



Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences

ISSN (E) 2708-4175 ISSN (P) 2074-2061

Volume 44: Issue 4 December 2024

Journal homepage: <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk>

Rules, Routines, and Roadblocks: Street-Level Bureaucrats' Perspectives on Public Service Delivery Challenges

^a Tariq Hussain, ^b Shahid Munir, ^c Nasir Abbas

^a Department of Public Administration, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Email: tariqwalee72@gmail.com

^b Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Email: shahidmunir@gcuf.edu.pk

^c Lecturer, College of Commerce, Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan

Email: nasirabbas@gcuf.edu.pk

ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<p>History: Accepted: 20 December, 2024 Available Online: 31 December, 2024</p>	<p>Purpose: This study aims to examine the impact of administrative and rule burdens on public service delivery in Pakistan, with a specific focus on street-level bureaucrats. The research highlights the challenges these bureaucrats face and their implications for efficient service provision.</p>
<p>Keywords: <i>Public Service Delivery</i> <i>Administrative Burdens</i> <i>Rule Burdens</i> <i>Street-Level Bureaucracy</i> <i>Structural Equation Model, Pakistan.</i></p>	<p>Design/Methodology/Approach: The study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire from 350 street-level bureaucrats in Pakistan. A Convenient sampling technique was used to ensure representation. The covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, facilitated by SPSS and AMOS software, was employed to test the hypotheses.</p>
	<p>Findings: Results indicate that both administrative and rule burdens significantly and negatively impact public service delivery. Excessive procedural formalities and resource constraints contribute to inefficiencies and dissatisfaction among service providers, ultimately affecting the quality of services delivered to citizens.</p>
	<p>Implications/Originality/Value: This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing on the experiences of street-level bureaucrats rather than solely examining the perspectives of service users. It sheds light on the unique challenges within Pakistan's public sector, characterized by traditional bureaucratic systems and partial automation. The findings have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they contribute to the discourse on administrative burden and street-level bureaucracy by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context. Practically, the study underscores the need for policy interventions to reduce bureaucratic burdens, streamline administrative processes, and enhance the adoption of IT-based systems to improve service delivery efficiency.</p>
	<p>© 2024 The authors. Published by PJSS, BZU. This is an open-access research paper under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial 4.0</p>



Recommended Citation:

Hussain, T., Munir, S., Abbas, N. F. (2024). Rules, Routines, and Roadblocks: Street-Level Bureaucrats' Perspectives on Public Service Delivery Challenges. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 44(4), 661-675. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14592484

Corresponding Author's email address: nasirabbas@gcuf.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Public service delivery is the central responsibility of public sector organizations which are highly organized through strict administrative rules and procedures (Davis & Ybarra, 2023). All the developing and under-developing countries follow these administrative procedures and rules very strictly so they can provide effective and efficient service delivery to their citizen. But these face serious complications due to the high involvement of human resources in these procedures (Davidovitz, 2023). As a result, when the service delivery involves a high level of human participation, it becomes challenging for public sector organizations to provide good public services (Swallehe, 2021). In particular, the street-level bureaucrats who involve in the provision of such services may affect by different organizational factors (Chang & Brewer, 2023).

However, in the modern world most governments, including Pakistan, are trying to find alternative service-providing systems which involve minimum involvement of humans. Governments are moving toward an e-governance system for filing taxes or paying fines online, yet the citizens of Pakistan are not satisfied with the service delivery. At the same time, street-level bureaucrats in Pakistan are working in a traditional bureaucratic system in which rules are very strict, along with many departmental formalities that public sector employees must fulfill for the successful delivery of services (Mikkelsen et al., 2024). High levels of procedural formalities and rules often create a sense of rule and administrative burdens in their organizations, which in turn affect service delivery (Nieto-Morales et al., 2024).

Public services refer to those services that are offered to citizens by the ruling government either directly or indirectly (Bulut-Sahin, 2023). In this regard, the government plays a very important role in making sure the availability of services to maintain at least a minimum level of citizens' well-being (Durose & Lowndes, 2024).. The quality of public services is largely dependent on the inefficiency of the providers of these services (i.e. street-level bureaucrats) (Carreras et al., 2024). In order to improve the delivery of public services, governments always try to improve the mechanism of the provision of these services (Al-Amin et al., 2024). Public service delivery is an important matter in a particular socioeconomic context that a country decides to formulate, form, and deliver. If the government fails to provide efficient and effective public service, then it shows the failure of the whole government system of that country. The failure of the public sector in provide services is frequently seen in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan (Levitats, 2024).

Pakistan is facing serious challenges to effective service delivery and people are not satisfied with this system. However, the political parties claim that they are improving the system but their inefficiency can be seen in local, provincial, and federal departments. The performance of street-level bureaucrats is unsatisfactory which results in unrest among the citizens. All governments are trying to improve the quality of service delivery by implementing new policies, actions, and measures but still, the service delivery depends upon street-level bureaucrats (Eshuis et al., 2023). In the current era Pakistani government is trying to shift public service delivery to automation, by using an IT-based system, but the role of street-level bureaucrats is not completely eliminated as some departments still operated manually (Aviram et al., 2024).

This study argues that Pakistan has a traditional bureaucratic system in which rules are strictly followed, and employees have a high administrative burden (Carreras et al., 2024). With the increasing population, the country has limited infrastructure and human resources, thereby they may feel an administrative as well as rule burden (Matallah, 2020). Consequently, it is possible that they may fail to deliver quality public services to the citizens. This is an important issue in public sector management that need to be investigated empirically in order to make effective policies.

The study addresses the research gap in previous literature as they have linked various organizational and other external factors to service delivery but they do not investigate street-level bureaucrats which are agents for service

delivery. This is an important omission in the literature because service deliverers or street-level bureaucracy is an important context for good service delivery (da Silva et al., 2024). Secondly, it also focusses on the perspective of street-level bureaucrats as existing research has mainly focused on administrative burdens from the perspective of users of government services ((Bassoli & Nesti, 2024).

In Pakistan, bureaucracy has a high influence over the functioning of public sector organizations. This shows the dependency of the delivery of public services to the citizen upon the bureaucracy. In this research gap in this different context due to its unique religious, cultural, institutional, and colonial characteristics especially in countries like Pakistan (Ali, et.al; 2021; Li, Y., & Qiu, 2022). Despite the advancement in technology, underdeveloped countries are yet failed to fully capitalize on it, and yet engage the bureaucrats, particularly the street-level bureaucrats for public service delivery.

As a result, the public sector is expected to experience administrative and rule burdens because they have no alternative way to deliver service more efficiently (de Araújo et al., 2024). As new technologies are used for service delivery but this technology is not fully established in developing countries and they still have strict administrative rules and regulations. These administrative rules and regulations are followed in order to have disciplinary actions. Accordingly, the intention to provide quality services may affect by administrative and rule burdens and vice-versa (Eshuis et al., 2023). Although public service delivery is important, and street-level bureaucrats experience both administrative and rule burdens, the question about the concoction between these variables are of great relevance.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the impact of administrative and rule burdens on public service delivery in Pakistan?
2. What challenges do street-level bureaucrats face in delivering efficient public services?
3. Does procedural formalities and resource constraints contribute to inefficiencies in public service delivery?
4. What role can IT-based systems play in reducing bureaucratic burdens and improving service delivery efficiency?
5. What policy interventions can help streamline administrative processes and enhance public service delivery in Pakistan?

The main aim of the present study is to explore the factors that affect the service delivery of public sector organizations in Pakistan. In particular, this study focuses on the factors that are related to street-level bureaucrats. Street-level bureaucrats are very important actors in the process of service delivery because they have direct contact with the public, and have a key role (Nieto-Morales et al., 2024). This will help the public sector management to find solutions for weak public service delivery, thereby will enable the management to improve the service delivery(Ekstedt, 2023).

In this way, public sector organizations can clear the backlogs of service delivery and can create a sustainable system of the delivery of services. Based on the research questions and aim of this study, has research objectives to investigate the impact of administrative burden on service delivery and to investigate the impact of rule burden on service delivery. This study will contribute to the academic and practical field of administration and allow researchers and policymakers to find new and innovative ways to reduce this administrative and rule burden of public sector organizations.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

In the theoretical framework part, there is an illustration of how the two indicators – “administrative burden” and “rules burden” relate to the main index – “public service delivery.” The above-cited theory is underlined by the following literature consisting of two theories: Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy and Theory of Public Service

Delivery (Kipo-Sunyezi, 2023). Under this framework, the effect that the administrative and rule costs impose on the quality of service delivery is assessed. However, from actual street-level bureaucrats, who are indeed the implementers of public sector services, it identifies how these variables are connected. The above theoretical framework is useful in the course of analyzing administrative rules and regulations of the public sector because of their rigid and invariable nature. Correction of each of these factors has implications for the delivery of public services to the populace. This paper explains the role of household-level bureaucracy in the delivery of efficient and effective services to people.

2.1.1 Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy

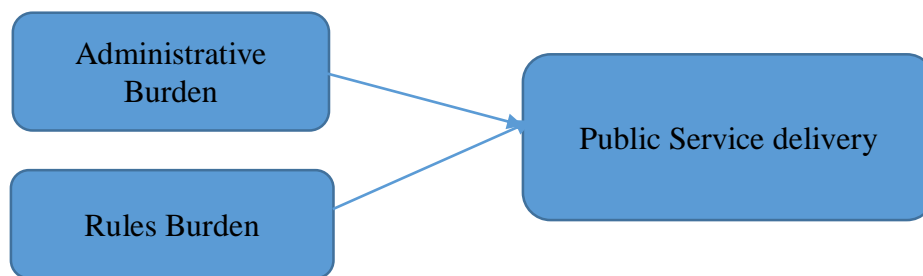
Introduced by Lipsky (1980), this theory underscores the pivotal role of frontline public officials in policy implementation. Street-level bureaucrats operate under constraints such as resource scarcity and procedural rigidity, often relying on personal discretion to navigate these challenges.

2.1.2 Theory of Public Service Delivery

This framework examines the mechanisms through which public services are designed and implemented to meet societal needs. It emphasizes the interplay between organizational rules, administrative processes, and service outcomes (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). These theories collectively inform the study's focus on how administrative and rules burdens impact service delivery, particularly from the perspective of street-level bureaucrats operating in Pakistan.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



2.2 Understanding Public Services

The concept of services is derived from the literature on business which are refer to the “deeds, processes, and performances”(Gray, 2024). However, several researchers have defined the concept of service in their own ways. In the business world, (Cohen et al., 2023)defines it as a business transaction between the service giver and the service taker with an aim to create valuable outcomes for customers. But the services have quite different features according to (Slee, 2023) which must be considered while understanding the concept of service.

Moreover, an important prerequisite of the service is that it must offer specific solutions to the problem of customers (citizens) (Bassoli & Nesti, 2024). Additionally, the public sector also delivers the services when it is found that the market mechanism in the country is weak and unable to identify the needs and deliver the services to satisfy those particular needs. As a result, the government intervenes and tries to produce and deliver a series to the community. In this regard, various public organizations such as hospitals, education, electric supply, transport, and revenue, become the service providers. Based on the literature(Cohen et al., 2023);Akinboade, et. al; 2012), the important attributes of public services are given below:

1. Public services are believing as a public good.
2. Public services are offered to the general public, and they are utilized by the citizens of the country.
3. They are offered under strict rules and regulations.

4. The price of these services is not determined by the open market, instead, they are generally offered free of cost or at marginal cost.
5. The services charges for public services are not profit oriented.
6. The prices of public services do not aim to recover the expenditure of the organizations.
7. Public services are not necessarily offered to those who pay for the production of these services.
8. Public services are not offered by a trust; they must be offered by the government.

The system of public service delivery usually needs a high level of capital, particularly in the case of police, revenue, social services, environment, and tax systems. Therefore, sometimes both public and private sector collaborate to deliver public services. However, it generally depends on the nature of services that are being offered to the general public (Chang & Brewer, 2023; Ekstedt, 2023). There are variations in the nature of services of different public sector organizations but all the organizations have strict and long formal rules and procedures which become hurdles in the effective provision of public services.

Therefore, public sector organizations and street-level bureaucrats face high criticism for the delivery of poor services. Considering the importance of public services that are provided by the public sector organizations, are subject to the perception of street-level bureaucrats. If they perceive that rules and administrative procedures are supportive of public service delivery, then they will deliver services to the citizens more effectively, otherwise, negative perception about administrative procedures and rules will negatively affect public service delivery.

To back this literature “Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy” and “Theory of Public Service Delivery” was used (Slee, 2023). These theories explain how local officials implement policies and how this affects how organizations performed (Ekmekcioğlu & Yildiz, 2024). It also explains how the concept of public service is applied to all those governmental activities that are offered to the general public such as social services (housing and medical care etc.), tax, revenue, and the environment with an aim to benefit the general public. How the street-level bureaucrats are involved in providing public services and how different factors affect their performance and result in the failure of the service delivery system (Dupont, 2024).

2.3 Administrative Burden and Public Service Delivery

As the nature of work in each department is different from the other similarly they encompass specific challenges and demand that every employee in a public sector organization face in the form of administrative burden, refers as “an individual’s experience of policy implementation as onerous” (Davidovitz & Shwartz-Ziv, 2024). Three important types of administrative burdens in the literature. First, is the cost of learning, which involves the process of collecting information regarding understanding the administrative procedure. Second, psychological cost, the stress and anxiety one faces in understanding the administrative procedures. Third, the cost of compliance, which is the requirement of resources that are essential to show the capability to successfully implement the administrative procedures (Connolly, et al., 2021).

Sometimes the policy is perceived as burdensome, then employees should respond in a way that yields maximum value. However, the officials are not prepared for this as a result they view policy as a burden and worry about how to implement it (Ekmekcioğlu & Yildiz, 2024). However, it is the responsibility of street-level bureaucrats to use policy for implementing government actions plan and delivery of public series.

When street-level bureaucrats face difficulty in the implementation of policies, then the perception of administrative burden starts, and they find themselves unable to deliver public services to the citizens successfully (Salazar, 2024). Although the administrative procedures are defined for the delivery of services effectively, the perception of the administrative burden by the street-level bureaucrats is unavoidable. When the perception of administrative burden developed, it starts to waste resources in the form of money as well as time. These issues due to the

perception of administrative burden influence the point of view of public officials too in different ways (Andreotti et al., 2024). For example, research on the feedback regarding policy shows that the experience of citizens regarding the implementation of policy significantly shapes their beliefs, attitude, and behaviors.

Therefore, this study also expects that when street-level bureaucrats have the perception of administrative burden, it significantly influences their way of delivering the services, resultantly are unable to deliver public services effectively (Irizarry et al., 2024). Especially, this study postulates that street-level bureaucrats will tend to reduce their burden, which in turn negatively influences their efforts to deliver the services to the citizens because they will spend more time in the administrative procedures, and less time delivering the services, which is their core task. In this way, it is expected that administrative burden will significantly and negatively influence public service delivery (Salazar, 2024). Hence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Perceived administrative burden negatively influence on public service delivery.

2.4 Rules Burden and Public Service Delivery

Street-level bureaucrats have to follow the rules strictly in order to deliver public services. It is found that regulatory quality and effectiveness of organizational rules are important for rules burden (Edmond, 2023). In order to reduce the perception of rules burden among street-level bureaucrats, particularly in Pakistan, there should be a sound legalistic system (Brierley et al., 2023). Unclear rules that are unable to interpret shape the attitude and behavior of street-level bureaucrats as well as their ability to deliver public services. Literature indicates that there are different rules for different activities at the street level (Stauffer & Hadorn, 2024).

Therefore, street-level bureaucrats are first required to assess the nature of the task and find the appropriate way to deliver the services to the public. Moreover, it is often noted that rules are very complex that street-level bureaucrats are unable to understand, which in turn negatively influences public service delivery (Falkenhain & Hirsland, 2024). When street-level bureaucrats face such a situation, then their perception of the complexity of rules, and starts feeling the burden of these rules. As a result, their public service delivery may suffer. Hence, we expect that rules burden negatively influences the public service delivery to street-level bureaucrats. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H2: Perceived rules burden negatively influence on public service delivery.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

3.1.1 Population and sample size

This is a cross-sectional study that used a quantitative field survey technique and targets street-level bureaucrats to collect data. The sampling method is convenience sampling which targets the population of street-level bureaucrats of Pakistan. The self-administrative questionnaire was adopted and 5 Likert scales were used to measure them. As it was mentioned in previous studies, the present research has considered gender, age, education, tenure, area of service, the frequency of canteens, and salary as control variables. The prior research suggests that the demographic characteristics of respondents significantly impact their emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.

Therefore, this study considers this control in the theoretical model. After ensuring bureaucrats that their information will not be disclosed and only will be used for research purposes, the questionnaires were distributed among 350 participants and received 264 filled questionnaires. Out of these, 13 were incomplete, thereby 251 were included in the final sample. After data collection, the data where screening was performed. In this, missing value analysis was performed. Then, then the analysis was performed to detect the outliers, and finally, various assumption such as normality was tested. After all this screening the data was ready for analysis. The demographic variables are analyzed by using SPSS and the results show that they are valid and reliable and final hypotheses tested by AMOS software.

Because Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is good at handling complex relationships and accounting for measurement error and latent variables, it is particularly well-suited to analyzing the relationship between the two variables of interest: administrative burdens and service delivery. Traditional statistical techniques do not allow examination of direct and indirect effects simultaneously; in contrast, SEM permits such examination and is suitable for the study of multifaceted constructs such as administrative burdens and their effect on service delivery. In addition, SEM accounts for measurement error in its estimation process, offers more accurate estimates, and allows the use of latent variables that are indispensable to represent unobservable constructs like psychological stress or compliance complexity. It also highlights its suitability for conducting such analyses because of its ability to test comprehensive theoretical models as well as multiple hypotheses within one framework.

4. Results

4.1 Data Analysis

The overall research methodology includes data analysis. First, this study used a statistical package for social science, (SPSS) to screen data for missing values and outliers, descriptive statistics, reliability of measures, and EFAs (Costello & Osborne, 2005). Since all the values are significant and this study went for hypotheses testing, this study used the covariance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. For this purpose, AMOS software was used. Moreover, this tool provides results in both tabulated forms and well as in graphical forms. First, the study performed preliminary analyses that include descriptive statistics. The objective of this analysis was to understand the demographic characteristics of respondents, and the psychometric properties of measures, and judge the distribution of data.

Finally, this study performed analyzes for hypotheses testing. For this purpose, correlational path analyses through AMOS were conducted in order to assess the degree and direction of influence. In particular, the correlation analysis of control variables, public services delivery, administrative burden, and rule burden was conducted. Path analysis was performed to assess the impact of administrative burden and rule burden, in the presence of controls, performed by using AMOS.

4.1.1 Reliability Analysis

4.1.1.1 Internal consistency Analysis

Reliability (internal consistency) represents the degree to which items of a measure are internally consistent (Kline 2011).

Table 1

Internal Consistency Analysis

No.	Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
1	Public Service Delivery	03	0.823
2	Administrative Burden	03	0.807
3	Rule Burden	04	0.890

The internal consistency of a measure is assessed through Cronbach's alpha. According to Nunnally (1978), the threshold value for the reliability of a measure is 0.70. Table 1 shows that Cronbach's alpha value for public service delivery is 0.823. The Cronbach's alpha values for administrative burden and rule burden are 0.807 and 0.890 respectively. The internal consistency of all the measures was obtained through the analysis performed in SPSS. This suggests that all the values are greater than the recommended value. Hence, all measures are reliable.

4.1.1.2 Composite Reliability

In addition to internal consistency, this study has also assessed the reliability of each measure through the analysis of composite reliability. According to Werts, Linn, and Jöreskog, (1974), the value of composite reliability of a

measure should be greater than 0.70. Table 2 shows that the value composite reliability of each measure is greater than the cutoff value, which suggests that all the measures are reliable.

Table 2

Composite Reliability Analysis

No.	Construct	Number of items	Composite Reliability
1	Public Service Delivery	03	0.895
2	Administrative Burden	03	0.886
3	Rule Burden	04	0.924

The composite reliability values of the constructs, as presented in Table 2, indicate strong reliability across all measures. Next, ease of Public Service Delivery (CR = 0.895), ease associated with Administrative Burden (CR = 0.886) and Rule Burden (CR = 0.924) exceed the quality standard of 0.70 Cronbach alpha (Werts, Linn, & Jöreskog, 1974). This confirms the consistency of the constructs across these studies and their suitability for further analysis. The reliability coefficient values for the composite reliability of these measurement items indicate the relative robustness of the measurement items in capturing the respective constructs.

4.1.2 Validity Analysis

4.1.2.1 Convergent validity

Convergent validity is the degree to which all group of items are referring to the same construct in which they were formulated to measure (Chin, 2010). Convergent validity is tested by average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2014). The convergent validity criteria are such that it has to be greater than 0.50 (Henseler, et. al; 2009). As revealed by table 3, the values of AVE of all measures are more than cutoff value. This validates that our measures all have convergent validities.

Table 3

Average variance extracted analysis output

No.	Construct	AVE
1	Public Service Delivery	0.740
2	Administrative Burden	0.722
3	Rule Burden	0.753

The analysis of table 3 also shows that all of the constructs have strong convergent validity since all of their Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are higher than 0.5. The AVE for Public Service Delivery is 0.740, Administrative Burden is 0.722 and Rule Burden is 0.753. According to Henseler et al. (2009), all of these values are higher than the suggested threshold value of 0.50. This confirms that the items of each construct converged with the items in each of the construct, supporting the measurement of this study. The Structure of constructs results shows that the constructs are robust in capturing the intended dimensions of the research.

4.1.2.2 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is a measure of how well one measure is positively different from other measures in a study (Hair et al., 2014). In assessing the discriminant validity, this research followed the recommendation of Fornell and Larcker (1981). Their criteria say that in order for discriminant validity, square root of AVE should be larger than the correlation value of other variables. Table 5 reveals that the values of correlations are less than the square roots of AVEs. It follows that validities of the discriminants for all measures are confirmed.

Table 4

Criteria of Fornell and Larcker

	Administrative Burden	Rule Burden	Public Service Delivery
Administrative Burden	(0.850)		
Rule Burden	0.291	(0.868)	
Public Service Deliver	-0.259	-0.334	(0.860)

Note: The bold values on the diagonal are the square roots of AVE.

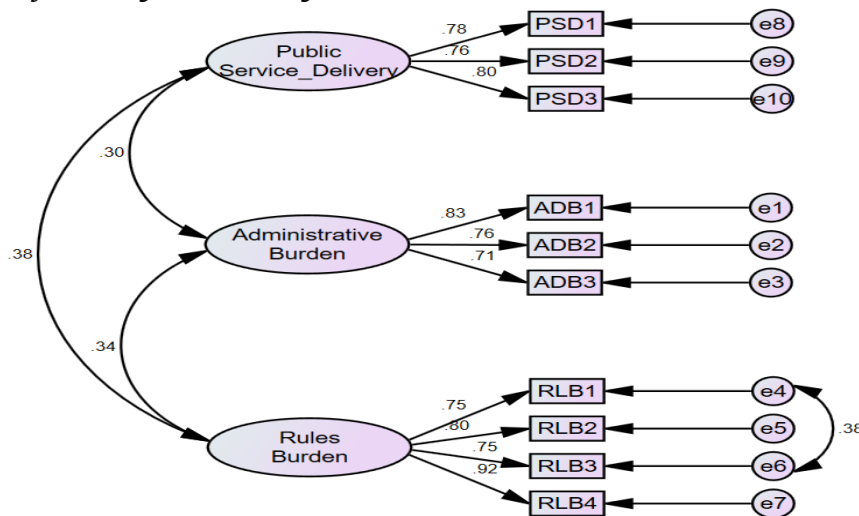
The analysis of Table 4 shows that the above criteria of Fornell and Larcker (1981) do hold and the constructs above exhibit discriminant validity. Diagonal values of 0.850, 0.868, and 0.860, square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE), indicate good levels for Administrative Burden, Rule Burden, and Public Service Delivery, respectively. These values are notably greater than the corresponding correlation coefficients with other constructs, specifically 0.291 and -0.259 for Administrative Burden and Public Service Delivery, and -0.334 for Rule Burden. This pattern indicates that each construct is sufficiently distinct from the others, thereby affirming the discriminant validity of the measures utilized in this study. The results reinforce the integrity of the constructs in capturing unique dimensions of the research framework.

4.1.3 Factor Analysis

In order to further confirm the validity of each measure, this study has performed facto analyzes. Factor analysis helps the researchers to recognize the factors or variables that describe the patterns of correlations in observed variables. More specifically, factor analysis is performed to reduce the data with the purpose to decrease several factors (constructs) to a few factors that explain the majority of the observed variance. Generally, two types of factor analyses are performed namely EFA and CFA. Both factor analysis has significant values which are also shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis



4.1.4 Regression Analysis

In order to examine the empirical findings of hypothesized relationships, the regression weights of produced in SEM were analyzed. These results are given in table 5. According to these findings, the controls (i.e. age, gender, education, salary, area of service, frequency of contact with citizens, and tenure) have an insignificant impact on public service delivery. The findings show that the impact of administrative burden on public service delivery is negative and significant ($\beta = 0.165, p = 0.005$), hence hypothesis 1 is supported. Similarly, the impact of rules

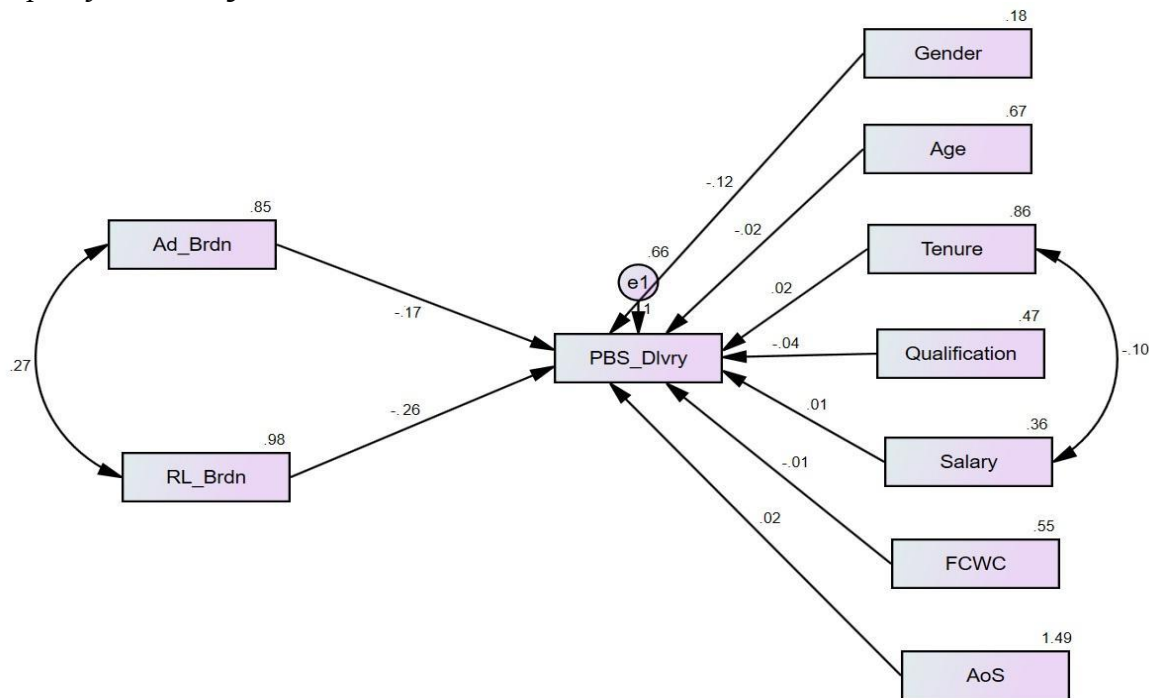
burden on public service delivery is also found to be negative and significant ($\beta = .0255, p = 0.00$), thereby hypothesis 2 is supported too. The analysis of these findings shows that both types of burdens matter for the rules burden has a strong impact than the administrative burden. This suggests that street-level bureaucrats have to follow the rules strictly while providing services to the citizens. The graphical output of SEM is presented in Figure 3.

Table 5
Regression Weights

			Estimate	P
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Ad_Brdn	-.165	.005
PBS_Dlvry	<---	RL_Brdn	-.258	***
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Gender	-.118	.337
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Age	-.021	.738
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Salary	.006	.944
PBS_Dlvry	<---	FCWC	-.007	.922
PBS_Dlvry	<---	AoS	.019	.648
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Tenure	.020	.717
PBS_Dlvry	<---	Qualification	-.038	.610

Note: PBS_Dlvry = Public Service Deliver; Ad_Brdn = Administrative Burden; RL_Brdn = Rules Burden; FCWC = Frequency of Contact with Citizens; AoS = Area of Service.

Figure 3
Output of SEM Analysis



The summary of the hypothesis of the study are shown in the table 6 below:

Table 6
Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Statement	Remarks
1	The administrative burden negatively impact on public service delivery.	Supported
2	Rules burden negatively impact on public service delivery.	Supported

5. Discussion

This study differs considerably from previous scholarship by explicitly studying the joint effect of administrative and rule burdens on public service delivery through the lens of street-level bureaucracy. Previous studies have examined the effects of administrative burden on different outcomes, such as public support for government programs (Keiser & Miller, 2020) or recruitment processes (Linos & Riesch, 2020). In contrast, this research addresses the question of how administrative burdens affect service delivery within state bureaucracies, that is, the efficacy of service delivery by street-level bureaucrats. This study targets respondents who are directly involved in the provision of the service, as we aim to get the nuances of challenges that are confronted by these frontline workers.

The findings of this study suggest that perceived administrative burden having a negative impact on public service delivery is strongly empirically supported. This is consistent with the current literature and supports the concept that high pressures in the form of administrative demands can reduce bureaucratic efficiency. The second hypothesis is also confirmed, finding a negative relationship between rule burden and public service delivery. This outcome is especially valuable given the tendency of bureaucratic systems to be rigid and complex in Pakistan (Yang & Huang, 2021; Berenson, 2010). The results imply that high levels of both administrative and rule burdens hamper the roles of street-level bureaucrats and render service delivery ineffective.

This study adds to the literature on street-level bureaucracy by theoretically revealing how administrative burdens and rule burdens interact and combine to affect public service delivery. Thus, the understanding of these burdens as constituting a systemic imperative is underscored and emphasizes how these burdens interrelate to the work lives of bureaucrats.

These findings are practically useful for public sector organizational administration (Munir et al., 2024). Management must involve street level bureaucrats in the administration of the rule and administration procedures to reduce the negative impact of the rule and administration burdens. Including their views can help businesses design a more supportive and less onerous rule environment. The participatory approach motivates bureaucrats to meet regulations more enthusiastically and with a better commitment to public service delivery.

In addition, making feedback mechanisms for feedback from street-level bureaucrats regarding their problems with rule-related issues can greatly diminish their perception of rule burden. By addressing these concerns, organizations can have a greater engaged workforce that can deliver high-quality public services (Peeters & Campos, 2022). This study contributes to the theoretical discourse related to street-level bureaucracy, while offering real-world implications for how public service delivery could be improved in the context of complex bureaucratic environments.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the administrative and rule burdens of public service delivery in the Pakistani public sector from the perspective of street-level bureaucracy. These burdens are found to adversely affect the street-level bureaucracy's capacity to deliver essential services to the public. The findings, based on analyses of various public sector organizations such as police, social services, tax, revenue, and environmental protection, find that in the process of facilitating service delivery, perceived burdens often become counterproductive. However, these burdens force bureaucrats to ignore merit-based service provision.

The study also shows that street-level bureaucrats who experience greater administrative and rules burdens are prone to putting in place policies that actually further increase these challenges, and this impacts the quality of public service delivery.

Finally, public sector organizations' goal is to provide effective and efficient delivery of public services. This process is hugely dependent, for example, on the perceptions of street-level bureaucrats on administrative procedures and rules. The burden of regulations decreases the bureaucracy's effectiveness in serving the citizenry when bureaucrats see regulations as burdensome.

This study provides empirical evidence that both perceived rules and administrative burdens challenges on public service delivery. Hence, it is important for them to minimize such burdens for public sector organizations and the government to be able to further improve service delivery. Moreover, street-level bureaucrats need to be involved in the policy formation process in relation to the delivery of services, precisely because they understand the first-hand problems encountered in practice. Addressing these frontline actors' concerns at the root will address the underlying concerns with administrative and rule burdens and empower these actors to deliver greater services.

7. Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are proposed to improve public service delivery and address the challenges faced by street-level bureaucrats in Pakistan:

- Policymakers must concentrate on providing simplified and fewer excessive formalities. This can be done by identifying redundant processes and putting reforms into place that encourage efficiency and pass up delays. Importantly, resource constraints must be addressed to reduce the excessive procedural formalities. This can be achieved by identifying redundant processes and implementing reforms that promote efficiency and minimize delays.
- Addressing resource constraints is critical. Given this, governments must earmark sufficient human and material resources to allow street-level bureaucrats to possess the means to perform their jobs efficiently. It encourages the use and integration of IT-based systems by public sector departments to reduce administrative and rule burdens and implement reforms that promote efficiency and minimize delays.
- Encouraging the adoption and integration of IT-based systems across public sector departments can help reduce administrative and rule burdens. E-governance and digital automation initiatives should be intensified to streamline processes and increase transparency.
- Street-level bureaucrats should be trained by regular training programs and given skills to help deal with administrative burdens and use IT systems effectively.
- Feedback mechanisms can be created for the collection of feedback from bureaucrats, which will not only provide a transparency check on bureaucrats' behavior but also give valuable insights on how effectively implemented policies and reforms that promote efficiency and minimize delays.

8. Study Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Therefore, this cross-sectional study limits itself to inferring causation between the variables. Longitudinal designs should be used in future research to trace dynamic changes over time into administrative and rule burdens. This study seeks direct relationships between administrative burdens and the delivery of public services. Although future studies should examine indirect effects, such as the effect of mediating variables (e.g., organizational culture) or moderating factors (e.g., leadership styles), on the dynamics, the findings imply that there is an inverse relationship between ownership decentralization and management transparency. Data used in this study were collected from 350 street-level bureaucrats by a technique of convenient sampling, which may restrict the generalization of findings. The applicability of the results is enhanced if future research is expanded to cover a broader, more diverse sample across different regions and sectors of Pakistan. Using only quantitative methods could miss understanding bureaucratic challenges qualitatively. In future research, the mix method study may be considered, that is, utilizing interviews or case studies to gain a better picture of the lived experiences of street-level bureaucrats.

References

- Andreotti, A., Coletto, D., & Rio, A. (2024). Street-level bureaucrats' discretion between individual and institutional factors: The analysis of the minimum income policy implementation in two Italian regions. *Social Policy and Administration, 58*(3), 368–384. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12964>
- Bassoli, M., & Nesti, G. (2024). The Impact of the Discretion and Coping Strategies of SLBs on Conditionality The Role of the Frontline Workers of Employment Centres in the Implementation of Citizen Income in Italy. *Rivista Italiana Di Politiche Pubbliche, 19*(2), 273–300. <https://doi.org/10.1483/114309>
- Brierley, S., Lowande, K., Potter, R. A., & Toral, G. (2023). Bureaucratic Politics: Blind Spots and Opportunities in Political Science. *Annual Review of Political Science, 26*, 271–290. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-061621-084933>
- Bulut-Sahin, B. (2023). International Office Professionals: An Example of Street-Level Bureaucrats in Higher Education. *Education Sciences, 13*(9). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090890>
- Carreras, M., Vera, S., & Visconti, G. (2024). Gender stereotypes and petty corruption among street-level bureaucrats: Evidence from a conjoint experiment. *Research and Politics, 11*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680241277405>
- Chang, A., & Brewer, G. A. (2023). Street-Level bureaucracy in public administration: A systematic literature review. *Public Management Review, 25*(11), 2191–2211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2065517>
- Cohen, N., Klenk, T., Davidovitz, M., & Cardaun, S. (2023). Varieties of welfare markets from a street-level perspective: Comparing long-term care services in Germany and Israel. *Public Administration Review, 83*(2), 419–428. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13549>
- da Silva, M. R., Vieira, D. P., Lotta, G., & Neto, J. M. R. (2024). Behavior and performance of street-level bureaucrats: A study at the Federal Highway Police. *Revista de Administracao Publica, 58*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-761220230210X>
- Davidovitz, M. (2023). Winds of change: How street-level bureaucrats actively represent minority clients by influencing majority clients—The context of LGB Israeli teachers. *Public Administration, 101*(4), 1587–1603. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12903>
- Davidovitz, M., & Shwartz-Ziv, T. (2024). The Role of Organizational and Client Reactions in Understanding Representative Bureaucracy. *American Review of Public Administration, 54*(2), 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02750740231200448>
- Davis, B., & Ybarra, M. (2023). Can Case-Management Teams Solve the Dilemmas of the Street-Level Bureaucrat? Evidence from a Nonprofit Case Study. *Human Service Organizations Management, Leadership and Governance, 47*(3), 194–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2023.2189439>
- de Araújo, F. R., Macedo e Silva Calazans, D. L., Gusmão Cordeiro, L. L., de Lima, C. C., & Pinheiro Neto, A. T. (2024). Covid-19 health crisis and the strategies of bureaucrats at the subnational level in the national School Food Program. *Revista Brasileira de Politicas Publicas, 14*(2), 326–343. <https://doi.org/10.5102/rbpp.v14i2.9018>
- Dupont, J. (2024). Schengen visa marketing in China: The street-level competition to attract tourists to Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2375364>
- Durose, C., & Lowndes, V. (2024). Gendering Discretion: Why Street-Level Bureaucracy Needs a Gendered Lens. *Political Studies, 72*(3), 1026–1049. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217231178630>
- Edmond, B. C. (2023). Public Policy Implementation and Workforce Diversity: How Important is the Latter in Enhancing Policy Outcomes? In *Street-Level Public Servants: Case Studies for a New Generation of Public Administration* (pp. 88–109). Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003359579-8>
- Ekmekcioğlu, A., & Yildiz, M. (2024). How Street-Level Bureaucrats Perceive and Deal with Irregular Migration From Borders: The Case of Van, Türkiye. *Journal of Borderlands Studies, 39*(4), 715–735. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2023.2202209>
- Ekstedt, J. (2023). Bureaucratic configuration and discretion in asylum case processing: The case of the EUAA in Greece. *Comparative Migration Studies, 11*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-023-00345-0>

- Eshuis, J., de Boer, N., & Klijn, E. H. (2023). Street-level bureaucrats' emotional intelligence and its relation with their performance. *Public Administration, 101*(3), 804–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12841>
- Falkenhain, M., & Hirsland, A. (2024). Limits of Activation? Street-Level Responses to the 2015 Refugee Challenge in German Job Centers. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2024.2313210>
- Gray, D. (2024). Mnemonic labor and the construction of civil service at the National Mall and Memorial Parks. *Sociological Forum, 39*(4), 388–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.13030>
- Irizarry, J. L., Evans, M. D., & Meyer, S. J. (2024). Street-Level Pedagogy: Fostering and Communicating Social Equity Through Course Syllabi. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 53*(3), 790–812. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640231169964>
- Kipo-Sunyezi, D. D. (2023). Street-level bureaucrat's coping strategies in health policy implementation: A comparative case study from Sawla-Tuna-Kalba district of Ghana. *Social Theory and Health, 21*(3), 267–285. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41285-022-00190-8>
- Munir, S., Sadiq, S., Abbas, N., & Rasul, F. (2024). E-Governance Initiatives and Citizen Participation at Global Perspective: Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainable Business and Society in Emerging Economies, 6*(3). <https://doi.org/10.26710/sbsee.v6i3.3089>
- Nieto-Morales, F., Peeters, R., & Lotta, G. (2024). Burdens, bribes, and bureaucrats: The political economy of petty corruption and administrative burdens. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 34*(4), 481–497. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muae010>
- Salazar, A. D. (2024). The role of discretion and street-level deliberative practices in the COVID-19 crisis response: Lessons from the Philippines. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12671>
- Slee, G. (2023). Of the State, against the State: Public Defenders, Street-Level Bureaucracy, and Discretion in Criminal Court. *Social Service Review, 97*(4), 675–718. <https://doi.org/10.1086/726528>
- Stauffer, B., & Hadorn, S. (2024). Political involvement in street-level policy implementation as a two-way relationship—The effect of policy capacity. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12669>
- Tummers, L., & Bekkers, V. (2014). Policy implementation, street-level bureaucracy, and the importance of discretion. *Public Management Review, 16*(4), 527–547.
- Werts, C. E., Linn, R. L., & Jöreskog, K. G. (1974). Intraclass reliability estimates: Testing structural assumptions. *Educational and Psychological measurement, 34*(1), 25–33.
- Yang, F., Li, Z., & Huang, X. (2021). Frontline information disclosure and street-level bureaucrats' willingness to follow the rules: evidence from local regulatory agencies in China. *International Public Management Journal, 24*(6), 831–845.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful for comments from two anonymous referees.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of any institution.

Tariq Hussain is a student of Department of Public Administration at Government College University Faisalabad, His research interest is management sciences.

Shahid Munir is Lecturer at department of public administration at Government College University Faisalabad, PhD Scholar. His research interest is management sciences

