

## *The performance assessment of public sector in Albania*

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**Abstract:** *The political changes after 90s were accompanied by major economic changes, transforming from a centralized to a decentralized economy. During the past two decades, public sector in Albania has been through a dramatic change, mostly on structural aspect. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the performance of the public sector through indicators based on citizens' perceptions. Another aspect intended to be addressed through the questionnaire is the assessment of consumers' expectations of the public good, with issues related to the economy, legal and institutional framework, modernization of public administration, etc. The survey took place in Albania, wherein a number of questionnaires were delivered and fulfilled. In this context 16 variables were developed considering the sectors education, health, safety and security, law enforcement, transparency (information, accountability), property rights, investments and public utility services. The other purpose of this study is to analyze the differences in the perceptions of public sector performance that could come from different groups of interviewees, grouped by: gender (male or female), education (higher or secondary) and sector where the interviewee is employed (in the public or private sector). Evaluation of variables in this study are rated using Likert-type scale. Each variable is measured through items, which are estimated through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as the most used technique in social sciences studies, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method is implemented. Referring to the citizens' expectations, this paper will contribute to enhance the performance of the activities of public organizations and government institutions. In addition, the results of this study, aim to help policy-making structures to improve the performance of public administration in providing public services to citizens.*

**Keywords:** *public sector, performance, public services, efficiency.*

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## Introduction

The public sector contributes positively to economic development through the provision of goods and public services, promoting and encouraging the private sector as well as the efficient use of public resources. In the last two decades there has been an almost constant effort parallel to limit the scope of state functions to increase institutional strength and quality of public goods provision. From this point of view, the evaluation of the performance of services provided by the public sector remains of crucial importance.

In most developing countries, public expenditure represents a significant part of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Nicolescu et al., 2020). An effective and efficient public sector plays an important role in economic growth, social development, and poverty alleviation (Andrew, 2011). Referring to various studies, the public sector contributes to the provision of public goods and services to citizens through a sustainable tax system, efficient use of natural resources, revenue collection and expenditure management (Antonio et al., 2006). The results and the performance of this sector focuses on the nature of financial management, public investment and the quality of services provided.

Measurement and evaluation of public sector performance in terms of services delivery is an instrumental important for governments and public policymakers. A well-functioning public sector that delivers a quality public services and fosters economic growth through managing fiscal resources, is considered critical to alleviate poverty and increase welfare of the citizens. Expansive efforts to use service contracts, concessions or public-private partnerships, it is not always accompanied by the results foreseen by this process.

In addition, the fiscal burden created by this approach has been contested by many experts, mainly supporters of a broad-based public sector.

Public administration is a state-run mechanism to regulate and enable business by creating favourable fiscal and economic policies and by providing administrative services that facilitate their operations. It is nowadays recognized that public administrations should work efficiently and effectively and that their services should be designed to meet the need of citizens and businesses (Rinaldi et al., 2015; Androniceanu & Tvaronavičienė, 2019; Androniceanu, 2019).

The performance of public institutions is related to the definition of priorities in the allocation of public resources, planning for achieving policy goals, public investment management, efficiency and integrity, and improving the quality of governance in service delivery (Vito, 2000).

The structure of the paper is the following: The theoretical part presents the study results on the role and performance of the public sector in providing services to citizens. The second part defines the aim of the study, methodology, and the descriptions of the data used.

The third part presents the results of the study and the discussion about evaluation of public sector performance. The fourth part provides a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations.

## 1. Literature review

The performance indicators are an important instrument for the evaluation of the public sector quality and efficiency in the majority of developed countries. In many developing countries, important reforms in the economic infrastructure sectors have been undertaken in the last two decades with the objectives to improve the efficiency and quality of service delivery by the public sector.

The public sector consists of organisations that deliver the goods and services of the government whether at a local or a national level. State organisations have a crucial role in the life of citizens and there is a continuous need for increased commitment to improve their activity (Fryer et al., 2007; Bayar et al., 2020; Borocki et al., 2019). The quality of government and public sector institutions significantly affects economic development and explain the differences in economic growth between countries (Tomorri et al., 2017). Usually, an organization has public power when it is able to regulate and facilitate the affairs of individuals, groups and other organisations in the public interest. Institutions are the rules and enforcement mechanisms that govern economic, social and political interactions (Islam, 2018; Tamulevičienė & Androniceanu, 2020). State administration is defined as a system of entities created by statute and in the competence to carry out internal and external management and executive activities with responsibility assigned to the state (Gray et al., 1995).

The success and sustainability of any society depends upon how well its public services are provided. State, through public administration serves citizens in all respects, offering public services, national security, national education, health, economic development and everything that is vital to citizens. Public administration is a state-run mechanism to regulate and enable business by creating favourable fiscal and economic policies and by providing administrative services that facilitate their operations. It is able to carry out these tasks by creating policies and rules for human capacity building, creating a suitable working environment, building communication systems through appropriate information technology, building procedures and processes in accordance with laws that originate from the legislature.

On the other hand, quality and effectiveness of public administration services are influenced by many factors such as organizational structure, responsibilities, available intellectual capital (Wiig, 2002). Governments may differ in the political principles reflected in their constitutions, but major principles of good administration are the same in any system (Ostrom et al., 1971). The meaning of public service, public service-oriented organizations, new public service, including those at the local level, imply a change of the role of governing board in society that become the service organizations serving needs of citizens (Manzoor, 2014). To satisfy citizens' requirements, it is necessary to develop policies and strategies that involve all actors and factors necessary to provide quality services. It is nowadays recognized that public administrations should work efficiently and effectively and that their services should be designed to meet the

need of citizens and businesses (Rinaldi et al., 2015; Ciobanu et al, 2019; Ciobanu & Androniceanu, 2018).

The public services are provided to citizens directly through a public sector organization or through financing provided by the private sector, third sector or voluntary organizations (Radnor, 2015; Haseeb et al. 2019). A good system of administrative procedures ensures the legality as much as the quality of administrative decisions. It also protects citizens' rights and promotes citizens' participation, enhances transparency and accountability by avoiding unnecessarily complicated, formalistic and lengthy processes. Successful process management speeds up service delivery and delights the citizens. Every organization, a governmental body, a non-profit organization and an enterprise has to manage a number of processes (Rusch, 2014; Mura et al. 2017).

Performance is a broad concept and should be viewed holistically. In addition, it is necessary to consider other theories in order to better identify factors that affect it (Domi et al., 2018). Performance assessment is a broader activity that takes into account not only numerals but also other forms of evidence such as written descriptions, observations (Marr, B., 2008). Good examples of such data are the judgements on the various achievements of organizations that can be obtained from surveys of citizens, service users and managers (Andrews et al., 2012). Citizens know better than anyone else how responsible or reliable an agency (Ravindra, 2004).

Performance is based on quality results (Van et al., 2015). The debate on the role of the state has shifted in recent years towards empirical assessments of the efficiency and usefulness of public sector activities (Afonso et al., 2005).

## 2. Data and Methodology

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the performance of the public sector through indicators of citizens' perceptions. Another aspect intended to be addressed through the questionnaire is the assessment of consumers' expectations of the public good, with issues related to the economy, legal and institutional framework, modernization of public administration, etc. The survey took place at the Tirana region, wherein 200 questionnaires were delivered and fulfilled. The construct questionnaire used for this purpose is referred to the Public Sector Reform in Europe, by the European Research Area; Citizen Service Centers Pathways toward improved public service delivery by the Nordic Trust Fund and World Bank.

Regarding to the performance measurement, 16 variables were developed considering the sectors education, health, safety and security, law enforcement, transparency (information, accountability), property rights, investments and public utility services. Another objective of this study is to analyze the differences in the perceptions of public sector performance of different groups of respondents, the differences that may come from: gender (male or female), education (higher or secondary) and sector where the interviewee is employed (public or private sector).

Evaluation of variables in this study are rated using a Likert-type scale (see e.g., Domi et al., 2019; Keco et al., 2019). This is due to that this technique of subjective measures accurately reflect the opinions of the respondent (Burns & Bush, 2002; Wong, 1999; Zikmund, 2000). Each of the above variables are measured through items, which are estimated through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as the most used technique in social sciences studies (Field, 2009), Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method is implemented.

In the framework of the EFA, PCA method was conducted on the 16 observed variables with Varimax rotation. To this, four items were deleted as they were not respectively measuring the same common underlying dimension as they were supposed to measure.

The EFA results are presented in Table 1. According to (Cortina, 1993), in the case of more than 12 items,  $\alpha$  can take values around the level of 0.7. While, factor loadings are an indication of the importance of a given question to a given factor. In general, factor loadings with an absolute value greater than 0.30 are considered significant (Child, 1990; Hair et al., 1995). The Kaiser - Meyer - Olkin (KMO) test and the Bartlett test are used to test whether the data are appropriate for factor analysis. The KMO takes values from 0 to 1, where the smallest acceptable value for this test is 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974). This means that if  $KMO > 0.5$ , sample is appropriate. In our study the value of  $KMO = .655$  is therefore a good value, which indicates that the sample is appropriate. While the Bartlett's test with  $\chi^2 = 1974.460$ ,  $df = 120$  and  $p = .000$ , shows that the relationships between the questions are sufficiently large for the analysis of the main component. We used PCA with Kaiser Normalization as can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. EFA results**

Parameters	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4
<b>Utility services</b>	<b>.838</b>				
Energy		.884			
Water		.869			
Public Transport		.748			
Telecommunication		.717			
<b>Legal and institutional framework</b>	<b>.764</b>				
Property Problems			.829		
Employment			.784		
Judicial system			.763		
<b>Modernization of Public Administration</b>	<b>.979</b>				
Electronic Services				.992	
Increase of service quality				.986	
<b>Economic Issues</b>	<b>.673</b>				
Improvement of legislation					.786
Public Investment					.735
Taxes					.656

(Source: Authors results, 2019)

### 3. Results and discussions

The public sector contributes to the provision of public goods and services to citizens through a sustainable tax system, efficient use of natural resources, revenue collection and expenditure management (Antonio et al., 2006). The evaluation of public sector performance is important, because it significantly affects the quality of public services and goods, comparing costs versus benefits that citizens receive from the activities of public organizations and enterprises. Also, the quality of governance and institutions has a significant impact in economic development and the performance of public service delivery (Vito, 2000).

This study is focused primarily on socio-demographic profile of respondents aiming to a clearer understanding of their attitude and perception about public sector performance. The majority of respondents (48%) are aged 41-50 years, while 23% of them aged 51-60 years. As regard to the educational level, it is estimated that about 65% of the respondents have higher education and master degree. The spectrum of indicators for measuring the quality of governance, has expanded because of increasing the role of institutional factors in the impact of public sector performance. Based on the survey data, sectors involved in the study such as education, health, safety and security, the rule of law, transparency (information, accountability), property rights, public investment and utility services (water, energy, public transport), estimates have been as follows in Table 2:

**Table 2. Indicators for measuring public sector performance**

No.	Public service indicators	Very good	Good	Average	Low	Very low	Total
1	Education	6.0%	24.5%	54.0%	14.5%	1.0%	100.0%
2	Health	0.0%	8.0%	46.0%	37.5%	8.5%	100.0%
3	Safety and security	0.5%	21.5%	50.5%	21.5%	6.0%	100.0%
4	Rule of law	1.5%	12.0%	34.5%	35.0%	17.0%	100.0%
5	Transparency (information, accountability)	2.0%	6.5%	38.5%	39.0%	14.0%	100.0%
6	Property rights	3.5%	15.0%	42.5%	30.0%	9.0%	100.0%
7	Public investment	2.0%	28.5%	47.5%	16.0%	6.0%	100.0%
8	Utility services (water, energy, public transport)	0.0%	15.5%	33.5%	41.0%	10.0%	100.0%

(Source: Authors results, 2019)

Referring to Table 2 the evaluation of services in education results that about 79% of respondents evaluated them with good and average. Roughly 84% of respondents evaluated health services low and average. Regarding the assessment of the safety and security variable, the majority of respondents (70%) expressed

about an average level. About the observance of the law, the respondents answered up to 70% as low to average. Regarding the transparency and property rights, assessment is similar to the 78% and 73% to the lowest level to the average. The last two variables, public investment and utilities, assessment is different from the above. Perceptions of respondents about public investment are about 76% good and average, while for utility services about 75% of respondents have a perception of a low to average level. It shows an inadequate performance of the activities of public enterprises in the provision of these services.

The other purpose of this study is to analyze the differences in the perceptions of public sector performance that could come from different groups of interviewees, grouped by: gender (male or female), education (higher or secondary) and sector where the interviewee is employed (in the public or private sector). To obtain such differences in the perception of public sector performance is used, independent samples t-test is implemented, which compares the mean scores of two different groups of people. These differences between the above groups will be seen for four of the elements derived from EFA: utility services (water, energy, public transport), legal and institutional framework (property problems, employment, judicial system), modernization of public administration (electronic services, increase of service quality) and economic issues (improvement of legislation, public investment, taxes).

Firstly, are analyzed the differences in perception of public sector performance coming from gender. About to utility services, there was not a significant difference between female ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) and male ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=0.6$ );  $t(198)=1.67$ ,  $p=0.095$ . About to legal and institutional framework, there was a insignificant difference between female ( $M=4.6$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) and male ( $M=4.6$ ,  $SD=0.5$ );  $t(198)=0.26$ ,  $p=0.978$ . Regarding to the modernization of public administration, an insignificant difference was between female ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.6$ ) and male ( $M=5.0$ ,  $SD=6.7$ );  $t(92)=1.2$ ,  $p=0.228$ . Also, to the economic issues, there was an insignificant difference between female ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) and male ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.6$ );  $t(198)=0.14$ ,  $p=0.887$ . All these results suggest that gender does not have an effect on the perception of public sector performance for all aspects taken into analysis.

Secondly, differences were seen in the perception of public sector performance that can come from the level of education. In relation to education, it was analyzed whether there is any difference in the perception of public sector performance between persons with secondary education and persons with higher education for the four elements derived from EFA. About to utility services, there was not a significant difference between persons with higher education ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) and persons with secondary education ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=0.6$ );  $t(145)=1.56$ ,  $p=0.119$ . About to legal and institutional framework, there was an insignificant difference between persons with higher education ( $M=4.6$ ,  $SD=0.4$ ) and persons with secondary education ( $M=4.4$ ,  $SD=0.9$ );  $t(93)=1.56$ ,  $p=0.121$ . The modernization of public administration, relive an insignificant difference between persons with higher education ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.6$ ) and persons with secondary

education ( $M=5.2$ ,  $SD=8$ );  $t(67)=1.10$ ,  $p=0.273$ . Finally, the analysis for these two groups of persons referred to economic issues. Even for this, there was not a significant difference between persons with higher education ( $M=4.4$ ,  $SD=0.6$ ) and persons with secondary education ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=0.8$ );  $t(125)=1.85$ ,  $p=0.066$ . All these results suggest that education level of the interviewees, does not have an effect on the perception of public sector performance for all aspects taken into analysis.

Thirdly, referring to employment, it is seen whether there are differences in perception of public sector performance. In relation to employment it is required to assess the differences in the perception of public sector performance of persons employed in the public and private sector to the four elements come from EFA. About to utility services, there was not a significant difference between persons working in the public sector ( $M=4.2$ ,  $SD=0.8$ ) and persons working in the private sector ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=0.7$ );  $t(130)=0.25$ ,  $p=0.797$ . We see that in relation to the legal and institutional framework, there was a significant difference between persons working in the public sector ( $M=4.7$ ,  $SD=0.3$ ) and persons working in the private sector ( $M=4.6$ ,  $SD=0.5$ );  $t(120)=2.71$ ,  $p=0.008$ . Regarding to the modernization of public administration, there was an insignificant difference between persons working in the public sector ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) ( $M=4.1$ ,  $SD=0.7$ );  $t(130)=1.27$ ,  $p=0$ . Also, in relation to economic issues, there was not a significant difference between persons working in the public sector ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.7$ ) and persons working in the private sector ( $M=4.3$ ,  $SD=0.6$ );  $t(130)=0.02$ ,  $p=0.986$ .

As suggested by the results, employment does not have an effect on the perception of the public sector performance for aspects related to utility services, modernization of public administration and economic issues. It shows what the analysis is that there is a difference, in the perception of public sector performance between persons employed in the public sector and persons employed in the private sector on aspects of the legal and institutional framework, including: property problems, employment and judicial system.

#### 4. Conclusions and recommendations

Referring to the citizens' expectations regarding the quality of public service delivery, it is an alert for decision-making structures to improve the performance of public administration. Measurement and evaluation of public sector performance in terms of services delivery is an instrumental important for government institutions.

According to the results of the study it is estimated that about education, safety and security, and public investments, there is a perception in average and good level. Regarding health, transparency, law, property rights and utility services it results a low to average perception. The perception of the respondents shows a significant valence of the level of trust in the delivery of public services which is an alert for decision-making and policy-making structures to improve the performance of public administration. There is also a clear discordance between the



consumers' expectations of the public good with the quality and extent of public service delivery and this certainly derives a clear signal for governance structures to increase performance. Referring to the citizens' expectations, it is estimated that the increase of performance in the health and education system, transparency, rule of law, property rights, improvement of infrastructure and utility services, represent some of the issues and challenges to be addressed in the future regarding public sector performance and quality of governance. According to the results there is a difference, in the perception of public sector performance between persons employed in the public sector and persons employed in the private sector on aspects of the legal and institutional framework, including: property problems, employment and judicial system. The performance of public institutions and organizations is closely related to macroeconomic stability, enhancing the quality of governance, creating an enabling business environment, efficient use of natural resources.

The undesirable effects of performance measurement in the public sector can take different forms in order to enhance the quality of the activities of public organizations and institutions. The research has its limitations, but the results of the study aim to help policy-making structures and relevant institutions to improve the quality of public service delivery to citizens. Future studies, will also aim at a more in-depth analysis of the services provided by the public sector, helping governments to improve the performance in accordance with citizens' expectations.

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