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PACD as a Mechanism for Transparency and Accountability: Assessing Its Effectiveness in Frontline Government Services

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ABSTRACT

The Public Assistance and Complaints Desk (PACD) is the frontline mechanism through which clients of Philippine government agencies seek assistance, raise concerns, and provide feedback, yet its effectiveness as a mechanism for transparency and accountability has rarely been examined empirically. This study assessed the effectiveness of the PACD in frontline government services among three selected government agencies in Cebu, namely the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority, the Land Transportation Office Licensing Office in Lapu-Lapu City, and the Commission on Elections 1st District Cebu City Office, during calendar year 2026, as a basis for a strategic action plan. A mixed-methods design was employed. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was administered to 90 clients (30 per agency) and three designated PACD focal persons, who were also interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage, weighted mean and standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, and thematic analysis. Both PACD personnel and clients rated PACD operational services as Very Effective (M = 4.91 and M = 4.61, respectively), with Referral and Coordination obtaining the lowest rating from both groups. Transparency (M = 4.89 and 4.68), accountability (M = 4.94 and 4.65), and client satisfaction (M = 4.68) were likewise rated Very Effective. PACD operational services were significantly and very strongly related to transparency (r = .833) and accountability (r = .891), and transparency (r = .808) and accountability (r = .886) were significantly related to client satisfaction (all $p < .001$). The interviews revealed transparency practices, accountability mechanisms, operational challenges, best practices, recommendations for improvement, and the dual role of designated PACD personnel who also perform regular plantilla duties. The study concludes that the PACD serves effectively as a mechanism for transparency and accountability and that its operational services are closely associated with client satisfaction. A Strategic Action Plan and a Pilot Complaint Referral and Monitoring System were proposed to strengthen referral and coordination, complaint tracking, digitalization, personnel capability, and workload management.

Keywords: *Public Assistance and Complaints Desk, Transparency, Accountability, Client Satisfaction, Frontline Government Services, Good Governance*

INTRODUCTION

Transparency and accountability are fundamental principles of effective public administration and good governance. In frontline government services, these principles are reflected in the accessibility of information, the clarity of procedures, responsiveness to client concerns, and the ability of government agencies to explain and act on complaints. The Public Assistance and Complaints Desk (PACD) serves as an important point of interaction

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between government institutions and the public by providing assistance, receiving concerns, and facilitating communication between clients and the concerned offices. As a frontline service mechanism, the PACD promotes transparency and accountability by ensuring that client concerns are properly acknowledged, referred, and addressed; its effectiveness may therefore be assessed not only by its availability but also by its capacity to support transparent processes, responsible complaint handling, and satisfactory service experiences.

In the Philippine setting, government initiatives have recognized the importance of measuring client experiences as a basis for improving public service delivery. The Civil Service Commission's Report Card Survey evaluates compliance with selected requirements of the Anti-Red Tape Act, including the availability of a Public Assistance and Complaints Desk, as well as client satisfaction with frontline personnel, service quality, physical setup, basic facilities, and the overall transaction (Civil Service Commission, n.d.). The PACDs of the Land Transportation Office (LTO) Licensing Office at Island Central Mall, Ibo, Lapu-Lapu City; the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) 1st District Cebu City Office; and the Mactan-Cebu International Airport Authority (MCIAA) are examples of such frontline mechanisms through which clients seek assistance, communicate concerns, provide feedback, and request information.

An operational consideration relevant to PACD implementation is the organizational status of PACD personnel. In many agencies, PACD functions are assigned to designated employees who simultaneously perform the duties of their regular plantilla positions. While this arrangement enables agencies to comply with government requirements on client assistance and complaints handling, it may create challenges related to workload management, prioritization, response time, and accountability. International scholarship further cautions that making information available does not automatically produce accountability (Fox, 2007); providing clients with information or receiving their complaints does not by itself show that the concerned office has acted on, monitored, or communicated the outcome of a case. Assessing the PACD therefore requires attention both to the accessibility and clarity of information and to the procedures through which concerns are documented, monitored, addressed, and resolved.

This research also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which promotes effective, accountable, and transparent institutions, and SDG 17, which recognizes the value of partnerships between government and citizens (United Nations, 2015). Government assessments of client satisfaction and service quality generally focus on overall service quality and compliance with service standards rather than on the PACD as a mechanism for transparency and accountability, and few empirical studies have examined how effectively PACD operational services promote these principles, particularly among government agencies in Cebu.

This study assessed the effectiveness of the PACD as a mechanism for transparency and accountability in frontline government services among selected government agencies in Cebu during calendar year 2026 as a basis for a strategic action plan. Specifically, it sought to determine (1) the profile of the PACD personnel in terms of age, gender, position or designation, length of service in the PACD, and relevant trainings attended, and of the clients in terms of age, gender, and type of concern; (2) the status of PACD operational services as perceived by the respondent groups in terms of information and inquiry assistance, receiving complaints and grievances, recording and documentation, referral and coordination, status monitoring and follow-up, feedback and status communication, complaint resolution and facilitation, receiving suggestions and commendations, client satisfaction monitoring, and accessibility and client assistance; (3) the extent to which PACD operational services are effective in terms of transparency and accountability; (4) the significant relationship between PACD operational services and transparency and accountability; (5) the significant relationship between transparency and client satisfaction and between accountability and client satisfaction; and (6) the strategic action plan that can be crafted to improve PACD operational services. The null hypotheses tested were that there is no significant relationship between the status of PACD operational services and their level of effectiveness, between perceived transparency and client satisfaction, and between perceived accountability and client satisfaction.

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Literature Review

Good Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

Transparency and accountability have long been recognized as core elements of good governance. The World Bank (1992) identified accountability, a legal framework for development, and information and transparency as key areas of governance, while the United Nations Development Programme (1997) included participation, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, and accountability among the characteristics of good governance. Contemporary governance assessments likewise describe effective public governance in terms of transparency, accountability, citizen-centered service delivery, and public trust, and note that citizens' satisfaction with government services is influenced by the quality, accessibility, and responsiveness of public institutions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017, 2023).

Accountability has been conceptualized as a relationship in which an actor is obliged to explain and justify conduct to a forum that can pose questions, pass judgment, and impose consequences (Bovens, 2007), and as comprising answerability and enforcement (Schedler, 1999). Transparency and accountability are closely linked but not identical. Hood (2010) described their relationship as variously that of "Siamese twins," "matching parts," or an "awkward couple," while Fox (2007) distinguished between opaque and clear transparency and between soft and hard accountability, arguing that disclosure of information does not necessarily lead to institutional answerability or corrective action. These distinctions are relevant to PACD operations, in which clients may receive information without necessarily receiving action on, or an account of, their concerns.

Client Satisfaction and Trust in Public Services

Studies of citizen satisfaction show that clients evaluate public services in relation to their expectations. James (2009) found that citizens' satisfaction with local public services is shaped by the disconfirmation of their expectations as well as by the anchoring effect of performance information. The relationship between service performance and broader trust in government, however, is not straightforward; Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003) cautioned that the assumption that better public service performance automatically produces greater trust in government is difficult to sustain because citizens' perceptions are shaped by many factors beyond individual service encounters.

Transparency and quality information have been associated with trust. Mabillard and Pasquier (2015) argued that the relationship between transparency and trust in government is complex and may run in both directions, and Mansoor (2021) found that good governance and the provision of quality information by government agencies were significantly associated with citizens' trust in government. Taken together, these studies suggest that frontline mechanisms that provide accurate information, respond to concerns, and account for actions taken may contribute to client satisfaction, although such relationships need to be examined in specific service settings.

Legal and Institutional Framework of the PACD

In the Philippines, the PACD is anchored on a legal framework that promotes ethical, efficient, and responsive public service. Republic Act No. 6713 (1989) establishes the norms of conduct of public officials and employees, including commitment to public interest, professionalism, and responsiveness to the public. Republic Act No. 9485 (2007), the Anti-Red Tape Act, requires government offices to improve the efficiency of frontline services and provides for mechanisms such as the Citizen's Charter and the public assistance and complaints desk, and Republic Act No. 11032 (2018) expanded these provisions to promote ease of doing business and efficient government service delivery. The Civil Service Commission's Report Card Survey includes the PACD among the anti-red tape provisions on which agencies are evaluated, together with measures of client satisfaction (Civil Service Commission, n.d.).

Despite this framework, existing assessments generally measure the presence of the PACD and overall client satisfaction rather than how well PACD functions, such as referral, monitoring, follow-up, and feedback, support transparency and accountability. The personnel arrangements under which PACD functions are performed,

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particularly the designation of employees who also carry regular plantilla duties, have also received little empirical attention.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study was anchored on the New Public Service Theory, which holds that the primary role of public institutions is to serve citizens rather than merely to steer or manage government operations, emphasizing citizen-centered governance, participation, responsiveness, and the delivery of quality public services (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). Applied to the PACD, the theory suggests that agencies should provide accessible, responsive, and citizen-oriented assistance. The study was further supported by Accountability Theory, which posits that public officials and institutions are obliged to explain and justify their actions and decisions to the public through answerability and enforcement (Schedler, 1999); within the PACD, accountability is reflected in proper complaint handling, timely responses, accurate documentation, and appropriate corrective action. Finally, Fox's (2007) Transparency Framework emphasizes openness, access to information, and the availability of government processes to public scrutiny, which in PACD operations are manifested through clear communication, disclosure of service processes, and regular feedback to clients.

These complementary perspectives, together with the legal mandates of Republic Act No. 6713, Republic Act No. 9485, Republic Act No. 11032, and the Civil Service Commission guidelines on the PACD, informed the framework shown in Figure 1. The New Public Service Theory provides the overarching view of citizen-centered service, while Accountability Theory and the Transparency Framework define the two dimensions through which PACD operational services were assessed. The study posits that effective PACD operational services promote transparency and accountability, which in turn are associated with client satisfaction, and that the findings provide the basis for a strategic action plan to improve PACD operational services.

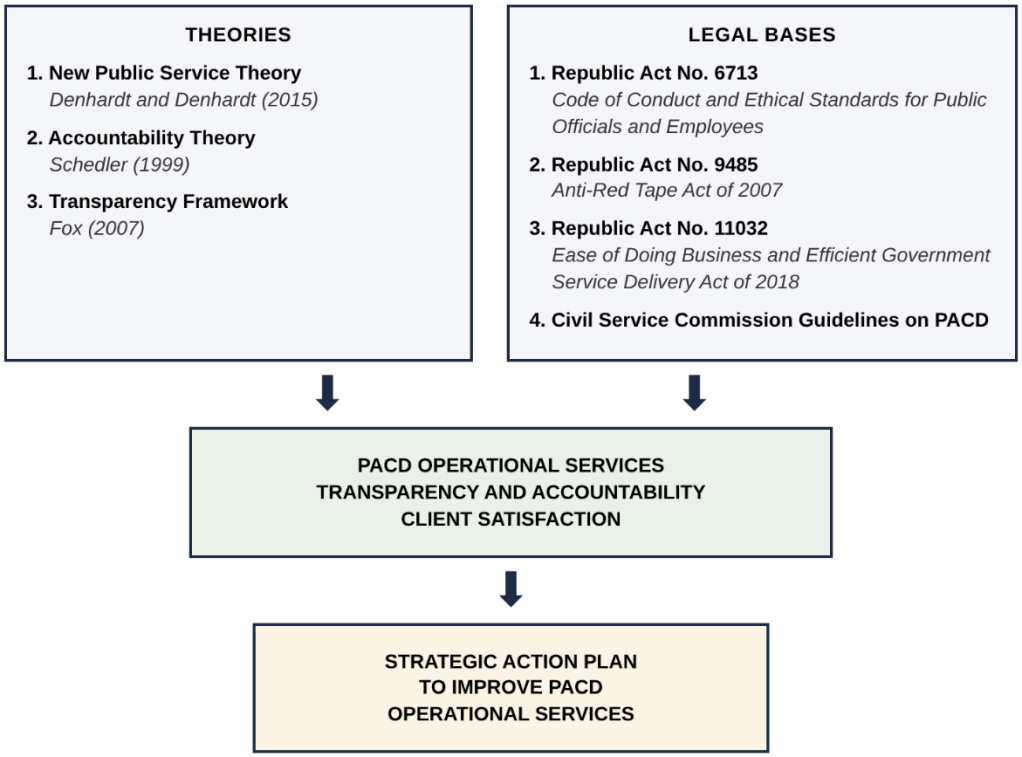


Figure 1. *Theoretical-Conceptual Framework of the Study*

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METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods design. The quantitative component determined the status of PACD operational services, the levels of transparency, accountability, and client satisfaction, and the relationships among these variables, while the qualitative component gathered PACD personnel's insights, experiences, and recommendations to provide a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings. The study followed an Input–Process–Output model in which the PACD operational services, the dimensions of transparency and accountability, client satisfaction indicators, respondent profiles, and the legal and theoretical foundations served as inputs; survey administration, semi-structured interviews, data validation, statistical analysis, and thematic analysis comprised the process; and the Strategic Action Plan to Improve PACD Operational Services was the output.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the PACDs of three government agencies in Cebu: the MCIAA One-Stop-Shop at the MCIAA Corporate Building, Airport Road, Lapu-Lapu City, a government-owned and controlled corporation responsible for the administration and operation of the airport; the LTO Licensing Office at Island Central Mall, Ibo, Lapu-Lapu City, which provides driver licensing services and handles a high daily volume of transactions; and the COMELEC 1st District Cebu City Office, which provides election-related services such as voter registration and information dissemination. These offices were selected because they maintain operational PACDs that interact directly with clients in accordance with Civil Service Commission guidelines.

Participants and Sampling

The respondents were 90 clients who availed themselves of PACD services and three PACD focal persons, one from each agency (Table 1). The client respondents were selected based on their actual experience with PACD services during the data collection period and were equally distributed, with 30 from each agency. Following Roscoe's rule of thumb, as cited in Sekaran (2003), sample sizes between 30 and 500 are appropriate for most research, with at least 30 per subgroup when the sample is divided; the client sample therefore satisfied the recommended minimum for descriptive and correlational analyses. The three PACD personnel were selected through purposive sampling because of their direct knowledge of PACD operations and client concerns and participated in both the survey and the interview.

Table 1. *Distribution of Survey and Interview Respondents*

Office	Client Survey Respondents	PACD Personnel (Survey and Interview)	Frequency	Percentage
COMELEC	30	1	31	33.33
LTO	30	1	31	33.33
MCIAA	30	1	31	33.33
Total	90	3	93	100.00

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide. The questionnaire, developed from the operational functions of the PACD, the dimensions of transparency and accountability, applicable government policies, and the objectives of the study, gathered the respondents' profiles and measured the status of the ten PACD operational services, the effectiveness of these services in terms of transparency and accountability, and the level of client satisfaction using a five-point rating scale (Table 2). The interview guide elicited PACD personnel's insights on implementation, transparency practices, accountability mechanisms, operational challenges, best practices, and recommendations, including whether PACD functions were performed as a primary responsibility or as an additional designation. The instruments were reviewed and

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validated by experts in public administration and research and were pilot-tested for clarity and suitability, after which necessary revisions were made.

Table 2. *Five-Point Rating Scale and Verbal Interpretation*

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Very Effective
4	3.41–4.20	Effective
3	2.61–3.40	Moderately Effective
2	1.81–2.60	Slightly Effective
1	1.00–1.80	Not Effective

Data Gathering Procedure

After approval of the thesis proposal, formal permission was obtained from the authorities of the participating agencies, and the researchers coordinated with the designated PACD focal persons on the administration of the questionnaires and the conduct of the interviews. Informed consent forms explaining the purpose and significance of the study were distributed, and the questionnaires were personally administered to the 90 clients, with assistance provided when clarification was needed. Accomplished questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and tabulated. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with the three PACD focal persons, and the responses were documented, transcribed, and organized for thematic analysis. In deference to the agencies' concern that disclosure of complaint statistics could create unintended public perceptions of agency performance, complaint archives, individual complaint records, and complaint volumes were not used as data sources; the study instead focused on the perceptions and experiences of PACD clients and personnel.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' profiles. The weighted mean and standard deviation were used to determine the status of PACD operational services, their effectiveness in terms of transparency and accountability, and the level of client satisfaction, interpreted using the scale in Table 2. The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between PACD operational services and transparency and accountability, and between transparency and accountability and client satisfaction, with all hypotheses tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The interview data were read, coded, and grouped into categories to identify recurring themes, which were used to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative results and to inform the proposed Strategic Action Plan.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed the ethical principles of social science research. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained after the purpose, procedures, and potential benefits of the study were explained, and the respondents were informed of their right to refuse or withdraw at any time without consequence. The respondents were assured that all responses would be treated with confidentiality and used solely for scholarly purposes; no identifying information was included in any report, data were presented only in aggregate form, and all records were securely stored. The researchers ensured that participation posed no physical, emotional, psychological, or professional harm and upheld honesty and integrity in gathering, analyzing, and presenting the data.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

Table 3 presents the profile of the respondents. Two of the three PACD personnel were aged 46–55 and one was 56 or older; all were female; two were administrative staff and one was a PACD officer; two had served in the PACD for more than six years; and two had attended customer service training, while none had attended PACD-specific or ARTA/EODB training. Among the clients, the largest age groups were 18–25 (26.87%) and 36–45 (25.37%), the respondents were almost evenly divided between female (50.00%) and male (48.89%), and the most common types of concern were inquiries (44.44%) and requests for assistance (43.33%), while complaints accounted for only 2.22%. These results indicate that the PACD personnel had considerable experience in frontline service and that the PACD primarily functions as a channel for information and assistance.

Table 3. *Profile of the Respondents*

Variable	Category	f	%
PACD Personnel (n = 3)			
Age	46–55 / 56 and above	2 / 1	66.67 / 33.33
Gender	Female	3	100.00
Position/Designation	Administrative Staff / PACD Officer	2 / 1	66.67 / 33.33
Length of Service	More than 6 years / 4–6 years	2 / 1	66.67 / 33.33
Relevant Trainings	Customer Service / Others	2 / 1	66.67 / 33.33
Clients (n = 90)			
Age	18–25	18	26.87
	26–35	8	11.94
	36–45	17	25.37
	46–55	13	19.40
	56 and above	11	16.42
Gender	Female	45	50.00
	Male	44	48.89
	Prefer not to say	1	1.11
Type of Concern	Inquiry	40	44.44
	Request for Assistance	39	43.33
	Suggestion	5	5.56
	Complaint	2	2.22
	Commendation	2	2.22
	Others	2	2.22

Note. Categories with zero frequency for PACD personnel are omitted. Client age percentages are based on the 67 respondents who reported their age.

Status of PACD Operational Services

Table 4 summarizes the assessment of PACD operational services by the two respondent groups. Both groups rated all ten operational services as Very Effective, with grand means of 4.91 (SD = 0.38) for PACD personnel and 4.61 (SD = 0.64) for clients. PACD personnel gave perfect ratings (M = 5.00) to Information and Inquiry Assistance, Status Monitoring and Follow-Up, Complaint Resolution and Facilitation, and Client Satisfaction Monitoring, while clients rated Accessibility and Client Assistance highest (M = 4.72, SD = 0.51), indicating that they found PACD personnel easy to approach and responsive to their needs. Referral and Coordination received the lowest rating from both PACD personnel (M = 4.56, SD = 0.77) and clients (M = 4.55, SD = 0.69).

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Table 4. *Assessment of PACD Operational Services by PACD Personnel and Clients*

Operational Service	Personnel WM	SD	VI	Clients WM	SD	VI
Information and Inquiry Assistance	5.00	0.00	VE	4.63	0.60	VE
Receiving Complaints and Grievances	4.89	0.19	VE	4.63	0.66	VE
Recording and Documentation	4.89	0.19	VE	4.57	0.70	VE
Referral and Coordination	4.56	0.77	VE	4.55	0.69	VE
Status Monitoring and Follow-Up	5.00	0.00	VE	4.59	0.67	VE
Feedback and Status Communication	4.89	0.19	VE	4.61	0.64	VE
Complaint Resolution and Facilitation	5.00	0.00	VE	4.58	0.62	VE
Receiving Suggestions and Commendations	4.89	0.19	VE	4.62	0.63	VE
Client Satisfaction Monitoring	5.00	0.00	VE	4.62	0.63	VE
Accessibility and Client Assistance	4.78	0.39	VE	4.72	0.51	VE
Grand Mean	4.91	0.38	VE	4.61	0.64	VE

Note. 4.21–5.00 = Very Effective (VE); 3.41–4.20 = Effective; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Effective; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Effective; 1.00–1.80 = Not Effective. WM = weighted mean; VI = verbal interpretation.

The consistently high ratings indicate a high level of agreement between PACD personnel and clients that the PACD performs its mandated functions effectively. The comparatively lower rating of Referral and Coordination, together with its larger standard deviation among PACD personnel, points to inter-office coordination and complaint monitoring as areas for improvement. The interviews revealed that referred concerns are endorsed to the appropriate office through established communication channels and classified according to prescribed response timelines, but that the absence of a centralized complaint-monitoring system limits the ability of PACD personnel to track the real-time status of referred cases, so that follow-up depends on periodic updates from the concerned offices. This observation reflects Fox's (2007) caution that receiving concerns does not by itself ensure answerability unless cases are monitored and their outcomes communicated.

Effectiveness of PACD Operational Services in Terms of Transparency and Accountability

Table 5 presents the assessment of transparency. PACD personnel rated transparency as Very Effective (M = 4.89, SD = 0.32), giving perfect ratings to the accessibility of information on PACD services, the disclosure of procedures and requirements, informing clients of the processes involved in handling their concerns, and providing sufficient information on actions taken, and slightly lower ratings (M = 4.67) to openness regarding the status of complaints and the availability of information on complaint resolution procedures. Clients likewise rated transparency as Very Effective (M = 4.68, SD = 0.60), with the provision of complete and accurate information rated highest (M = 4.72) and the open communication of requirements and the availability of updates on concerns rated lowest (M = 4.64).

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Table 5. *Assessment of PACD Effectiveness in Terms of Transparency*

Indicator	WM	SD	VI
PACD Personnel			
Information about PACD services is readily accessible to clients.	5.00	0.00	VE
Service procedures and requirements are clearly disclosed.	5.00	0.00	VE
Clients are informed of the processes involved in handling their concerns.	5.00	0.00	VE
PACD promotes openness regarding the status of complaints and requests.	4.67	0.58	VE
Clients are provided sufficient information to understand actions taken on their concerns.	5.00	0.00	VE
Information regarding complaint resolution procedures is readily available to clients.	4.67	0.58	VE
Composite Mean	4.89	0.32	VE
Clients			
PACD provides complete and accurate information.	4.72	0.58	VE
Procedures are clearly explained to clients.	4.69	0.56	VE
Service requirements are communicated openly.	4.64	0.63	VE
Updates regarding concerns are readily available.	4.64	0.66	VE
PACD promotes openness in handling client concerns.	4.70	0.57	VE
Composite Mean	4.68	0.60	VE

Note. 4.21–5.00 = Very Effective (VE); 3.41–4.20 = Effective; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Effective; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Effective; 1.00–1.80 = Not Effective.

Table 6 presents the assessment of accountability. PACD personnel rated accountability as Very Effective (M = 4.94, SD = 0.24), with perfect ratings on adherence to procedures, documentation of actions, acceptance of responsibility for service outcomes, implementation of corrective actions, and explanation of actions taken, and a slightly lower rating on addressing complaints within reasonable timeframes (M = 4.67). Clients also rated accountability as Very Effective (M = 4.65, SD = 0.57), rating highest the statement that PACD personnel take responsibility for concerns received (M = 4.72) and lowest the proper documentation of actions taken (M = 4.60).

Table 6. *Assessment of PACD Effectiveness in Terms of Accountability*

Indicator	WM	SD	VI
PACD Personnel			
PACD personnel adhere to established procedures.	5.00	0.00	VE
Complaints are addressed within reasonable timeframes.	4.67	0.58	VE
Actions taken are properly documented.	5.00	0.00	VE
PACD personnel accept responsibility for service outcomes.	5.00	0.00	VE
Corrective actions are implemented when necessary.	5.00	0.00	VE
PACD personnel provide explanations for actions taken on client concerns.	5.00	0.00	VE
Composite Mean	4.94	0.24	VE
Clients			
PACD personnel take responsibility for concerns received.	4.72	0.50	VE
Complaints are acted upon appropriately.	4.63	0.57	VE
Actions taken are properly documented.	4.60	0.61	VE
PACD follows established policies and procedures.	4.66	0.59	VE
PACD demonstrates commitment to resolving concerns.	4.62	0.59	VE
Composite Mean	4.65	0.57	VE

Note. 4.21–5.00 = Very Effective (VE); 3.41–4.20 = Effective; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Effective; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Effective; 1.00–1.80 = Not Effective.

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Overall, PACD personnel rated transparency and accountability with a grand mean of 4.92 and clients with a grand mean of 4.67, both interpreted as Very Effective. That personnel gave slightly higher ratings than clients across both dimensions may reflect their direct involvement in implementing PACD procedures and their familiarity with internal mechanisms; nevertheless, both groups were aligned in their favorable assessment. The relatively lower ratings on the status of complaints, availability of updates, and timeliness of complaint handling are consistent with the view that accountability requires not only disclosure but also answerability and follow-through (Schedler, 1999; Bovens, 2007), and they mirror the concern with referral tracking identified in the operational services.

Level of Client Satisfaction

Table 7 presents the level of client satisfaction with PACD services. All indicators were rated Very Effective, with a composite mean of 4.68 (SD = 0.54). Clients rated highest their satisfaction with the service provided (M = 4.73) and respectful treatment by PACD personnel (M = 4.72), and lowest their overall experience with the PACD (M = 4.64). The low standard deviations indicate a strong level of agreement among clients, reflecting consistently favorable service experiences, consistent with the New Public Service emphasis on responsive, citizen-centered service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

Table 7. *Level of Client Satisfaction with PACD Services*

Indicator	WM	SD	VI
I am satisfied with the service provided by PACD.	4.73	0.52	VE
PACD responded adequately to my concern.	4.66	0.55	VE
PACD personnel treated me respectfully.	4.72	0.52	VE
My experience with PACD was positive.	4.64	0.55	VE
Overall, I am satisfied with PACD services.	4.66	0.58	VE
Composite Mean	4.68	0.54	VE

Note. 4.21–5.00 = Very Effective (VE); 3.41–4.20 = Effective; 2.61–3.40 = Moderately Effective; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Effective; 1.00–1.80 = Not Effective.

Relationships among PACD Operational Services, Transparency, Accountability, and Client Satisfaction

Table 8 presents the results of the correlation analyses. PACD operational services showed very strong, positive, and significant relationships with transparency ($r = .833$, $p < .001$) and accountability ($r = .891$, $p < .001$); thus, the first null hypothesis was rejected. Transparency ($r = .808$, $p < .001$) and accountability ($r = .886$, $p < .001$) likewise showed very strong, positive, and significant relationships with client satisfaction, leading to the rejection of the second and third null hypotheses.

Table 8. *Correlations among PACD Operational Services, Transparency, Accountability, and Client Satisfaction*

Variables	r	p-value	Interpretation
Operational Services and Transparency	0.833	< .001	Very strong positive; significant
Operational Services and Accountability	0.891	< .001	Very strong positive; significant
Transparency and Client Satisfaction	0.808	< .001	Very strong positive; significant
Accountability and Client Satisfaction	0.886	< .001	Very strong positive; significant

Note. Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). Reject H_0 if $p < 0.05$.

These results indicate that better PACD operational services are associated with higher levels of transparency and accountability, and that clients who perceived the PACD as transparent and accountable tended to report greater satisfaction. Clients appeared more satisfied when PACD personnel provided complete and accurate information, clearly explained procedures and requirements, and maintained openness in addressing concerns, which supports Fox's (2007) view that openness and access to information strengthen public confidence and is consistent with findings linking quality information and good governance to trust (Mabillard & Pasquier, 2015; Mansoor, 2021). Likewise, clients who perceived the PACD as following procedures, documenting actions, taking responsibility, and showing commitment to resolving concerns reported higher satisfaction, consistent with Accountability Theory (Schedler, 1999). Because the analysis was correlational, these relationships indicate

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association rather than causation, which is consistent with the caution that service performance and trust are linked in complex ways (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003).

Themes from the PACD Personnel Interviews

Six themes emerged from the interviews with PACD personnel (Table 9). Transparency was promoted through official guidelines, customer assistance counters, websites, social media, public advisories, and regular client updates, while accountability was maintained through documentation, complaint tracking, assignment of responsibilities, and supervisory review. The personnel identified high client volume, limited manpower, system interruptions, inter-office coordination, and managing client expectations as operational challenges, and cited prompt and courteous assistance, adherence to procedures, teamwork, documentation, and regular follow-up as best practices. They recommended further digitalization, improved complaint tracking, continuous personnel development, stronger feedback mechanisms, and wider information campaigns. Finally, the personnel reported that PACD functions were performed in addition to their regular plantilla duties, which created workload challenges and affected monitoring, follow-up, and the timeliness of responses.

Table 9. *Themes from the PACD Personnel Interviews*

Theme	Emerging Issues and Insights	Representative Response
Transparency Practices	Dissemination of accurate information, public advisories, service guidelines, and regular client updates through multiple channels.	"Information is provided through official guidelines, customer assistance counters, websites, social media platforms, and public advisories to ensure clients receive accurate and timely information."
Accountability Mechanisms	Documentation, monitoring systems, complaint tracking, assigned responsibilities, and supervisory review.	"Every complaint is recorded, monitored, and endorsed to the appropriate office. Supervisors regularly review records to ensure concerns are resolved within prescribed timelines."
Operational Challenges	High client volume, limited manpower, technical system issues, inter-office coordination, and managing client expectations.	"Peak transaction periods, system interruptions, and the need for coordination among different offices sometimes affect service efficiency and response time."
Best Practices	Prompt assistance, adherence to procedures, teamwork, proper documentation, and continuous communication with clients.	"Prompt responses, courteous service, proper documentation, and regular follow-up with clients contribute to effective PACD operations."
Recommendations for Improvement	Digitalization, enhanced complaint monitoring, continuous training, stronger feedback mechanisms, and improved information dissemination.	"The agencies should strengthen digital platforms, improve complaint tracking systems, provide continuous personnel development programs, and expand public information campaigns."
Dual Role and Personnel Designation	PACD functions performed alongside regular plantilla duties, creating workload challenges that affect monitoring, follow-up, and timeliness.	"PACD responsibilities are performed in addition to our regular office functions. During periods of heavy workload, balancing both responsibilities becomes challenging."

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results by showing how transparency and accountability are embedded in daily PACD operations, while also explaining the areas that received comparatively lower ratings. The challenges of coordination, complaint tracking, and workload under a dual-role arrangement help account for the lower ratings on referral and coordination, status updates, and timeliness. In terms of the New Public Service Theory (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), the PACD's citizen orientation is evident, but its sustained responsiveness depends on organizational arrangements that allow personnel to monitor and follow up on concerns consistently.

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Proposed Strategic Action Plan

Although PACD operational services, transparency, accountability, and client satisfaction were all rated Very Effective, the survey and interview results identified areas for continuous improvement. Table 10 presents the proposed Strategic Action Plan for Improving PACD Operational Services, which addresses referral and coordination, transparency, accountability, digitalization, personnel capability, the dual role of designated personnel, client feedback, and client satisfaction monitoring.

Table 10. *Proposed Strategic Action Plan for Improving PACD Operational Services*

Key Result Area	Finding/Issue	Proposed Activities	Responsible Office	Time Frame / Success Indicator
Referral and Coordination	Lowest-rated operational service for both groups	Designate focal persons and develop a referral tracking system	PACD and concerned units	6 months / reduced referral turnaround time
Transparency	Lower ratings on status updates and resolution information	Publish complaint process flow and status monitoring guidelines	PACD	6 months / improved transparency ratings
Accountability	Timeliness of complaint handling	Establish a complaint monitoring dashboard and resolution timelines	Agency head and PACD	1 year / increased on-time resolution rate
Digitalization	Interviewees recommended digital platforms and complaint tracking	Develop an online complaint tracking and feedback system	ICT and PACD	1 year / functional online tracking system
Personnel Capability	Need for continuous personnel development	Training on customer service, accountability, and grievance management	HR and PACD	Annually / number of personnel trained
Dual Role of Designated Personnel	PACD duties performed in addition to plantilla duties	Review workload distribution; designate dedicated PACD focal personnel where feasible	Agency management	1 year / reduced workload conflicts and improved monitoring
Client Feedback Mechanism	Need for wider client engagement	Strengthen surveys, QR-code feedback forms, and suggestion systems	PACD	Continuous / increased feedback participation
Client Satisfaction Monitoring	Need for institutionalized assessment	Conduct quarterly client satisfaction surveys	PACD and planning office	Quarterly / quarterly satisfaction reports

To address the lowest-rated operational service directly, a Pilot Complaint Referral and Monitoring System (PCRMS) was also proposed. Under the PCRMS, every complaint is assigned a control number, classified as a simple or complex case, encoded in a shared monitoring database, and referred through official channels; concerned offices provide periodic status updates, complainants are informed of the status of their concerns, and compliance with prescribed timelines is monitored and documented. Simple cases follow a timeline of logging and classification (Day 0), referral (Day 1), monitoring and follow-up (Day 2), and resolution and client feedback (Day 3), while complex cases follow logging and classification (Day 0), referral (Day 1), progress review (Day 5), and resolution and client feedback (Day 7). The success indicators include assignment of control numbers to

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all complaints, classification of all complaints within one working day, resolution of at least 90% of simple cases within three working days and of complex cases within seven working days, fewer delayed referrals, and improved client satisfaction with referral and coordination. The PCRMS is intended to be evaluated during the pilot phase before full implementation.

CONCLUSION

The Public Assistance and Complaints Desk serves effectively as a mechanism for promoting transparency and accountability in frontline government services in the participating agencies. Both PACD personnel and clients assessed its operational services, transparency, accountability, and client satisfaction as Very Effective, indicating that PACD operations contribute to responsive, accessible, and client-centered service delivery. The very strong positive relationships among operational services, transparency, accountability, and client satisfaction show that the quality of PACD operations is closely associated with clients' perceptions of openness and answerability and with their satisfaction.

The interviews confirmed that transparency and accountability are embedded in PACD operations through information dissemination, documentation, monitoring, and adherence to procedures. At the same time, referral and coordination, complaint tracking, and the timeliness of updates remain areas for improvement, and the performance of PACD functions by designated personnel alongside their regular plantilla duties may affect workload management, follow-up, response timeliness, and accountability, suggesting that the organizational arrangement of the PACD influences the sustainability of its effectiveness.

Recommendation

Government agencies may sustain the operational practices that contributed to the favorable ratings and adopt the proposed Strategic Action Plan and the Pilot Complaint Referral and Monitoring System. PACD offices may strengthen referral and coordination by designating focal persons in concerned units, establishing systematic coordination procedures, and adopting digital platforms for complaint tracking, monitoring, documentation, and communication. Agency management may review personnel assignments and workload distribution and, where resources permit, assign dedicated PACD personnel or establish backup schedules and alternate focal persons to ensure continuity during heavy workload, leave, training, or official travel; agencies with high transaction volumes may consider establishing dedicated PACD positions with clearly defined responsibilities.

Human resource offices may provide regular training on customer service, grievance management, transparency, accountability, and digital service delivery. Agencies may institutionalize periodic client satisfaction surveys and feedback mechanisms and expand physical and digital means of informing clients about services and the status of their concerns. Future researchers may include additional government agencies, larger samples of PACD personnel, and other governance-related variables that may influence PACD effectiveness and client satisfaction.

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