

Original article

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# EGYPT GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE AWARD: WHO'S PERSPECTIVE IS BEING ASSESSED?

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**Abstract:** This research assesses the gap between how citizens perceive government performance and how the government evaluates itself based on the criteria identified as New Public Management (NPM) practices and the criteria used by the Egyptian government in its excellence awards. Criteria assessed included performance orientation, transparency and accountability, innovation and creativity, and responsiveness. This research is empirical in nature and utilizes exploration and description to serve the theoretical background. A gap exists between the archival measure used by the government to assess and award excellence, and the perceptual measures reflected in citizens' responses regarding how worthy the institution researched deserves the excellence award granted by the government. The findings of this paper suggest that NPM application in the Egyptian context does not show improvements in public service delivery and that receiving the Government Excellence Award has minimal impact on citizen perception of the institution receiving the award.

**Keywords:** Egypt government excellence award; citizen satisfaction; public administration reform; New Public Management.

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## Introduction

Public administration reform has been a chronic problem for both Egyptian politicians and citizens since President Nasser's era in the fifties, when every Egyptian citizen was offered a free university education and a guaranteed government job. With the number of employees growing exponentially in the bureaucracy reaching a staggering five million employees in 2019 versus a mere twenty-five thousand employees in 1952 (CAPMAS, 2019; Said, 2004), rigid and mediocre public service delivery, budgetary pressures resulting from the overpopulated government machinery wage bill, and a vast number of overlapping laws, regulations, and policies, inefficiency became the trademark of the Egyptian bureaucracy. This situation required thorough intervention on both normative and political levels. There have been many attempts at administrative reform, and most of these attempts did not achieve their objectives (Ayubi, 2015; Al-Araby, 2014; Barsoum, 2018; Handoussa and El Oraby, 2004; Palmer et al., 1989). The past reforms did not achieve their goals due to overreliance on laws resulting in reactions to specific issues, and consequently creating more spontaneous national committees, proposing even more laws and regulations, thus entering a loop of inconsistent and inapplicable laws and regulations (Ayubi, 2015; IMF, 2015). By 2014 a new national public administration reform policy was endorsed by the government. Officials and practitioners politically promoted the new policy under the premise of adopting the best practices of NPM represented in adherence to good governance practices in public administration, a shift away from personnel management towards human resources development, highlighting performance and merit over seniority, an inclination towards decentralization, and a focus on citizen centric public service delivery. However, the core of the reform was built on a normative reform design (Dahl, 2018; Wise, 2002) either intentionally or not. Normative reforms were already represented in the Egyptian constitution (2014) that was promoting democratization and decentralization. Moreover, the civil service law (2016) and its executive regulation (2017) endorsed social equity through more employment rights, increased diversity, and better working conditions. Furthermore, Egypt's Vision 2030 launched in 2015 and reviewed in 2018, highlighted the importance of individual career growth and development through continuous capacity building. With this newly introduced public administration reform policy, the Egyptian government through the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED) started in 2018 an ambitious administrative reform plan promoted under the NPM platform and good governance practices including performance orientation, responsiveness, efficiency, and innovation of service delivery, overall citizen experience, and comprehensive application of technology (MPED, 2021).

This research evaluates the relationship between the application of the principles of New Public Management (NPM) based on the framework set by the Egyptian government to conduct public administration reforms and how these reforms affect the citizens. This is achieved by comparing citizens' perceptions with both the NPM practices criteria and the criteria for granting the "Egypt Government Excellence Award" by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.

## Literature review

The Egyptian public administration system is a highly centralized one, trying for decades with minimal success to reform and decentralize. According to article 175 of the Egyptian constitution, under subsection three titled “Local Administration”, the state is divided hierarchically into local administrative units, with each governorate having several cities, and each city has a number of districts or villages (Egyptian constitution, 2014). As the constitutional section title indicates, the local public administration system in Egypt is a local administration system and not a local government one, with civil service employees working on a local level rather than in the central government. The Egyptian constitution refers to the selection of governors and local unit heads to the corresponding law, namely Law 43 issued in 1979 and its amendments which are based on articles in Egypt’s older constitution issued in 1971. According to law 43 and its executive regulation, the governor who is the highest representative of the executive authority in the governorate as well as the vice governor is selected and appointed by the President, while the city and district heads are appointed in coordination with the Minister of local administration. Local government in Egypt operates as part of the central government, without involvement in public policy and political decision-making, and with a clear function limited to local administration and the provision of local public services cascaded from the central level of government to the local level (Mahmoud, 2012; Mayfield, 1996; Zengin; 2022). Accordingly, the District service centers and HDSC among them, is part of the overall government initiative to reform and modernize its public administration system by facilitating public service delivery and improving citizen access to local public services (GIZ, 2022; MCIT, 2022).

NPM has been widely used to define and refer to different concepts such as professional and competitive government (Clarke, Gerwitz, and McLaughlin, 2000), efficient and citizen-centric management (Stewart and Walsh, 1992; Lynn, 2006), private sector like management style (Hood, 1991), entrepreneurial and innovative public administration (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Mazzucato, 2013), bureaucratic modernization that is agile and flexible versus the traditional Weberian rigid organization (Graeber, 2015; Wollmann, 2004).

Many researchers, however, highlighted the potential problems of copy-pasting one successful NPM reform in a specific national context to a new different one, and that many undesirable results could take place and the positive effects could be minimal (Box et al., 2001; Fernandez and Rainey, 2017; Wise, 2002). By time and practice, NPM-based reform became viewed as one of the many reform tracks governments can utilize, and that NPM was not the best solution to government efficiency, but rather it could become an impediment to reform itself as it poses some contradictory principles and its blind application could lead to negative results due to the many different political, economic, social and cultural differences across countries (Hood and Dixon, 2015; Kamensky, 1996; Torfing et al., 2020; Terry, 1999; Mintzberg, 1996). Thus, improving public service quality should not be reduced to NPM theory and practice. Promotion of the idea that only business-like operations is the solution to better service quality and citizen satisfaction

could be highly debated since normative best practice. Weberian public administration should initially exist and might be sufficient to provide citizen-centric and quality public service delivery (Drechsler, 2005; Grönroos, 2019; Cejudo and Michel, 2017).

While most of the literature focuses on NPM's practices in other parts of the world (Diamond, 2017; Klikauer, 2015; Machovcová, Zábrodská and Mudrák, 2019; Røiseland, Pierre and Gustavsen, 2015), this research attempts to offer an empirical study of NPM as an administrative reform approach in Egypt. To boost awareness across the Egyptian bureaucracy the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MPED) introduced the "Egypt Government Excellence Award" competition across the national administrative system (MPED, 2021). The award consists of six categories, with the main award the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award"; the other five categories include the "Governmental Service Institution Award", "Governmental Services Websites Award", "Innovation and Creativity Award", "Leaderships Excellence Award", and the "Individual Excellence Award."

When going in-depth it becomes clear that the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award" evaluates the back-office operation of the institution and not the quality of services delivered by the front office which is evaluated in another award category the "Governmental Service Institution Award". This second award is granted to citizen service centers, units, and offices that meet several conditions before applying and becoming eligible for the award. Eligibility conditions include having a dedicated director and a separate fully automated administrative center with a sign showing the entity's name that is consistent with the institutional identity; at least two front offices serving at least one thousand citizens per month over the previous six months (MPED, 2021).

The "Governmental Service Institution Award" utilizes a mystery shopper team to assess the service quality and delivery of the participating government organizations and grants the award on the condition that the organization receives a higher average score than the participating entities (MPED, 2021). This award has five different sub-categories that interact directly with citizens. These include Post Offices, Notary Public Offices, Health Offices, Food Subsidy Offices, and Citizen Service Centers. This research study focuses on the Heliopolis District and its service center as this is the primary interface between citizens of the district and the government. According to the Egypt government Excellence Award website, the assessment Criteria of the "Governmental Service Institution Award" is based on the results obtained from the mystery shopper team assessment of "Strategic Connectivity and Leadership; Priority for Citizen/customer; Services and delivery channels; Customer experience; Service efficiency and innovation; Empowering human resources; and Integrated technology" (MPED, 2021).

The reason for choosing Heliopolis District as a representative of an Egyptian bureaucratic institution is that in 2021, MPED awarded Heliopolis District the first prize "Governmental Institution Excellence Award" in the category of districts throughout Egypt, as Heliopolis District achieved the highest performance in its category. The criteria for the award are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

**Assessment Criteria for “Governmental Institution Excellence Award”**

Pillars	Main Criteria
Vision realization 60%	Egypt vision 2030
	Main functions
	Smart government
	7stars services
Enablers 20%	Human capital
	Governance
	Resources and assets
	Risk management
Innovation 20%	Future foresight
	Innovation management

*Source:* MPED portal.

While the Heliopolis District received the “Governmental Institution Excellence Award” based on the three pillars with different weights and the ten main criteria as shown above in Table 1, it did not even rank among the top three winners in the “Governmental Service Institution Award”, reflecting a gap between back office and front office operations. From a broad NPM perspective and focused citizen-centric viewpoint, what counts is the quality of the services delivered by the district service and technology center and not much of the success of the back-office operations. Thus, having the case of Heliopolis District receiving the 2021 “Governmental Institution Excellence Award” would only be relevant to citizens if the award is coupled with the “Governmental Service Institution Award” that would be then awarded to the Heliopolis District Service Center (HDSC).

It is worth noting that these and other awards are the result of strategic cooperation between the governments of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, as the latter has a track record of applying this model to public administration reform (MPED, 2021; UAE Government Excellence Model, 2021).

## Research Purpose and Objectives

This article contributes to exploring the gap between the archival measure of government performance adopted by the Egyptian government in granting the Excellence awards, and the perceptual measure that citizens use to assess government performance (Boyne et al., 2006; Song and Meier, 2018; Jilke, Olsen, Resh and Siddiki, 2019; Gębczyńska and Brajer-Marczak, 2020). Although the archival measures used by MPED to assess government performance use quantified NPM components, these components are highly related to back-office operations and discount the front office operations and the citizens’ needed service delivery standards.

In this study, NPM components are proposed to generate a perceptual measure to assess the existing archival measure for assessing and rewarding excellence in governance. The proposed components are a combination of the early writings of Drucker (1974), Pollitt (2016) and Hood (1991), including performance, transformation, financial efficiency, and innovation, as well as some of the applicable assessment criteria used in the original mystery shopping application in the United Arab Emirates, in addition to relevant components adopted by MPED. Relevance here refers to the assessment of service delivery, as some of the criteria mentioned in MPED mystery shopping could be irrelevant to the citizen as a service recipient, such as strategic connectivity and leadership.

The above-mentioned components are thus assessed in a survey to capture the perception of citizens in the HDSC. It would not have been possible to achieve this objective unless the components of NPM existed and were communicated across executing organizations.

It is hypothesized that NPM adoption and practice in an Egyptian government institution shall lead a participating institution to earn the Egypt Government Excellence Award.

This research answers the following questions:

- To what extent does granting the “Governmental Institution Excellence Award” reflect improved public services delivered?
- Does the MPED approach in granting the award reflect a holistic reform agenda or does it represent back office and front office operations separately?

The objectives of this research study are:

- To provide empirical information on the NPM practices in an Egyptian public administration context.
- To explore the gap between how citizens perceive government performance in terms of the criteria identified as NPM practices, as well as the criteria identified through the excellence awards, and how the government evaluates its own institutions.

## Methodology

### *Survey Design*

To assess the level of the citizen-centric NPM practices in the HDSC, this research study attempted to use a data collection instrument that is based on exploring the components highlighted above. It is hypothesized that NPM adoption and practice in an Egyptian government institution shall lead a participating institution to earn the Egypt Government Excellence Award. The empirical findings of this study encourage senior Egyptian state policy makers to know that NPM carries a lot of potential in the administrative reforms needed in the Egyptian public administration, however, the focus should be on citizen-centric and front office operations as much as it is on back office and structural ones.

A quantitative survey was used to capture both citizens’ perceptions of NPM in general and service delivery in specific in HDSC. This empirical study follows two citizen satisfaction survey instruments that were tested and validated, and used previously (Emirates Government Service Excellence program, 2021; Vigoda-Gadot,

and Yuval, 2003). Unlike the case in Egypt where citizens' experience with government service centers are assessed through mystery shoppers working for the government among the MPED team to assess government service institutions by checking several criteria as mentioned earlier, the case in the UAE is quite different and offers more valid citizen feedback about government service delivery. The UAE launched a mystery shopper application where any individual living in the UAE and dealing with a government service center can provide feedback and suggestions regarding public services offered. Citizens use their smart phones to download an application offered in eight different languages that allows them first to rate their overall experience with the government service center they dealt with. The rating choice is either positive or negative, then according to the initial rating the citizen is asked to choose if they were satisfied with the service if the initial answer was a positive rating, and what they were dissatisfied with if the initial answer was a negative one. The criteria listed in this part of the application to assess the level of citizen satisfaction include timeliness of service delivery, clarity of information and process, ease of access, employee professionalism, the efficiency of application submission, service quality, availability of support, complaints handling, communication and transparency, and the payment process. Finally, if there was a specific employee who managed to leave a certain impression, the assessing mystery shopper could leave a comment about that employee (Emirates Government Service Excellence program, 2021).

In order to receive meaningful and contextual results, this research study utilized the above-mentioned criteria listed in the UAE mystery shopper assessment and divided them into four NPM components based on Vigoda-Gadot, and Yuva (2003) survey. The four components are Employee performance level, Transparency and accountability, Innovation and creativity, and Responsiveness. Each component included four survey questions. The employee performance level section included questions regarding the professionalism and other performance qualities of the employees in the HDSC. Citizens were asked to rate the level of professionalism; efficiency and effectiveness; understanding and care; and willingness to serve. Transparency and accountability questions included citizen perceptions' regarding employees' attitudes towards criticism; the seriousness of handling suggestions for service improvement; employees' reaction to citizens' complaints; citizens' perception of how employees could be held accountable for their actions. The Innovation and creativity section asked citizens questions on how they compare public service quality in Egypt to other countries; if new and creative ideas were introduced in the HDSC that would improve citizens' quality of life'; if advanced technology is utilized in improving quality of service; and if the payment process reflects a simple and fast way to receive the services. To assess the Responsiveness component of NPM and the accuracy and speed of public services provided by the HDSC, citizens were asked if the employees of the service center responded to public requests quickly; if the citizens' service center is efficient and provides quality solutions based on public needs; if the citizens' service center is responsive to public opinion and employees exert genuine efforts to support the citizens who need help; and if citizens' appeals are processed professionally and in a reasonable time (Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval, 2003). The final section of the questionnaire included dependent variable questions to analyze the effect of the

independent variables discussed above. This section asked respondents about the “Egypt Excellence Award”. Citizens were asked if the “Egypt Government Excellence Award” that included the “Governmental Institution Excellence Award” and the “Governmental Service Institution Award” helped in the enhancement of public service delivery; if the citizen agrees with Heliopolis District receiving the “Governmental Institution Excellence Award”; if HDSC deserves to receive the “Governmental Service Institution Award”; if the respondent is satisfied in general with the quality of services delivered by Heliopolis District. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from “1” to indicate “strongly disagree” and “5” to indicate “strongly agree” was employed to capture the citizens’ perceptions versus real practices. Also, the survey instrument included demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, education, technological knowledge, and international travel experience. The survey was translated by the author from English to Arabic, and back-translated by a specialized translator to ensure the accuracy and meaningfulness of the statements, that they match the intended aims and context of the study instrument, and that it measured what it intended to measure.

### *Sampling and data collection*

As mentioned above, the sample for this study was drawn from the target population, namely citizens coming to HDSC to receive different government services. A pre-test was conducted for the study tools by contacting 25 people onsite of HDSC. Based on the pretest the survey has been rearranged in a better form. The full questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1. A total of 440 questionnaires were distributed to citizens exiting the HDSC. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires and submit them to the research team member. 400 respondents submitted fully answered questionnaires for analysis at a 90% response rate. This high response rate could be attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were distributed and collected onsite. The 40 respondents that submitted incomplete questionnaire answers were removed from the analysis.

## Survey Results and Descriptive Analysis

### *Demographic statistics*

Table 2

#### Demographic statistics

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	264	66
Female	136	34
Age	Frequency	Percent
24–30	37	9,3
31–43	85	21,3
Above 43	278	69,5



<b>Educational level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than secondary education degree	8	2,0
Secondary education degree	9	2,25
University education degree	362	90,5
Post graduate education degree	21	5,25
<b>Technological knowledge</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	26	6,5
Very good	69	17,3
Good	265	66,3
Weak	40	10,0
<b>International travel experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	75	18,8
No	325	81,2

**Source:** Compiled by the author (-hereinafter, unless otherwise noted).

As shown above in Table 2 the demographic data of the participants: 264 representing 66% of the participants were males and 136 representing 34% were females; 278 were above 43 years old representing 69.5%, 85 and 37 representing 21.3% and 9.3% representing ages 31–40 and 24–30 respectively; 362 representing 90.5% held a university education, and 21 representing 5.3% held a post-graduate degree, and 9 representing 2.3% had a secondary education degree, and 8 representing 2% held an educational degree less than secondary education. Regarding technological knowledge 265 participants representing 66.3% responded with having good technological knowledge, and 26 representing 6.5% responded with having excellent technological knowledge, 69 representing 17.3% responded with very good, and 40 representing 10% responded with weak technological knowledge.

The last demographic question asked participants about international travel experience showed 325 representing 75% showing a negative answer, and 75 responding with a yes representing 18.2%. This question was intended to relate to question 9 of the survey, which asked participants to compare public service delivery in Egypt with other countries. With regards to the gender of respondents, although as shown above and having 66% males, this is culturally understood as in Egypt men have the social role to go to government agencies to do paper work. As for the age, it is understandable that these are the age brackets that deal with local government and their service centers. Moreover, when comparing the results of the report published by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS, 2021) showing the characteristics of the general population of the Heliopolis District, the differences between the data results from the research sample and the official cor-

responding data in the target population show little differences, and hence the sample shows representativeness, and their stratification has no impact on the results of the study.

For instance, in the age category of 24–30, the sample male represents 73% while the general population represent 79.4%; the sample female represents 27% while the general population represent 20.6%; and in the age category of 31–43 the sample male represents 67.1% while the general population represent 66.9%; the sample female represents 32.9% while the general population represent 33.1%; and in the age category above 43 the sample male represents 64.7% while the general population represent 77.1%; the sample female represents 35.3% while the general population represent 22.9%; and regarding the educational level with regards to the sample with less than secondary education degree it represents 2.0% while the general population represents 6.5%; and the sample with secondary education degree it represents 2.25% while the general population represents 5.4%; and the sample with university education degree it represents 90.5% while the general population represents 82.1%; and the sample with post graduate education degree it represents 5.25% while the general population represents 5.8%.

### *Descriptive statistics*

Table 3

#### **Descriptive statistics**

Question	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Employees performance</b>					
HDSC employees are professional when dealing with citizens	22,0%	448,8%	114,8%	333,5%	11,0%
HDSC employees are effective and efficient when dealing with citizens	22,0%	554,0%	222,8%	221,3%	11,0%
HDSC employees show understanding and care when dealing with citizens	119,0%	668,3%	00,3%	111,0%	11,0%
HDSC employees show a willingness to serve citizens	119,0%	668,3%	00,0%	111,8%	11,0%
<b>Transparency and accountability</b>					
HDSC employees accept criticism and react objectively	22,0%	885,8%	00,0%	111,3%	11,0%
HDSC employees are serious in handling suggestions for service improvement	119,0%	778,8%	00,0%	11,3%	11,0%
HDSC employees react to citizens' complaints without affecting service delivery	119,0%	778,8%	00,0%	11,3%	11,0%
HDSC employees could be held accountable for their actions and citizens could identify the employee who delivered the service	444,0%	336,8%	117,0%	11,3%	11,0%

Innovation and creativity					
Service quality of public service delivery in Egypt is equal to other countries	22,0%	226,0%	660,0%	111,3%	00,0%
New and creative ideas were introduced in HDSC that improve citizens' quality of life	22,0%	552,3%	11,0%	444,8%	00,0%
Advanced technology is utilized in improving the quality of service	22,0%	66,8%	00,0%	991,3%	00,0%
The payment process reflects a simple and fast way to receive HDSC services	33,0%	115,5%	118,5%	660,0%	33,0%
Responsiveness					
HDSC employees respond to public requests quickly	44,0%	882,8%	44,0%	99,3%	00,0%
HDSC employees provide quality solutions based on public needs	221,3%	773,8%	00,3%	44,8%	00,2%
HDSC is responsive to public opinion and employees exert genuine efforts to support the citizens who need help	221,3%	774,5%	00,0%	44,3%	00,0%
Citizens' appeals are processed professionally and in a reasonable time	443,8%	333,8%	118,3%	44,3%	00,0%
Egypt Government Excellence Award					
"Egypt Government Excellence Award" that included the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award" and the "Governmental Service Institution Award" helped in the enhancement of public service delivery	33,0%	224,0%	668,8%	44,3%	00,0%
Citizens agree with Heliopolis District receiving the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award"	221,3%	664,8%	99,8%	44,3%	00,0%
HDSC deserves to receive the "Governmental Service Institution Award"	221,3%	664,8%	99,8%	44,3%	00,0%
I am generally satisfied with the quality of public services delivered by Heliopolis district	33,0%	883,0%	00,0%	114,0%	00,0%

**Notes:** Descriptors: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree.

The results in Table 3 show that almost 70% of respondents were neutral regarding the public service delivery enhancement effect of the "Egypt Government Excellence Award". However, it is clear from the results that citizens are neither satisfied with the quality of public services delivered by Heliopolis District, nor think that Heliopolis District deserves to receive an excellence award whether the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award" or the "Governmental Service Institution Award". Respondents gave identical answers to the two questions referring to the two different awards. Responses to the question "Citizens agree with Heliopolis District receiving the Governmental Institution Ex-

cellence Award” and the question “HDSC deserves to receive the Governmental Service Institution Award”. Responses show that citizens cannot distinguish between the reforms that take place in the back office of the bureaucracy and what they receive at the front office.

While this is the case with citizens, the Egyptian government itself differentiated between the two awards, and these responses actually prove one of the objectives of this study, that a success story of a reformed government entity requires both strategic and structural organizational reform and a citizen-centric focus. Moreover, these two decisive results answer this research’s question “Does the MPED approach in granting the award reflect a holistic reform agenda or does it represent back office and front office operations separately?.” The results show that whatever back office reform the government does, shall not have a spillover effect on the level of citizen satisfaction without coupling it with front office citizen centric orientation. The two answers with highest approval responses of strongly agree and agree are in the innovation and creativity section, showing a link between reform efforts and citizen satisfaction.

Responses to the question “New and creative ideas were introduced in HDSC that improve citizens’ quality of life,” and the question “The payment process reflects a simple and fast way to receive HDSC services,” show that citizens have physically realized the use and benefits of new and advanced payment methods introduced in HDSC which was an ever existing problem in government service delivery. The answers to the question “Advanced technology is utilized in improving the quality of service,” in specific were not consistent with the rest of the answers and thus was omitted from the reliability of the innovation and creativity variable.

The question “HDSC employees could be held accountable for their actions and citizens could identify the employee who delivered the service” while important and responses show an agreement level of 80.8%, was omitted from the transparency and accountability variable to gain a higher level of reliability as shown in Table 6.

## Constructing the Reliability statistics

To assess the reliability for each set of variables, Cronbach’s alpha was checked. In this study, the cut-off value of 0.5 of Cronbach’s alpha was set as the minimum value for reliability based on the literature (CHO and KIM, 2015; Lance et al, 2006; Griethuijsen et al., 2014).

In the first set of variables the data is reliable as shown in Table 4 with Cronbach’s alpha 0.78

Table 4

### Reliability statistics for Employee performance items

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,780	4

In the second set of variables representing transparency and accountability, the data shows that the reliability analysis of Cronbach's alpha is equal to 0.633, as shown in Table 5, when the four items are included. However, there would be a significant increase in the reliability statistics when the question "HDSC employees could be held accountable for their actions and citizens could identify the employee who delivered the service," is omitted, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.828, as shown in Table 6.

Table 5

### Reliability statistics for transparency and accountability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.633	4

Table 6

### Reliability statistics for transparency and accountability (2) after omitting the question (HDSC employees could be held accountable for their actions and citizens could identify the employee who delivered the service)

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,828	3

In the third set of items, the data had low reliability, as shown in Table 7, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.426. In order to increase reliability and reach the acceptable Cronbach's alpha level, the question "Advanced technology is utilized in improving the quality of service," was dropped to ensure consistency of the variable innovation and creativity with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.534, as shown in Table 8.

Table 7

### Reliability statistics for innovation and creativity

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,426	4

Table 8

### Reliability statistics for innovation and creativity (2) after omitting the question "Advanced technology is utilized in improving the quality of service"

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,534	3

As for the fourth set represents the responsive variable, data is reliable as shown in Table 9 with Cronbach's alpha 0.642.

Table 9

### Reliability statistics for responsiveness

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,642	4

As mentioned earlier in this article, a quantitative survey was used to capture both citizens' perceptions of NPM in general and service delivery in HDSC specifically, to assess how the citizens' responses reflect the adoption of the NPM practices as proposed by the government public administration reform initiative, as well as how worthy the institution researched deserves the excellence award granted by the government. The researcher has found it beneficial to partially rely on the UAE's citizen satisfaction survey instrument, which was tested, validated, and used previously, as well as the literature output and the relevant components adopted by MPED in constructing the statistical model of this study. Consequently, the dependent variable "Egypt Government Excellence Award" was extracted from citizens' opinions regarding the four statements shown below. The data is reliable as shown in Table 10 with Cronbach's alpha of 0.880. The dependent variable, Egypt Government Excellence Award, was extracted from the following data array:

- General satisfaction among citizens regarding the quality of public services delivered by the Heliopolis District.
- HDSTC deserves to receive the "Governmental Service Institution Award".
- Citizens agree with the Heliopolis District receiving the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award".
- "Egypt Government Excellence Award" which included the "Governmental Institution Excellence Award" and the "Governmental Service Institution Award" helped in the enhancement of public service delivery.

Table 10

### Reliability statistics for Egypt Government Excellence Award

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0,880	4

## Determinants of Egypt Government Excellence Award: Empirical Findings

As explained in the previous section, the Egypt Government Excellence Award is the dependent variable, and it is continuous in nature where the highest value represents the higher level of satisfaction. Also, more than one independent

variable, meaning multiple linear regression is suitable in this study. The regression model takes the following form:

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \dots + \beta_k X_k, \quad (1)$$

Where,

$X$  is the set of  $k$  predictors/independent variables

$\alpha_j$  is the intercept,

$\beta$  is the parameter for each predictor variable.

As mentioned before, we have four predictors/independent variables which are Employee performance, Transparency and accountability, Innovation and creativity, and Responsiveness.

### *Empirical Findings*

To study the effect of the explanatory/independent variables on the dependent variable namely the Egypt Excellence Award, a regression analysis was conducted. The results for the regression analysis are summarized below in Table 11.

Table 11

### Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	-1,210	0,391		-3,094	0,002		
Employee performance level	0,200	0,037	0,237	5,454	0,000	0,314	3,186
Transparency and accountability (2)	0,075	0,071	0,051	1,054	0,292	0,250	4,006
Innovation and creativity (2)	0,147	0,038	0,101	3,824	0,000	0,849	1,178
Responsiveness	0,810	0,037	0,676	21,618	0,000	0,606	1,650

From the coefficients Table 11, the estimated regression equation for this study's model is:

$$\hat{Y} = -1.210 + 0.2X_1 + 0.075X_2 + 0.147X_3 + 0.810X_4$$

Where  $\hat{Y}$  represents the estimated value of earning the Egypt excellence award.

### *Test of Hypotheses (T-Test):*

The P-value for each coefficient ( $\beta$ ) in this model is tested against alpha ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) for significance as shown in Table 11 and all of them are less than 0.05, indicating that each value of  $\beta$  is not equal to zero and that it is significant to the model.

Table 12

## ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1641,498	4	410,375	323,111	0,000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	501,679	395	1,270		
	Total	2143,177	399			

*Testing the significance of the overall Model (F-Test):*

This test will examine the significance of the model through the following hypotheses:

$H_0$ : Model is not significant ( $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = 0$ )

$H_1$ : Model is significant (At least one  $\beta \neq 0$ )

Based on the ANOVA Table 12, the P-value of Model is  $0.000 < 0.05$ , therefore the decision is to reject  $H_0$  and accept  $H_1$ . This means that the overall estimated model is highly significant.

Table 13

## Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0,875 <sup>a</sup>	0,766	0,764	1,12698	2,660

The adjusted- $R^2$  for our model is 0.764 as shown in Table 13. This means that around 76.4% of the variations in the estimated satisfaction  $\hat{Y}$  is explained by the independent variables (Employee performance level, Transparency and accountability, Innovation and creativity, and Responsiveness); while around 23.6% of the variations are unexplained and can be due to other factors not included in this model.

**Statistical Checks**

To receive reliable results from the regression analysis Statistical checks were conducted before data integration, fulfilling linearity, normality and homoscedasticity assumptions, and avoiding multicollinearity (Taber, 2018). In this study, all assumptions are verified for the model, in which the linearity assumption was fulfilled through a constant rate of change occurring in the dependent values due to changing the independent variables, and normality took place in which the residuals of the model were normally distributed with a mean of zero (Lindstromberg, 2020). Moreover, homoscedasticity residuals were approximately equal for all predicted dependent variables in this model (Taber, 2018). Finally, multicollinearity was avoided in this model manifested in an avoidance of a correlation among the independent variables (Ragsdale, 2021). As shown in Table 10, the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each independent variable in the regression model



is used to verify that multicollinearity is avoided between the independent variables. From Table 10, VIF for the four variables is less than 5 meaning there is no multicollinearity.

## Conclusions and implications

While the Egyptian government acknowledges practicing NPM to achieve public administration reform goals, the results of this study prove to be different. The findings of this paper suggest that NPM application in the Egyptian context does not show improvements in public service delivery, and that receiving the “Government Excellence Award” has minimal impact on citizen perception of the institution receiving the award.

As shown in the model summary, the NPM practices represented in the independent variables Employee performance level, Transparency and accountability, Innovation and creativity, and Responsiveness affect the possibility of earning the Egypt government excellence award level 76.4%. This is not reflected in the responses in the survey used in this research and a clear gap exists between what the government assesses as excellence and what the citizens perceive, hence much more improvements are needed in the application of these four variables in order to achieve higher citizen satisfaction levels and align the perception of both government and citizens on the application of NPM and citizen satisfaction from services delivered. Moreover, it can be argued that the obtained negative results of testing the hypothesis are not just a reflection of modest NPM practice but could be a notice for the Egyptian government that NPM is not the best fit public administration reform track, and its success in one country could not be replicated in the Egyptian context due to different economic, social, and political conditions.

The findings also suggest that the MPED approach in granting the award is not reflective of a holistic reform agenda and that the NPM practice and assessment is done for back office operations in a separate form than the one performed for front office operations or in other words is done from a process oriented view rather than a citizen-centric view. A true Egyptian success story in public administration reform shall require a revision of which reform approach will be adopted by the government. NPM adoption to reach a citizen-centric orientation and public satisfaction from the quality of services delivered, could not be the best solution for the government to adopt. NPM adoption could complicate the original problem, since the cloning of the successful NPM practices in other countries could be uncertain in Egypt. Many setbacks exist in the case of Egypt including high levels of corruption among civil servants putting Egypt in the 117th rank out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2021), as well as deeply rooted cultural resistance (Schedler and Proeller, 2007) that run in the veins of a seven thousand year bureaucracy. It is possible that the negative results of testing the hypothesis of this research are not just the result of poor application of NPM practice by the Egyptian government, but also a reflection of the problems of the NPM theory itself and the claimed potential and positive change that it can offer. Probably, a return to a more rational Weberian paradigm as the basis for public administration reform could end up as the most convenient one for Egypt.

The findings also point to the need for future practical research regarding the mystery shopping approach conducted in Egypt when granting the “Governmental Service Institution Award.” The initial recommendation based on this study is to follow a mystery shopping approach similar to the one conducted in the UAE, and have an online application that can be used by citizens receiving the public services, where the citizens evaluate the quality and delivery of services throughout the year, rather than a mystery shopper team composed of government employees assessing the service of the participating government organizations during the award shortlist assessment phase.

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