

The Weight of Amanah: Stewardship Strain in Extraterritorial Public Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Public officials posted abroad answer for people their state does not employ, for assets it inherited and for flows it does not own. They do so inside another country's jurisdiction and outside their own authority. That the work costs them something is documented. What is missing is a mechanism saying which condition produces which part of the burden, and in which direction. This paper supplies one. It names the burden stewardship strain and defines it as a sustained felt state of three separately measured facets. The first is the felt weight of a charge that does not end. The second is felt depletion that is not replenished. The third is the felt persistence of obligation when nothing would be noticed. The definition carries no structural term. Five antecedents are coded from role documents rather than from the official. A sixth is a belief she holds, the construal of the charge as a trust, or amanah. That a normative construal can cut both ways is not new: it is established for callings, religious coping and public service motivation. What this paper adds is a sign assignment inside one tradition, derived from two features internal to amanah. The condition that constitutes the state is an answerability with no point of discharge, a property of the charge coded from record, which the doctrine of continuous answerability describes and which holds the three facets together. The fault-based liability of the trustee, who answers for transgression and negligence rather than for loss without fault, is proposed to lower the first facet. Thirteen propositions follow. Each is mapped to its measurement sources and to what would refute it, with three reported as applications of established findings. For practice the implication is not to dilute the trust but to supply what lets it be carried.

Keywords: stewardship strain, public leadership, amanah, moral injury, extraterritorial administration

INTRODUCTION

Consider an education attache posted to a foreign capital. She is answerable, at home, for the welfare and success of several thousand students from her country, yet she does not employ them, cannot command them, and has no authority over the universities that teach them or the host agencies that regulate their stay. She inherits an alumni network built by predecessors she never met and a reputation she did not manufacture. She is expected to attract more of the flows her state values, students, researchers, partnerships, none of which her state owns. She does all of this inside another country's rules, answering to several audiences at once whose expectations do not agree, and she does it largely alone, far from the office that will judge her.

That the work costs her something is not a new observation, and this paper does not claim it as one. Brooks et al. (2023) reviewed fifteen studies of the mental health of diplomatic personnel and reported little consensus among them, noting that the studies were disparate and that few investigated the same variables or outcomes, so that which factors predict wellbeing in this population remains unsettled. Their review is instructive for exactly

that reason. Having found no settled predictors in the diplomatic evidence, they draw the protective factors they name, managerial support, team cohesion and peer support, and recognition of staff performance, from research on other occupational groups, and say so. Their later interview study with serving officials reports stressors arising from job demands, overseas postings, family needs, frequent relocation, hardship postings, workplace relationships, the lack of appreciation and acknowledgement, and organisational culture, alongside features of the work the officials valued (Brooks et al., 2025). Leira (2018) argued that a state which owes a duty of care to its citizens abroad owes a reciprocal duty to the personnel who discharge it, and that protective measures can themselves undermine wellbeing. The cost is documented.

What is missing is a mechanism. That literature is descriptive about a population: it establishes that these officials suffer and names the conditions that surround them, without saying which source produces which part of the burden, or with which sign, or under what conditions a source would not produce it at all. A construct is a different object from a finding. It states what the burden is, what is proposed to move it and in which direction, and what observation would show the proposal wrong. This paper offers one, for the class of official who answers for objects beyond her state's jurisdiction and outside her own authority, and it offers it in a form that can fail.

The situation also breaks the assumptions of the literatures one would otherwise reach for. Leadership theory, including its public variants, generally assumes a leader with some authority over followers who belong to the same organisation (Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Studies of occupational stress assume a role located inside an organisation, with someone who sends demands and a structure that can, in principle, relieve them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Rizzo et al., 1970). The official described above has neither authority over those she leads nor an organisation on the ground that can relieve her. She is responsible for what she cannot command, and she is responsible for it alone.

The paper names that burden stewardship strain and defines it below in experiential terms only, so that the features of the post and the burden the official reports remain separate things, measured separately. Its contribution is a sign assignment. That a normative construal can cut both ways is established, and the paper sets that literature out below. What it adds is what each of two features internal to amanah does, and they do different things: one names the condition that constitutes the state, the other is proposed to move one of its facets in a stated direction. Both are stated so that either can be shown wrong.

Two terms in the title need fixing before the argument begins, because both carry settled meanings that are not the ones intended here. Extraterritorial is used in an administrative rather than a jurisdictional sense. It denotes an official posted outside the sending state's territory who acts inside another state's rules and answers to a home authority for what happens there. It is not used in the sense familiar from public international law, where it describes the reach of a state's legal authority beyond its own borders, and no claim is made here about the lawful extension of jurisdiction. Leadership is used to mean the exercise of responsibility for people and for outcomes in the absence of command authority over either. That stretches the conventional usage, in which a leader has followers who can be directed, and the stretch is deliberate: the officials described here are held answerable in the way leaders are held answerable while commanding almost nothing, and it is precisely that combination the paper is about. A reader who prefers a narrower usage may read leadership here as answerable officeholding without losing anything the argument needs.

Conceptual Method

Because the paper offers propositions rather than findings, the way they were arrived at should be visible. In the typology of conceptual article designs set out by Jaakkola (2020) the paper is a theory synthesis: it draws together literatures that have not been brought into contact, on the wellbeing of officials posted abroad, on role stress and resource depletion, on accountability and stewardship, and on the trusteeship ethic, in order to produce a construct and a set of propositions that none of them yields alone. It is not a theory adaptation, since no single theory is being carried into a new domain, and it is not a typology. It does borrow from the fourth of Jaakkola's designs, the model: a construct and a set of propositions are stated, and a figure sets out the constructs and the relationships proposed among them. Jaakkola notes that the designs can be combined, and the honest description of this paper is a synthesis that issues in a model, with the synthesis doing the work of establishing that no

existing construct covers the configuration and the model doing the work of saying what follows. It is also not a systematic review. No database search was run and no screening protocol was applied, and none is implied.

The phenomenon was specified before any construct was sought. The starting point was the documented wellbeing literature on officials posted abroad (Brooks et al., 2023, 2025; Leira, 2018), which establishes that the cost is real and names the conditions surrounding it without saying which condition produces which part of it. That asymmetry, a well evidenced outcome with no specified mechanism, set the task.

The literature was located as follows. A seed set was fixed first: the reviews and interview studies of wellbeing in this population, and the standard statements of the four adjacent traditions named below. From that seed set the search proceeded by backward and forward snowballing, following cited works backwards and citing works forwards, and stopping in each direction when new sources ceased to add a construct that met the admission rule set out next. Two consequences follow and both are limitations. The coverage is deliberate rather than exhaustive, so a relevant construct outside the citation neighbourhood of the seed set could have been missed. And because snowballing follows established citation paths, it is biased toward well-cited work, which is a poor way to find a recent or marginal treatment. A systematic review would correct both, and is the appropriate next step for anyone wishing to establish that the configuration has not been named elsewhere.

Adjacent constructs were admitted by a single rule: a construct was retained for discussion if it would explain at least one element of the configuration, and it was then examined for whether it explains the rest. Role conflict and role ambiguity, effort-reward imbalance and over-commitment, felt accountability, moral distress, burnout, emotional labour, illegitimate tasks, street-level discretion, invisible work, psychological ownership, felt responsibility, public service motivation and servant leadership each satisfied that test and each is treated below. Three constructs were considered and set aside, and the reasons are given so that the exclusions can be checked. Job insecurity was considered and set aside: it is a well evidenced stressor in public employment, but the officials described here typically hold secure tenure and the burden is not about whether the post continues. Workplace loneliness was considered and set aside as an outcome rather than a condition, since it is a felt state and would belong on the same side of the model as the burden itself, which would make the account circular. Culture shock and cross-cultural adjustment were considered and set aside because they are about adapting to a setting and fade with time in post, whereas the condition described here is created by the structure of the office and does not attenuate with familiarity. Where a retained neighbour explains an element better than the construct proposed here, the paper says so and cites it as the explanation rather than competing with it.

The six antecedents were derived by decomposing the post rather than the person. The question asked of the phenomenon was what features of an office, readable from the documents that create and govern it, would produce the described burden, and five were identified: the gap between answerability and command, the shortfall of resource and mandate against documented scope, the absence of an organisational surround in the jurisdiction of service, the number and incompatibility of principals holding a formal claim, and the invisibility of the value produced to the returns by which the post is appraised. A sixth is not a feature of the post at all but a belief the officeholder brings to it, and it is reported separately for that reason. The division is deliberate: five are coded from record and one is reported by the person, so that the features of the post and the burden she reports do not share a source.

The step from the trusteeship construal to the facets is the one that carries most weight and it proceeds in three moves. First, the construal is identified from the scholarly literature on the trusteeship ethic rather than derived independently. Second, two features internal to it are isolated, each with content about a different thing: one about when answerability operates, the other about what the trustee answers for. Third, and this is where the two part company, each feature is assigned the kind of work its own content can do. The feature about when answerability operates says that it never lapses, and a feature of that kind cannot sensibly be made a predictor of a facet defined by the same interval, since the two would restate one another; the fact it describes, a charge with no point of discharge, is therefore treated as the condition that constitutes the state, coded from the post rather than reported by the official, which is a claim about structure and is tested as Proposition 5a. The feature about the scope of what is owed is different in kind: it says the trustee answers for conduct rather than for outcome, which bears directly on whether a charge can be closed, and it is therefore assigned a direction against the facet

defined by closure, which is tested as Proposition 5b. Only one sign is assigned. The counter-readings of both features are set out in full below, and a reader who rejects the assignment should treat the propositions as hypotheses the tradition permits rather than as claims it entails.

The construct definition follows the procedure Podsakoff et al. (2016) set out for concept definitions in the organisational and behavioural sciences: the potential attributes were collected from the adjacent literatures, the necessary and shared ones were separated from those that merely tend to accompany the state, the definition was written in experiential terms with no structural attribute smuggled into it, and the entity to which the concept applies and the level at which it operates were specified before any proposition was stated. Two of their tests are the reason for choices that might otherwise look fussy. Their rule that a definition should not include the construct's causes or effects is why the five conditions of the post sit outside the definition rather than in it. Their recommendation that a concept be differentiated from related concepts as part of refining its definition, rather than left to the discussion, is why Table 3 sits where it does. The item domain in Appendix A goes further than they recommend, since their subject is definition rather than measurement, and it is offered because a definition that cannot be turned into items is difficult to falsify.

The paper reasons throughout from published work and from the logic of the phenomenon. Its claims are offered as propositions to be tested, not as findings, and the single illustration it uses is described in the declarations below.

Theoretical Basis

What the Adjacent Literatures Supply, and Where Each Stops

Several literatures sit close to the phenomenon. Setting out what each supplies, and where each stops, both credits the lineage and shows what remains to be specified.

Public leadership research has matured into a distinct field, mapping the behaviours, values and contexts of leaders in public organisations (Ospina, 2017; Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015), with a meta-analysis finding public sector leadership reliably associated with beneficial outcomes (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). Its attention has been on what such leaders do and produce, and its cases are almost always leaders acting inside their own jurisdiction and over their own staff, even where the cross-border terrain has been mapped as a space betwixt the domestic and the foreign (Ho & McConnell, 2019). Stewardship theory supplies the idea of a steward who acts for a principal's long-term interest rather than narrow self-interest (Davis et al., 1997), and public administration has drawn on it to describe officials as stewards of public value and trust (Kass, 1990; Moore, 1995), most recently as a live alternative to principal-agent control in the steering of organisations a government cannot simply command (Salomonsen et al., 2024). But it was built to describe a manager inside a firm, accountable to owners, and it registers one cost to the steward, the frustration of being governed as an agent, rather than the weight of the stewarding itself.

Servant leadership names the impulse to develop and serve those one leads (Van Dierendonck, 2011), and a leader-centric strand has established that serving can cost the server. Liao et al. (2021) found in two experience-sampling studies that daily servant leadership behaviour predicted same-day depletion and next-day withdrawal into passive leadership, but only for leaders low in perspective taking; for leaders who took perspective frequently, the same behaviour was associated with decreases in depletion and in laissez-faire behaviour, which the authors describe as replenishing. That finding is a precedent for this paper rather than a rival, and it is a precedent in two ways. It establishes the cost of serving as a legitimate object of study, and it shows that one behaviour can carry opposite signs depending on a moderator, which is the structure this paper proposes at the level of a single belief. What it does not address is service rendered without authority over the served, across a border, to people who are not members.

The occupational stress literatures come closer to the cost and assume the organisation. Role theory identifies role conflict, incompatible demands from different senders, and role ambiguity, the absence of clear information about what is expected, defined and measured for a role held inside an organisation with identifiable senders

(Rizzo et al., 1970). Role theory does cross the organisational boundary, treating boundary-role positions with senders outside the focal organisation as a classic source of conflict, and it also encompasses person-role conflict between role demands and the incumbent's own standards (Kahn et al., 1964). Its mismatch is nevertheless between demands, and the paper takes from it rather than against it: the multi-field demand described below is inter-sender role conflict in a boundary-role position, and is reported as such.

The job demands-resources and conservation-of-resources traditions explain strain as the product of demands that outrun resources and of the threat or loss of the buffers that would offset them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll, 1989), applied chiefly to employees whose support, feedback and recognition are supplied or withheld by an employer who is present. Burnout names the outcome of chronic stress, exhaustion, cynicism and a sense of ineffectiveness (Maslach et al., 2001), a syndrome rather than a specification of the condition producing it. Emotional labour describes the management of feeling to meet an employer's feeling rules for a wage (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), and in public service it has been shown to be work that is absent from job descriptions, uncompensated and unrecognised (Guy et al., 2008; Mastracci, 2022). The moral injury literature describes the lasting harm of acts that violate deeply held moral beliefs, documented well beyond the battlefield (Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2018), but treats the injury as an endpoint.

Constructs That Occupy Part of the Same Ground

Six further established constructs cover parts of what is described here. Effort-reward imbalance and its intrinsic component, over-commitment, theorise health consequences where high effort meets low reciprocal reward (Siegrist, 1996; Siegrist & Li, 2016). Felt accountability under low autonomy is the closest tested antecedent, and Hall et al. (2006) established the relationship the first proposition below applies to this setting. Moral distress names the condition of one who knows the right action and is blocked from taking it (Jameton, 1984). Invisible and hidden work theorises work that is systematically unseen and what that costs (Star & Strauss, 1999). Illegitimate tasks are demands appraised as falling outside what a role can reasonably be asked to carry (Semmer et al., 2010), and the street-level tradition established that front-line officials absorb the contradictions of policy at the point of delivery (Lipsky, 2010). Each is taken up individually in the differentiation section below, where Table 3 states what would show the construct and each neighbour apart. The point to register here is that none of them was built for an officeholder who answers across a border for objects she cannot command, and the configuration rather than any single element is what the construct is proposed to name.

Double-Edged Normative Construals Are Not New

The paper's claim is a sign assignment, not the discovery that a normative commitment can cut both ways, and the difference matters enough to be set out before the claim is made. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) found a calling to be both binding and ennobling: zookeepers with a sense of calling identified deeply with the significance of their work and were at the same time more likely to see it as a moral duty and to sacrifice pay, personal time and comfort for it. Silva Filho et al. (2021) found occupational calling carrying a direct negative effect on burnout and stress alongside an opposite indirect effect through paradoxical tensions. The dark side of calling has become a literature in its own right (Cardador & Caza, 2012; Duffy et al., 2016).

The same structure is established for religious commitment specifically. Positive and negative religious coping form a two-factor structure in which the first is associated with wellbeing and the second with poorer functioning (Pargament, Smith, et al., 1998; Pargament, Feuille, & Burdzy, 2011), and the sanctification literature holds that people invest more in what they regard as sacred and suffer more when it is lost or violated (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). And a double-edged finding already exists in this paper's own field: public service motivation lowers burnout through one path and raises it through another (Zhang & Liu, 2024). The form is therefore established in three literatures at once, and no claim to it is made here.

Public service motivation explains why some officials are disposed to serve the public interest, and its measurement includes a self-sacrifice dimension (Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990); and it is one of the double-edged cases just named (Giauque et al., 2013; Zhang & Liu, 2024). It is a disposition rather than a condition of a role, and it is deliberately left outside the model here: it plausibly predicts who accepts such posts and who

holds the trusteeship construal, and it should be measured as a control rather than represented as an antecedent the propositions use.

What is not settled by any of that work is which element of a given tradition moves which component of a given burden, and in which direction. That is the question this paper answers for one tradition and one setting, and the answer is the thing that can be wrong.

The Trusteeship Construal and Its Two Features

Scholarship on the Islamic trusteeship ethic supplies a vocabulary for the steward's stance and, within it, two features that do different kinds of work on the burden. This section sets out the construal and then those two features. It draws throughout on the scholarly literature on that ethic and on the law of trust-based contracts, and it advances no independent reading of scripture.

The construal at issue is *amanah*, the holding of something in trust for which one answers beyond any contract. Comparative work setting the term against the secular idea of trust finds it wider in one respect that matters here: what is owed runs beyond the contracting party, being oriented to God as well as to the person who entrusts (Herijanto, 2022). A second feature, that what is owed attaches to the conduct of the holder rather than to the outcome achieved, is not a finding of that comparison but a rule of the law of trust-based contracts, and it is established below from that law rather than from the comparison. Islamic leadership models place a related conception at their centre, that authority over worldly things is delegated and accounted for rather than possessed (Al-Buraey, 1985; Ali, 2009; Beekun & Badawi, 1999), and the field has grown into a substantial empirical literature on that basis, including work linking it to performance in service settings (Zaim et al., 2024). What that literature has treated as a virtue to be cultivated, this paper treats as a weight to be carried, and it takes from the construal two features of different kinds: one that gives the weight its shape, and one proposed to move a part of it.

The first is continuous answerability. On the account this literature gives, a trust is not discharged only where it can be inspected; it is owed whether or not anyone is in a position to check, so answerability does not lapse in the unobserved interval (Al-Buraey, 1985; Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Herijanto, 2022). That reading has a secular analogue in organisational research showing that internalised or anticipated accountability shapes effort and self-monitoring absent an external monitor (Hall et al., 2017; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999).

The second is fault-based liability, and it is internal to the trust rather than a separate virtue standing beside it. In the classical law of trust-based contracts, agency and deposit among them, the holder possesses on a footing of trust and is not liable for loss or defect in the thing entrusted except where there has been transgression, negligence or breach of the terms on which it was held (Cakmak, 2024; Naim et al., 2016). The Ottoman Hanafi codification states it in one sentence: a trust is not subject to compensation, so that where the trustee is guilty of no wrongful act or negligence and the thing entrusted is destroyed or lost, he is not obliged to make the loss good (Majalla al-Ahkam al-Adliyya, art. 768). The content of the rule is that the trustee answers for her own conduct and not for outcomes occurring without her fault, and because it sits inside the trust rather than beside it, it is from here that the paper draws the relief. The schools differ over which particular contracts are of trust rather than of guarantee, so the rule is taken here only for those on which they agree (Naim et al., 2016).

The tradition states both halves in a single report. Asked for a public office, the Prophet is reported to have told Abu Dharr that authority is a trust, that on the Day of Judgment it is a cause of humiliation and regret, and then to have made an exception: except for one who takes it up by right and discharges what is owed in it (Sahih Muslim, no. 1825). The weight and the terminus sit in a single sentence, and the terminus is stated in terms of what the officeholder does rather than of what results. The paper reads the report for that structure only and offers no exegesis of it; the doctrinal weight is carried by the scholarship cited above.

What Is Being Transferred, and What Is Not

A rule about liability for entrusted property is not a psychological boundary, and nothing follows automatically from the one to the other. Four things are in play once a doctrine of this kind is brought near an account of a felt state, and the paper claims only the last of them.

The first is legal liability under the contracts of trust. That is a rule of positive law about when a holder must make good a loss, it is adjudicated by a court, and it has no application whatever to a public official answering for students in another country. The paper does not claim that an officeholder is or is not legally liable for anything.

The second is moral accountability before God, which the tradition treats as continuous and as owed whether or not any human forum is watching. That is a theological claim about the structure of obligation and the paper takes no position on its truth. It appears here only as content of a belief that officeholders in this population are documented as holding.

The third is organisational accountability, the forum of ministries, appraisals and inspections. That is treated throughout as a separate matter, and it is why the conditions of the post are coded from documents rather than inferred from the tradition.

The fourth is the officeholder's own interpretation of what she answers for, and this alone is the operative variable. The claim is not that a rule of liability acts on perception. It is that an officeholder who construes her charge as a trust of this kind has available to her an answer to the question of what she owes, namely her own conduct, which an officeholder who construes it as an open-ended duty does not have. The doctrine is the source of the construal, not a mechanism operating on her. Whether officeholders in fact construe it that way is an empirical question, and Proposition 5b is how it would be answered.

The Sign Assignment

Writing on amanah in management has invoked continuous accountability to explain why a charge is heavy, and reward or relief to explain why it is bearable, without stating the conditions under which each operates. An account that can explain both a heavy burden and a light one, with no rule for which to expect, cannot be contradicted by anything an official reports. The paper states the rule, and then states the case against it.

Continuous answerability is about the third facet, the persistence of obligation in the unobserved moment. If what is owed is owed whether or not anyone is in a position to check, then there is no interval in which the charge is off the record. That is why the third facet exists at all in this account, and it is why the three facets are proposed to hold together. It is not offered as a prediction that one measured belief raises one measured facet, because the two would be saying the same thing twice. What carries the structural claim is the fact the doctrine describes, a charge whose answerability has no point of discharge, and that fact is coded from the post rather than reported by the official. It is tested as a claim about structure in Proposition 5a.

Fault-based liability bears on the first facet, the felt weight of a charge that does not end. If the trustee answers for transgression and negligence and not for loss occurring without her fault, then holding the charge as an amanah supplies a terminus that a charge held simply as a duty does not have: what is owed is conduct, and conduct can be completed. The prediction runs the other way: a stronger fault-based-liability component lowers that facet.

The assignment could be written the other way round, and the counter-case is set out here. Continuous answerability can be a source of settledness as much as of surveillance, and construing the post as sacred service is the sanctification mechanism, which predicts greater satisfaction and meaning in the work (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005). On that reading the condition would bear on the first facet rather than the third, and the state would be constituted differently from the way proposed here. And fault-based liability, if it is heard as a standard to be met rather than as a limit on what one answers for, could raise the felt weight instead of lowering it. Both counter-readings are available.

The argument for the assignment as made is that each side is matched to the facet its own content is about. The continuous-witness doctrine is a claim about when answerability is in force, and the third facet is defined by what is felt when nothing would be noticed; they concern the same moment. The liability rule is a claim about what answerability covers, and the first facet is defined by whether the charge can be closed; they concern the same question. The counter-readings pair each doctrine with a facet its content does not address. That argument can be wrong, and if the three facets fail to cohere where answerability does not terminate, or if the sign comes back reversed, the account fails and should be reported as having failed rather than rewritten.

Three things follow for testing. The directional claim is at the level of component and facet, so its test is specificity rather than magnitude: the fault-based-liability component should predict the first facet and not the third. A composite score across the three facets is not diagnostic for this claim, because a directional prediction about one facet cannot be read off a total that averages it with two others; it is uninformative rather than predicted to be null. That warning is specific to the construal, and it does not extend to the conditions of the post. Propositions 1 to 4 predict elevation on all three facets together, since a condition that widens the gap between what is answered for and what can be commanded bears on the weight of the charge, on the depletion and on the unobserved moment alike. They are therefore tested facet by facet with the prediction that all three coefficients are positive, and the decision rule is fixed in advance: a proposition among the first four holds where all three coefficients are positive and distinguishable from zero, is reported as partially supported where two are and one is not, and fails where only one is. And the structural claim in Proposition 5a requires a comparison group rather than a single sample, since it is a claim about where the three facets cohere and where they do not.

The Construct

What Is Measured, and From Where

A construct paper of this kind fails in a particular way. If the burden is defined as being constituted by the conditions that produce it, then any proposition linking them is true by definition and no observation can contradict it. The specification below is designed against that, and it names the places where it remains imperfect.

There are three measurement sources, not two. The first five antecedents are features of the post and are coded from role documents, mandates, budgets, establishment tables, the principal map of the assignment and the post's own reporting instruments, independently of the official. The sixth antecedent is not a feature of the post at all. It is a belief the official holds, it can only be obtained from her, and it is reported here as person-level rather than being presented as something the post supplies. Stewardship strain is the third source: a felt state obtained by self-report from the official.

Both ends of a link are supplied by the same person wherever a reported belief or a reported state stands on each side of it. That is so for the link between the sixth antecedent and the burden, tested as Proposition 5b; for the three moderated paths running from reported strain to self-reported burnout, withdrawal and moral injury in Propositions 7a to 7c; and for Propositions 8a and 8b. Coding a moderator from record does not remove the exposure, because it is the two ends of the path and not the moderator that share the source. The first of these is the one on which the central claim rests, and it is treated at length here; the rest are ordinary common-method exposure of the kind any self-report model carries, and the remedy for them is the usual one of temporal separation and, where possible, a record-based outcome such as the curtailment measure used in Proposition 9 and the continuity measure used in Proposition 8b. The first link is handled three ways: by predicting a negative sign, which shared-method variance is less likely to produce than a positive one although it is not immune to it; by requiring time separation between the belief measure and the state measure, with differing response formats and a marker variable; and by writing the construal items so that they are about the scope of what is answered for rather than about how heavily the charge is felt. Table 2 records, proposition by proposition, which links carry the exposure and which do not.

Defining Stewardship Strain

Stewardship strain is a sustained felt state with three facets, defined in experiential terms and carrying no structural term.

The first facet is the felt weight of a charge that does not end: the experience of carrying an answerability that persists past the working day and that no completed task closes.

The second is felt depletion without replenishment: the experience that what the work takes out is not given back, so that effort draws on reserves that are not restored.

The third is the felt persistence of obligation in the unobserved moment: the experience that the charge holds even in moments when nothing one did or failed to do would be noticed.

Three consequences follow. It is a state rather than a trait or a syndrome, so it can rise and fall within a single posting. Each facet is separable and is scored separately, which the sign assignment requires. And its relation to established measures is an empirical question the paper does not prejudice: the second facet is closest to the exhaustion dimension of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) and would be expected to share variance with items about being used up and emotionally drained, while differing from items about cynicism and reduced efficacy; the first and third facets have no obvious counterpart in that instrument. Whether the three together explain variance beyond existing role stress, over-commitment and burnout measures is the first empirical task set out below, and if they do not, the construct is a relabelling and should be reported as one. Appendix A supplies an initial item domain so that this can be attempted rather than only proposed.

Why these three facets are proposed to form one construct, and not three related states, needs saying plainly, because a construct that is only a list is not a construct. What holds them together is a single condition: an answerability that does not terminate. That is a property of the charge and not a belief about it. Whether a post is one in which answerability has a point of discharge is readable from the documents that create it, and Appendix B gives the rule by which it is coded. Where a charge can be discharged, the three come apart. Effort ends when the task is signed off, so depletion is replenished by completion; the weight lifts because there is a point at which it is no longer carried; and the unobserved interval is genuinely free, because what was owed has been rendered. Where answerability has no terminus, the same three move together for the same reason: nothing closes, so nothing is given back, nothing is put down, and no interval is off the record. The three facets are therefore proposed as three faces of one condition rather than three separate experiences that happen to co-occur.

This has a consequence the paper accepts rather than avoids. Two things in this account share the name continuous answerability, and they sit at different levels. The first is the structural fact that the charge has no point of discharge. That is a property of the post, coded from the documents that create it by the rule in Appendix B, and it is the condition that constitutes the state: it is what the state is a state of. The second is the doctrinal feature of amanah, which holds that what is owed is owed whether or not anyone is in a position to check. That is the officeholder's normative reading of the same fact, and it is not entered as an antecedent predicting the third facet. It could be. The reason it is not is that the two would then say nearly the same thing in two grammatical moods: the belief that the charge holds when unobserved, and the felt persistence of obligation when unobserved. A prediction of that kind is not so much wrong as empty, and no amount of temporal separation between the two measures repairs it, because the difficulty lies in the content and not in the occasion of measurement. Treating the structural fact as constitutive removes the circularity at its source, and it exchanges an empty prediction for a claim about structure that can fail, stated as Proposition 5a below.

It is worth saying in the usual vocabulary what kind of construct this is, since the answer has consequences for how it should be measured. It is not reflective in the strict sense. Reflective indicators are interchangeable manifestations of a common latent cause, and dropping one should leave the construct intact; here each facet carries content the others do not, and removing any one would change what is being measured. Nor is it formative in the strict sense, since the facets are not causes that combine to produce the state but ways in which one condition is experienced. It is best described as a multidimensional construct with a superordinate structure,

whose facets are held together by a shared condition rather than by a shared cause. Two testing consequences follow and both are observed throughout. The facets are scored separately and never averaged into a total, because a superordinate structure does not license a composite. And whether the facets cohere at all is treated as a question rather than an assumption, which is what Proposition 5a puts to the test. If they do not cohere in the domain where the paper says they should, the honest report is that these are three related states and not one construct, and the paper should be read that way.

The Antecedents

Six antecedents are specified. The first five are conditions of the post; the sixth is a belief the official holds. Table 1 records each with its measurement source and its proposition.

A1, the responsibility and authority gap. The official is answerable for outcomes she cannot command, holding no authority over the people, assets and flows in her care. Coded as the residual between documented scope of answerability and documented formal powers over the same objects.

A2, the resource and mandate deficit. The official is expected to deliver without the budget, staff or legal mandate the responsibility would ordinarily carry, as a standing feature of the post rather than a temporary shortfall (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Semmer et al., 2010). Coded from establishment tables, budget lines and delegated-authority instruments.

A3, extra-jurisdictional isolation. The official operates far from the home institution and without an organisation of her own on the ground, so the support and feedback that ordinarily buffer demand are distant or absent (Giauque et al., 2013; Hobfoll, 1989). Coded from posting structure, headcount at post, reporting chain and documented supervision frequency, which are matters of record rather than of report. Recognition is deliberately not part of this antecedent; it is treated separately below, because whether work can be recognised at all and whether an institution chooses to recognise it are different variables.

A4, multi-field demand. The official reconciles the incompatible expectations of several principals at once, the home state, the host state and the community served, which cannot be satisfied in sequence. This is inter-sender role conflict in a boundary-role position (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970), and it is coded from the principal map of the post: the number of principals holding a formal claim on the same activity and the documented incompatibility between their requirements.

A5, non-instrumentality of the value produced. The value the official produces, goodwill and trust, depends on not being advertised and corrodes when the service is seen to be a means to short-term advantage, so the work cannot be shown, claimed or counted in the ordinary way and recognition of it is structurally unavailable rather than merely withheld (Guy et al., 2008; Star & Strauss, 1999). Coded from the post's own reporting instruments: whether its principal outputs appear in countable form in the returns by which the post is appraised. This is the antecedent for which a facet-specific prediction is made, because what it withholds is replenishment rather than closure.

A6, the trusteeship construal. The official holds the people, assets and flows in her care as an amanah for which she answers beyond any contract, to the community and to God (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). This is a belief, it is self-reported, and it is person-level. It is measured here as one thing, the fault-based liability component: the belief that a trustee answers for transgression and negligence and not for loss occurring without her fault. The other feature of the construal, continuous answerability, is not measured as an antecedent. It is the officeholder's normative reading of the structural condition that constitutes the state, and entering it as a predictor of the third facet would restate that facet rather than predict it, for the reason given above. The construal therefore does two different kinds of work in this account: one feature articulates the condition the state is a state of, and the other is proposed to move one of its facets.

To see them together, consider a stylised illustration that names no real post, person or country. A scholarship mission maintains a body of students and alumni abroad that it neither employs nor controls. An officer is

answerable for their welfare but can command none of it (A1), with no budget or mandate equal to the charge (A2), working without an office of her own, far from the ministry that will appraise her (A3). She reconciles the conflicting requirements of home ministries, host universities and the students in a single course of action (A4). The goodwill she builds holds only while it is not instrumentalised, so it does not appear in the returns by which she is judged (A5). And she holds the whole of it as an amanah (A6).

Table 1: The antecedents, their measurement sources and their propositions

Antecedent	What it names	Measured from	Proposition
A1. Responsibility and authority gap	Answerable for outcomes one cannot command	Role documents: scope of answerability against formal powers over the same objects	P1
A2. Resource and mandate deficit	Expected to deliver without the budget, staff or standing the charge implies	Establishment tables, budget lines, delegated-authority instruments	P2
A3. Extra-jurisdictional isolation	Operating far from the home institution without an organisation of one's own	Posting structure, headcount at post, reporting chain, documented supervision frequency	P3
A4. Multi-field demand	Several principals holding a formal claim on the same activity, with incompatible requirements	The principal map of the post and the documented incompatibility between requirements	P4
A5. Non-instrumentality of value	Producing value that cannot appear in the returns by which the post is appraised	The post's own reporting and appraisal instruments	P6
A6. Trusteeship construal (amanah)	Holding the charge as a trust, answerable beyond contract. Measured as one component, fault-based liability of the trustee	Person-level, not a condition of the post. Self-report from the official. Continuous answerability, the other feature of the construal, is the officeholder's reading of the structural condition that constitutes the state and is not measured here as an antecedent	P5b

Note. A1 to A5 are coded independently of the official. A6 is a belief and can only be obtained from her; it is reported here as person-level rather than as something the post supplies. Stewardship strain is self-reported. The three moderators used throughout, institutional shelter, institutional recognition and communal recognition, are defined and separated under From the Burden to Its Outcomes below and are coded from record on the same principle as A1 to A5, with the rules in Appendix B. Where a perceptual measure is used instead, that link becomes self-reported on both sides and must be reported as such. Propositions 8a and 8b are claims in which A6 is the moderated variable, so it is listed with the moderators rather than among the antecedents.

Propositions

Thirteen propositions follow. Four link conditions of the post to the burden; two state the sign assignment; one concerns the non-instrumentality mechanism; five concern the path from the burden to its outcomes, three of them naming one moderator each; and one states the claim at the level of the post-holding unit. Three of them, marked as such, are applications of established findings to this setting rather than new claims. Table 2 maps every proposition to its measurement sources and to the observation that would refute it. Figure 1 sets out the framework.

The Conditions of the Post

Proposition 1. The wider the documented gap between the responsibility an official holds and the authority she commands, the greater the stewardship strain she reports.

This is an application rather than a discovery. Hall et al. (2006) established across two studies that felt accountability relates to job tension and to emotional exhaustion where autonomy is low, and that autonomy neutralises those effects. The relationship they report is an interaction rather than a main effect, which is what makes it usable here. What this setting adds is that the neutraliser is structurally unavailable, because the authority that would supply it lies with a foreign sovereign or with no one. The proposition is therefore a boundary-condition claim on a tested relationship, and it fails if the coded gap does not predict the three facets where no autonomy is available to neutralise it.

Proposition 2. A resource and mandate deficit raises reported stewardship strain beyond what the responsibility and authority gap alone would predict.

This is an incremental-variance claim and is the cleanest in the paper. Each facet is regressed on the coded authority gap, the coded resource deficit is then added, and the proposition fails if the increment is not distinguishable from zero on any of the three across a sample of posts.

Proposition 3. Extra-jurisdictional isolation raises reported stewardship strain.

An application of the job demands-resources and conservation-of-resources accounts to this setting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll, 1989). It is consistent with the demands Brooks et al. (2025) heard from serving officials, and it is offered as a proposition precisely because Brooks et al. (2023) found the existing evidence on this population too disparate to settle which conditions predict what. The mechanism proposed is the removal of the support and feedback that would otherwise buffer demand, and it is offered as the interpretation of a result rather than as part of the claim, since a proposition that carries its own mechanism asserts nothing. It is retained because the model needs it and because it is coded from record rather than report, not because it is new.

Proposition 4. The greater the number of principals holding a formal claim on the same activity, and the greater the documented incompatibility between their requirements, the greater the reported stewardship strain.

An application of inter-sender role conflict in a boundary-role position (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970). It is stated in coded terms so that it can be tested, and it is not presented as a new mechanism.

The Two Components of the Construal

Proposition 5a. The three facets cohere as a single higher-order state where answerability does not terminate, and cohere less or not at all where it does. It is tested by fitting a higher-order model to the three facets in two groups, officials in posts of the kind specified in the scope conditions and officials in line posts inside an organisation with a defined point of discharge, and comparing the solutions. The step the proposition turns on is configural invariance, which it predicts will not hold; where configural invariance does hold, the metric and scalar steps follow and the proposition is not supported. It holds if the higher-order structure is supported in the first group and not in the second. It fails if the two groups are configurally invariant, or if no coherent structure is obtained in either.

Proposition 5b. The stronger the fault-based-liability component of the trusteeship construal, the lower the first facet of reported stewardship strain, the felt weight of a charge that does not end, and not the third facet.

The two propositions are tested differently. Proposition 5a is a claim about structure and needs two groups rather than a stronger instrument. Administering the items outside the domain is not a contradiction of the scope statement below. The items are written in experiential terms and carry no structural term, which is what makes them answerable by an officeholder in any post; the claim is not that they are meaningless there but that they will not cohere there, and a claim of that kind can only be tested by putting them in both places. Proposition 5b is a directional claim with a specificity clause, and the clause is the test: fault-based liability should lower the first facet and not the third, so an equal effect on both, or an effect on the third alone, counts against it. Proposition 5b is less exposed to common-method variance than a positive prediction would be, since a predicted negative relation is harder for shared method to manufacture. It is not immune. Common-method variance can arise through item wording, response tendencies, respondents' implicit theories, social desirability and the context of

measurement, and any of these could in principle produce a negative association. Temporal separation between the belief measure and the state measure, differing response formats, and a marker variable are therefore advised here as elsewhere.

Non-Instrumentality

Proposition 6. The less the value an official produces can appear in the returns by which her post is appraised, the higher the second facet of her reported stewardship strain, felt depletion without replenishment.

The proposition is stated in coded terms deliberately, because the obvious formulation carries its own mechanism and so asserts nothing: to say that work whose recognition is structurally withheld raises strain by withholding recognition is to say the same thing twice. Stated as above, the antecedent is a property of the post's reporting instruments and the outcome is a state the official reports, and the proposition fails if two officials in otherwise comparable posts, one whose outputs are countable and one whose outputs are documented as unreportable, report equivalent depletion on the second facet. The proposed mechanism, that concealment here protects the value of the object rather than cheapening the work as in the cases catalogued by Star and Strauss (1999), is offered as an interpretation of the result and not as part of the claim.

From the Burden to Its Outcomes

Two things that share a word are kept apart here, and the distinction is between what is possible and what is chosen. Whether the work a post produces can be recognised at all is a property of the post and its reporting instruments, and that is A5. Whether an institution recognises what can be recognised is a choice it makes, and that is institutional recognition, a moderator. The two are separately coded and neither sits inside the other. Communal recognition is a third thing, supplied by the normative community to which the official belongs and to which the trust is owed, and it is not in the employer's gift. Together with institutional shelter, meaning the practical provision the home institution makes for the post, these are the three moderators named throughout this paper, and no other set is used. One outcome term also needs fixing before the propositions are stated. Withdrawal from the role means work withdrawal in the established sense: behaviour that avoids parts of the work role while the holder remains in it, measured by the psychological and physical withdrawal subscales of the on-the-job behaviours instrument (Lehman & Simpson, 1992). It is not job withdrawal, the family of behaviours aimed at leaving the organisation and the role (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991), which in most foreign services is governed by the posting cycle and by considerations outside this account.

Proposition 7a. Institutional shelter moderates the path from stewardship strain to burnout and to withdrawal from the role: at a given level of reported strain, officials whose posts are provided with supervision, medical and psychological cover, security arrangements and protected leave show lower burnout and lower withdrawal than officials whose posts are not.

Proposition 7b. Institutional recognition moderates the path from stewardship strain to withdrawal from the role: at a given level of reported strain, officials whose contribution is recorded in the appraisal and award system show lower withdrawal than officials whose contribution is not recorded.

Proposition 7c. Communal recognition moderates the path from stewardship strain to moral injury: at a given level of reported strain, officials whose standing is acknowledged by the community they serve show lower moral injury than officials whose standing is not.

Each moderator is matched to the outcome its own content addresses, and each match is drawn from an established literature rather than asserted. Institutional shelter is practical provision, which is a job resource in the demands-resources sense, where resources buffer the effect of demands on exhaustion and are the main predictor of disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), and where perceived organisational support is associated with lower strain and with less withdrawal behaviour (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), so it is proposed against burnout and withdrawal. Institutional recognition is the reward side of the effort-reward relation and bears on whether effort is registered where advancement is decided (Siegrist, 1996; Siegrist & Li, 2016), so it is

proposed against withdrawal. Communal recognition is the judgement of the community to which the trust is owed. The moral injury literature treats transgression and betrayal alike as morally injurious: Litz et al. (2009) define a potentially morally injurious event as perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations, and the scale used across the studies Williamson et al. (2018) synthesise measures betrayal by trusted others alongside transgressions by self and by others. The extension proposed here is this paper's own and is offered as such: the betrayal that matters in this setting may be withheld acknowledgement by the community on whose behalf the officeholder acts rather than by colleagues or superiors. Communal recognition is therefore proposed against moral injury. Where the burden stands on the predictor side, as it does in Propositions 7a to 7c and 8a, the three facets are entered simultaneously as three predictors and are not summed into a score, and a moderation is reported separately for each facet on which it is found. The phrase at a given level of reported strain in those propositions therefore means at given levels of the three facets, held jointly. The three moderators are proposed to operate independently and additively, not conjunctively: each is expected to buffer whether or not the others are present, and the account does not require all three at once. The three outcomes are separate dependent variables with established measures, tested separately rather than combined, since a proposition may hold for one and fail for another. Where a moderator is not named against an outcome, no prediction is made, and a buffering effect found there would be an addition to the account rather than a confirmation of it.

Proposition 8a. The buffering claimed in Propositions 7a to 7c is itself conditional on the trusteeship construal: where the construal is strong, communal recognition weakens the relation between reported strain and those outcomes more than it does where the construal is weak.

This is a three-way interaction, and stating it as one is the point. The reason for expecting it is the sanctification account: what is held as sacred is invested in more heavily, and its violation is felt more sharply (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005), so the judgement of the community to which the trust is owed should weigh most with the officeholder for whom the charge is a trust. It is distinguishable from Proposition 7c, which claims only that communal recognition buffers the path to moral injury for officials in general; Proposition 8a claims that the buffering is not general but largest where the construal is strong. The design is demanding, since a three-way interaction needs a larger sample than a two-way one, and Proposition 8a is therefore the last of the set to become testable rather than the first.

Proposition 8b. Officials who hold a strong trusteeship construal and receive strong communal recognition report sustained service, observable as continued engagement and as reported meaning in the work.

Sustained service has two indicators, each separately measured and each stated positively: documented continuity of the relationships on which the work depends, taken from handover and contact records, and reported meaning in the work, taken from an established meaning-in-work measure. Neither indicator is the absence of an outcome named in Propositions 7a to 7c. Defining one proposition's outcome as the negation of another's would make the two claims non-independent, so that confirming one would partly confirm the other, and two tests that cannot come apart are one test reported twice. Proposition 8b fails if officials with a strong construal and strong communal recognition show no greater continuity and report no more meaning than those without.

Propositions 5a, 5b, 8a and 8b together fix the paper's net position on amanah, and it is not that trusteeship harms the steward. One feature of the construal gives the burden the shape it has, one is proposed to lower a facet of it, and communal recognition governs what the burden then leads to. The practical implication is not to dilute the trust but to supply what lets it be carried.

At the Level of the Unit

Proposition 9. Where an institution requires service under these conditions while withholding institutional shelter, institutional recognition and the conditions in which communal recognition can form, the service it relies on becomes less sustainable, observable as rising early curtailment of postings and declining continuity of the relationships on which the work depends.

Tenure length is not used as an indicator. In most foreign services the length of a posting is fixed administratively by the posting cycle, so a change in it would be a policy artefact rather than a signal about the people in post. Early curtailment, which departs from that cycle, is the sound indicator, and relationship continuity can be established from handover and contact records. The proposition is stated at unit level and tested by comparing post-holding units that differ in what they supply; it fails if units that withhold these things show no such decline. It rests on a reciprocity documented in organisational support research, where perceived support generates obligation and its absence erodes commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), and it restates for this population the reciprocal duty of care that Leira (2018) argued a state owes the personnel who discharge its duty of care to others. Whether extracting the service without that return is also wrong is an ethical question worth pressing, and not one these propositions settle.

The propositions do not all sit at one level, and the difference matters for how each is tested. Propositions 1 to 8 are individual-level claims: the unit of observation is an officeholder, the antecedents are properties of the post she occupies, and the burden is a state she reports. Proposition 9 is a unit-level claim and is tested by comparing post-holding units rather than officials. A post-holding unit is the body that creates and maintains a set of comparable posts and supplies or withholds their conditions, typically a mission, a country office or a functional division of a sending ministry, and it is the level at which shelter, recognition and posting policy are actually decided. The unit-level claim is not an aggregation of the individual one and does not depend on it: an institution could show rising early curtailment and falling relationship continuity whatever the mechanism inside individual officeholders, and Proposition 9 would hold while the individual propositions failed. The two levels are therefore tested separately and neither is evidence for the other.

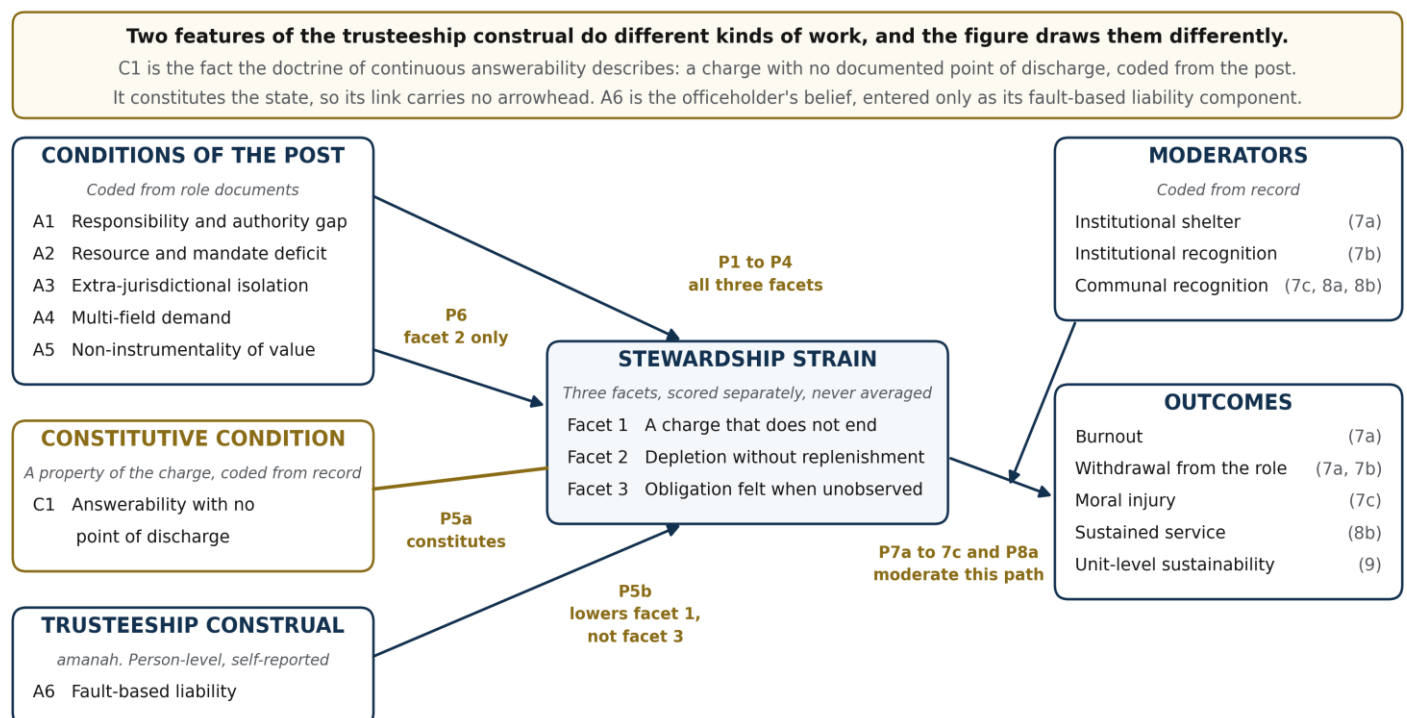


Figure 1: A framework of stewardship strain in extraterritorial public leadership.

Five conditions of the post are coded from role documents. Propositions 1 to 4 predict elevation on all three facets; Proposition 6 predicts the second facet alone. The link from the constitutive condition carries no arrowhead because it is not a causal path: an answerability with no documented point of discharge is a property of the charge, and it constitutes the state rather than raising it, which Proposition 5a tests across posts that have such a point and posts that do not. The trusteeship construal is person-level and is entered only as its fault-based liability component, which Proposition 5b proposes will lower the first facet and not the third. The moderators act on the path from the burden to its outcomes and not on the outcomes directly, which is why the moderator

arrow meets that path. Each is stated in a separate proposition and the three are proposed to operate independently and additively.

Source: authors.

Table 2: The thirteen propositions and one specificity test, with measurement sources, what would refute each, and whether the link is clean

P	Antecedent and source	Outcome and source	What would refute it	Status of the link, and whether the claim is an application
1	A1, documents	All three facets, self-report, tested separately	The coded gap does not predict the three facets where no autonomy is available	Clean. Application of Hall et al. (2006)
2	A2, documents	All three facets, self-report, tested separately	No increment over A1 on any of the three facets across a sample of posts	Clean
3	A3, records	All three facets, self-report, tested separately	Isolated posts report no higher scores on the three facets	Clean. Application of JD-R and COR
4	A4, documents	All three facets, self-report, tested separately	Principal count and incompatibility do not predict the three facets	Clean. Application of role conflict
5a	Coded non-termination of answerability: posts within and outside the scope conditions	Factor structure of the three facets, self-report, both groups	The two groups are configurally invariant, or no coherent structure is obtained in either	Clean. A structural claim tested across groups on a coded property of the post, not a prediction from a belief to a facet
5b	A6, self-report, separate sitting	Facet 1, self-report	Strong fault-based liability with no reduction of facet 1, or an equal effect on facet 3	Thin but separable. A6 is about the scope of answerability, facet 1 about whether the charge closes. A predicted negative sign is harder for shared method to manufacture, though not immune; marker variable and differing response formats advised
5 specificity	A6, entered against both facets	Facets 1 and 3, entered together	A6 predicting both facets equally, or predicting facet 3 rather than facet 1	Clean. A composite across facets is not diagnostic and is not used
6	A5, appraisal returns	Facet 2, self-report	Comparable posts differing in the reportability of output show equal facet 2	Clean. Note that the coded variable, uncountable output, is broader than the theorised one, value destroyed by display
7a	The three facets entered simultaneously, self-report, with institutional shelter	Burnout and withdrawal, established scales, tested separately	Sheltered and unsheltered officials matched on strain show equal slopes to burnout and to withdrawal	Both ends self-reported; the moderator is coded from record. Facet 2 shares item content with burnout exhaustion, so discriminant validity is required first

P	Antecedent and source	Outcome and source	What would refute it	Status of the link, and whether the claim is an application
7b	The three facets entered simultaneously, self-report, with institutional recognition	Withdrawal, established scale	Officials matched on strain show equal slopes to withdrawal whether or not their contribution is recorded	Both ends self-reported; the moderator is coded from the appraisal and award record
7c	The three facets entered simultaneously, self-report, with communal recognition	Moral injury, established scale	Officials matched on strain show equal slopes to moral injury whether or not the community acknowledges them	Both ends self-reported; the moderator is coded from documented standing
8a	A6 with communal recognition	The strain-to-outcome relations of 7a to 7c, at strong and weak construal	Communal recognition weakens those relations no more where the construal is strong than where it is weak	Both ends self-reported; the moderators are coded from record. A three-way interaction, so the most demanding of the set on sample size
8b	A6 with communal recognition	Sustained service: documented relationship continuity and reported meaning	Officials with a strong construal and strong communal recognition show no greater continuity and report no more meaning than those without	The meaning indicator is self-reported on both sides and needs temporal separation and a marker variable; the continuity indicator is coded from record
9	Unit provision, records	Early curtailment and relationship continuity, archival	Units withholding provision show no decline	Clean

Note. The last column records where both ends of a link are supplied by the same person and where they are not. Six links carry that exposure: Propositions 5b, 7a to 7c, 8a and 8b. Coding a moderator from record does not remove it, because the exposure lies in the two ends of the path. The remedies advised throughout are temporal separation, differing response formats, a marker variable and, where one exists, a record-based outcome; Propositions 8b and 9 use record-based outcomes in part or in full. Proposition 5b is separable but thin. Proposition 7a additionally requires discriminant validity against burnout before it can be interpreted, because facet 2 shares item content with burnout exhaustion. Proposition 5a is clean and is tested differently from the rest, since it requires a comparison group rather than a single sample.

Scope And Boundary Conditions

The construct applies to an official who holds responsibility for people, assets or flows beyond her state's jurisdiction and outside her own authority and resources. Note what is not in that statement. Neither the trusteeship construal nor the absence of institutional shelter is a condition of entry.

Both exclusions are deliberate and the reason is methodological. A theory that samples only on the presence of its key antecedent cannot learn that the antecedent is unnecessary: if the domain were restricted to officials who hold the charge as a trust, the case that would show the construal is not doing the explanatory work, an official with a weak construal who nonetheless reports a strong third facet, would be excluded before it could be observed. The construal is therefore a measured variable across its full range, and any test of Propositions 5a and 5b must sample officials with weak construals in the same kinds of post as those with strong ones. The same holds for institutional shelter. If being outside it were a condition of entry it would have no variance inside the

domain, and Propositions 7a to 7c could not be tested, since a theory that samples only on the absence of a buffer cannot observe it buffering.

The construct does not apply where an official's authority matches her responsibility, such as a line manager with a mandate and a team, for whom ordinary role theory suffices.

Contrasting cases mark the boundary. The education attache of the opening illustration is a clear instance, as are a consular officer answerable for the welfare of detained or stranded nationals she cannot free, and a development officer accountable for the good use of aid she does not disburse. A domestic desk officer with a defined mandate and a supervisor who can relieve her is not. The construct is stated with an Islamic normative core because that tradition articulates the trusteeship logic most sharply and supplies both of the features the account needs, the one that constitutes the state and the one that carries a sign. The conditions of the post do not depend on the tradition. Whether an equivalent secular ethic of trust constitutes the state in the same way and carries the same sign, or does only one of the two, is an open question the research agenda puts up for comparative test, and it is the question on which the generality of the central claim turns.

DISCUSSION

Differentiation from Adjacent Constructs

The separation from each neighbour is a mechanism rather than an adjective, and where the separation is thin the paper says so.

Table 3 sets the construct against its fourteen nearest neighbours in one view. The column that matters is the last, which names the observation that would show the two apart. Where that column is weak, the separation is weak, and the paper says so. The paragraphs that follow give the argument for the separations that are contested, and leave the rest to the table.

Table 3: Stewardship strain against its fourteen nearest neighbours

Neighbour	What it is	Level and source	What would show them apart
Stewardship strain (this paper)	A sustained felt state of three facets, constituted by an answerability that does not terminate, a property of the charge coded from record	Person-level, self-report; its antecedents coded from role documents	The reference case. Each row below names what would separate it from this one
Felt accountability under low autonomy	Expectation of being evaluated, where autonomy is low (Hall et al., 2006)	Person-level, self-report	Autonomy neutralises it; here the neutraliser is structurally unavailable, so the relation should persist where autonomy cannot vary
Role conflict and role overload	Incompatible or excessive demands from identifiable senders inside an organisation (Rizzo et al., 1970)	Person-level, self-report	Requires senders and a structure that can relieve; the construct should appear where neither exists
Effort-reward imbalance	High effort meeting low reciprocal reward (Siegrist, 1996)	Person-level, self-report	The reward is withheld by the nature of the object produced, not by an employer, so supplying reward should not remove facet 1
Over-commitment	A coping style of excessive engagement and need for control (Siegrist & Li, 2016)	Person-level, trait-like	A coping style predicts all facets uniformly; the construal here is predicted to lower facet 1 and not facet 3

Neighbour	What it is	Level and source	What would show them apart
Moral distress	Knowing the right action and being blocked from taking it (Jameton, 1984)	Person-level, self-report	Requires a known blocked action; the construct can arise where no particular action is blocked
Burnout exhaustion	A syndrome following chronic stress (Maslach et al., 2001)	Person-level, self-report	A syndrome versus a state; facet 2 should share variance with exhaustion but not with cynicism or reduced efficacy
Invisible work	Work systematically unseen, cheapening it (Star & Strauss, 1999; Guy et al., 2008)	Work-level	There invisibility cheapens the work; here concealment protects the object, so making it visible should destroy the value
Psychological ownership and felt responsibility	Feeling that a target is mine, and personal accountability for an outcome (Pierce et al., 2001; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991)	Person-level, self-report	Ownership rises with control (Pierce et al.); facet 1 is predicted to rise as control falls, so the two should correlate oppositely with the coded authority gap. Felt responsibility has been studied against task interdependence rather than control
Public service motivation and calling	A disposition toward public service, or work felt as a calling (Perry, 1996; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009)	Person-level, disposition	A disposition selects who takes such posts; the construct is a state within the post and should vary within a person across a posting
Emotional labour	Managing feeling to satisfy an employer's feeling rules for a wage (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000; Guy et al., 2008)	Person-level, self-report	Requires a present employer and a feeling rule; no antecedent here is a measure of feeling managed, and A4 is a coded count of principals
Illegitimate tasks	A demand appraised as falling outside what the role can reasonably be asked to carry (Semmer et al., 2010)	Person-level, appraisal of a task	Perceptual and attached to a task; A2 is a coded standing shortfall in the establishment, so the two can come apart in both directions
Street-level discretion	A front-line official absorbing policy contradictions and coping by rationing and improvising (Lipsky, 2010)	Role-level, within an organisation	Requires discretion to exercise and a service to ration; the official here controls neither the flow nor the point of delivery
Moral injury	Lasting harm following transgression or betrayal (Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2018)	Person-level, self-report	An endpoint rather than a state; it is an outcome in Propositions 7c and 8a, so the two should be measurable apart and related in the predicted direction
Servant leadership depletion	Serving subordinates depletes the leader, with the sign reversed by perspective taking (Liao et al., 2021)	Person-level, within an organisation	Requires authority over the served and the option of withdrawing into passivity; neither is available across a border to non-members

From role conflict and role ambiguity. Those constructs are defined for a role held inside an organisation with identifiable senders (Rizzo et al., 1970), and role theory reaches across the organisational boundary to boundary-role positions and to person-role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964). The paper uses that literature rather than displacing it: Proposition 4 is inter-sender role conflict, reported as such. What the role tradition does not contain is the sign assignment of Propositions 5a and 5b.

From effort-reward imbalance and over-commitment. Over-commitment, excessive engagement together with a desire to be in control (Siegrist & Li, 2016), is close to the first and third facets, and the closeness is the reason the first empirical task below is discriminant validity against it. The proposed difference is in the source and in

the sign: over-commitment is a coping style that predicts strain uniformly, whereas the construal specified here is a normative commitment predicted to lower one facet while leaving another untouched, which a coping style would not do. If that specificity is not observed, the honest conclusion is that the construal is over-commitment in religious vocabulary.

From psychological ownership and felt responsibility. These are the nearest neighbours to the first and third facets and the separation has to be made carefully. Psychological ownership is the felt state that a target is mine, arising from control over it, intimate knowledge of it and investment of the self in it (Pierce et al., 2001). Two of those three routes are closed in this setting: the official controls little of what she answers for, and what she answers for was largely inherited rather than made. The construct described here can therefore be present at full strength where psychological ownership is weak, which is a testable divergence rather than a definitional one. Felt responsibility is the sense of being personally accountable for an outcome, and it has been shown to mediate between task interdependence and effort beyond the role (Pearce & Gregersen, 1991). It is the closest antecedent-side neighbour, and the difference is that felt responsibility is a state about an outcome one is in a position to affect, whereas the burden described here arises precisely where the outcome cannot be commanded and the answerability has no terminus. The prediction that separates them is drawn from psychological ownership rather than from the felt responsibility literature, which has been studied against task interdependence rather than against control: if ownership rises with control (Pierce et al., 2001) while the first facet is proposed to rise as control falls, the two should correlate in opposite directions with the coded authority gap. If they do not, the claim to a distinct construct is weaker and should be reported as such.

From felt accountability, moral distress and burnout. Hall et al. (2006) tested felt accountability under low autonomy and found autonomy neutralising it; Proposition 1 is that relationship in a setting where the neutraliser is unavailable, and it is presented as an application rather than a rival. Moral distress concerns a known right action blocked by institutional constraint (Jameton, 1984), whereas the burden described here can arise where no particular action is blocked and the answerability has no terminus, so the two would be expected to co-occur and to be distinguishable. Burnout is a syndrome that can result from chronic stress (Maslach et al., 2001); stewardship strain is a state that can produce it and may also be borne without it, and the item-level overlap with the exhaustion dimension is a matter for discriminant validity rather than assertion.

From emotional labour. Emotional labour manages feeling to satisfy an employer's feeling rules for a wage (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983), and in public service is performed for a citizen audience under a present employer (Guy et al., 2008; Mastracci, 2022). No antecedent in this model is emotional labour: the fourth is a coded count of incompatible principals, not a measure of feeling managed. The tradition enters the argument instead through the fifth antecedent, as the established finding that work of this kind is absent from job descriptions and goes uncompensated and unrecognised.

From illegitimate tasks. Semmer et al. (2010) specify a demand appraised by the holder as falling outside what her role can reasonably be asked to carry. That construct is perceptual and attaches to a task; the second antecedent here is a coded standing shortfall in budget, staff and mandate measured against the documented scope of the post. One is a judgement the official makes, the other a fact about the establishment, and they can come apart in both directions.

From street-level bureaucracy. Lipsky (2010) described a front-line official who absorbs the contradictions of policy on behalf of an organisation whose discretion she exercises, and who copes by rationing the service, bending rules and improvising. The official described here exercises no organisation's discretion and has no service to ration: she cannot reduce what is owed to those in her care by serving fewer of them, because she does not control the flow and is not the point at which it is delivered.

From invisible work. The literature on invisible and hidden work theorises work that is systematically unseen and what that costs (Star & Strauss, 1999), and Guy et al. (2008) locate exactly that in public service. The proposed difference is that concealment here is protective of the object rather than dismissive of the work. That is a claim about mechanism, it is not established, and if it fails the fifth antecedent is an instance of invisible work rather than a new case of it.

From moral injury, the servant leadership depletion strand, and stewardship theory's steward. Moral injury is a lasting harm following transgression or betrayal (Litz et al., 2009; Williamson et al., 2018), and stewardship strain is a state that, unbuffered, can culminate in it, most sharply where the official's own institution withholds what the trust required. The depletion strand of servant leadership establishes the cost of serving and the moderated sign reversal this paper builds on (Liao et al., 2021), for a manager serving subordinates inside her own organisation, with authority over them and the option of withdrawing into passivity, neither of which is available here. Stewardship theory casts the steward principally as a benefit to the organisation and registers the frustration of being governed as an agent rather than the weight of the stewarding (Davis et al., 1997). Public service motivation is a disposition (Perry, 1996; Perry & Wise, 1990), left outside the model and measured as a control.

Contributions, Stated at the Size They Are

The paper makes one theoretical contribution and two smaller ones.

The theoretical contribution is this. The form of the claim, a normative construal that bears on a burden, is established for callings, for religious coping, for sanctified work and for public service motivation, and this paper builds on that work rather than announcing it. What it adds is an account of what two features internal to amanah each do, and they do different things. The fact that continuous answerability describes, a charge with no point of discharge, is proposed as the condition that makes an unending answerability one state rather than three, which is a claim about structure. The fault-based liability of the trustee is proposed to lower one facet of that state and not another, which is a claim about sign. Both are argued against the counter-reading rather than asserted over it, and either can come back wrong.

The second is a set of items. Felt answerability in moments when nothing would be noticed has no counterpart in the existing role stress or burnout instruments, and is distinguishable from over-commitment by its normative rather than dispositional content. Appendix A supplies an initial domain for all three facets so that this can be tested, and the discriminant-validity task below is where it would be.

The third is a design principle for practice, set out below. Beyond these, what the paper offers is a configuration: a named assembly of effort-reward imbalance, felt accountability under low autonomy, boundary-role conflict and invisible work, specified for a setting where they co-occur and where the usual remedies are structurally unavailable. A configuration is worth having only if it predicts something its parts do not, and the research agenda makes that the first empirical task rather than assuming the answer.

Implications for Practice

If the burden follows from the role rather than from poor management, the task is not to abolish it but to keep it bearable. Four implications follow, and only the third is not already available from the literatures this paper draws on.

In role design, authority should be brought closer to responsibility wherever it can be, through clearer mandates and delegated discretion (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). In preparation, the burden should be named in advance, so that officials understand that the unreportability of their best work and the persistence of their accountability are features of the post rather than personal failings. In appraisal and recognition, the non-instrumental character of the work calls for confidential recognition: a channel that is real to the officer and invisible outside the institution, so that the work is acknowledged without being advertised and thereby destroyed. That is the one design idea here that follows from the paper's own mechanism and is not obtainable from its neighbours. And in support, the isolation that removes ordinary buffers should be offset deliberately, through peer communities, continuity with predecessors and home-side mentoring. Peer support and the recognition of staff performance are protective in other occupational groups, and Brooks et al. (2023) recommend drawing on that evidence precisely because the diplomatic literature does not yet supply its own; whether they are protective here is among the things the propositions above would establish. To them this paper adds, where it fits the official, the normative community that lets a trust be carried.

Limitations

Five limitations bound these claims. The first concerns the derivation. Each feature of the tradition is assigned the kind of work its own content can do, one constituting the state and the other carrying a direction, and a reader who rejects that assignment should treat Propositions 5a and 5b as hypotheses the tradition permits rather than as claims it entails; the counter-readings of both are stated in full above. The second is that the evidence motivating the construct comes partly from adjacent populations, and although this population has now been studied directly (Brooks et al., 2023, 2025), it has not been studied with these measures. The third is that the account derives an empirical expectation from a normative ideal, which remains an assumption the model makes rather than a finding it reports. The fourth is that six links have both sides supplied by the same person, and until the designs above are run they are untested. The fifth is that the construct is articulated in the vocabulary of one tradition while being meant to hold wherever an equivalent ethic of trust is present, and the directional claim of Proposition 5b in particular may not travel.

Research Agenda

The first task is discriminant validity, and it is the task on which the construct stands or falls. The criteria and the controls must be kept apart, which the obvious formulation fails to do. The three facets should be tested for variance in moral injury and in withdrawal beyond what role stress, over-commitment and burnout measures explain, and for variance in burnout beyond what role stress and over-commitment explain (Maslach et al., 2001; Rizzo et al., 1970; Siegrist & Li, 2016; Williamson et al., 2018). If they add nothing, the construct is a relabelling and should be reported as one.

The second task is to test Proposition 5a, which needs a comparison group rather than a better instrument. The three facets are administered to officials in posts of the kind specified in the scope conditions and to officials in line posts inside an organisation with a defined point of discharge, and the factor structure is compared across the two. Sameness refutes it, as does incoherence in both. Separately, the third facet is the hardest of the three to measure by self-report, since an officeholder reporting what she feels when unobserved is reporting on something no one else saw, and three routes are worth having: a behavioural measure of effort on a task the official is told is unmonitored, informant report from a household member, and experience sampling of obligation cognitions during documented off-duty periods. None is exotic and all are within reach of a modest study.

The third task is the measures themselves. A1 to A5 are coded from records, as specified above, and not from perceptual scales. Appendix B gives the coding protocol: for each document-coded variable and each moderator it names the documents consulted, the unit of coding, the scoring rule, anchors at both ends, and the rule separating it from its nearest neighbour, together with the treatment of missing and strategically written documents and the reliability procedure. The role conflict and ambiguity scales (Rizzo et al., 1970) and the illegitimate tasks scale (Semmer et al., 2010) can be carried as convergent-validity checks on the coded values of A1 and A2, which is a different use, and must not be substituted for the coding, since that would collapse those links into the same-source problem the design confines to A6. For the construal, a measure of the fault-based liability component is needed, drawing on scholarly treatments of the trusteeship ethic and on the law of trust-based contracts (Al-Buraey, 1985; Beekun & Badawi, 1999; Herijanto, 2022; Naim et al., 2016). It must be written so that its items are about the scope of what the trustee answers for rather than about how heavily the charge is felt, since items of the latter kind would restate the outcome rather than predict it, which is the circularity the specification is built to avoid.

Several designs suit the remaining propositions. Critical-incident interviews with education attaches, consular officers and development staff can surface the facets in the field. Vignette experiments varying the coded authority gap and the presence of shelter test Propositions 1, 3 and 7a while holding other factors constant. A longitudinal design across a posting cycle traces whether unbuffered strain moves toward the outcomes of Propositions 7a to 7c and whether communal recognition alters that path, testing Propositions 7a to 7c and 8a. Proposition 9 requires unit-level comparison, with early curtailment and relationship continuity as the observable outcomes. And a comparative test across traditions would show whether the structure claimed in Proposition 5a

and the sign claimed in Proposition 5b appear where the ethic of trust is secular, which is the question the generality of the paper's central claim turns on.

CONCLUSION

An official who is answerable, from inside another country, for people she does not employ, assets she inherited and flows she does not own, carries something that the literatures on her wellbeing have documented and not explained. This paper has named it stewardship strain and defined it as a felt state of three separately measured facets, kept apart from the five conditions of the post proposed to raise it and from the belief proposed to shape it.

Its principal claim is not that the burden exists, nor that a normative construal can bear on it, which is established. It is what each of two features of one tradition does: one names the condition that constitutes the state, the other is proposed to move one facet of it and not another. Stated as rules, argued against their own counter-readings and tied to propositions that name what would refute them, both can be wrong, and the paper has set out how and the designs that would show it. The construct is offered to public leadership research as a specification rather than a discovery, to the institutions that create such posts as a reason to supply what makes a charge bearable, and to those who hold them as an account of why the weight is real and why it need not be borne alone. It remains to be tested.

Declarations

Conflict of interest. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Ethics. This is a conceptual paper. It involves no human or animal participants, imports no confidential data and identifies no individual or organisation, so ethics committee approval was not required. The single illustration used is stylised and names no real post, person or country.

Data availability. This is a conceptual paper and no new data were generated or analysed. All sources supporting the argument are published works and are listed in full in the reference list. The measurement sources named for each antecedent and each proposition refer to instruments and record types available in the published literature and in the administrative records of sending institutions; no such records were obtained or used in preparing this paper.

Use of generative artificial intelligence. A generative artificial intelligence assistant was used only for copy-editing, that is, for improving language and grammar, and for checking references. It was not used for the ideas, the argument, the analysis or the interpretation in this paper. The authors take full responsibility for the content, and no artificial intelligence tool is listed or credited as an author, consistent with the position of the Committee on Publication Ethics.

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Appendix A. An Initial Item Domain

The construct is offered with candidate items rather than without, because a facet described only in prose cannot be shown to be distinct from its neighbours. What follows is an initial domain, not a validated scale. The items have not been administered, and the first empirical task named in the research agenda is to administer them alongside existing role stress, over-commitment and burnout measures and to establish whether they hold together and stand apart.

Three drafting rules were applied. First, no item names a condition of the post, so that the burden and its antecedents cannot share a source. Second, no item refers to the trusteeship construal, so that the construal can predict the state without predicting itself. Third, each item is written to be answerable by an officeholder in any national system, so that the domain is not tied to one service. A five-point agreement format is assumed. The reference period is the past four weeks for the standard administration, since the construct is a state rather than a trait, and a shorter window set by the sampling interval where the items are used in the experience-sampling design named in the research agenda.

Facet 1, the felt weight of a charge that does not end. 1. There is no point at which I can say this part of my work is finished. 2. Completing what I set out to do does not make the responsibility any lighter. 3. The responsibility stays with me after the working day is over. 4. I cannot hand any of this over in a way that would close it. 5. However much I do, the charge remains the same size.

Facet 2, felt depletion that is not replenished. 1. What this work takes out of me is not given back. 2. I start each period with less than I had before. 3. Rest does not restore what the work uses up. 4. I am drawing on reserves that are not being replaced. 5. The recovery I get is not equal to the demand.

Facet 3, the felt persistence of obligation in the unobserved moment. 1. I feel bound by this work at times when no one would know either way. 2. The obligation holds when nothing I do would be recorded. 3. I do not stop being answerable when I am off duty. 4. There is no period in which this is genuinely not my concern. 5. I would still act on it if no one were ever to find out.

Two properties of the domain bear on the tasks set out above. Facet 2 is expected to share variance with the exhaustion dimension of established burnout measures, and items 2 and 4 in particular are close to it; that overlap is what the discriminant-validity task is for, and rewording the items to conceal it would defeat the test. Facet 3 is the hardest of the three to measure in this register, because an officeholder reporting what she feels when unobserved is reporting on something no one else saw; the research agenda therefore names behavioural, informant and experience-sampled routes to it, and the items here are a starting point.

Appendix B. Coding Protocol for the Document-Coded Variables

Five antecedents, the condition that constitutes the state, and three moderators are coded from record rather than reported by the official. Naming a source is not the same as specifying a rule, so the rules are set out here. Each entry gives the documents consulted, the unit of coding, the scoring rule, an anchored example at each end of the range, and the rule that separates the variable from its nearest neighbour. All coding is applied to the post and not to the person. Where a rule yields a proportion, the proportion is the score of record and is converted to a five-point format only for presentation, by quintile within sending system; where a rule yields a count of recorded features, that count gives the five-point score directly.

C1, the non-termination of answerability. This is the condition that constitutes the state, so it is coded from record rather than reported, and it is the variable on which the two groups of Proposition 5a are formed. Documents: the instrument of appointment, the mandate or terms of reference, the reporting and appraisal instruments, and any handover or discharge instrument attached to the post. Unit: the post. Rule: for each documented object of answerability, record whether the documents name an act, a report, a handover or a term that discharges it, so that the holder ceases to answer for it once that is done. The score is the proportion of objects for which no point of discharge is documented. Anchor at 1: a project officer answerable for a programme that closes on an acceptance certificate, after which the file is transferred. Anchor at 5: an officer answerable for the welfare and standing of a body of nationals abroad, where no document names an act that ends the answerability and the handover instrument passes the same charge undiminished to a successor. Separation from A1: A1 asks whether the holder can command what she answers for, C1 whether what she answers for can be discharged at all. A post can score low on A1 and high on C1, as a line manager with full authority over an open-ended duty of care would.

A1, the responsibility and authority gap. Documents: the instrument of appointment, the mandate or terms of reference, the delegation of authority schedule, and the reporting lines. Unit: the post. Rule: list every object the post is documented as answerable for, then mark each as commanded or not commanded, where commanded means the holder can issue a binding instruction about it without seeking another party's consent. The score is the proportion not commanded. Anchor at 1: a domestic desk officer answerable for a team she appraises and directs. Anchor at 5: an education attache answerable for the welfare of students she cannot instruct, at universities she does not govern, under a visa regime she does not administer. Separation from A2: A1 is about permission, A2 about means. A post with full authority and no budget scores low on A1 and high on A2.

A2, the resource and mandate deficit. Documents: the approved budget, the establishment or staffing table, and the mandate as written. Unit: the post. Rule: for each documented obligation, record whether the budget line, the staff and the written mandate exist to discharge it. The score is the proportion of obligations with at least one of the three missing. Anchor at 1: every obligation carries a funded line and named staff. Anchor at 5: obligations listed with no budget line, no staff and no mandate beyond an instruction to attend to them. Separation from A1: ask whether supplying money and staff would close the gap. If it would, it is A2. If the obstacle is that another sovereign decides, it is A1.

A3, extra-jurisdictional isolation. Documents: the post description, the organisation chart of the mission or office, the supervision arrangement, and the location of the appraising officer. Unit: the post. Rule: score on four recorded features, one point each, plus one for the baseline: no co-located line supervisor; no co-located peer in the same function; the appraising officer resident in another country; and no documented professional support available in the country of service. Anchor at 1: a post inside a staffed office with a resident supervisor. Anchor at 5: a single officer covering a country alone, appraised from the capital. Separation: this is a structural count, not a report of loneliness, which belongs to the outcome side.

A4, multi-field demand. Documents: the mandate, standing instructions from each principal, and any inter-agency agreement covering the post. Unit: the activity, not the post, since incompatibility attaches to particular activities. Rule: for each documented activity, count the principals holding a formal claim on it, then code incompatibility as present where two or more written requirements cannot both be satisfied in a single course of action. The post score is the count of activities with incompatibility present, expressed as a proportion of activities. Anchor at 1: one principal, or several whose requirements are documented as compatible. Anchor at 5: three or more principals with requirements the documents themselves cannot reconcile. Note: the count and the incompatibility are recorded separately and reported separately, so that a post with many compatible principals is not scored as a post with few incompatible ones. Because this is the one variable coded at activity level, and posts differ in how many activities their documents record, the proportion is always reported alongside the raw count of incompatible activities and the total; posts with fewer than three documented activities are reported separately rather than pooled, since a proportion over one or two activities is not comparable with one over forty.

A5, the non-instrumentality of value. Documents: the appraisal instrument, the reporting template, and the returns the post is required to submit. Unit: the output. Rule: for each documented output, code whether it can appear in the returns at all. Score the proportion that cannot. The hard distinction is between output that is merely hard to quantify and output whose value would be destroyed by being displayed, and the coding rule is this: an output is merely hard to quantify if a counting instrument could in principle be built for it without changing what it is; it is non-instrumental if counting or reporting it would alter the relationship that produces it. Trust built with a host official that would be compromised by being logged as an asset is the second kind. Hours spent on student welfare is the first. Where a coder cannot tell, the output is coded as merely hard to quantify, so that the variable is biased against the paper's own claim.

The three moderators, coded on the same format as the antecedents. Institutional shelter. Documents: the provisions attached to the post for supervision, medical and psychological cover, security arrangements and leave entitlement. Unit: the post. Rule: the count of those four that are documented as available. Anchor at 1: none of the four documented. Anchor at 5: all four documented and a named person responsible for each. Separation: this is what the institution provides, not what the officeholder reports receiving. Institutional

recognition. Documents: the appraisal record and the award or commendation record across the posting. Unit: the posting. Rule: whether the contribution appears in either, scored absent, appraisal only, or appraisal and award. Anchor at low: no entry in either record. Anchor at high: a named commendation citing the specific contribution. Separation from A5: A5 is whether the work could be recognised at all, this is whether the institution recognised what could be. Communal recognition. Documents: records of invitations, honorary roles, formal acknowledgements and requests for the officeholder by name from the community served. Unit: the posting. Rule: scored absent, occasional, or sustained. Anchor at low: no record of any approach by name. Anchor at high: a standing role conferred by the community and repeated approaches by name. Separation from institutional recognition: institutional recognition is in the employer's gift and communal recognition is not, so an entry is coded to whichever party issued it.

Comparability across national systems. Recognition raises this most sharply, but it applies to every variable here, because an establishment table in one foreign service is not written to the conventions of another, and an appraisal instrument that awards commendations freely is not comparable with one that awards them rarely. Three rules follow. Every variable is coded relative to the norms of the sending system rather than on an absolute scale, so that a post is scored against what that service typically provides and not against what any service could provide. Scores are then standardised within sending system before any comparison across systems, which removes the level difference while preserving the variation the propositions are about. And for institutional recognition in particular, the base rate of commendation in the system is recorded alongside the score, since a commendation means something different where one official in twenty receives one and where one in two does. Where a sending system supplies too few posts for within-system standardisation, its posts are reported separately rather than pooled.

Missing and strategically written documents. Administrative documents are often incomplete and are sometimes written to present a post favourably, which the coding must handle rather than ignore. Three rules follow. Silence is coded as missing and not as zero, so that an undocumented obligation does not become evidence of its absence. Every variable is triangulated across at least two document types where two exist, and a discrepancy between them is recorded rather than resolved in favour of the more recent. Where only a self-presenting document exists, such as a mission's own annual report, the variable is flagged as low-confidence and the analysis is run with and without the flagged cases.

Coder training and reliability. Two coders work independently from the same document set, blind to the officeholder's reported strain. Agreement is established on a pilot of at least twenty posts before the main coding begins, and a chance-corrected agreement statistic is reported for every variable, with disagreements resolved by a third coder rather than by discussion between the two. The protocol above is the coding manual in summary form; a full manual with the decision rules and the pilot anchors would accompany any study that used it.