

## **Preliminary Study on Accountability of Social Organisations Directed Towards Social Public-Private Partnership in Malaysia**

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### **Abstract**

Solving social issues such as homelessness, youth unemployment, reoffending prisoners and drug abuse has traditionally been the government's responsibility and consumed many public expenditures. An emerging initiative in many countries is moving from a single-handed approach to a collaborative approach between the government, private organisations and social organisations in enhancing social development. The government and private organisations provide the funds the social purpose organisations require to deliver their social goods. As a result, social purpose organisations must demonstrate accountability in managing the funds and delivering their social goods. This study reports the preliminary results of the information on accountability in the annual reports and Finance Information Form or Borang Maklumat Kewangan (BMK) of social purpose organisations registered with The Companies Commission of Malaysia or Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM). The findings demonstrate that Malaysian social purpose organisations are improving their accountability despite lacking a specific governance framework for the NPO sector. The theoretical reporting model covered in this paper also helps social organisations uphold their responsibility to be accountable. While this is happening, the framework also explicitly addresses the crucial components of accountability and reported information quality, ensuring that the available data gives funders and other significant stakeholders the knowledge they need to make decisions with the greatest possible social impact. This is significant because public-private partnerships are becoming increasingly popular in Malaysia and have been shown to benefit the state, the private sector, and nonprofit groups in numerous ways.

**Keywords:** Social Private and Public Partnership Initiatives, Social Purpose Organisations, Accountability, Social Issues.

### **Introduction**

The government has traditionally been responsible for resolving social problems, requiring significant public spending. An emerging initiative is changing how the government,

private organisations, and social organisations work together to improve social development from a one-person approach to a collaborative one. This collaborative approach is known as "Social Private and Public Partnership" or SPPP. SPPP is an initiative under Malaysia's National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS). SPPP taps into the strengths of the government, the private sector, and the social sector to address social disparities by looking at new ways of delivering social service. SPPP strives towards strengthening collaboration through a whole-society approach as part of strategies for 'Translating Innovation to Wealth', one of the six game changers under the 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. In this situation, the government and private organisations give the social organisations the money they need to deliver their social goods.

The SPPP aims to foster collaboration between the public and corporate sectors to support the nonprofit (NPO) sector in creating influential and groundbreaking solutions for social issues. Social-purpose organisations (SPOs) or nonprofit organisations (NPOs) will receive support from a consortium of prominent SPOs and a network of other SPOs working on the same project. This support will include funding and professional development guidance. MaGIC's<sup>1</sup> social entrepreneurship unit will provide capacity-building to SPOs to ensure the project is effectively managed and administered.

Therefore, the SPOs must demonstrate their dependability and capacity to manage the funds and pertinent activities effectively and efficiently before receiving the funding. It is essential that the SPOs can prove they are accountable for managing the funds and providing social goods. However, in the current situation, it is challenging for stakeholders to obtain information about the accountability of SPOs due to the need for a specific framework to communicate their accountability. Multiple regulators of SPOs in Malaysia resulted in the sector not having a standard reporting requirement and lacking transparency, as not all information is publicly available. Studies found that Malaysian SPOs face minimum regulatory requirements with no financial reporting and governance framework (Arshad et al., 2012; Atan et al., 2012).

Hence, this study aims to obtain preliminary information on the accountability position of SPOs in Malaysia, and the specific goal is to determine the current level of SPO accountability in Malaysia. For that purpose, this study uses disclosure, known as the medium of accountability. Specifically, one of many ways of demonstrating accountability is through disclosure, which is a form of accountability to the public (Nor et al., 2019). The disclosure incorporates the main components of accountability and the quality of information reported. Ultimately, the information reported provides relevant information to fund providers and other relevant stakeholders in making effective decisions that will contribute to social impact maximisation in Malaysia. Subsequently, this study further examines the SPPP in Malaysia and the literature on SPO accountability is described in more detail. The significance of SPOs in demonstrating their accountability through reporting, discussions on the methodology and

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<sup>1</sup>The Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC) is bringing together the private sector, finance providers, universities and government agencies by providing end-to-end support to entrepreneurs. Magic creates unprecedented value by orchestrating the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Malaysia through a 1-stop centre that offers entrepreneurs hands-on training, mentoring, co-working spaces and tailored support. This relatively low-cost approach will help the nation attract creative domestic and international entrepreneurial talent to launch high-growth start-ups and position Malaysia as the regional hub of entrepreneurial activity. More info can be retrieved at <http://mymagic.my/en/>

findings followed. This study will conclude with its limitations and recommendations for additional research.

### Social private and public Partnership (SPPP) in Malaysia

The SPPP initiative is a public, private, and NPO partnership programme to develop initial responses to social problems. Social enterprises, non-government organisations, and community-based organisations are organisations with a social purpose. The SPPP has been considered an effective tool for ensuring sustainability (Wang & Ma, 2021). It has also been claimed that PPP could alleviate the impact of shortages of fiscal funds in government procurement whilst making full use of the private sector's expertise,

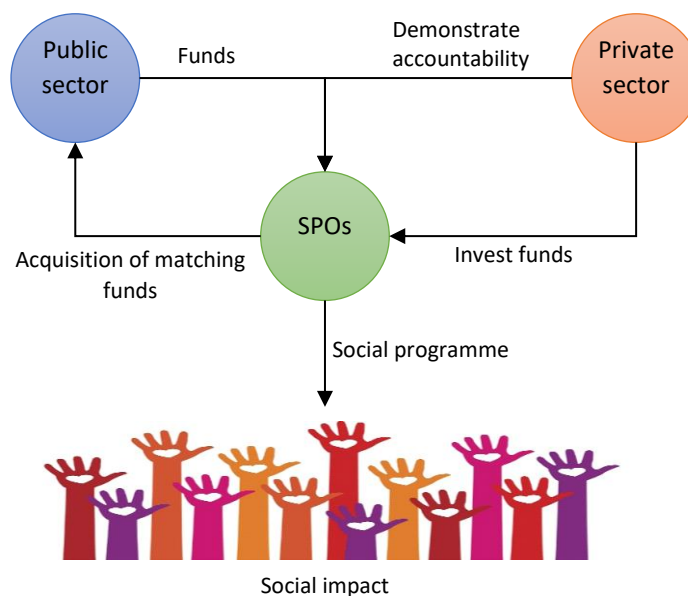


Diagram 1: Flowchart of SPPP initiatives

Experience and technological innovation (Scheyvens et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2016), as well as mitigating, to an extent, the problems of government and market failure (Koppenjan & Enserink, 2009).

The SPPP initiative involves three interested groups: SPOs, the private sector as investors and the government as associated organisations as matching fund providers. The SPPP model is in line with the impact investing concept. This concept encourages investors to invest in social programmes with measurable social and financial returns. In many developed countries, this concept is refined to incorporate evidence-based performance as a basis for the governments and associated institutions to pay the amount initially provided by the investors to the social programmes. The advantages of this concept are: (i) it brings financial capital to the social organisations to run their social programmes, (ii) it transfers the risks of the social programmes from the governments and associated institutions to the investors and the social organisations and (iii) it provides motivations for the social organisations to optimise their capabilities in delivering sustainable and measurable social outputs from their social programmes. Diagram 1 illustrates the flowchart of the SPPP initiative for easy reference.

The SPPP model adopted in the above diagram is the first SPPP model introduced by the *Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia (YIM)* in Malaysia under the Government Transformation

Programme and National Blue Ocean Strategy initiatives in finding innovative approaches to delivering high-impact, low-cost, and rapidly executed public services to the society. As a result, there are some differences between the adopted model and the more developed application of the impact investing concept. The phases involved in implementing the SPPP model in Malaysia are as follows: It starts with the social organisations identifying the social intervention programmes that can bring measurable social outcomes. This is followed by the social organisations securing funds from private organisations or investors to run the social intervention programmes. After that, the SPOs will acquire matching funds from the governments and related institutions. In contrast to the more developed SPPP model, during this phase, governments and related institutions pay back the investors' initial investment based on quantifiably improved social outcomes of social projects that result in actual public financial savings (such as less crime and an increase in youth employment).

As mentioned earlier, the likelihood of the model being successfully implemented is increased by two key factors. The availability of funds comes first, followed by the evaluation of social outcomes. In Malaysia, various funds, including those designated for corporate social responsibility and Islamic social financings, such as Zakat and Waqf, can fill the funding gap for social programmes. In this context, introducing the SPPP model is timely as it provides an innovative platform for utilising conventional and Islamic social financing effectively and efficiently. Second, the SPOs must communicate that they can deliver the social objectives effectively and efficiently. The information reported will facilitate the private organisations or investors and the government or associate organisations to assess and monitor the performance of the social investors. More importantly, the governance practices of social organisations must be adequate in ensuring the effective delivery of social objectives.

In terms of literature, various studies link the social dimension and the SPPP initiative. Scholars like Berrone et al (2019); Ezebilo and Animasaun (2012); Marx (2019); Yu et al (2018) were among that explore the SPPP in many prepositions such as equal, sustainable partnership, transparency and accountability. The latest was by Wang and Ma (2021), for example, who contributed to the body of knowledge on the literature of the SPPP.

### **Accountability in SPOs under SPPP**

Accountability is a complex, elusive, abstract, multifaceted and contested issue that can be approached differently depending on the role, institutional context, era and political perspective (Fombad, 2012). For-profit organisations, such as those that prioritise accountability, primarily depend on investors and creditors as the primary funding sources to maximise profits. On the other hand, SPOs prioritise the attainment of social objectives. They will be assessed regarding social achievements, namely, how effectively they meet the needs of beneficiaries and fund providers and public support for their activities and events (Pratten, 2004).

Conceptually, SPOs function with integrity and efficiency to effectively enhance their societal influence, as its establishment is driven by the objective and impetus to execute philanthropic endeavours. Nevertheless, with the increasing occurrence of asset misappropriation cases, there is a growing requirement for accountability within the NPO sector. Since stakeholders, particularly resource providers under the SPPP model, are more inclined to back an initiative only if their trust and confidence diminish, SPOs must exercise great prudence. Accountability in the context of SPPPs is crucial for ensuring that these partnerships operate effectively, transparently, and in the best interests of all stakeholders.

Accountability is, therefore, a crucial quality for SPOs to develop and preserve public and funding sources' support and trust.

The accountability concern for SPOs in the above SPPP model has an added element where there is a new affiliation between the resource providers and the SPOs. This is consistent with Mulgan (2003) definition of accountability in the context of the social dimension, "a social interaction involving rights on the part of the account holder and obligations on the part of the actor to justify and explain their conduct". Bovens (2007) then builds on the social dimension by describing accountability as "a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor must explain and justify his or her conduct to the forum, which may, in turn, pose questions and pass judgment". Both definitions reflect the hierarchical accountability structure in SPPP, where NPOs see themselves as accountable for reporting, defending or explaining their actions to others and subject to penalties for mistakes and failings (Fombad, 2013). Following that, Fombad (2013) noted that the hierarchical accountability approach in general private and public partnerships (PPP) or SPPP serves as a check and a motivation for holding those in SPPP accountable.

Additionally, SPOs can establish credibility with both their upward and downward stakeholders. Moreover, such activities can strengthen the SPO's credentials, including their credibility, reputation, trust, and integrity, strengthening their beneficiaries' trust and support (Slim, 2002). Though the resource providers are the critical component of the SPPP model in Malaysia, this paper emphasises the accountability to upward stakeholders, who are the resource providers.

In the last few years, due to increasing scandals involving SPOs, more resource providers (private and public sector) require SPOs to demonstrate how they perform and whether they are managed efficiently and effectively (Arvidson & Lyon, 2014). Such expectations infer the necessity for documentation and communication of SPOs' performance. This, in turn, increases the pressure on governmental and private funders to demand performance management systems in the NPO sector (Greiling, 2009). In response to the demand, the SPOs can communicate their accountability through formal reporting mechanisms (the statutory annual report) and additional voluntary reports (i.e. annual reviews) (A. Ebrahim, 2003b; Goodin, 2003). SPO disclosure is arguably one of the essential mediums by which a SPO communicates with its stakeholders (Best et al., 2022; Dhanani & Connolly, 2012a; A. S. Ebrahim, 2010). Disclosures on SPOs' activity, financial information, and others in the annual reports and other available disclosures mitigate information deficits between the SPOs and their stakeholders and enhance the organisation's accountability. In the context of the SPPP model, the SPOs need to demonstrate their accountability to attract fund providers to invest in their activities. Hence, there is a need to guide the SPOs through an appropriate framework to report on their accountability.

Discharging accountability is an essential concern for SPOs as it will portray their efficiency and effectiveness. In Malaysia, the number of SPOs registered with the Registry of Societies (ROS) and Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) is reported to be more than 30 thousand in 2021. This reflects the size and influence of the sector as well as increased visibility and public scrutiny (Beattie et al., 2002; Best et al., 2022; Katz, 2005; Pratten, 2004). To address the lack of confidence between SPOs and their stakeholders, implementing a transparent accountability system allows SPOs to be held accountable for their activities, which can mitigate ambiguity and enhance the stability and certainty of their stakeholders. In this context, the communicated accountability acts as a mechanism of official oversight and control imposed on the organisation (see Buhr, 2001; Ebrahim, 2003b, 2003a, 2009; Edwards

& Hulme, 1996; John Roberts, 2001; Najam, 1996; Roberts, 1991; Sinclair, 1995). This is consistent with the view of accountability as a “medium of relationship” in which people are required to explain their actions through “the giving and demanding of reasons for conduct” (Johansen, 2008; Sinclair, 1995).

### **Signalling theory and accountability in SPOs under SPPP**

Signalling theory (ST) helps describe the behaviour when two parties (individuals or organisations) access different information. Typically, one party, the sender, must choose whether and how to communicate (or signal) that information, and the other party, the receiver, must choose how to interpret the signal. In detail, stakeholder trust and support are critical to an organisation’s survival and success (Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Baum & Oliver, 1991; Kujala et al., 2022). The SPOs then use their disclosure as a medium to get this trust and support by portraying accountability disclosure practice information. The statement aligns with Friske et al (2023) study that concludes reporting is initially a costly signal but eventually enhances firm value as companies learn how to communicate sustainability initiatives to stakeholders better. Investors learn how to evaluate reports properly. In addition, using social media as disclosure is also seen as very significant for SPOs now. Harris et al. (2023) discovered that social media can replace traditional fundraising costs, indicating that new media alters how donors interact. Regardless of the communication method SPOs employ to demonstrate their responsibility, it indicates that the purpose of SPOs is to validate their actions by assuring stakeholders of their trustworthiness and ability to deliver the offered service.

This approach is used for social motivation, driven by a divergent interest to maximise stakeholders' trust and gain better support by utilisation of internal superior resources. Social motivation refers to disclosing accountability information to SPOs to demonstrate their ethical concerns and inform stakeholders of their social responsibility (Bini & Bellucci, 2020). In ST, a primary distinction is made between information signalling the quality and intent of an organisation. Quality signals relate to communicating a specific organisational characteristic to obtain legitimacy with signal receivers (e.g., disclosure quality). Signals of intent “indicate future action, possibly conditional on the receiver’s response” (Connelly et al., 2011). Through these signals, the organisation informs stakeholders about their aspirations or resolutions, which they accept as a sign of legitimation. Scholars have also suggested that organisations may signal their disclosure quality in response to stakeholder demands or to differentiate themselves from competitors, providing them with greater legitimacy in the marketplace (Clarke & Gibson-Sweet, 1999; Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Usman, 2020).

The study illustrates diagram 2 for quick reference to show the ST's relationship between accountability, SPPP, and SPOs. According to the diagram, the SPOs' disclosure signals to all entities, including those in the public and private sectors and their stakeholders. Generally, the signal concerns a legitimate strategy to obtain social approvals, potentially reflecting the stakeholders' reputation perception. For the legitimate strategy to obtain social approvals, this directly affects the SPOs stakeholders. It means that after stakeholders assess and gain the trust and support of NPOs, the perception of reputation begins to arise.

Meanwhile, the stakeholders’ perception of reputation is about obtaining a competitive advantage strategy to establish trust, good relations, and reputational value. This link is associated with the public and private sectors because SPOs need all the elements to have a good rapport with those entities. Therefore, signalling through disclosure is very important

for SPOs, and overall, ST unites all the elements in the SPPP process to create a suitable environment for social services in Malaysia.

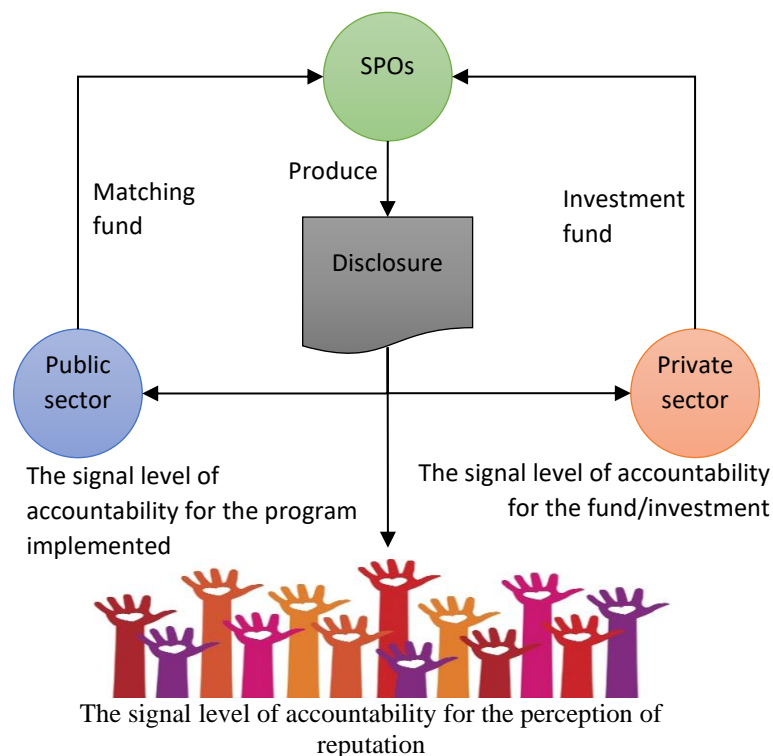


Diagram 2: How resources providers discharge Accountability disclosures for the SPPP initiative

### Research Approach

The study opted to use quantity measurement based on the premise that more detailed disclosure gives stakeholders more information for valuation (Blankespoor et al., 2020), and a higher level of disaggregation enhances the credibility of firms' financial reports (Bui et al., 2023). In terms of measurement, the study used the weighted accountability index (ADI) used by (Dhanani and Connolly, 2012b; Arshad et al., 2012). This method is suitable as it will measure the level of accountability in quantity. Quantity can refer to the presence or absence of information on the degree of accountability practises of the SPOs. The reasons for adopting this method are that the index was constructed from the accountability literature, analysis of annual reports, and practitioners' opinions, allowing for differences in the quality of individual disclosures (Wei et al., 2008) and the index was subsequently externally validated using data from various public sectors and countries (see Abu Bakar, 2016; Ismail & Abu Bakar, 2011; Nelson et al., 1997; Ahmad & Haraf, 2013; Saxton & Guo, 2011).

### Sample and Data Collection

The SPOs selected to be the samples were those registered with the SSM. The data were gathered from the annual reports and *Borang Maklumat Kewangan* (BMK) for the financial period 2021. Examples of information collected from the annual reports are details on the directors, financial statements and the programmes held by the SPOs. Examples of information collected from the BMK are bank information details and annual expenditures details. The final sample consists of 210 SPOs. The research approach used in this study is content analysis. Content analysis has been widely used to study the content of documents

in a systematic, objective and quantitative mode (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Hackston & Milne, 1996).

### **Accountability Index**

Due to the absence of a dedicated accounting standard for the NPO sector in Malaysia, NPOs registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM) are currently adopting accounting standards primarily designed for private-sector reporting entities. The study will analyse the categories of accountability based on a review of previous studies on the accountability of NPOs, such as (Dhanani and Connolly, 2012b; Ebrahim, 2010). It will also consider mandatory disclosures mandated by the Societies Act 1966, recommended practices by regulatory authorities, and industry norms. The recommended practices of governance and accountability of NPOs are significant, as outlined in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)<sup>2</sup> Report, Asia Pacific Group (APG) Mutual Evaluation 2007, and APG Typology 2011.

Many officials from SSM and academicians who specialise in reporting on NPOs have verified the categories above and accountability items. The verified items are subsequently compared to the information found in the annual reports and BMK for 30 randomly chosen SPOs. This ensures that the items will be removed from the validated list if they meet the specified SPOs. Following that, 21 items are encompassed inside the accountability index. The index is then employed to gauge the degree of accountability by juxtaposing the contents of each annual report and BMK against the items in the index and assigning a code of "1" for disclosed items and "0" for undisclosed items. Similar to earlier research, disclosure items deemed irrelevant to a corporation will not be subject to penalties.

In order to determine the relevance of a specific item, a thorough examination of the entire annual report and BMK will be conducted to ensure that no equivalent information exists elsewhere in these documents. This evaluation must be completed before making any conclusion on the topic. The accountability index (ADI) score for each SPO is determined by dividing the actual score awarded to the organisation by the highest potential score awarded to that organisation. The following formula determines the calculation of the accountability score:

$$ADI_j = \frac{\sum^n X_{ij}}{21} \times 100$$

Where:

n= number of indicators disclosed

X<sub>ij</sub> = 1 if the indicator is disclosed and '0' if otherwise

The total score ADI<sub>j</sub> represents the number of points awarded to NPO<sub>j</sub>. It is an ordinal measure of the level of ADI for each organisation and is unweighted. The weighted or unweighted index has produced almost equivalent results by past researchers (e.g. Chow & Wong-Boren, 1987; Gray et al., 1995).

Four critical themes of accountability are identified for this study: strategic, fiduciary, principles, and procedural. First, strategic accountability relates to an organisation's

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<sup>2</sup> The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an authoritative organisation founded in 1989 with the mandate to formulate legislative and political measures aimed at combating money laundering and the funding of terrorism. APG assesses the adherence of NPOs operating in the Asia Pacific region to the recommended standards set by FATF. Malaysia joined the APG on May 31, 2000, and partially complied with the initial audit.



commitment to effectively achieving its mission and goals. It involves aligning activities and decisions with the organisation's strategic objectives. Second, fiduciary accountability centres around the responsible and ethical management of financial resources. It emphasises the duty of individuals or entities to manage funds and assets in the best interests of stakeholders, particularly those who have entrusted the organisation with financial resources. Third, principles accountability refers to an organisation's adherence to ethical principles, values, and standards. It encompasses the organisation's commitment to upholding integrity, fairness, and ethical conduct in all aspects of its work. Finally, Procedural accountability involves establishing and adhering to processes and procedures that ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in organisational decision-making and operations. The four key themes of accountability, their measurements and their descriptions are summarised in the following table.

Table 1  
*Accountability Themes*

	Measurements	Descriptions
<b>Strategic</b>		
a) Committee Structure	Evidence of Committee Structure and Charters	There is an existence committee in the organisation
b) Finance Committee	Evidence of separation of the audit committee from the finance committee	The existence of a finance committee
c) Strategic Plan	Evidence of a written strategic plan	The principal activity of the organisation
d) Individual Donations	Evidence of all members of the board financially support the organisation	Requirement of several financial contributions by the board members
e) Fundraising Costs	Evidence of fundraising costs is accurately reported	Any fund or donation raised is reported
f) Received by Beneficiaries	Evidence of funds received by the beneficiaries that were sent to them	Notes to the Account-Donations paid to the stakeholders
g) Tax-Exempt Status	Evidence of compliance and reporting requirements are known and regularly reviewed to identify possible threats to tax-exempt status.	The organisation is exempted from being taxable
h) Financial Reports	Evidence of financial reports that are accurate, easy to understand and timely	Income statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement
i) Financial Summaries	Evidence of summary of financial reports	There is a summary of the financial reports of the organisation

<b>Fiduciary</b>		
a) Committees, Authorities and Responsibilities	Evidence of types of committees and responsibilities	There is disclosure on types of committees and also the responsibilities
b) Management Accountability	Evidence of functional accountabilities for the management	Activities and programmes held involving the beneficiaries
c) External Financial Audit	Evidence of external financial audit	Independent auditor's report
<b>Principles</b>		
a) Business and Operating Principles	Evidence of governance with operating and business principles	Expenses made by the organisation are aligned with the business principle
b) Core Beliefs	Evidence of Foundation for Culture	There are many kinds of contributions to the community by the organisation
c) Leadership Development	Evidence of leadership Succession, assessment and development responsibilities	Director's report
d) Management and Incentives	Evidence of Alignment of performance management to incentive plans	There is a training programme for the staff
e) Community	Evidence of representation of the organisation to government, business, agencies, funders, and community at large	Based on the programmes joined by the organisation
<b>Procedural</b>		
a) Policies	Evidence of any policy manuals	The existence of any policy adopted in the organisation
b) Fiscal Policies	Evidence of Fiscal Policies	Any contribution by the organisation needs to be approved by the selected committee.
c) Risk Management Policies	Evidence of procedures to safeguard against loss-human, financial and reputational	There are financial risk management policies in the organisation
d) Technology	Evidence of Alignment of Technology and Governance Requirements	Any purchase of technological tools

### Findings

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the overall accountability level and the four accountability themes.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Accountability*

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
ADI (%)	0.81	0.14	0.95	0.63
Strategic (%)	0.89	0.11	1.00	0.64
Fiduciary (%)	0.67	0.33	1.00	0.72
Principles (%)	0.80	0.20	1.00	0.52
Procedural (%)	0.75	0.25	1.00	0.68

Results in Table 2 reported that the mean value for the overall level of accountability is 63%, ranging from a minimum of 14% to a maximum of 95%. The results indicate a moderate level of accountability practices reported by the SPOs in Malaysia. The mean values for the four themes of governance accountability are strategic at 64%, fiduciary at 72%, principles at 52% and Procedural at 68%, respectively. The result supports the result of Dhanani and Connolly (2012), which demonstrated that the UK NPOs give more attention to strategic accountability. However, Dhanani and Connolly (2012) suggested that a high compliance level with Charity Commission guidance is why strategic accountability received more attention from the NPOs in the UK. Conversely, in Malaysia, where there is no guidance on disclosure, it is believed that the NPO would like to demonstrate their activities, achievements, and strategy to obtain stakeholders' trust, while financial information is to demonstrate that they are accountable.

Table 3

*Strategic Accountability*

<b>Strategic</b>	Number of SPOs	%
a) Committee Structure	93	0.44
b) Finance Committee	86	0.41
c) Strategic Plan	209	0.99
d) Individual Donations	31	0.15
e) Fundraising Costs	188	0.90
f) Received by Beneficiaries	87	0.41
g) Tax-Exempt Status	125	0.56
h) Financial Reports	189	0.90
i) Financial Summaries	201	0.96

Table 3 reported that less than 50% of the SPOs in the study sample reported such information in the context of strategic accountability, committee structure, finance committee, and the amount received by beneficiaries. However, the other components of strategic accountability are reported by many SPOs in the sample.

Table 4

*Fiduciary Accountability*

Fiduciary	Number of SPOs	%
a) Committees, Authorities and Responsibilities	86	0.40
b) Management Accountability	155	0.74
c) External Financial Audit	210	0.10

Table 4 reported that of the fiduciary accountability, all the NPOs in the sample reported that they had been externally audited as SSM mandatorily requires this. Concerning management accountability, 74% of the SPOs in the sample reported their activities and programmes involving their beneficiaries. However, only 40% of the SPOs reported the information on their committees, authorities and responsibilities. The voluntary nature of this information may reduce the SPO's motivation to provide the information.

Table 5

*Principles of Accountability*

Principles	Number of SPOs	%
a) Business and Operating Principles	155	0.74
b) Core Beliefs	76	0.36
c) Leadership Development	209	0.99
d) Management and Incentives	53	0.25
e) Community	57	0.27

Table 5 reported that most NPOs reported important business and operating principles and leadership development information. However, the lower level of information reported on the other components of principles of accountability indicates that less emphasis is being given to the other relevant stakeholders in promoting good governance and accountability.

Table 6

*Procedural Accountability*

Procedural	Number of SPOs	%
e) Policies	197	0.94
f) Fiscal Policies	164	0.78
g) Risk Management Policies	128	0.61
h) Technology	83	0.40

Table 6 reported that of the various components of procedural accountability, only 40% of the SPOs in the study sample reported only information on the technology component. Procedural accountability may be reasonably good as most SPOs registered with SSM are large SPOs. Larger SPOs are expected to have the infrastructure resources.

**Analysis**

For strategic accountability, the extent of accounting disclosures made in the annual reports of publicly reporting SPOs is influenced by financial information (see financial reports, fundraising costs, financial summary and tax-exempt status). It is not surprising as strategic accountability items include the SPO important information, known as narrative information. Thus, it is justified that SPOs produce more financial information than others. This remark is

analogous to Connolly and Dhanani's (2009) study, which concludes the same. However, they accessed the disclosure patterns of accounting narratives within 71 UK fundraising charities, while this study used 210 SPOs. In specific to financial items in strategic accountability, financial statements are the essential tool to exhibit the effectiveness of management objectives and to implement the functions of accountability for the resources assigned to an organisation Eivani et al (2012) and should be used as a foundation for making decisions concerning the allocation of the resources (Botosan, 2019).

For fiduciary accountability, an external financial audit is the choice of SPOs to be displayed in their reporting compared to other items. This revolves around management control systems and accountability processes, which support the realisation of the mission in SPOs with stakeholders. According to Conaty and Robbins (2023), their research findings suggest that incorporating a stakeholder-oriented methodology into practice can result in an efficient service delivery process. The discovery of additional data highlighting the excessive focus on stakeholder accountability within the organisation's goal reveals ongoing deficiencies in SPOs' accountability procedures unless this unequal distribution of power is addressed. The study conducted by Conaty and Robbins (2023) also demonstrates the significance of management in deliberately creating control systems, among other strategies, to communicate the recognised power imbalance. They also propose that this might be accomplished by integrating and overseeing internal advocacy initiatives, promoting the empowerment of service users, and facilitating accountable relationships and communication.

Selected SPOs may emphasise leadership development as a critical aspect of the significant accountability category. Accountability and governance typically exist together (Abhayawansa et al., 2021). Thus, leadership is essential for fostering business responsibility, transparency, and ethical conduct. Several scholars have acknowledged this connection by asserting that leadership plays a crucial role in improving transparency in corporate accountability (Taştan & Davoudi, 2019).

The findings of this investigation can be deemed precise when viewed from the perspective of the SPOs themselves. Public officials responsible for service delivery are facing increasing pressure to provide evidence of the origin and use of public resources and enhance their effectiveness in delivering services (Manaf et al., 2023). The quest for enhancing the accountability of administrators has been conceptualised within managerial frameworks of administrative reform (Sinclair, 1995).

Procedural accountability demonstrates the crucial role of policies in enabling SPOs to demonstrate their capabilities to stakeholders. The preliminary investigation conducted by Atan et al. (2018) demonstrated that each of the five dimensions of CISs (compliance, policies and norms, organisational culture, leadership, ethical training and education, and whistleblowing) make a substantial contribution to the favourable accountability results of NPOs. The significance of establishing a comprehensive and organised understanding of transparent and voluntary information disclosure in the industry is emphasised in a recent study conducted by (Ortega-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Transparency in this context pertains to the capacity of SPOs to disclose comprehensive information, including their overarching policies, openly.

The patterns also indicate that the items are disclosed in a selected manner. For instance, items such as the financial report and others of the exact nature are given more attention. This serves as an effective means to convey the SPO's capabilities and plans to

stakeholders. The financial reports serve as more than just a summary of the SPO's performance in the previous year. They provide an occasion to emphasise the SPO's significant accomplishments, projections for the upcoming year, and the extent to which the SPO has been able to meet its overall aims and objectives.

Other categories, such as fiduciaries, also receive significant focus since they provide a valuable chance for SPOs to directly communicate with NPO stakeholders and the public about their achievements in managing risks and maintaining internal control. There are multiple potential rationales for the selection criteria. To begin with, the items reveal trends in the chosen samples, indicating that an organisation's information disclosures are influenced by asymmetric information (Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Verrecchia, 2001). Disclosure aims to alleviate the issue of uneven dissemination of information, known as information asymmetry, between SPOs and stakeholders. SPOs possess comprehensive knowledge of the internal workings and matters of the institution. Therefore, the information revealed indicates the decision made by SPOs in choosing which items to divulge.

Furthermore, SPOs with positive news, such as improved performance, are more inclined to be discerning in their choices. This is because such news can enhance goodwill and financial resources. The study conducted by Dhanani and Connolly (2012a) demonstrates that numerous NPOs only included favourable news articles in their annual reports. Their findings demonstrate that the average volume of damaging disclosures was much smaller than that of positive disclosures. The outcome implies the implementation of selectivity among SPOs. Furthermore, it has been noted that certain SPOs tend to reveal more financial items than strategic items. Monetary incentives drive this type of behaviour or trend.

Furthermore, it is noted that SPOs utilise their disclosure to communicate favourable information to their stakeholders and the general public. This is supported by the presence of elements within the category of principles (leadership development) and the category of procedures (policy). Both items showed superior performance compared to the others, suggesting that the practices are consistent with the theoretical framework of ST utilised in this study to support the accountability disclosure practice. The signalling strategies employed by NPOs to communicate with their stakeholders, funders, and patrons are consistent with the theories proposed by (Ebrahim, 2003b; 2005; O'Dwyer and Unerman, 2007, 2008). Given the absence of a designated reporting framework, NPOs can choose the specific information they choose to reveal. From an alternative perspective, the selected elements must be significant to the SPOs.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research**

Traditional social service delivery methods are only partially effective and consume considerable public expenditure. The private sector's corporate social responsibilities (CSR) can no longer address systemic social ills. SPOs, on the other hand, often need more resources and professionalism to scale and achieve broad impact. For these reasons, the government has developed the SPPP model, a new initiative to curb social issues by involving private, public and SPOs. However, the collaboration between the private, public and SPOs needs a special connection whereby the SPOs need to show that they are accountable enough to get the funds. This study then reports the preliminary results of the information on accountability in the annual reports and BMK of SPOs registered with SSM. The findings in this study suggest that SPOs in Malaysia are making efforts in the right direction even without a specific governance framework for the NPO sector. However, the minimum values reported: ADI at 14%, strategic at 11%, fiduciary at 33% and procedural at 25% should concern the regulatory

authorities. In identifying the relevant policies for the NPO sector, it is recommended that future research examines the perceptions of those responsible within the SPOs on the issues related to the lack of transparency and accountability. Expected findings will provide insights into the various measures that can be considered in formulating enhanced reporting, accountability, governance, efficiency and performance of SPOs. It is equally crucial for the regulators to promote the recommended policies that can produce advantages for the sector. For example, enhanced transparency through annual reports is an essential mechanism for the SPOs to manage and communicate their accountability more effectively and, in doing so, build greater trust and support with the relevant stakeholders. This paper contributes to existing accountability literature by giving scholars and researchers brief information in understanding the nature of the SPPP model in a developing environment, the extent of accountability in SPOs in the context of this SPPP model and the methodologies used in accounting and disclosure literature to assess the number of accountability disclosures.

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