex social, economic, and environmental challenges.

The paradigm shift in public service delivery follows the same literacy, as proven by the evolution from Government 1.0 to Government 4.0. In Government 1.0, the service operating system is a one-way model oriented toward the government, with maximizing efficiency as the primary goal. In Government 2.0, the service operating system is a two-way model but citizen-oriented, with democracy and two-way service as its central values. Government 3.0 is individual-oriented and focuses on providing services to achieve personalized happiness for every citizen. The system also features citizens interacting with the government through smartphones. Government 4.0 service operations leverage big data, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and smart cities.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Public service management provides knowledge to describe how “management” can improve service quality. From various perspectives, academics and practitioners explore a broader range of expertise. Public leaders use the research results as a foundation to implement service transformation uniquely, particularly in government institutions. Furthermore, research

on public service management will elucidate the service delivery principles and their implementation.

When the reality of public service delivery shifts to an inter-organizational approach, public service logic shifts in the intra-organizational process. Public management focuses on efficiency and effectiveness, especially by applying business and private sector management techniques to government agencies. Public managers are responsible for all public service provided to citizens. There has been a shift towards a public service model that prioritizes strategic rationality and the interests of citizens. Public service involves a variety of actors, ranging from politicians and bureaucrats to citizens and the private sector. According to this perspective, citizens are customers and agents for themselves, with the right to be involved in policymaking and public services. The government functions as an organization that works to build cooperation with various organizations.

Research trends in public service management studies have provided a variety of references for improving service inclusivity. The government's most widely carried out activity is digital transformation, which involves changing traditional ways of service to a service model that emphasizes effectiveness and efficiency. The government relies on collaboration and partnerships to fulfill various service-related needs it cannot meet. The role of leadership in public service management will determine the strategy and achievement of organizational goals. Transformative service efforts have measurable, beneficial, and evaluation values that involve citizen participation to control how far the government has carried out its duties. The basic principles of management will allow the government to be oriented toward service quality, fairness, and user-friendliness. For this reason, the focus of public service management research consists of digital transformation, collaboration and partnerships, public sector leadership, public participation and involvement, and public service delivery. Although other topics can reduce the understanding of public service management for future research.

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