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# NEW TRENDS OF IDEAL TYPE: ADDRESSING WICKED PROBLEMS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

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**Abstract**. Arising across borders and jurisdictions, and spanning multiple dimensions across sectors, collaborative governance has matured into an ideal type of complex problem solving. However, challenges regarding collaborative governance's reliability in responding to rapidly changing global issues exist. This study conducts a systematic bibliometric evaluation of collaborative governance literature from 2019 to April 12, 2024. The methodology for the identification of emerging themes and trends is based on a review of 478 Scopus documents and visualization of the data in Microsoft Excel. These papers suggest a trend toward widespread collaborative governance for addressing global crises, especially climate change, disaster management, and public health. Two new development trends were found: one confirms the effectiveness of collaborative governance as an efficient problem-solving approach, and the other critically analyzes the scalability, efficiency, and adaptability hampers of collaborative governance to fit in a fast-changing global environment. Both trends represent important inputs and fresh perspectives on the future direction of research in

collaborative governance, with additional opportunities for research and timely publication.

**Keywords:** *collaborative governance, bibliometric analysis, Scopus, Microsoft Excel, ideal type.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *Bendradarbiavimo valdymas, bibliometrinė analizė, „Scopus“, „Microsoft Excel“, idealus tipas.*

## 1. Introduction

In many cases, traditional governance approaches have failed to solve increasingly complex global problems. These problems are known as "wicked problems" (Emerson and Nabatchi 2015), marked by the nature of unpredictability (Alford and Head 2017), ambiguity (Schwab and Diaz 2023), lack of consensus on solutions, and complex interdependencies (Veríssimo 2023). These problems are difficult for traditional governance to address. Such failures make collaborative governance, which involves various actors from the public sector, private organizations, and civil society in the decision-making process, a promising alternative solution (Avoyan 2023). The engagement of these actors extends to collective decision-making and action.

Applications of collaborative governance have been made in the last decade with regard to environmental sustainability (Yu et al. 2024; Wang et al. 2023), disaster management (De Sisto et al. 2024; Lee 2020), and public health (Emerson 2018; Grootjans et al. 2022). These applications show a lot of interest in collaborative governance. Some of them are interested in increasing participation, engagement, and coordination between actors to achieve common goals and ensure the sustainability of collaborative networks (Yahia et al. 2021), strengthening public participation, improving accountability, and making decisions that are more responsive to public needs (Sitienei, Manderson, and Nangami 2021). In contrast, other studies point to its limitations, such as the difficulty of aligning efficiency and inclusiveness, the emergence of power imbalances between stakeholders, and challenges in scaling up collaborative initiatives to address larger and more complex problems (Hansen, Triantafillou, and Christensen 2022; Qi and Ran 2023).

The counter-trend in collaborative governance development underlies this study to explain it through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the collaborative governance literature from 2019 to April 12, 2024. The selected period of focus was to expand upon the work of previous studies, one of which was performed by Bartz et al. (2021), which offered a review of collaborative governance up to 2018.

This study aims to answer three key questions:

1. What are the trends in collaborative governance literature from 2019 to 2024?
2. What are the varied geographical and thematic applications of collaborative governance?

3. What are the key contributions and critiques in the literature?

The answers to these three questions yield a systematic and current overview of collaborative governance, including its major challenges, achievements, and the direction of future research.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Research design

The trend analysis in this study was conducted using bibliometric methods to contribute to collaborative governance from 2019 to April 12, 2024. Bibliometrics in this study is used for data processing from various previous studies on collaborative governance to evaluate the development of literature in today's rapid progress. This evaluation was done to provide recommendations for further research on this topic.

### 2.2. Data collection

The literature search and data collection were conducted using the keyword "collaborative governance" in the article title in the Scopus database. The first search yielded 790 documents consisting of articles, book chapters, conference papers, reviews, books, errata, notes, retracts, editorials, and letters, from 1990 to 2024.

To ensure consistency and relevance, the following inclusion criteria were employed:

- Publication: No other documents prior to 2019 until 12 April 2024 were listed. This time frame was selected to include the most up-to-date efforts in collaborative governance, and it was guided by past bibliometric reviews, e.g., (Bartz et al. 2021).
- Document type: This includes journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers, as these are the most widely recognized and shared forms of academic research.
- Language: Only documents published in English were chosen to standardize the dataset and to be able to compare it with other studies.
- Total Documents: The initial search yielded 790 documents, and subsequent application of the inclusion criteria retained 478 documents for final analysis.

### 2.3 Data analysis

Microsoft Excel was used for data organization and visualization. Microsoft Excel was selected, as it offers versatility in managing large sets of data as well as producing detailed graphs and tables.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Publication and citation trends

The number of publications and means of citations in the literature analysis of collaborative governance showed a sharp increase after 2019 till April 12, 2024. A total of 478 documents were published during this period, with an average of 90 publications per year. Similarly, Figure 1 shows that the upward movement in publications continues, suggesting that the use of collaborative governance as a first-order governance architecture continues to grow. A total of 3,406 citations of the selected documents were evaluated using a co-citation citation analysis.

The publication trend is analyzed according to the number of documents published per year. As we can see in Figure 1, collaborative governance is still a hotly debated, highly cited topic. The yearly citation trend reflects the total number of documents published in a year. A citation for the article is recorded in Scopus when the authors who cited the article also post their articles on Scopus.

The top-cited article on environmental governance in 2019 was written by Sullivan et al. (2019) regarding the drought contingency planning process in the Lower Colorado River Basin. The most-cited article in 2020 was Yan et al. (2020), based on lessons drawn from China's experience with emission trading systems and their effects on air pollution.

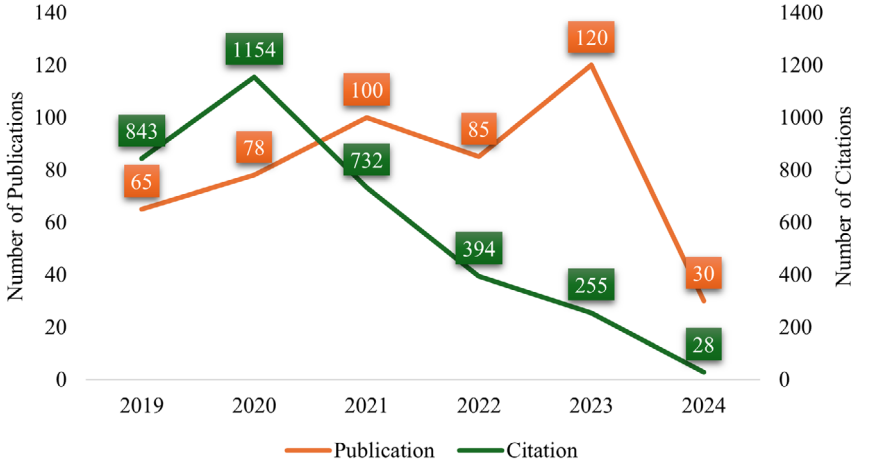


**Figure 1.** Number of publications and citations in 2019–2024

Unlike previous years, emphasizing empirical case studies, Bianchi et al. (2021) published a topic issue about collaborative governance implementation, and this article, in

2021, is the most cited article. Jones and White (2022) published the most cited article in 2022, on barriers to collaborative governance in the food-energy-water nexus. The most-cited article in 2023 was Wang and Ran's (2021) contrast between network and collaborative governance.

### 3.2. Country of study location

There is a significant share of publications on studies of collaborative governance from Asian and European countries, as indicated in Table 1, and the three leading countries responsible for generating knowledge were China (21.5%), the United States (12.8%), and Indonesia (10%). Research conducted in China focused on environment and natural resources (42%), sustainable development (27%), government and public policy (16%), health and disaster (10%), economy and business (4%), social and education (1%), and technology and innovation (1%). The United States relates to government and public policy (49.2%), environment and natural resources (34.4%), health and disasters (11.5%), economy and development (3.3%), education and research (1.6%), and technology and innovation (1.6%).

As a developing country, Indonesia generated abundant studies on collaborative governance with a discourse ranging from issues related to governance and public policy (35.4%), environment and natural resources (25%), sustainable development (20.8%), health and disaster (10.4%), economy and business (6.3%), social and education (2.1%), technology and innovation (1%), infrastructure (1%), and security and law (1%).

**Table 1.** Countries and the number of publications

| Continent | Country and number of publications | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Asia | China (103); Indonesia (48); Israel (10); South Korea (9); Malaysia (5); India (5); Nepal (3); Bangladesh (1); Philippines (1); Hong Kong (1); Japan (1); Myanmar (1); Pakistan (1); Taiwan (1); Thailand (1); multi-countries (4) | 40.79 |
| Europe | Italy (13); Sweden (12); Netherlands (9); Spain (7); France (5); Norway (5); United Kingdom (4); Finland (4); Portugal (3); Belgium (2); Austria (1); Estonia (1); Multi-country (25); Ireland (1); Germany (1); Latvia (1); multi-countries (1); Romania (1); Russia (1); Switzerland (1); Turkey (1); Greece (1) | 20.92 |
| America | United States (61); Canada (9); Brazil (3); Argentina (3); Ecuador (2); Bolivia (1); Chile (1); Colombia (1); Honduras (1); Peru (1); Suriname (1); multi-country (2) | 17.99 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Africa | South Africa (4); Ghana (3); Uganda (2); Cabo Verde (1); Ethiopia (1); Kenya (1); Malawi (1); Nigeria (1); Tanzania (1); multi-countries (1) | 3.35 |
| Australia | Australia (6); New Zealand (4) | 2.09 |
| Multi-continent | Multi-countries (26) | 5.44 |
| Not available | | 9.41 |

### 3.3. Most cited articles

Yan et al. (2020) is the most cited in 478 selected documents. The study highlights the system's ability to reduce pollution levels by developing green technologies and phasing out highly polluting industries by developing innovative governance models that combine aspects of environmental governance and carbon trading schemes. Another salient piece is Huang (2020) who analyzes Taiwan's success in responding to COVID-19, with community participation through task forces and the private sector volunteering to ease the blow during the pandemic.

Ansell et al. (2020) provide an impactful paper on inclusive governance, specifying categories such as trust, incentives, and interdependent stakeholders. Bianchi et al. (2021) propose a novel framework, communicating service policies and institutional dynamics and tackling the challenges of complex governance. Finally, Sullivan et al. (2019) investigate collaborative governance approaches to combat climate change-exacerbated water scarcity, while noting the challenge of stakeholder consensus. The top five cited articles are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Five most cited articles

| Authors | Year | Issue | Source | Total citations | Type of study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yan, Y.; Zhang, X.; Zhang, J.; Li, K.; | 2020 | Air pollution | Energy Policy | 152 | Case/ Empirical |
| Huang, I. Y.-F. | 2020 | Fighting COVID-19 | Public Administration Review | 95 | Case/ Empirical |
| Ansell, C.; Doberstein, C.; Henderson, H.; Siddiki, S.; 't Hart, P. | 2020 | Inclusion management | Policy and Society | 73 | Case/ Empirical |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bianchi, C.; Nasi, G.; Rivenbark, W.C. | 2021 | Implementation | Public Management Review | 70 | Theoretical |
| Sullivan A.; White D. D.; Hanemann M. | 2019 | Environmental governance | Environmental Science & Policy | 62 | Case/ Empirical |

## 4. Discussion

This study confirms the importance of collaborative governance to address such complex challenges, which require the involvement of multiple actors from different sectors and across borders and jurisdictions. The exponential increase in publications and citations over the past five years shows that collaborative governance has become standard practice in complex problem solving while also gaining strong traction among academics as a viable governance framework. This further strengthens collaborative governance as an ideal type in solving wicked problems.

Among the findings of this study is the growing diversity of research on collaborative governance geographically, with China and the United States leading the way, followed by Indonesia. These countries have applied collaborative governance frameworks to a range of different issues, illustrating their adaptability across contexts. In China, the emphasis is on environmental governance, with collaborative governance as an important approach to address unique environmental and resource crises, namely air pollution, climate change, water management, and certification. The United States has used collaborative governance to address governance and public policy issues related to governance, public services, and social and health policy. Indonesia highlights governance and public policy issues such as environmental, health, and development policies. The summary of issues addressed through the use of collaborative governance in China, the United States, and Indonesia tentatively shows a different focus of interest between developed and developing countries. The former focuses more on policy and service maximization, while the latter focuses more on development, especially environmental and local. Furthermore, the complexity and interdependence of issues requiring multi-sectoral cooperation point to the need for collaborative governance to promote context-sensitive development in different countries.

Along with the widespread adoption of shared governance, this study also witnessed challenges emerging. As asserted by Hansen et al. (2022), while collaboration leads to inclusiveness (by its very nature), it hinders well-informed efficiency and even integrated decision-making. The involvement of multiple stakeholders with varying interests and priorities can also make the negotiation and implementation process protracted. Qi and Ran (2023) also explored paradoxes in collaborative governance, particularly regarding the challenges of overcoming power imbalances in stakeholder dynamics and achieving

equitable engagement. These challenges signal a demand for more relevant collaborative governance models that balance inclusion and operational efficiency. Collaborative governance has increasingly been seen as an effective mechanism to address global and local challenges across multiple sectors (e.g., climate change, disaster management, public health crises) that require the coordination and cooperation of multiple actors.

Moreover, increasing digital transformation, climate change, and geopolitical shifts, all of which threaten the world at a rapid pace, challenge the adaptability of collaborative governance. As collaborative governance faces increasing scrutiny in terms of its relevance to the shifting global terrain, it is necessary to re-examine its relevance to rapidly changing contexts. Alongside its success in various contexts, literature also offers critical perspectives, especially regarding its scalability, efficiency, and adaptability in a rapidly changing global context. Concerns about power imbalances, stakeholder conflicts, and maintaining efficiency direct everyone to call for a critical examination of its use in various contexts.

Future research should also consider ways in which collaborative governance can adapt to new challenges globally, especially issues related to technology, digital governance, and the growing importance of data governance. While staying true to the basic principles of inclusivity and shared decision-making, collaborative governance must also change to meet new technological realities.

In short, collaborative governance is increasingly establishing itself as the ideal type for solving complex problems. However, its current development suggests the emergence of new trends that require future research to seek new ways of creating the type of collaborative governance that can help solve the difficulties of a rapidly changing world. Finally, considering the relationship between collaborative governance and other governance models, including adaptive governance and network governance, may provide insights into how to make collaborative governance more adaptive and responsive.

## 5. Conclusion

a. This study aims to analyze the trends, geographical and thematic application variations, and main contributions and criticisms of the collaborative governance literature. The results found a significant growth in publications and citations from 2019 to 2024. This analysis also yields two major trends, namely the effectiveness of collaborative governance and the need to reassess its use in various contexts.
b. Collaborative governance research draws on a variety of geographical contexts. In China, it focuses on environmental governance and water resources, while in the United States, it deals with governance and public policy, and in Indonesia, it relates to environmental governance, health, and development.
c. While progress has been made in confirming collaborative governance as the ideal type in solving wicked problems, there are still gaps and challenges in collaborative

governance that require future research. With waves of technological, natural, and geopolitical changes continuing to rock the world, the resilience of collaborative governance frameworks will face the need for strengthening.

d. Future research should examine the application of collaborative governance to address increasing global challenges. Further investigation is needed to create more flexible, scalable, and efficient models that can achieve greater inclusiveness alongside successful operational effectiveness and adaptability in an evolving global landscape.

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Mutia Rahmah, Amy Yayuk Sri Rahayu, Irfan Ridwan Maksum

# NAUJOS IDEALAUS TIPO TENDENCIJOS: SPRENDŽIANT SUDĖTINGAS PROBLEMAS PASITELKIANT BENDRĄ VALDYMĄ

**Anotacija.** Bendradarbiaujantis valdymas, apimantis įvairius sektorius ir tarpvalstybinius bei jurisdikcinius aspektus, tapo idealiu sudėtingų problemų sprendimo būdu. Tačiau pradėjo kilti iššūkių, susijusių su bendradarbiavimo valdymo patikimumu reaguojant į sparčiai kintančias pasaulines problemas. Šiame tyrime atliekamas sisteminis bibliometrinis bendradarbiaujamojo valdymo literatūros vertinimas nuo 2019 m. iki 2024 m. balandžio 12 d. Kylančių temų ir tendencijų identifikavimo metodika grindžiama 478 „Scopus" dokumentų apžvalga ir duomenų vizualizavimu „Microsoft Excel" programoje. Iš šių dokumentų galima spręsti apie tendenciją plačiai taikyti bendradarbiavimo valdymą sprendžiant pasaulines krizes, ypač klimato kaitos, nelaimių valdymo ir visuomenės sveikatos. Išryškėja dvi naujos raidos tendencijos, t. y. viena iš jų patvirtina bendradarbiavimo valdymo, kaip efektyvaus problemų sprendimo metodo, veiksmingumą, kita kritiškai analizuoja bendradarbiavimo valdymo mastelio, efektyvumo ir pritaikomumo kliūtis, siekiant prisitaikyti prie sparčiai kintančios pasaulinės aplinkos. Abi tendencijos yra svarbus indėlis ir naujos perspektyvos į tolesnę bendradarbiavimo valdymo mokslinių tyrimų kryptį, o tai suteikia papildomų galimybių laiku atlikti mokslinius tyrimus ir paskelbti publikacijas.

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# COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE IN PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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**Abstract.** Collaborative governance is an approach that involves various stakeholders in the process of making and implementing public policy, especially in addressing complex and dynamic problems such as public policy. This article aims to review the literature that discusses collaborative governance in the context of public policy. The method used is a systematic literature review, identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant literature to the research question. This article uses the Scopus database as a source of literature search, using the keyword "collaborative governance." The search results show

that 245 articles meet the inclusion criteria. The articles were then critically analyzed to determine the main concepts, methodologies, findings, and implications of collaborative governance in public policy. This article finds that collaborative governance can improve participation, coordination, communication, accountability, and adaptability in public policy but also faces challenges such as leadership style, organizational capacity, results-based policy development, and shared learning. This article also provides recommendations for future research on collaborative governance in public policy. The implications are broader than collaborative governance, which serves as a model for improving public policy in general and can be replicated across other areas by producing more results toward mapping the concept of collaborative governance.

**Keywords:** *collaborative governance, public policy, systematic literature review.*
**Raktiniai žodžiai:** *bendradarbiavimas valdymas, viešoji politika, sisteminė literatūros apžvalga.*

## Introduction

A systematic literature review is a method of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant research on a specific topic, question, or problem (Kitchenham 2004; Petersen et al. 2008; Rizal et al. 2018). It aims to provide a comprehensive and unbiased overview of a given inquiry's current knowledge, gaps, and challenges. One of the fields that has attracted increasing attention from researchers and practitioners is collaborative governance, which involves multiple actors from different sectors and levels in the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies or services (Eckerberg et al. 2015; Torfing and Ansell 2017). Collaborative governance is a promising way to address complex and wicked problems that transcend the boundaries and capacities of single organizations or sectors (Hamann 2014; Karinda et al. 2024).

One of the domains where collaborative governance is particularly relevant and challenging is public policy (Hossen et al. 2021; Mulyadi and Maulana 2021). However, despite the potential benefits of collaborative governance for public policy, there are also many difficulties and barriers to its effective implementation, such as power imbalances, conflicting goals, communication gaps, trust issues, institutional constraints, and contextual factors (Hermansson 2019). In addition, there needs to be more conceptual clarity between collaborative governance and other concepts often used interchangeably. Both approaches emphasize the importance of collaboration between multiple stakeholders. Ansell and Gash (2008) define collaborative governance as "an arrangement in which one or more public agencies directly engage non-governmental stakeholders in a formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative collective decision-making process." Provan and Kenis (2007) further define network governance as "the use of institutions and structures of authority and

collaboration to allocate resources and coordinate and control collective action across the network as a whole." Therefore, more systematic and rigorous research is needed on how collaborative governance can be fostered, facilitated, and evaluated in the context of public policy, as well as on the outcomes and impacts of collaborative governance for improving communities in society (Saputra et al. 2023).

According to (Kitchenham et al. 2009), the main purpose of a systematic literature review (SLR) is to better understand a particular topic systematically, find the state-of-the-art, and determine the gaps or shortcomings of existing studies. In addition, SLR can also help to identify the weaknesses of existing studies and find areas that require further research. The ultimate goal of SLR is to produce a strong conclusion supported by credible and reliable evidence on the research topic under study. In an SLR, choosing the right keywords is very important because it can affect the accuracy and completeness of search results (Kitchenham et al. 2009; Petersen et al. 2008). To select appropriate keywords, researchers must consider several factors, such as the specific research topic, the language used in the literature to be searched, and the information source to access.

Understanding the purpose of an SLR and the theoretical approach used in the research is essential before determining the search keywords (Yusuf et al. 2021; Rizal et al. 2018). In this research, the purpose of SLR is to find out the research map in the field of public policy with a case study on public policy using the collaborative governance theory approach. So it is necessary to understand the scope and factors that influence government policies in society. Researchers can determine more specific and relevant search keywords based on these objectives and theoretical approaches. As a first step, researchers need to understand key concepts related to collaborative governance and public policy.

The main objective of this SLR is to provide recommendations for future research on collaborative governance in public policy. The SLR should have clear research questions to answer and research objectives, and it should guide the discovery of the state-of-the-art in collaborative governance science. The research questions are as follows: What are the trends in collaborative governance research? What are the main theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyze collaborative governance? What are the main research areas and themes explored in the literature on collaborative governance related to public policy?

## Methodology

The research methods for this SLR followed the guidelines of the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews (Carrera-Rivera et al. 2022). The initial stage was carried out by determining the research question. The second stage involves searching for studies. The third stage involves selecting studies. The last step involves extracting and synthesizing data (Petersen et al. 2015; Carrera-Rivera et al. 2022; Saputra et al. 2023). The first step was to formulate a research question: How does collaborative governance affect public policy

outcomes and impacts? This question was framed using the PICO framework, which specifies the population, intervention, comparison, and outcome of interest. The population is defined as any community affected by a problem in society. Interventions are defined as collaborative governance involving multiple actors. Comparison is defined as the alternative or absence of collaborative governance. Then, outcomes are defined as measures of effectiveness, efficiency, or sustainability of public policies. From the research questions, the string to use in this SLR is "collaborative governance."

Next, researchers can start searching relevant databases and screening to select the most relevant and quality literature. Keywords are searched in the article title area and abstract, and the search is carried out on publishers with Scopus indexing. The results of the literature findings on collaborative governance are 2,023 documents (search date: April 20, 2023). The initial literature was found in 1990 and continued to increase in 2008. The result of the document findings after the limitation was 245 documents. Final articles are articles that focus on the inclusion criteria. Articles with inclusion criteria refer to articles that meet certain standards to be included in an encyclopedia or database of SLR resources. The SLR process can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** SLR process (compilation of relevant articles)

In certain contexts, there are more specific inclusion criteria, namely scientific articles that have passed peer review or meet established scientific research standards—this category is selected based on "final research" articles. Furthermore, the SLR analysis method is used to compile a literature review systematically from 245 articles that have been found to produce more objective and valid results. In this SLR, we used software in conducting SLR analysis and synthesis, including Microsoft Excel, JabRef (open source reference management software), Mendeley, and VOSviewer (which visualizes the network of links between articles, keywords, or authors). The software helps users in producing more accurate and valid SLR results. However, using the software must still be done carefully and not replace the role of humans in systematically selecting and assessing articles.

## Results and discussion

This section focuses on data synthesis, which involves summarizing, analyzing, and integrating data from the included studies to answer the research questions. Data synthesis uses both narrative and quantitative methods. Narrative synthesis describes key findings and themes across studies using tables, graphs, and text. In Table 1, the mapping results based on the research focus obtained 15 categories, namely poverty (2.9%), Poorness (5.7%), natural disasters (0.8%), social crime (1.2%), public health (3.3%), health problems (18%), water problems (5.7%), air pollution (1.6%), land problem (4.9%), sustainability (11.4%), environmental conflict (9.4%), migrant, urban & humanitarian (6.1%), malnutrition & stunting (0.8%), flooding problem (0.8%), and other issues, which can be addressed by collaborative governance (27.3%).

**Table 1.** Results of systematic mapping based on research focus

| No. | Research focus | Authors | Articles |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Poverty | Fitriana et al. (2019); Zhang et al. (2020); Meads (2017); Florini & Pauli (2018); Xiang & Tan (2019); Tian & Ge (2022); Galli et al. (2018) | 7 |
| 2 | Poorness | Yang et al. (2022); Feberina et al. (2021); Xu & Wei (2020); Vij (2011); Liu (2021); Tremblay et al. (2021); Liu et al. (2021); Ming'ate et al. (2014); Elias et al. (2020); Lyver et al. (2014); Marks & Miller (2022); Yuan et al. (2022); Angelstam et al. (2017); Rong & Shen (2022) | 14 |
| 3 | Natural disasters | Bodin & Nohrstedt (2016); Jacobi et al. (2013) | 2 |
| 4 | Social crime | Waardenburg et al. (2020); Waardenburg et al. (2020); van Erp (2017) | 3 |

| No. | Research focus | Authors | Articles |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Public health | Lelieveldt (2023); Emerson (2018); Lee et al. (2019); Plochg et al. (2013); Zhangyanhui, & Genglei (2021); Haapasaari et al. (2019); Kim (2015); Cui et al. (2022) | 8 |
| 6 | Health problems | Grootjans et al. (2022); Hersey & Gordon (2021); Gordon et al. (2020); Sijing (2022); Choi (2020); Woldesenbet (2018); Ulibarri et al. (2020); Sitienei et al. (2021); Tremblay et al. (2019); Fu et al. (2021); Crompton et al. (2018); Vainieri et al. (2021); Cyr et al. (2021); Schneider et al. (2019); Robert et al. (2022); Tute et al. (2021); Buddharaksa et al. (2021); Chang et al. (2015); Ovseiko et al. (2014); Vabø et al. (2022); Chamberland-et al. (2022); Vidal et al. (2021); Woldesenbet (2021); Wu et al. (2020); Assmuth et al. (2020); Bartelings et al. (2017); Jeong & Kim (2021); Casprini & Palumbo (2022); Gonçalves et al. (2021); Jeanes et al. (2019); Kaushal et al. (2014); Yang et al. (2020); Sabbagh & Hickey (2020); Bretas et al. (2017); Kurtsal & Viaggi (2020); Prevo et al. (2020); Bárrios et al. (2018); Onitsuka et al. (2018); Metz & Ingold (2017); Adu-et al. (2021); Wijesinghe & Thorn J (2021); Looman et al. (2021); Mcet al. (2021); Shin et al. (2021) | 44 |
| 7 | Water problems | Lu et al. (2022); Huang et al. (2022); Yoder et al. (2021); Jones & White (2022); Woldesenbet (2020); Bitterman & Koliba (2020); Vodden (2015); Fish et al. (2010); Sánchez et al. (2022); Söderberg et al. (2021); Widmer et al. (2019); Agramont et al. (2022); Ferreira et al. (2018); Person et al. (2017) | 14 |
| 8 | Air pollution | Guo et al. (2022); Wang et al. (2021); Zheng et al. (2021); Zheng (2023) | 4 |
| 9 | Land problem | Roengtam & Agustiyara (2022); De et al. (2019); Bruno (2020); Molenveld et al. (2021); Guerrero et al. (2015); Westerink et al. (2017); Chapman et al. (2010); Avoyan & Meijerink (2021); Midgley et al. (2021); Lee & Baggio (2021); Dressel et al. (2020); Angelstam et al. (2021) | 12 |

| No. | Research focus | Authors | Articles |
|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | Sustainability | Ding et al. (2022); Guo & Li (2022); Gollagher & Hartz-Karp (2013); Wang & Ran (2018); Ahdiyana et al. (2021); Zhao & Wang (2019); Prehoda et al. (2019); Sundqvist-Andberg & Åkerman (2022); Al et al. (2022); Baudoin & Gittins (2021); Hou & Yungang (2017); Eckerberg et al. (2015); De et al. (2017); Choi & Robertson (2019); Ain et al. (2021); Unceta et al. (2019); Kusumawardhani et al. (2022); Zhao et al. (2022); Brink & Wamsler (2018); Yang et al. (2021); Cusack et al. (2022); Sun et al. (2022); Rahmayanti (2021); Af et al. (2020); Kwiatkowski et al. (2020); Pereira et al. (2017); Vangen et al. (2015); Swann (2019) | 28 |
| 11 | Environmental conflict | Duan et al. (2020); Wang & Gong (2022); Fan et al. (2022); He et al. (2021); Cheng et al. (2015); Titik (2018); Cheung & T (2015); Fajrina et al. (2023); Arantes et al. (2020); Brisbois et al. (2019); Ulibarri (2019); Vihma & Toikka (2021); Merritt & Kelley (2022); Woolaston (2018); Zhang & Zhu (2022); Inguaggiato et al. (2021); Rapp (2020); Sant'et al. (2019); Newig et al. (2018); Scott (2015); Fliervoet et al. (2016); Howlett (2014); Vuori et al. (2019) | 23 |
| 12 | Migrant, urban & humanitarian | Dupuy & Defacqz (2022); Erikson & Larsson (2022); Bahri et al. (2020); Liu & Xu (2018); Dapilah et al. (2021); Bradley et al. (2022); Griggs et al. (2020); Newman et al. (2004); Sutter (2020); Temmerman et al. (2021); Bradley (2012); Ansell & Torfing (2021); Zhang & Tian (2022); Huang & Y (2020); Hong & Ryu (2019) | 15 |
| 13 | Malnutrition & stunting | Carboni et al. (2017); Candarmaweni, et al. (2020) | 2 |
| 14 | Flooding problem | Aung & Lim (2021); Lindbergh et al. (2022) | 2 |

| No. | Research focus | Authors | Articles |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Other issues, which can be addressed by collaborative governance | de Koning et al. (2016); Hajnal & Jeziorska (2021); Ran & Qi (2018); Noh & Yashaiya (2019); Mukhlis & Perdana (2022); Hysing (2022); Hafer et al. (2022); Douglas et al. (2020); Bianchi et al. (2021); Lou et al. (2022); Lopes (2021); Berardo et al. (2020); Jayasinghe et al. (2020); Lehtonen & Uusikylä (2021); Moreno & Gonçalves (2021); Ansell et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2020); Bronstein (2022); Sørensen et al. (2020); Plotnikof (2016); Bartenberger & Grubmüller-Régent (2014); Rahmaningtyas & Rahayu (2019); Unceta et al. (2021); Johansson et al. (2022); Sørensen & Torfing (2021); Jing & Hu (2017); Mc et al. (2015); Liu et al. (2020); Flye et al. (2021); Bichler & Lösch (2019); Tando et al. (2020); Ansell & Gash (2008); Mountford & Geiger (2018); Freitag (2019); Lee & Ospina (2022); Shilbury & Ferkins (2015); Shan et al. (2021); Emerson et al. (2012); Mcet al. (2020); Ross & Woodfield (2017); Criado & Guevara-Gómez (2021); Beran et al. (2016); Tonelli et al. (2018); Andres & Chapain (2013); Merritt & Kelley (2018); Warsono et al. (2023); Millner & Meyer (2022); Kinder et al. (2021); Batory & Svensson (2020); Sørensen et al. (2015); Fisher et al. (2020); Chen & Liu (2022); Torfing & Ansell (2017); Hermansson (2019); Aaltonen & Turkulainen (2022); Yu & Gao (2022); Chang et al. (2021); Waeterloos (2021); Morales & Meek (2019); Ulibarri & Scott (2017); Challies et al. (2016); Nyirenda & Nkhata (2013); Cayli (2011); Ansell & Gash (2018); Douglas & Ansell (2021); Quayle et al. (2019); Dewulf & Elbers (2018) | 67 |
| Total | | | 245 |

Research in collaborative governance has extensively explored topics such as poverty, public health, urbanization, poor sanitation, and inadequate public facilities. However, there is a notable gap in explicitly addressing public policy studies within SLR in the context of collaborative governance. The absence of a dedicated focus on public policy is a critical limitation, as it is imperative to comprehend how societal and health problems faced by communities are influenced by policy decisions. Public policy plays a pivotal role in shaping the response to challenges associated with poverty, public health, and urbanization. Investigating the interplay between collaborative governance structures and the implementation of public policies is essential for understanding the efficacy of such collaborative approaches (Nurhaeni et al. 2024). Analyzing the impact and effectiveness of

policies geared towards poverty alleviation, public health improvement, and addressing urbanization challenges can provide valuable insights.

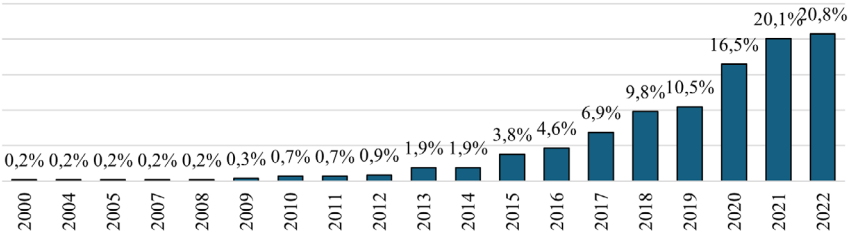


**Figure 2.** Collaborative governance research trends 2000–2022

Figure 2 illustrates the trend of studies on collaborative governance from 2000 to 2022. The results of collaborative governance publications began to increase significantly in 2015 and continued to increase until 2022. Based on the search, researchers found that this research was conducted 22 years ago. Research on collaborative governance began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when organizations and social movements actively demanded participation in the policy-making process (McKelvey et al. 2021; Aaltonen and Turkulainen 2022). The collaborative governance debate began and evolved in the 1990s to the present day. In the 1960s, the US government began promoting the public participation model to improve policy quality and strengthen the legitimacy of government decisions

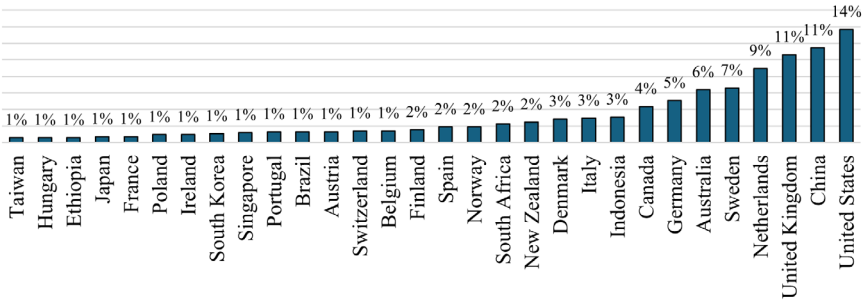


**Figure 3.** Countries of origin of publications

In globalization, collaborative governance is crucial in strengthening fair and inclusive policies in responding to global challenges such as climate change, inequality, and drought. Therefore, collaborative governance theory continues to develop and be applied in various government practices (Dwirahmadi et al. 2019; Hedlund et al. 2023), natural resource management (Rapp 2020; Hickey et al. 2023), and the management of inclusive community social systems (Ahdiyana et al. 2021). Based on the origin of the researcher's country, it is

known that collaborative governance research is generally dominated by scientific publications originating from the United States (as much as 14%), China, and the United Kingdom (each as much as 11%) with a comparison of the distribution of articles throughout the world. This condition shows that research on collaborative governance is a research theme that gets much attention from academics and practitioners in the United States, China, and the United Kingdom.

After reviewing previous research based on the country of origin of the publication, the SLR synthesis results are grouped based on publishers who have published scientific publications in the field of collaborative governance. Figure 4 shows the top 26 publishers who have published scientific publications in the field of collaborative governance. The list includes Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI), which has a publication rate of 22.6%. MDPI is an open-access publisher that publishes scientific journals in various fields of science, including environmental science, health, technology, and social science. Other publications include Elsevier (15.6%), Routledge (8.3%), Taylor & Francis (8.1%), Springer (5.3%), and SAGE Publishing (4.8%).

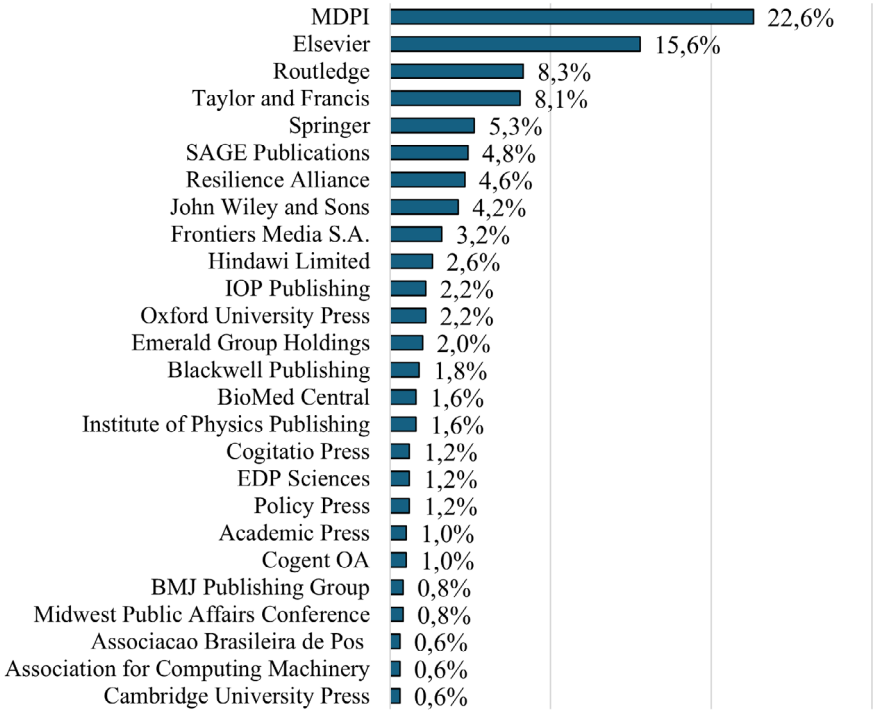


**Figure 4.** Collaborative governance research publisher

The research focus on health problems in relation to the topic of collaborative governance shows a percentage of 24.7%. Discussions on collaborative governance in managing infectious diseases and sustainability often appear in the literature, which can focus on how collaborative governance can help overcome infectious diseases, such as skin diseases, malaria, malnutrition, acute respiratory infections, avian flu, Ebola, and other diseases that arise after a disaster in society. Research shows these issues are caused by poverty.

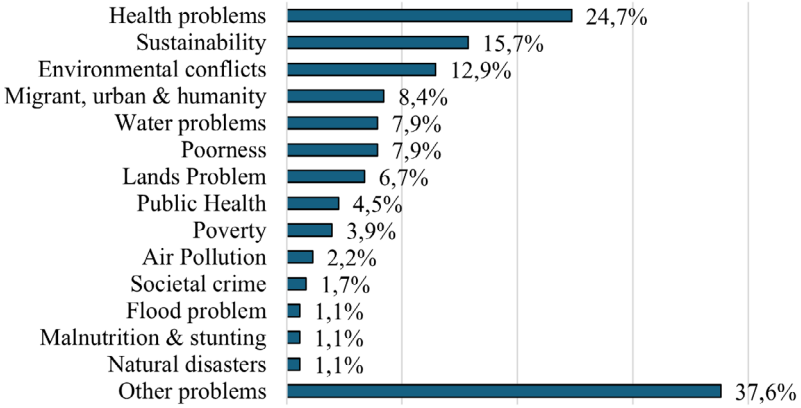


**Figure 5.** Research focus: collaborative governance

In general, based on SLR, collaborative governance research can focus on how collaborative governance can help overcome health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, non-communicable diseases, nuclear accidents, and natural disasters. In the public health area (4.5%), collaborative governance research is used in improving access and quality of public health services. Then, in the research focus area of sustainability (15.7%), collaborative governance is an important approach in achieving environmental, social, and economic sustainability. The sustainability in collaborative governance research topic covers the scope of sustainable natural resource management (Boyle et al. 2021; Zhang et al. 2021; Bergsten et al. 2019).

The results of the SLR using VOSviewer revealed correlations between the Governance Approach and a variety of other research topics, including (1) sustainability, (2) humanities, (3) stakeholders, (4) decision-making, (5) public health, (6) cooperation, (7) leadership, (8) urban planning, (9) resource management, (10) policy-making, (11) forest management, (12) participatory approaches, (13) healthcare systems, (14) conservation, (15) civil society, (16) natural resources, (17) ecosystems, (18) resilience, (19) smart cities, and (20) infrastructure.

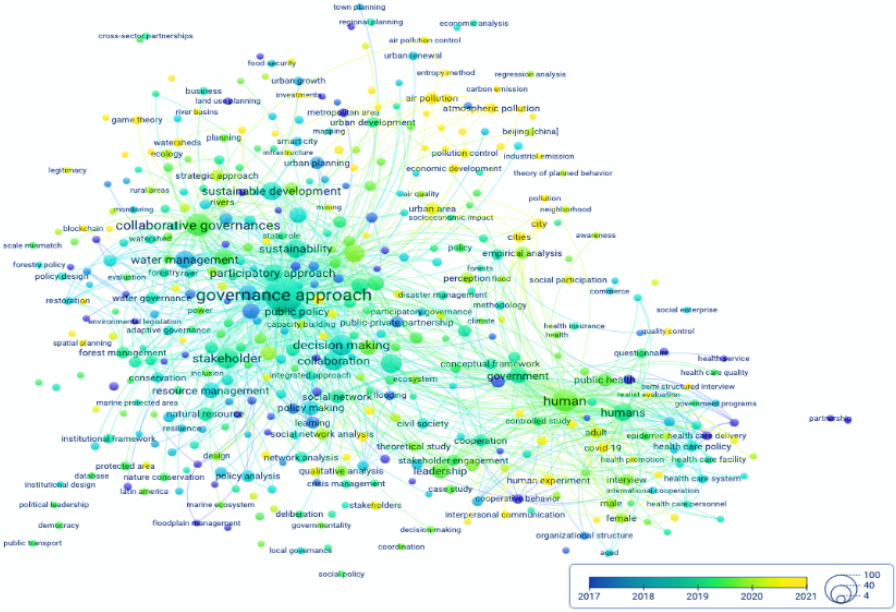


**Figure 6.** VOSviewer (research focus)

The subsequent analysis is to evaluate the overlay of co-occurrences based on collaborative governance research trends that are currently being researched, including (1) urban areas, (2) rural/coastal areas, (3) societal linking, (4) bridging organizations, (5) citizen engagement, (6) biodiversity conservation, (7) ecology, (8) restoration, (9) air pollution, (10) economic development, (11) cities, (12) industrial emissions, (13) social participation, (14) watersheds, (15) social network analysis, (16) human experiment, (17) interpersonal communication, (18) cooperative behavior, (19) spatial planning, and (20) cross-sector partnerships. In this research, it is an empirical fact that in the process of collaborative governance, there is a connection with the new research topics of citizen engagement, bridging organizations, and societal linking. In collaborative governance research, other topics often appearing with agricultural land reserves are land use planning, land conservation, food security, local food systems, sustainable agriculture, coastal management, climate change adaptation, community resilience, ocean governance, and marine spatial planning.

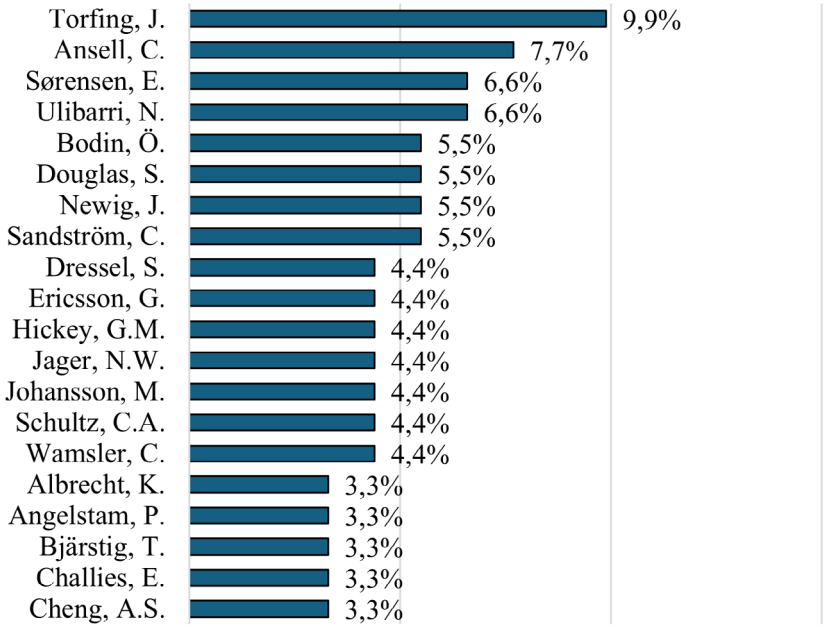


**Figure 7.** Authors who have the highest publications (top 20)

The subsequent SLR synthesis is a review of the author or authors who most often conduct research and publish it. Researchers use mixed methods, namely a combination of coding methods and bibliometric methods. Manual coding is a technique that requires reading each article manually and recording the author's name in Microsoft Excel. The bibliometric method involves using software to analyze bibliographic data from published articles in the field of collaborative governance. Thus, the mixed method combines manual coding and bibliometric methods. The step is to use bibliometric methods to identify the most prolific authors. Based on the SLR results on authors, the authors found that Torfing, J., Ansell, C., Sørensen, E., Ulibarri, N., and Bodin, Ö. are the authors who have done the most research on collaborative governance in Scopus. Jacob Torfing is a professor of political science at Roskilde University in Denmark. One of his best-known works is the book Collaborative Governance: New Ideas for Democratic Governance in the 21st Century (Torfing et al. 2021; Torfing and Ansell 2017).

Then the second highest on this list is author Christopher Ansell (Ansell 2019) (Ansell and Gash 2008). One of his best-known works is the book Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice (2008), co-authored with Alison Gash. Next is Eva Sørensen (Sørensen and Torfing 2021a) (Sørensen et al. 2020) (Sørensen and Torfing 2021b). One

of her best-known works is Radical and Disruptive Answers to Downstream Problems in Collaborative Governance? (2021), co-authored with Jacob Torfing. Then the fourth highest on the list is Nicola Ulibarri (Ulibarri et al. 2017; Ulibarri et al. 2020; Ulibarri 2015; Ulibarri 2018; Ulibarri 2019). Ulibarri has published several scholarly articles on collaborative governance and community participation in leading journals. After that is Örjan Bodin (Bodin et al. 2016), who researches collaboration between communities and decision-makers in natural resource management, including agriculture, fisheries, and national parks. Bodin has published numerous scientific articles on collaborative governance and analytical frameworks to study the dynamics of collaboration between communities and decision-makers in natural resource management.

In the subsequent SLR synthesis, researchers also reviewed the most citations of collaborative governance research. Authors with the most citations are authors whose works have been cited or referred to by other authors in their articles or scientific works. Most citations indicate that the author's work is considered essential or influential in their field. In the SLR results, the most cited source is Ansell and Gash (2008), entitled Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice (Ansell and Gash 2008), published by the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory with 2,954 citations (Scopus data). In the second position is Emerson et al. (2012), entitled An Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance, published by the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (Emerson et al. 2012) with a citation count of 1,325.

Ansell and Gash, in their journal Collaborative Governance in Theory and Practice, formulate a collaborative governance model based on a literature review. The conclusions of the study are described in four main variables, namely: (1) initial conditions, (2) institutional design, (3) leadership, and (4) collaborative processes (Ansell and Gash 2008). Meanwhile, Kirk Emerson, Tina Nabatchi, and Stephen Balogh, in their journal, entitled An Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance, explain that the collaboration process consists of (1) collaboration dynamics, (2) collaboration actions, and (3) impact and adaptation on the collaboration process (Emerson et al. 2012). The views and frameworks initiated and proposed by Ansell and Gash (2008) and Emerson et al. (2012) will be the applied theory in this dissertation research. However, in theory, the definition of collaborative governance by Emerson et al. (2012) is slightly expanded from the scope of the Ansell and Gash (2008) definition to a higher level by developing a theory of collaboration called the Collaborative Governance Regime.

## Conclusion

1. Trends in collaborative governance research found a number of 245 articles, which is increasing every year, where the community focuses on research areas such as-Poverty, Poorness, natural disasters, social crime, public health, health problems,

water problems, air pollution, land problem, sustainability, environmental conflict, migrant, urban & humanitarian, malnutrition & stunting, flooding problem, and other issues problem. These trends continue to develop and are interrelated with each other.

2. The main theoretical framework often used to analyze collaborative governance is the Collaborative Governance Framework (Ansell and Gash 2008), which emphasizes the importance of face-to-face dialogue and trust-building and the Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance. Emerson et al. (2012) emphasize the dynamic and iterative cycle in collaboration.
3. The main themes in collaborative governance literature related to public policy are participation, coordination, communication, accountability, and adaptability. As well as leadership style, organizational capacity, results-based development policies, and shared learning. Collaborative governance research in public policy can continue to develop as technology advances, public expectations change, and learning and practices evolve.

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# BENDRADARBIAVIMAS VIEŠOSIOS POLITIKOS STUDIJOSE: SISTEMINĖ LITERATŪROS APŽVALGA

**Anotacija**. *Bendradarbiaujantis valdymas – tai požiūris, į kurį į viešosios politikos formavimo ir įgyvendinimo procesą įtraukiamos įvairios suinteresuotosios šalys, ypač sprendžiant sudėtingas ir dinamiškas problemas, tokias kaip viešoji politika. Šiuo straipsniu siekiama apžvelgti literatūrą, kurioje aptariamas bendradarbiavimas valdymas viešosios politikos kontekste. Naudojamas sisteminis literatūros apžvalgos metodas, identifikuojant, atrenkant, įvertinant ir sintezuojant tiriamam klausimui aktualią literatūrą. Šiame straipsnyje kaip literatūros paieškos šaltinis naudojama duomenų bazė Scopus, naudojant raktinį žodį „bendradarbiaujantis valdymas". Paieškos rezultatai rodo, kad įtraukimo kriterijus atitinka 245 straipsniai. Tada straipsniai buvo kritiškai išanalizuoti, siekiant nustatyti pagrindines sąvokas, metodikas, išvadas ir bendro valdymo pasekmes viešajai politikai. Šiame straipsnyje nustatyta, kad bendradarbiavimas valdymas gali pagerinti dalyvavimą, koordinavimą, bendravimą, atskaitomybę ir gebėjimą prisitaikyti viešojoje politikoje, tačiau taip pat susiduriama su tokiais iššūkiais kaip vadovavimo stilius, organizaciniai gebėjimai, rezultatais pagrįstos politikos kūrimas ir bendras mokymasis. Šiame straipsnyje taip pat pateikiamos rekomendacijos būsimiems bendradarbiavimo viešosios politikos valdymo tyrimams. Poveikis yra platesnis nei bendradarbiaujantis valdymas, kuris yra pavyzdys gerinant viešąją politiką apskritai ir gali būti atkartojamas kitose srityse, duodant daugiau rezultatų nustatant bendradarbiaujančio valdymo koncepciją.*

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# HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON MACROECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** Higher education plays an important role in building human capital and stimulating economic growth. The aim of this research is to examine the impact of the relationship between the higher education policy and Kazakhstan's macroeconomic development by focusing on key economic indicators. The study employs a macroeconomic approach, using secondary statistical data from official sources, including the Bureau of National Statistics of Kazakhstan and the QS World University Rankings. A panel data set covering the period from 2001 to 2023 enables an analysis of the long-term trends. The results show that higher education reforms have contributed to reducing the number of universities, strengthening academic autonomy and increasing the international competitiveness of universities. However, structural problems remain, such as an insufficient adaptation of educational programmes to the demands of the labour market, limited research funding and insufficient integration of innovation into universities. These findings suggest that policymakers should focus on improving higher education financing mechanisms,

strengthening the integration of universities with the labour market and increasing their contribution to the development of national innovation. Future research may focus on the impact of higher education policies on employment and income growth, as well as the long-term effects of the digitalisation of education on adaptations to the labour market.

**Keywords:** higher education, education policy, macroeconomic development, human capital, public investment.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** aukštasis mokslas, švietimo politika, makroekonominė plėtra, žmogiškasis kapitalas, valstybės investicijos.

## Introduction

Higher education is a key factor in innovative development, economic growth and the formation of human capital (Lueddeke 1999; Pitman 2014; Orazbek et al. 2023). Universities perform a dual function: providing training for qualified specialists, on the one hand; and forming a research base that promotes technological progress on the other. However, the effectiveness of the higher education system largely depends on the state's educational policy, which should ensure that the curricula meet the requirements of the labour market and support innovation and research (Ojha 2022; Olo et al. 2022).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of higher education for macroeconomic development, noting the impact of public investment, university integration and the level of innovation. The increase in university funding contributes to the growth of the GDP and innovation activity, but in Kazakhstan, this indicator remains below the average level of the OECD countries (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2015). At the same time, the discrepancy between the training of specialists and the requirements of employers leads to an imbalance in the labour market (Abdiraiymova et al. 2020; Jonbekova et al. 2020). In countries with an active involvement of universities in R&D, stable economic growth is seen, but in Kazakhstan, the investment in research is low, limiting the impact of higher education on the country's macroeconomic performance (Ashirbekova and Nurmukhanova, 2022; Liu et al. 2024).

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan's higher education system has undergone significant structural changes. Due to reforms, the number of universities decreased from 180 in 2003 to 112 in 2023. The introduction of the Bologna Process in 2010 made it possible to bring the educational standards in line with international standards and to increase student mobility. In 2018, a policy of academic autonomy was introduced, giving the universities more independence in relation to their curriculum development, financial management and scientific research. At the same time, there was an increase in international integration in the QS World University Rankings and the number of universities increased significantly, which indicates an increase in their competitiveness abroad. Despite the reforms that

were carried out, there is still insufficient research on how the educational policy affects key macroeconomic indicators, including the average income, employment and innovation activity. The existing research does not adequately explain which mechanisms of the educational policies have the most significant impact on economic development and which factors can enhance that effect.

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of the relationship between the higher education policy and Kazakhstan's macroeconomic development by focusing on key economic indicators. This study employs a quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlations and a regression analysis, to examine the relationship between the country's higher education policy and its macroeconomic development. Adopting a macroeconomic approach, the research utilises secondary statistical data from official sources, covering the period 2001 to 2023, to assess the long-term trends and economic impacts. This work contributes to the literature by addressing gaps in the research on the macroeconomic impact of higher education, assessing the interactions between the educational policy and macroeconomic factors, and offering empirically-based recommendations for optimising investments in education and improving the policies.

## Literature Review

The higher education system, as one of the main factors of economic growth and social progress, plays a key role in the development of human capital. In economic theory, the theory of human capital formulated by Becker (1964) and later developed by Lucas (1988) and Romer (1990) had the greatest impact on studies focusing on the role of education. Becker's (1965) concept of human capital considers education as an investment that leads to increased labour productivity. Modern research highlights that investments in education not only enhance the skills of employees, but also contribute to technological innovation and the growth of productivity (Hanushek and Woessmann 2015).

Further developments in the theory of human capital have led to an understanding of the indirect effects of higher education on the economy. In particular, Lucas (1988) emphasised that increasing the population that has completed higher education promotes the dissemination of knowledge, accelerating scientific and technological progress and increasing innovation activity in a country. Thus, education plays a significant role in endogenous economic growth models, where knowledge accumulation and innovation drive long-term development (Romer 1990; Lueddeke 1999).

The rapid development of technology and the transition to a post-industrial economy have increased the demand for highly-qualified specialists (Haughton 1990). However, structural unemployment has arisen in several countries due to the inadequacy of graduates' skills to meet the requirements of the labour market (Lewis 1992). According to Saint-Paul (1996) less-educated workers are more likely to be unemployed than skilled

professionals. Similarly, education generally improves the employability but can also extend the unemployment duration for graduates with specialised skills that are not aligned with the immediate labour market demands (Altindag et al. 2022).

During this period, many countries began to develop government strategies to reduce youth unemployment through higher education reforms, including the introduction of vocational training programmes, cooperation with employers and an increase in the number of universities (Aamodt and Arnesen 1995; Yano 1997). Furthermore, the theoretical foundations of human capital were formed in parallel with the expansion of mass higher education which, in developing countries, led to problems such as a decrease in the quality and the emergence of diploma factories (Kerr 2001; Grolleau et al. 2008). In the European Union, educational reforms have been aimed at standardising educational programmes within the framework of the Bologna Process (Pitman 2014).

The effectiveness of higher education is largely determined by the level of public investment (Song, 2019). Research has indicated that countries with well-funded, high-quality education systems tend to experience sustained economic growth (Castelló-Climent and Hidalgo-Cabrillana 2012). However, the approach to financing higher education varies significantly in different countries. Higher education has been viewed as a market service in the United States and the UK, where students are viewed as consumers (Dougherty and Natow 2020). In China and South Korea, universities receive a significant public investment, allowing them to become leading research centres (Liu et al. 2024).

Despite active reforms in higher education, Central Asian countries continue to face several structural challenges that have limited their competitiveness on the international stage. One of the problems is the low competitiveness of the universities represented in international rankings, such as the QS World University Rankings, which is increasing, with the gap between leading and regional universities remaining significant (Hou 2021). In Central Asia, new technologies are created through grant programmes and increased funding for promising areas, which contributes to economic growth (Hwami et al. 2024).

The existing literature on the labour market demand and higher education in Kazakhstan highlights the fact that undergraduate-level training is generally sufficient for entry-level positions, although some sectors prefer advanced degrees (Abdiraiymova et al. 2020). However, employers are increasingly emphasising the need for practical skills, critical thinking and digital literacy, revealing a gap between the academic training and labour market expectations (Jonbekova et al. 2020; Kireyeva et al. 2024).

Kazakhstan's integration into the Bologna Process in 2010 and the subsequent modernisation of the country's higher education were intended to improve the labour market alignment by introducing standardised degree structures, expanding academic mobility and encouraging research-driven innovation. While these reforms enhanced the educational accessibility and global competitiveness, research indicates they have not fully addressed the mismatch between university curricula and the needs of employers (Uzhegova and Baik 2022). Despite the increased state investment in higher education, research suggests

its impact on innovation-driven economic growth remains constrained (Ashirbekova and Nurmukhanova 2022). Factors such as limited research funding, weak industry-academia collaborations and insufficient R&D commercialisation are contributing to this challenge. Additionally, there is a complex structural organisation of Kazakhstan's education system, which requires searching for new ways to solve its problems and achieve further development (Saparova et al. 2023).

The literature review confirms that higher education is a key factor in economic growth and innovative development. However, its impact is largely determined by the effectiveness of government policies. Kazakhstan's reforms in the field of higher education have made it possible to increase the nation's competitiveness, but challenges remain regarding the financing of science, integration with the labour market and the modernisation of educational programmes. The lack of empirical data from the region limits the possibilities for a comprehensive analysis of the ' effectiveness of educational reforms.

## Research Methodology

In this study, a macroeconomic approach was used to assess the long-term impact of higher education policies on economic development. The research is focused on analysing structural changes at the national level, rather than the characteristics of individual educational institutions. This approach enables a comprehensive evaluation of how higher education policies influence key economic indicators, including employment, income distribution and investments in research and innovation. The findings will contribute to evidence-based policymaking, supporting the development of strategies aimed at enhancing human capital and improving economic sustainability.

The study is based on secondary statistical data from official sources, including the Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the QS World University Rankings. The period from 2001 to 2023 provides a sufficient time frame to analyse long-term trends in the higher education sector and to assess the outcomes of policy reforms. The period of 2001-2023 was a time of key higher education reforms in Kazakhstan, including the transition to the Bologna Process (2010) and the university modernisation programme (2017–2023). This allows for an assessment of the long-term impact of policy changes on macroeconomic indicators.

Based on the research aim of examining the impact of the higher education policy on Kazakhstan's macroeconomic development through key economic indicators, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1: An increase in the number of universities reduces unemployment.

H2: Higher public investments in education raise the average income.

H3: Higher education expansion boosts innovation activity.

H4: Public investments improve the higher education system.

*Data selection and key indicators*

The choice of macroeconomic indicators was determined by their importance for the public policy and strategic economic planning. These indicators provide insights into general economic trends, the effectiveness of the public investment in education and the contribution of higher education to economic growth. The key indicator in this study was the public investment in education as a percentage of the GDP, which reflects the priority of education in the national policy and its role in human capital development. Also, cross-sectional data such as the Gini index, average income and unemployment rate were included to provide a broader social and economic context and to further illustrate the structural imbalances.

The study employed descriptive and statistical methods to analyse the trends in higher education and the macroeconomic indicators. The descriptive statistics included an analysis of the central trends (mean, median and mode) and distribution characteristics. Python and SPSS were used for the data processing, which provided accurate calculations and a convenient visualisation of the results. Missing values were processed using the multiple imputation method, which avoided shifting the results.

The data set included the dependent variables presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

| Variable | Description | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Median | Log (Mean) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| YEAR | Year of the observation | 23 | 2001 | 2023 | 2012 | 2012 | 7.606 |
| HIGH_ED | Number of universities | 23 | 112 | 185 | 145 | 139 | 4.977 |
| STUD | Number of students | 23 | 491,470 | 784,512 | 623,097 | 620,053 | 13.342 |
| FACUL | Number of teaching staff | 23 | 34,508 | 43,382 | 39,167 | 38,470 | 10.575 |
| COVER | Higher education coverage (%) | 23 | 43 | 67 | 54 | 53 | 4.007 |
| UNEMPL | Unemployment rate (%) | 23 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 1.945 |
| AVER_INC | Average income (KZT) | 23 | 17,303 | 364,295 | 119,572 | 101,263 | 11.692 |
| GDP_EDU | GDP in the education sector (KZT) | 23 | 118,227 | 5,337,073 | 1,260,962 | 886,296 | 14.048 |

| Variable | Description | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Median | Log (Mean) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EXPEN | R&D expenditure (KZT) | 23 | 7154 | 172,586 | 56,429 | 51,253 | 10.941 |
| INNOV_ ACTIV | Innovative activity (%)* | 21 | 2 | 12 | 7 | 8 | 2.08 |
| GINI | Gini index (%) | 23 | 0.27 | 0.37 | 0.296 | 0.290 | -0.866 |
| *Data recorded since 2003 | | | | | | | |

The study employed a correlation and regression analysis to study the relationship between the higher education policy and economic development, which allowed for an in-depth study of the cause-and-effect relationship between the investment in education and the economic performance. The structure of the study is shown in Figure 1.

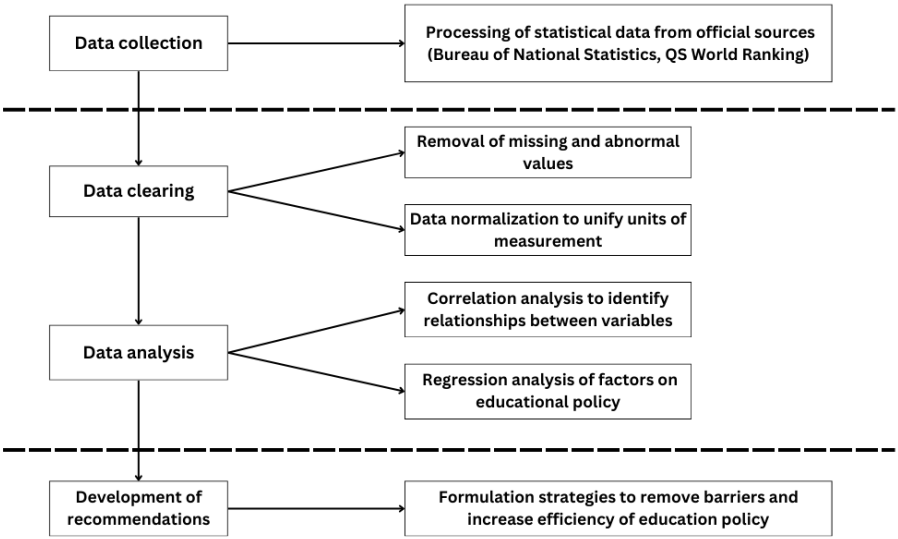


**Figure 1.** Stages of the research implementation

According to the presented scheme, the study consisted of four key stages. These stages included data collection, data purification, data analysis and the development of recommendations. The first stage involved collecting statistical data from official sources, as well as ensuring the sample's representativeness and reliability. After the data was collected, it was cleaned to improve the accuracy of the analysis. At this stage, missing values were eliminated and data normalisation was performed to ensure the correctness of the subsequent calculations.

Next, the data was analysed using correlation and regression methods.

A correlation analysis was used to assess the relationship between key variables, including the number of higher education institutions, public investment in education, innovation activity, unemployment and the average income. Based on these correlations, an econometric model was developed to examine the impact of educational and economic factors on the average income, unemployment and innovation activity, where *Y* represented the dependent variable. Independent variables included indicators reflecting the education level, human capital investments and socio-economic factors. Additionally, control variables reflecting temporal and institutional effects, such as the GDP in the education sector, were also included.

During the analysis, a correlation matrix containing Pearson correlation coefficients (ρ) demonstrated the degree of linear dependence between the variables. Based on the results of the correlation analysis, regression modelling was conducted to quantify the impact of educational policies on the macroeconomic indicators. A regression analysis was chosen as the primary method because it quantified the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

Multiple regression models were employed to estimate the effect of the higher education policy on social and economic development. The regression model followed the general form (1):

$$Y = +\beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \cdots + \beta_n x_n + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where:

Y – the dependent variable;

$x_1$, $x_2$ ...$x_n$ – independent variables;

$\beta_0$ – the constant of the model;

$\beta_1$ $\beta_2$ ,...$\beta_n$ – the regression coefficients that measured the impact of each independent variable on Y.

ε – the error term.

A key limitation of this study was that the dataset spanned 23 years, restricting the temporal scope of the analysis. While this time frame provided valuable insights into long-term trends, the absence of earlier data limited the ability to conduct a more historical assessment and to analyse the evolution of higher education policies over a broader period of time. Additionally, another limitation was the trade-off between the sample size and the model's stability. Attempts to expand the data set led to a decrease in the statistical reliability of the estimates due to errors, so the final sample size was chosen based on an optimal balance between reliability and the availability of data. The results served as the basis for developing recommendations to improve the educational policy in order to integrate universities with the labour market and to increase investments in research.

## Analysis and Results

*Analysis of the dynamics of higher education policy developments in Kazakhstan*

The development of academic mobility programmes, expansion of international cooperation in the fields of science and education, and the active participation of Kazakh universities in the world rankings are all important. The dynamics of the involvement of Kazakh universities in the global rankings confirms the effectiveness of the ongoing reforms. For example, the QS World University Rankings showed that in 2010, only two universities from Kazakhstan were included in this ranking; but 24 years later, there were already 16 universities included. This indicates the growing competitiveness of Kazakh higher education on the international stage. For a more detailed analysis of the dynamics of change in the higher education system, see Table 2.

**Table 2**. *Leading indicators of higher education in Kazakhstan in 2003, 2008, 2013, 2018 and 2023*

| Year | Higher education institutions | Faculty | Total students | Higher education institutions (%) | Faculty growth (%) | Students growth (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2003 | 180 | 40,972 | 665,843 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| 2008 | 143 | 37,814 | 645,648 | -20.56 | -7.71 | -3.03 |
| 2013 | 128 | 41,635 | 561,068 | -28.89 | 1.62 | -15.74 |
| 2018 | 124 | 38,275 | 586,661 | -31.11 | -6.58 | -11.89 |
| 2023 | 112 | 37,391 | 635,151 | -37.78 | -8.74 | -4.61 |

The results obtained demonstrate how the reforms have affected structural changes in higher education and what trends can be traced over the long-term period. In general, there has been a decrease by -37.78% in the number of universities operating in Kazakhstan. This trend may reflect the increased quality requirements for teaching, increased competition for personnel and the redistribution of resources among universities. During the study period, the number of faculty members decreased by -8.74%, which may also indicate the increased quality standards for teachers and the competition to hire faculty at universities. The total number of Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral students also showed a negative trend (-4.62). However, within this structure, there were multi-directional trends. The number of undergraduate students increased by 14.2% (from 31,950 in 2013 to 36,491 in 2023), indicating a growing interest in higher education programmes and an increasing importance of academic specialisation. Interestingly, the largest growth was seen in the segment of Doctoral students, as their numbers increased significantly (400 to 5966).

These trends highlight the change in the model of higher education in Kazakhstan: the transition from a quantitative expansion to a qualitative development of the scientific and educational environment. This has been transforming the approaches to university

management and requires a further analysis of the public policy in the field of education. Therefore, attention should be paid to the globalisation of higher education, which encourages universities to increase their competitiveness and their quality indicators.

One of the key tools for assessing the international status of higher education institutions is the QS World University Rankings, which take into account criteria such as the academic reputation, teaching quality, scientific productivity and the level of international cooperation. As is shown in Figure 2, there has been a steady increase in several Kazakh universities represented in the QS Rankings from 2010 to 2024.

According to the analysed period for 2010-2024, there have been significant dynamic changes in the participation of Kazakhstani higher education institutions in international rating systems, such as QS World University Rankings. From 2010 to 2013, the integration of Kazakh universities into international rankings was limited and characterised by a small number of represented universities. However, between 2014 and 2018, the participation remained relatively stable, probably reflecting the process of the universities adapting to international standards and efforts to improve the quality of education and research. Since 2020, the number of Kazakhstan's represented universities has increased sharply in the QS Rankings, resulting from successful reforms aimed at improving educational programmes, developing the country's scientific potential and strengthening international competitiveness. These changes can be considered as a result of the state policy in higher education, including measures to encourage universities to meet the global standards, improve the quality of their educational services and increase scientific productivity.

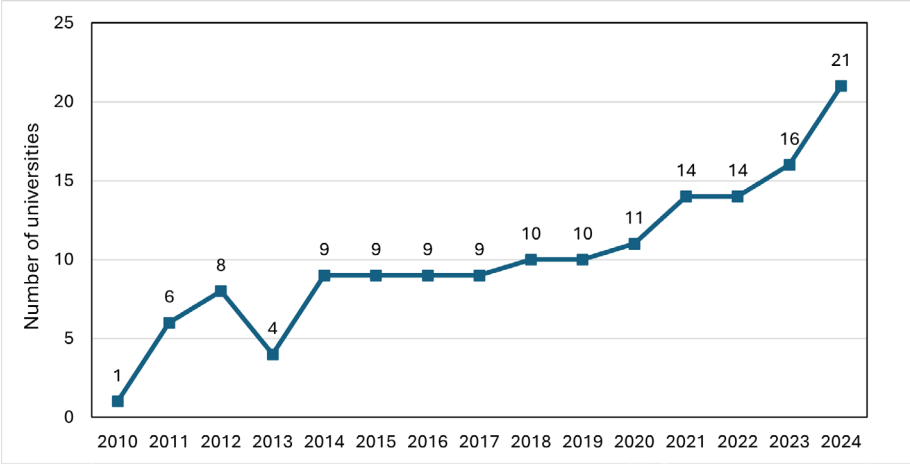


**Figure 2.** Kazakhstani universities in the QS Rankings for 2010-2024

Next, let us consider Kazakhstan's position in the QS Rankings among CIS countries, to assess the dynamics of the government policy and its impact on the competitiveness of universities (Figure 3).

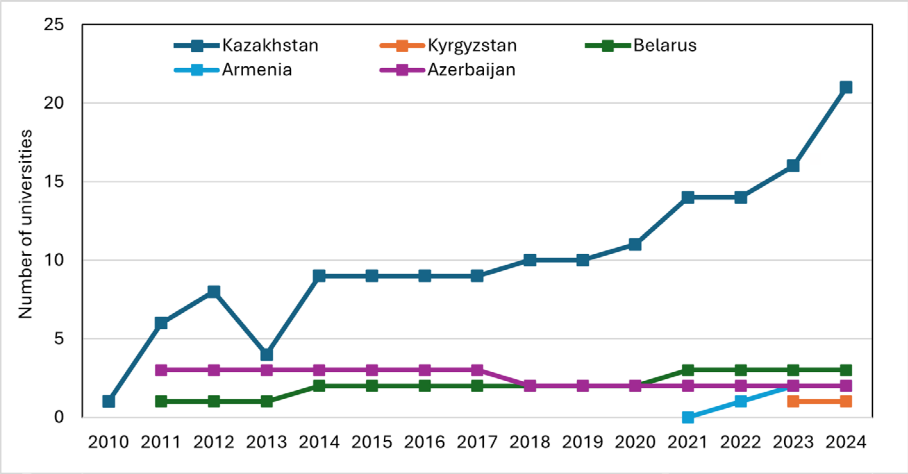


**Figure 3.** Dynamics of the number of universities participating in the QS Rankings for 2010-2024

According to the data, Kazakhstan has demonstrated a significant increase in the number of universities represented in the rankings since 2020. This indicates the effectiveness of educational reforms aimed at increasing the country's international competitiveness. The number of universities included in the rankings in other CIS countries remains relatively stable. It should be noted that Belarus has a limited number of represented universities, which may be due to the slow pace of their reforms. Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have shown a gradual increase in the universities included in the rankings since 2019, which may result from reforms aimed at improving the quality of higher education. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are not included in the lists, although they had similar starting conditions. Thus, Kazakhstan stands out among the CIS countries in terms of the growth dynamics of the number of universities in the international rankings.

*Analysis of the relationship between the higher education policy and macroeconomic factors*

Higher education acts as a strategic tool for the formation of human capital, the development of innovations and economic growth. The education policy is linked with macroeconomic indicators such as unemployment, technical progress and economic well-being. Investments in education foster an upskilling of the workforce, which stimulates economic development and reduces social inequality. The relationship between the higher education system and macroeconomic indicators is essential for research on the educational policy. In this regard, the factors influencing the higher education system in Kazakhstan will be considered in a correlation analysis (Table 3).

**Table 3**. Correlation matrix of indicators

| | YEAR | HIGH_ED | STUD | FACUL | COVER | UNEMPL | AVER_ INC | GDP_ ED | EXPEN | INNOV | GINI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| YEAR | 1.0 | | | | | | | | | | |
| HIGH_ED | -0.934 | 1.0 | | | | | | | | | |
| STUD | -0.574 | 0.782 | 1.0 | | | | | | | | |
| FACUL | -0.816 | 0.799 | 0.549 | 1.0 | | | | | | | |
| COVER | 0.482 | -0.214 | 0.248 | -0.323 | 1.0 | | | | | | |
| UNEMPL | -0.900 | 0.965 | 0.758 | 0.702 | -0.223 | 1.0 | | | | | |
| AVER_INC | 0.938 | -0.814 | -0.372 | -0.769 | 0.469 | -0.738 | 1.0 | | | | |
| GDP_EDU | 0.824 | -0.683 | -0.238 | -0.682 | 0.385 | -0.596 | 0.958 | 1.0 | | | |
| EXPEN | 0.928 | -0.833 | -0.419 | -0.732 | 0.385 | -0.755 | 0.986 | 0.948 | 1.0 | | |
| INNOV | 1.0 | -0.893 | -0.548 | -0.739 | 0.545 | -0.864 | 0.882 | 0.747 | 0.875 | 1.0 | |
| GINI | -0.934 | 0.683 | 0.708 | 0.416 | 0.203 | 0.730 | -0.309 | -0.214 | -0.362 | -0.392 | 1.0 |

Based on the presented results, the following conclusions have been drawn.

1. *Unemployment (UNEMPL)*

The relationship between the level of higher education and unemployment (0.965) indicates structural discrepancies between the educational programmes and the labour market. These disparities could be caused by a lack of mechanisms for graduates to adapt to changing economic conditions or the insufficiency of an applicability approach in the higher education system. As a result, educational policy reforms are needed to modernise the educational programmes, develop a double-degree education system, and to strengthen interactions between universities and employers (Abdiraiymova et al. 2020).

2. *Average income (AVER_INC)*

Economic growth and a population's standard of living significantly depend on the dynamics of the average income. The positive correlation with time (0.938) reflects a long-term trend toward income growth. Still, its negative relationship with the higher education level (-0.814) indicates potential challenges facing the effectiveness of educational investments.

The inconsistency between the professional skills of graduates and the labour market needs limits the employment opportunities for highly-paid positions (Olo et al. 2022). It also leads to a decrease in the efficiency of educational investments. Therefore, the applicability of knowledge, as well as strengthening the mechanisms for integrating universities with the real sector of the economy, such as joint educational programmes with industrial partners and professional internships, should be applied to the educational strategy.

3. *R&D expenses (EXPEN)*

The high positive correlation between the level of R&D funding and a population's income (0.986) indicates a direct linkage between the country's economic growth and its R&D expenditure. However, the negative correlation between universities and the volume of R&D funding (-0.833) requires a detailed analysis of the mechanisms of budget redistribution and the effectiveness of educational reforms, as it indicates an insufficient integration of the university sector with research and innovation activities, which leads to a limited involvement of universities in the development and implementation of advanced technologies (Ashirbekova and Nurmukhanova 2022).

4. *Innovative activity (INNOV_ACT)*

The capacity growth of innovations is the principal factor for sustainability that contributes to the competitiveness of a national economy. A high positive correlation with the time frame (0.972) means active developments in science and technological advancements and efficient state mechanisms for innovative activities. However, the negative high correlation between higher education and innovative activity (-0.893) demonstrates there are barriers at universities, such as insufficient levels of research commercialisation, weak links between universities and industry, and inefficient technology transfers (Jonbekova et al. 2020).

5. *Education expenditure from the GDP (GDP_EDU)*

The accumulation of intellectual capital depends on education investments. A high

positive correlation with the income (0.820) confirms that increasing educational funding leads to economic prosperity. However, the negative relationship with the Gini index (-0.214) requires an additional analysis to assess its efficiency in decreasing social inequality.

Next, a regression analysis was conducted after excluding the variables that demonstrated multicollinearity and lacked a statistically significant relationship with the higher education system. Table 4 demonstrates that the proposed model fits well (R = 0.988).

**Table 4.** Model summary and coefficients

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error | Change Statistics | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | R Square Change | F Change | df1 | df2 |
| 1 | 0.988 | 0.976 | 0.972 | 4.117 | 0.976 | 260.147 | 3 | 19 |
| 1 | Variable | Unstandardised Coefficients (B) | Standardised Coefficients (Beta) | Std. Error | t | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval for B (Lower Bound) | 95% Confidence Interval for B (Upper Bound) |
| 1 | Constant | 40.217 | | 7.329 | 5.487 | <0.001 | 24.876 | 55.558 |
| 1 | STUD | 7.317E-5 | 0.242 | 0.000 | 6.304 | <0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 1 | GDP_ EDU | -4.262E-7 | -0.237 | 0.000 | -5.278 | <0.001 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| 1 | UNEMPL | 10.226 | 0.713 | 0.687 | 14.891 | <0.001 | 8.788 | 11.663 |

The included indicators explain 97.6% of the variance in the number of higher education institutions. The adjusted $R^2$ (0.972) confirms the robustness of the model, after accounting for the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate is relatively small, indicating a high level of accuracy in the model. The F-statistic ($F = 260.147$, $p < 0.001$) suggests that the overall model is statistically significant. Additionally, the p-values for all the predictors are below 0.001, confirming their statistical significance.

According to Figure 4, the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) positively correlates with both student enrolment and unemployment, indicating an ambiguous impact on the labour market.

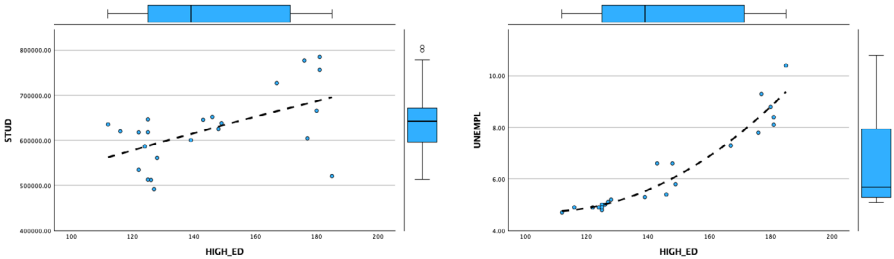


**Figure 4.** Impact of higher education on unemployment and student numbers

Mass accessibility of higher education, when not aligned with the industrial demand, leads to labour market imbalances (Grolleau et al. 2008). Therefore, a decline in student numbers may enhance the educational quality, producing more highly-skilled graduates with greater competitiveness in the labour market and ultimately reducing unemployment (Uzhegova and Baik 2022). However, according to the B coefficient (7.317E-5), increasing the number of students in the long term leads to increasing HEIs.

Furthermore, with a B coefficient of 10.226, increasing the number of HEIs does not decrease unemployment; in fact, it could even enhance it (Altindag et al. 2022). As a result, the country has more graduates than the workplace, and the optimisation of universities enhances the quality of education and contributes to a lowering of the unemployment rate.

Figure 4 shows the impact of higher education on unemployment and student numbers.

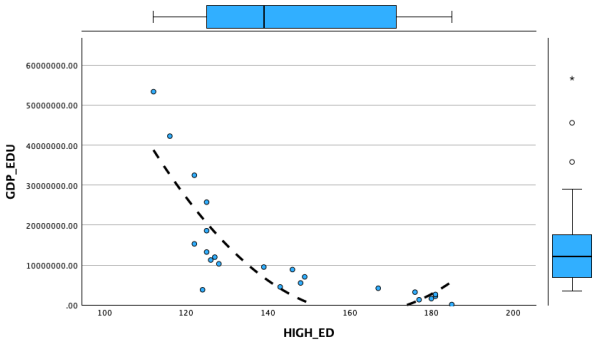


**Figure 4.** Impact of higher education on unemployment and student numbers

One unanticipated result was that the analysis revealed a negative correlation between the public investment in education (GDP_EDU) and the number of higher education institutions (Figure 5), with B = 4.262E-7. This suggests that an increase in public education funding does not necessarily lead to the expansion of HEIs. Thus, this finding contradicts previous research, in which a higher education investment is associated with institutional

growth (Song 2018). In this context, this indicator is an important signal for management structures about the need for a detailed analysis of the effectiveness of the public investment in education, including an assessment of its impact on the quality of trained specialists and the long-term economic effects.

Thus, the following results were achieved:

H1: An increase in the number of universities reduces unemployment – *rejected.*

H2: Higher public investments in education raises the average income – *confirmed.*

H3: Higher education expansion boosts innovation activity – *rejected.*

H4: Public investments improve the higher education system – *rejected.*

## Conclusions

The results of the study confirm the key role played by higher education in the economic development of Kazakhstan. An analysis of the dynamics of the educational policy has shown that reforms aimed at optimising the university system contributed to the growth of the international competitiveness of Kazakh universities. However, structural challenges remain, including an insufficient integration of educational programmes with the labour market needs, limited funding for research, and an imbalance between many graduates and the demand for qualified personnel.

Policymakers should therefore consider the following:

1. The growing presence of Kazakhstani universities in the international rankings confirms the success of the internationalisation policy, but further integration with the global academic space is an urgent task.
2. Increased investments in R&D are key factors in stimulating innovation growth and long-term economic development. The government should provide targeted financing for applied research, while supporting technology transfers and taking measures to strengthen the cooperation between universities and industry partners.
3. To increase the efficiency of investments in higher education, we need to optimise the allocation of resources and to balance quality and accessibility. Strategic financial models should be developed to ensure a fair funding distribution and support the competitiveness of universities.

Future research should focus on a more detailed analysis of the causal relationship between higher education policies and macroeconomic indicators, particularly in the context of employment rates and income growth. A comparative study involving other developing countries could provide additional information. In addition, further research would be advisable in order to conduct a comparative study involving other developing countries, as well as to study the long-term effects of the digitalisation of higher education and its impact on the adaptability of the workforce.

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# AUKŠTOJO MOKSLO POLITIKA IR JOS POVEIKIS MAKROEKONOMINEI PLĖTRAI: KAZACHSTANO PATIRTIS

**Anotacija.** Aukštasis mokslas vaidina svarbų vaidmenį kuriant žmogiškąjį kapitalą ir skatinant ekonomikos augimą. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama išsiaiškinti aukštojo mokslo politikos ir Kazachstano makroekonominės raidos santykio įtaką, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant pagrindiniams ekonominiams rodikliams. Tyrime naudojamas makroekonominis metodas, įvertinant antrinius statistinius duomenis paimtus iš oficialių šaltinių, įskaitant Kazachstano nacionalinio statistikos biuro ir QS World University Rankings duomenis. Duomenų rinkinys, apimantis laikotarpį nuo 2001 iki 2023 m., leidžia analizuoti ilgalaikes tendencijas. Rezultatai rodo, kad aukštojo mokslo reformos prisidėjo prie universitetų skaičiaus mažinimo, akademinės autonomijos stiprinimo, universitetų tarptautinio konkurencingumo didinimo. Tačiau išlieka struktūrinių problemų, tokių kaip menkas švietimo programų pritaikymas darbo rinkos poreikiams, ribotas mokslinių tyrimų finansavimas, nepakankama universitetų integracija į inovacijas. Šios išvados rodo, kad politikos formuotojai turėtų sutelkti dėmesį į aukštojo mokslo finansavimo mechanizmų tobulinimą, universitetų integracijos į darbo rinką stiprinimą ir jų indėlio į nacionalinę inovacijų plėtrą didinimą. Būsimi tyrimai gali būti skirti aukštojo mokslo politikos poveikiui užimtumui ir pajamų augimui, taip pat pritaikant ilgalaikį švietimo skaitmeninimo poveikį darbo rinkai.

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# BUILDING AN URBAN E-GOVERNMENT IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

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**Abstract.** The Fourth Industrial Revolution has had a profound impact on all aspects of social life and human beings. This study assesses the importance of e-urban government deployment and delineates the accomplishments, constraints, and strategies to improve this paradigm. By examining the achievements and obstacles of e-government, we suggest ideas for its enhancement. The primary aim is to augment the efficiency of governmental administration and improve the quality of public services for citizens and enterprises. The research employs Ho Chi Minh City as a case study to exemplify the analyses and recommendations, offering insights into e-urban government advancement in a significant metropolitan center.

***Keywords:*** *Urban e-government, Ho Chi Minh City, institutional solutions, PAPI.*
***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *E-miesto valdžia, Hošiminas, viešasis valdymas, instituciniai sprendimai, PAPI indeksas.*

## Introduction

- **Overview of e-urban government**

E-government is one of the new leadership and operation methods, adapting to changes in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Although most countries in the modern economy are building and implementing e-government, there are still many different approaches to this term:

From an organizational perspective, e-government is a government machine operating on the internet and through information technology. It is not merely the act of putting public services on the internet or executing administrative procedures on the internet, e-government requires a fundamental change in the view of policies, regulations, and operating procedures of the government and in considering how technology and new business models will impact and improve the internal performance of the government, as well as change the nature and quality of communication activities between the government and the people and between the government and businesses.

From a time perspective, e-government is the transfer of information services electronically to businesses and citizens 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

From a technology perspective, e-government is when government agencies use information technology, such as wide area network, internet, and mobile devices to relate to citizens, the business community, and the state administrative agencies themselves (Brys et al. 2023). From the above approaches, it can be understood that "e-urban government" is a model of e-government applied in urban management; the essence is the application of information technology, digital technology into the administrative reform process, aiming to operate more effectively and provide better services for urban residents. E-urban government includes the automation and digitization of current procedures and documents, and thereby will create a new leadership style and new ways in building and deciding strategy, doing business transactions, listening to community opinions, and organizing and providing information, aiming toward the highest goal for the benefit of urban residents. Building e-government in urban areas also needs to consider the characteristics of the urban area, such as synchronization and interconnection in management (Davies 2010). The level of socio-economic development, modern nature, and the growth rate in urban life, in particular, make the implementation of an e-government model in Ho Chi Minh City more urgent than in other regions. An e-urban government is a type of government with a proactive and open management structure with all participating subjects, aiming to maximize the economic, social, and ecological efficiency of cities, respond to negative impacts, and apply learnings from the development path in history. Therefore, to achieve the requirements for creating an e-urban government, it is necessary to transform the internal components of the government and also those of external organizations. E-urban government takes the factor of serving people as the center, focusing on users and on the relationship between people and other related parties. Therefore, to successfully build an e-urban government, the government subject needs to change the management method and facilitate the

connection between people in urban social life.

- **Overview of Ho Chi Minh City**

Ho Chi Minh City is a special urban area, a major center for economics, culture, education and training, and science and technology. It is a hub for international exchange and integration—it is the region's locomotive and driving force for progress. The city only accounts for 0.6% of the country's area, with a population of about 10 million people, but it contributes significantly to the overall economic development of the country (Vuong T. 2024). The urbanization process took place very quickly, bringing Ho Chi Minh City a breakthrough economic growth, resulting in it holding the position of "locomotive." Thus, creating momentum for the development of the key economic region in the South, an international trading center, the urban nucleus of the region and the country, and the focal point of connection, linkage, and support for other urban areas in the region to develop together, holding a strategic position.

About 20% of Ho Chi Minh City's population originates from other provinces and is employed in the nation's primary economic sectors. Between 2016 and 2020, the city's economic sectors generated and addressed 1,516,430 labor shifts, resulting in the creation of 651,735 jobs. The unemployment rate decreased to 3.7% in 2020. Between 2016 and 2020, an average of 70 to 80 job transaction fairs were systematically and flexibly held annually in districts to facilitate the connection between labor supply and demand, assisting jobless individuals in swiftly securing appropriate employment. Over 11,000 enterprises participate in recruiting via the job transaction floor, resulting in 120,000 labor transitions and the recruitment of over 50,000 workers. Ho Chi Minh City has achieved diverse and effective international partnerships. Labor export firms and collaborative initiatives (such as issuing work permits for South Korean laborers, technical interns to Japan, and nurses to Germany) between Vietnam and other nations have enabled individuals from impoverished and near-impoverished families to increase their earnings and alleviate poverty. The city's unique status as a hub for foreign investment in company establishment renders job searching favorable, resulting in 10%–12% of the total labor force working abroad being registered residents of the city. Ho Chi Minh City has achieved notable triumphs in urban growth, yet it also faces some constraints: The nation's biggest population increase continues to burden the city.

Currently, with nearly 14 million people living in the locality, Ho Chi Minh City is considered the metropolis of Vietnam. After many years leading in socio-economic indicators, the city has recently been facing many instabilities. According to statistics from 1991–2010, within 20 years, the gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of the city reached an average of 10.5%/year, which was higher than the average GDP growth rate of the whole country by about 1.5 times. However, over a period of about nine years, from 2011 to 2020, the GDP growth rate only reached 7.2%/year, which was higher than the average GDP growth rate of the whole country by about 1.2 times. In 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic growth rate of Ho Chi Minh City was about 45% compared to the general growth rate of the whole country (1.4% compared to 2.91%), thus it was assessed that the ability to

face abnormal fluctuations of the economy is very weak (Du Lich, T. 2021).

Many complex social issues continue to arise, putting pressure on leadership, management, and administration activities. The dense concentration of residents in the city also poses significant challenges in ensuring employment for workers, as well as social security issues in the city. The situation of traffic congestion and flooding is becoming more complex with shortcomings in planning work, urban planning management, land use planning, and specialized planning. Progress in finding solutions to problems implementing housing programs (social housing, housing for rent workers, housing along canals, building new apartments to replace old ones, etc.) is still slow. Social networks have become an information environment and are used for the interaction of the majority of people, quickly and strongly affecting the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the people, which requires state management work to continuously adapt, inspire, guide, and correct thoughts and values. The demand for investment in transport infrastructure and cultural institutions to serve the people is increasingly large while the city's budget resources are limited, creating a challenge that requires creative thinking, ways of working, mobilizing resources from people, and businesses to participate in investment, etc.

The current administration of Ho Chi Minh City has resulted in a scarcity of human resources for the local government apparatus. The People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City indicates that 90 out of 249 wards have populations above 30,000 inhabitants. Of these, 54 wards have populations ranging from 30,000 to under 50,000, 21 have populations from 50,000 to under 75,000, 12 have populations from 75,000 to under 100,000, and three have populations over 100,000. Ho Chi Minh City has an average population density of 14,000 individuals per square kilometer, escalating to 37,000 in the principal districts. On average, each ward in Ho Chi Minh City accommodates over 28,000 residents, approximately 1.9 times the stipulated limit of 15,000 individuals as per Article 8 of Resolution No. 1211/2016/UBTVQH13 dated May 25, 2016 of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly on criteria and classification of administrative divisions. In Ho Chi Minh City, one public worker serves a population of 1,343 individuals due to elevated population density. Civil workers are required to manage documents outside of official work hours in densely populated regions with a high concentration of households and commercial establishments. In 2021, authorities and civil workers in Bình Hưng Hòa A ward, Bình Tân district, the most populous region with 125,894 residents, reviewed 628 documents annually, averaging 52 per month, and processed 3,241 documents per year, equating to 270 per month. Cultural and social activities occurring after 5 PM every day impose stress on central personnel. The team of officials, civil servants, and volunteer campaigners may operate until 2 AM on holidays and weekends. (Nguyên 2022).

Therefore, the realities of the urban social life context in Ho Chi Minh City have posed an urgent requirement to build an e-urban government—a smart city will allow the government of Ho Chi Minh City to change the management method to solve the problems posed by the current urban social life in the city.

- Some achievements in building an e-urban government in Ho Chi Minh City
  - Issuing plans and strategies to build an e-urban government

November 23 and 24, 2017, are important dates in Ho Chi Minh City's e-government development. The city government announced the "Project to Build Ho Chi Minh City into a smart city for the period 2017–2020, with a vision for 2025," and the National Assembly passed Resolution No. 54/2017/QH14 on piloting mechanisms and policies for special development. The project implements data system connectivity and utilities to help people and businesses participate in improving state management. It emphasizes four main topics: building a common data warehouse and open data ecosystem, building a smart urban operation center, building a simulation and socio-economic forecasting center, and building a city information security center. The Resolution of the 11th Party Congress of the City includes a dedicated section on "Building a Smart City," which clearly outlines the need to deploy advanced digital infrastructure and technologies to ensure the timely implementation of the Smart City Construction Project. It emphasizes the importance of effectively operating and utilizing the common data warehouse to support data-driven decision-making, and calls for continued investment in completing both the Smart Operation Center and the Forecasting Center, which are essential for enhancing urban management and predictive capabilities. Big data will modernize, reduce costs, and improve quality and forecasting in key areas for the city. Smart cities and creative cities can be deployed using artificial intelligence (AI). Universities and research institutes can pilot AI research into production and society. These breakthrough policies are political opportunities for the city to promote creativity, solidarity, Party Committee unity, and popular development. Additionally, the city's leaders have actively researched and gained practical experience deploying the smart city model in major cities around the world, and they have seen the effectiveness of modern social management (Long 2021).

On October 9, 2018, the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City held a conference to announce the framework of the e-government architecture. The e-government architecture of Ho Chi Minh City is an overall plan that helps to guide the unified and synchronous deployment of information technology in the city's state agencies. The architecture is built on new technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, AI, blockchain technology, virtual assistant technology, and smart robots.

As a result of the initiative, the e-government architecture has been implemented across the Office of the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, as well as in all 24 district-level People's Committees, 322 ward-, commune-, and town-level units, and various departments and directly affiliated agencies. Ho Chi Minh City's e-government model includes three key portals: a centralized administrative information portal, an integrated online public services portal for processing citizen and business requests, and a public feedback and engagement portal. These components are designed to foster a collaborative working environment, enable service and data integration, support the development of specialized digital applications, and ensure robust information security (Nam 2018).

In addition, the People's Committee of the City issued Decision No. 2392/QĐ-UBND

dated July 3, 2020, on building and updating the e-government architecture of Ho Chi Minh City, according to which, the overall model of the e-government of Ho Chi Minh City viewed from the architectural aspect is divided into basic layers (HCM igov 2024): (1) users and external systems, (2) access channel, (3) electronic information portal, (4) online public services, (5) applications, (6) database, (7) e-government deployment platform (HCM LGSP), (8) technical infrastructure, (9) IoT infrastructure, and (10) orientation management.

– Building infrastructure and sharing electronic data to serve citizens and businesses

Currently, the e-government in Ho Chi Minh City has entered Phase 3, the stage in which complete transactions can be carried out without citizens having to go to administrative agencies. Examples of online services include the registration of income tax, registration of property tax, renewal/issuance of new licenses, visas, and passports, and online voting.

Information about the e-government in Ho Chi Minh City is provided through the city's general information portal, hochiminhcity.gov.vn. This is where information, news, and general plans from the city government are updated. From this website, you can access all other small information portals in the city. The administrative procedure information portal and the portal for receiving and processing online public service dossiers of the city are https://dichvucong.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/vi/home-hcm and https://dichvucong.gov.vn.

In 2018, the page dichvucong.hochiminhcity.gov.vn received nearly 480,000 online applications and processed more than 210,000, with a rate of 83% being processed on time. A survey of people using online public services was then conducted, showing that 509 individuals were satisfied with the service (accounting for 68%), and 41 individuals were not satisfied (accounting for 6%).

In 2020, the city government issued the Regulation on Integration and Operation of the Common Data Warehouse to create a legal corridor to integrate the city's existing databases into the Common Data Warehouse. At the same time, research was conducted on building a plan to connect the city's existing database with the databases of ministries and sectors. The Common Data Warehouse aims to serve the city's management and administration work, and at the same time, provide data exploitation utilities to support people and businesses. In 2022, Ho Chi Minh City implemented a comprehensive digital transformation, developing a digital economy and building a digital society and government. The city has designed, built, and put into operation a system of integration, connection, and interconnection of large databases (big data), which hold data on population, planning, health, education, insurance, businesses, land, and housing, to serve the operation and management work of the city as well as the life of the people (Phap Luat E-magazin 2022).

Ho Chi Minh City has currently deployed an integrated platform and shared data to officially connect the national integrated and shared data platform to the common data warehouse. The city also focuses on the field of administrative reform, providing public services, bringing benefits to people and businesses. In this regard, the city has deployed

applications to enhance the interaction between the government and the people. More than 900 units in the city, including state agencies, corporations, and public service units, have connected electronic documents through the integrated platform and shared data. In the fields of transportation, health, education and training, environment, urban planning, and public security, many applications have been deployed to serve professional work and provide services to the people (Phap Luat emagazin 2022).

The city's data portal (at the address https://data.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/) implements data sharing for departments, boards, and sectors to exploit and use. Through the portal, it is possible to deploy and integrate data on the drainage system, urban lighting, green spaces, wastewater treatment, bridge data layer, road, and traffic light signal to the city's common data warehouse.

The city also completes and connects software for document management and internal operation to ensure continuity from the city to wards, communes, and towns in the implementation of sending, receiving electronic documents; promote the application of specialized digital signatures and other contents as prescribed; promote the application of information technology in the management and operation of the city's leadership; to foster coordination between agencies and units, especially at ward, commune, and town levels; serve people and organizations; and expand the use on the smartphone platform (Minh, T. 2022). In addition, the city will expand the complaint system to departments, sectors, districts, and people's committees, deploying the use of digital signatures, electronic authentication in the internal activities of agencies and units, and implementing the reporting regime through the Government Office's Information Reporting System as required.

– Application of information technology in urban management

In September 2022, the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City held a ceremony to announce the Ho Chi Minh City Execution Management System on digital platforms (Phase 1). The system with three functions will change the way of directing, managing, and inspecting the operation of the city government, from procedures and paper document reports to management by an information system, with quick interaction: (1) Synthesize statistical indicators classified by field, presented in the form of charts, diagrams, and infographic illustrations, helping city leaders, departments, and districts grasp an overview of the city's socio-economic situation; (2) Management and administration—city leaders can grasp immediate information and give directions on socio-economic activities on the system; and (3) Supervision and interaction between people and the city government—city leaders can see the interaction time of people with the government, supervise the results of administrative procedure handling, and evaluate which unit handles its tasks on time, which unit handles its tasks late, and which unit handles its tasks directly through the system (Le 2023).

– Supplying online public services of the electronic city government in serving people and businesses

In 2022, the total number of records received and resolved by departments, boards, district-level people's committees, and commune-level people's committees was 16,657,884

records (including 12,638,816 paper-copy records received and 4,019,068 online records), of which 16,211,481 have been resolved and 466,403 are being resolved. Among the resolved records, there are 16,197,327 that were resolved on time (accounting for 99.85%) and 24,154 that were overdue (accounting for 0.15%).

In the first nine months of 2023, the percentage of administrative procedure records that were processed and returned electronically reached 22.48% for ministries and sectors, and 38.94% for localities. For comparison, during the same period in 2022, these rates were 8.78% and 13.14%, respectively. The conversion of paper records to electronic records at ministries and sectors reached 81.39% (the same period in 2022 reached 50.69%), and localities reached 70.24% (the same period in 2022 reached 38.84%), thereby, contributing to the construction and operation of national specialized databases for population, social insurance, business registration, electronic civil status, and driver's license data (Ngan 2023a).

The survey results from the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) show that the management effectiveness of the e-government of Ho Chi Minh City in the criterion of public service supply made significant progress from 2018 to 2022; the highest being in 2021, with 7.75 points out of 10 points.

*Unit: Point*

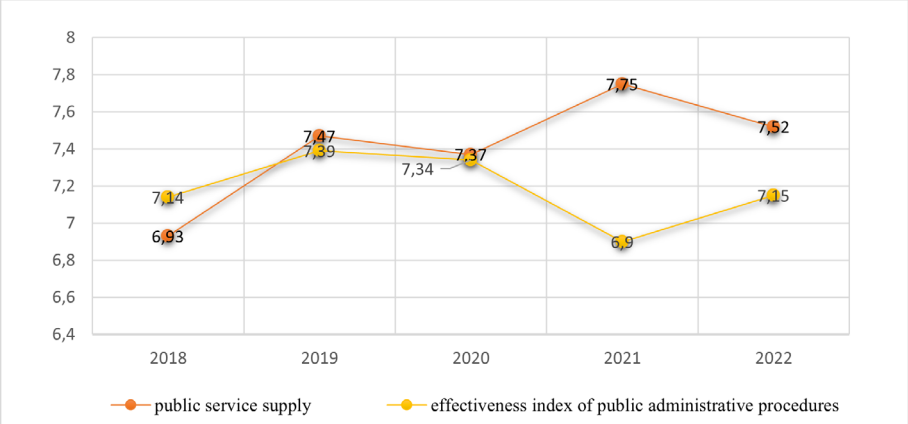


**Figure 1.** The effectiveness index of public service supply and the effectiveness index of public administrative procedures of Ho Chi Minh City from 2018 to 2022 (https://papi.org.vn/bao-cao)

The data reveals a discernible downward trend in both indices, with a particularly marked decline observed between 2021 and 2022. Multiple factors may have contributed to this observed deterioration. The COVID-19 pandemic likely engendered significant disruptions to public services and administrative procedures, with concomitant lockdowns, social distancing measures, and economic challenges potentially impeding the efficiency

of governmental operations. Concurrently, an economic downturn may have precipitated reduced public expenditure, thereby diminishing the quality and availability of public services. Moreover, extant systemic issues within the public administration framework, such as corruption, bureaucratic red tape, and lack of transparency, may have exacerbated the decline. The burgeoning population and consequent increased demand for services in this rapidly expanding metropolis may have outpaced the administrative capacity to deliver services effectively. Additionally, alterations in governmental policies or regulations may have inadvertently yielded negative repercussions on the efficiency of public services and administrative procedures. By addressing these fundamental issues and implementing targeted reforms (Ngan 2023b) Ho Chi Minh City has gradually improved the efficiency of public services and administrative procedures, thereby improving the quality of life for its people.

With the shift from traditional, manual management methods to electronic management methods, the e-government of Ho Chi Minh City has demonstrated increased local administrative capacity over time. The evaluation results of the satisfaction level of people and businesses in relation to the management activities of the e-government of Ho Chi Minh City from 2018 to 2022 show that the index of the satisfaction level of people and businesses with the city government increased from 71.91% (in 2018) to 86.56% (in 2022).

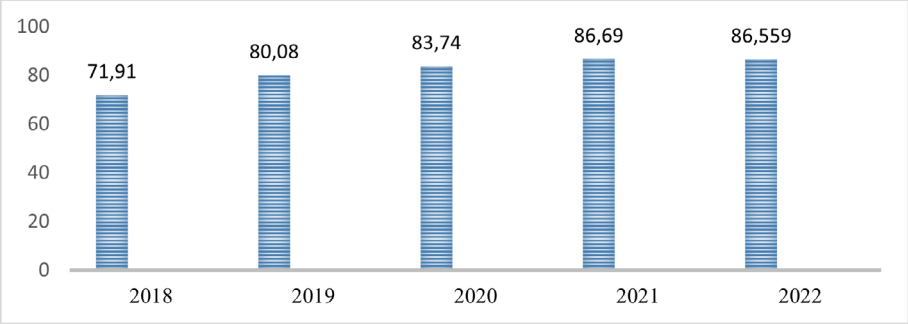


**Figure 2**. The satisfaction index of the people in relation to the service of the state administrative agencies from 2018 to 2022. (Nga et al. 2024)

– Correlation between the development of e-government and urban economic development in Ho Chi Minh City

The correlation between the development of electronic city government and economic development in Ho Chi Minh City shows that the enhancement of information and communication technology applications in the management and operation of the electronic city government has promoted economic development, especially the development of e-commerce. The E-commerce Index ranking will be synthesized from three pillars: (1) human resources and information technology infrastructure, (2) e-commerce transactions between businesses and consumers, and (3) e-commerce transactions between businesses.

The results of the E-commerce Index Report in Vietnam from 2018 to 2022 show that Ho Chi Minh City has a digital economic development index that continuously increases. In 2022, Ho Chi Minh City continued to lead the E-commerce Index ranking in Vietnam with 90.6 points, followed by Hanoi with 85.9—4.7 points less than Ho Chi Minh City (PAPI 2024).

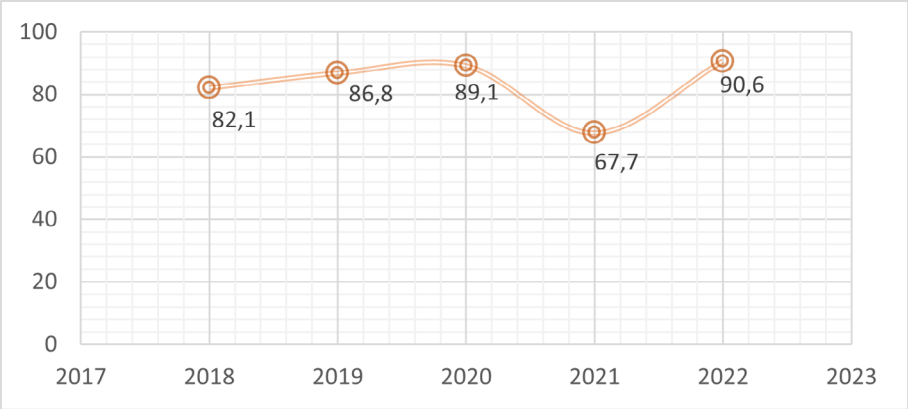


**Figure 3.** The E-commerce Index of Ho Chi Minh City from 2018 to 2022 (http://ebi.vecom.vn/Trang-chu.aspx)

**Some limitations in building an e-government in Ho Chi Minh City**

– Limitations on policy and law

Although in recent times, the National Assembly, the Government, and competent state administrative agencies have built and issued some legal documents, creating an important legal corridor to build and develop an electronic city government, the actual deployment in Ho Chi Minh City still encounters many difficulties and obstacles. There are still gaps in the regulations on management, connection, data sharing, electronic documents, storage of electronic documents of state agencies, legal value of electronic documents in administrative transactions and payments, and information security in the electronic environment.

There are some issues that need to be considered by ministries and sectors, such as the total number of records resolved and the data on the Online Public Service Portal that isn't synchronized with the city's data. The quantity and quality of public services are still low, and as of October 12, 2023, Ho Chi Minh City has 680/1,758 procedures (accounting for 38.7%) that have not been fully reviewed on the National Public Service Portal. There are about 450 administrative procedures that have not resulted in records in the past three years, which need to be reviewed. The rate of overdue administrative procedure settlement, according to statistics, has not reached 1% (Ngan 2023a).

In addition, one of many issues that Ho Chi Minh City has been facing is the security of personal user data in the context of a strong digital transformation. The electronic city government in Ho Chi Minh City is still lacking a strong legal framework to regulate new

social relationships and operations in the electronic environment, and the issue of human rights and personal data protection is becoming increasingly urgent.

– Limitations in the enforcement capacity of civil servants

In the context where Ho Chi Minh City is in the pilot phase of the Urban E-Government model, the city's human resources are streamlined. Therefore, work pressure also creates challenges for the city's civil servants. The biggest challenge comes from civil servants and public employees, the central characters in the operation of the e-government. Most civil servants have approached and used computers commonly, but, in reality, those considered computer literate just stop at the basic level of document editing and accessing information on the internet; however, they have not reached the level of proficient application of information technology to organize and manage work for effective business. Many civil servants, public employees, and workers in the state administrative system are still in the habit of using paper documents, hoarding data, not sharing information, and fearing the shift toward working in a digital environment.

– Limitations in the participation of citizens and businesses

In order to build and develop an municipal e-government, in addition to preparing for issues related to infrastructure, human resources, and support, the participation of citizens in this process is extremely important. However, currently, the awareness and readiness of citizens to actually participate in implementing the municipal e-government through online public administrative transactions are still limited. People are still hesitant to use technological elements. The survey results of PAPI show that the participation index of the city's residents is still limited. In 2020, the participation index of residents in the city only reached 4.45 out of a total of 10 points, especially in 2021, when it only reached 4.06/10 points, falling into the lowest level among a total of 63 provinces and cities nationwide.

– Limitations in infrastructure and financial and technological conditions

To build an municipal e-government, in addition to conditions related to human resources, institutions, and legal policies, it is necessary to ensure suitable physical infrastructure, finance, and technology conditions. The reality in Ho Chi Minh City shows that, although it is a locality currently enjoying the special mechanism of the State, the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in recent years have seriously affected the infrastructure and public investment in Ho Chi Minh City.

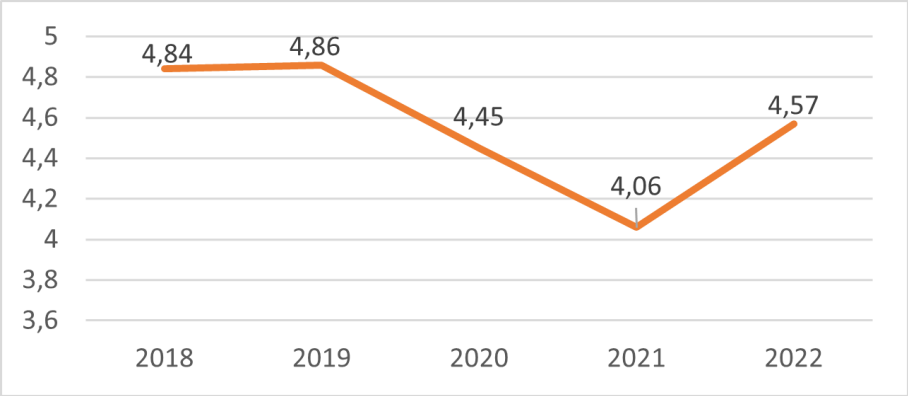


**Figure 4.** The index of citizen participation in the activities of the municipal e-government in Ho Chi Minh City (Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee 2022)

Therefore, the lack of capital for investment in purchasing working equipment and applying modern technological factors in management somewhat affects the effectiveness of local administration. The abovementioned limitations have affected the management effectiveness of the municipal e-government over time. Survey results from PAPI show that Ho Chi Minh City had a trend of decreasing strengths in the years 2021 and 2022. The electronic governance index also shows a decrease (see Table 1).

*Unit: Point*

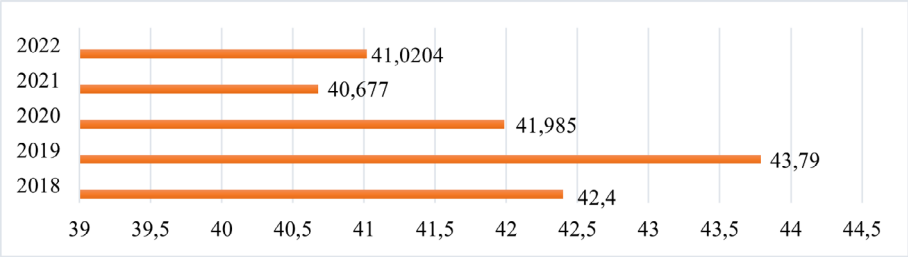


**Figure 5.** The Provincial Governance and PAPI of Ho Chi Minh City from 2018 to 2022

**Table 1.** E-governance index of Ho Chi Minh City from 2018 to 2022 (PAPI 2024)

*Unit: Point*

| Electronic administration | | | | | Component point | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | Use of the local government's electronic portal | | | | | Access and use of the internet locally | | | | | Response of the local government on the provincial electronic portal | | | | |
| 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| 3.99 | 4.33 | 3.46 | 4.43 | 3.32 | 0.62 | 0.41 | 0.41 | 0.29 | 0.41 | 1.73 | 2.55 | 2.66 | 2.63 | 0.51 | 0 | 1.37 | 0.4 | 0.42 | 0.39 |

These shortcomings and limitations stem from one of the reasons why the city authorities have not yet publicly disclosed the progress and results of administrative procedure settlement at the district level on the city's public service portal: The disclosure of administrative procedures on the electronic information portal and on the national database on administrative procedures has not been uniform, not meeting the requirements of Decree No. 92/2017/ND-CP, Decree No. 61/2018/ND-CP.

**Some solutions to improve the effectiveness of building an municipal e-government in Ho Chi Minh City**

– Institutional solutions

The central and city-level authorities must collaborate to revise and issue clear and comprehensive legal documents regarding municipal government organization, thereby establishing a legal framework for the effective functioning of the municipal government in Ho Chi Minh City. Authorities must also review and incorporate city-specific legal regulations pertaining to the construction and development of electronic municipal governance. In June 2022, the government promulgated Decree 42/2022/ND-CP to govern the online information and public services of state agencies (Vietnam Government 2022). Central and local government entities were mandated to digitize public administrative processes and promote the utilization of central or provincial e-service portals by citizens and businesses. According to the 2023 National Digital Transformation Action Plan (Vietnam Government 2020), Vietnam intended to transition 50% of administrative procedures online, finalize the information system for managing administrative procedures across all ministries and provinces. These initiatives were brought about to diminish bureaucratic discretion, corruption, and governmental inefficiency. The PAPI indicators assess policy efficacy from the viewpoint of citizens.

– Human resource solutions

The city government needs to have a policy mechanism and a specific strategic plan for training and fostering the improvement of the capacity of civil servants and officials to meet the requirements set out in the operation of the municipal e-government. Accordingly, state administrative agencies need to regularly organize training for civil servants and officials that focuses on developing digital capacity, knowledge and skills for working in an electronic environment, skills to handle online administrative procedures for people and businesses, communication skills, and familiarity with behavior with mass media while ensuring compliance with administrative standards and civilization in the digital environment. The results of training need to be considered as one of the criteria for evaluating the capacity of civil service execution of civil servants of the city.

– Solutions to engage the participation of multiple entities

The city government needs to improve communication effectiveness to engage the participation of citizens and businesses in the operation of building the municipal government. This is very important in ensuring democracy and providing an information system with data for the municipal e-government. The more entities that participate in the process, the richer the data and the more accurate the predictions based on algorithms.

Accordingly, the city government needs to build a transparent public information system for the operation of the government, data, projects, and development plans, and provide information about online public services. At the same time, it is necessary to enhance the interaction between people and businesses to absorb their contributions, reflections, and suggestions in a timely manner to align management activities with reality, creating trust between people and businesses. It is also necessary to develop diverse communication channels, such as websites, social networks, and mobile applications to provide information and interact with people and businesses develop television and radio programs with information about municipal e-government, and enhance online interaction through chatbot/voicebot systems, for example to support people and businesses.

– Technological and financial solutions

Investing in physical infrastructure and equipment with information technology applications to serve the management of electronic urban areas in Ho Chi Minh City is considered the most important investment to ensure the effective management of urban areas. It is necessary to upgrade the network system and information technology infrastructure by expanding the optical cable network, increasing internet access speed, and improving the effectiveness of online public services. At the same time, building a data center to centrally store data of state agencies, businesses, and people and ensuring data safety and security as prescribed are also areas of priority. Developing a shared data system to collect and integrate data from state agencies, businesses, and individuals will create a unified data source to serve state management and socio-economic development. The development of a shared data system will contribute to the effective use of data and ensure safe and secure data sharing, thus protecting the privacy of citizens and businesses. It is also important to strengthen the use of modern technology software in urban management in Ho Chi Minh City, such as using AI in the field of public administration, and to enhance the use of management software, such as geographic information system technology application software and remote sensing in resource management (Vietnam News 2022).

The city government needs to have synchronous and specific solutions for financial investment to serve the construction of the municipal government. One of the necessary measures is to improve the effectiveness of socializing financial investment for the city. Therefore, there needs to be a suitable and specific mechanism and institution to attract the participation and financial contribution of citizens and businesses.

## Conclusion

We have provided a comprehensive assessment of Ho Chi Minh City's advancement in the execution of electronic municipal governance, which recognizes significant accomplishments, including the formulation of strategic plans, improved IT applications in urban governance, optimized administrative processes, and the expansion of the digital economy. We have also identified significant challenges, such as deficiencies in legal frameworks,

constraints in civil servant capabilities, and obstacles in public participation. This thorough assessment increases understanding of the complexities related to digital transformation at the municipal level.

This study illustrates a significant relationship between the efficacy of public administrative processes and the advancement of Ho Chi Minh City's E-commerce Index. Optimized and effective administrative services enhance business operations, fostering e-commerce advancement. Inefficiencies in public services can obstruct business growth and adversely affect the city's digital economy. Enhancing e-government initiatives will likely augment the city's e-commerce sector.

The research findings offer a thorough evaluation of Ho Chi Minh City's progress in implementing electronic municipal governance. These recommendations highlight the need for institutional reforms, enhancement of civil servant competencies, advancement of IT applications, and increased participation from citizens and businesses. This study associates these concepts with the objective of enhancing local governance and urban quality of life, thereby integrating theoretical principles with practical policy ramifications.

## Acknowledgement

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# E-MIESTO VALDŽIOS DIEGIMAS HOŠIMINE, VIETNAME

**Anotacija.** Ketvirtoji pramonės revoliucija padarė didelį poveikį visiems socialinio gyvenimo ir žmonių veiklos aspektams. Šiame tyrime įvertinama e. miesto valdžios diegimo svarba ir apibrėžiami pasiekimai, suvaržymai ir strategijos, siekiant pagerinti šią paradigmą. Nagrinėdami elektroninės valdžios pasiekimus ir kliūtis, siūlome jos tobulinimo idėjas. Pagrindinis tikslas – didinti valdžios administravimo efektyvumą ir gerinti viešųjų paslaugų piliečiams ir įmonėms kokybę. Atliekant tyrimą Hošiminas naudojamas kaip atvejo tyrimas, skirtas analizei, įžvalgoms ir rekomendacijoms apie e. miesto valdžios pažangą šiame reikšmingame didmiestyje pateikti.

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# CONDITIONAL CONFIGURATIONS FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATION IN URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS

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**Abstract.** This research investigates how the conditional elements in combination drive interlocal collaborative activities regarding air pollution control in urban agglomerations in China. By applying a multiple-value qualitative comparative analysis, findings indicate that interlocal environmental collaboration requires two necessary conditions: informal intergovernmental relations and intervention by higher authorities, combined with either balanced power structures or a history of collaboration. Furthermore, case-based comparative analyses indicate that, first, although personalized, non-institutionalized superior intervention may be effective in initiating collaboration. Institutionalized mechanisms should also be enforced to advance the formation of designed organizations and mitigate policy inconsistencies brought by leadership rotation. Second, lasting collaborative environmental governance requires the conditions of informal intergovernmental relations and self-organized networks, which are conventionally developed from designed networks through planned leadership transfers. Third, among China's local governments, selective benefits (i.e., individual interest) and the distribution of benefits may be more decisive in the formation of environmental collaboration than the integral improvement of collective benefits. It is necessary for tactical sub-regionalism based on partially integrated benefits and preferences to reduce the transaction costs of collaboration, especially in urban agglomerations with two or more dominant leaders.

***Keywords:*** *intergovernmental collaboration, air pollution control, configurational analysis, qualitative comparative analysis, urban agglomeration, China.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *Tarpvyriausybinis bendradarbiavimas, oro taršos kontrolė, konfigūracinė analizė, kokybinė lyginamoji analizė, miestų aglomeracija, Kinija.*

## Introduction

There has been extensive analysis of the antecedents or conditions of intergovernmental collaboration (O'Leary and Vij 2012; Bianchi et al. 2021). Explanatory frameworks of collaboration have incorporated conditional variables ranging from informal elements (e.g., facilitative leadership, trust, commitment, shared objectives, and responsibilities) to formal organizational factors (e.g., protocols, rules, structures, platforms, and roles) to explain why some circumstances generate a collaborative outcome while others do not (Thomson and Perry 2006; Ansell and Gash 2008; Provan and Kenis 2008; Emerson et al. 2012). Furthermore, convincing arguments have been proposed for research agendas in which these factors are intertwined and work together to build collaboration, requiring a synthetic explanation to investigate the combined effects of collaborative conditions (Sedgwick 2017; Liu et al. 2021).

Institutional collective action (ICA) theory proposes an integrative analysis framework of the collaboration process by assuming collaborative outcomes are determined by net expected benefits that reflect the differences between anticipated gains and potential costs when participating in collaborative governing networks (Feiock 2007; Feiock 2013; Kim et al. 2022). In this regard, there arises an important research issue as to how these collaborative conditions interact and combine to gain positive net benefits and achieve intended collaborative practice.

This research issue is important and challenging in the context of China, not only because of the unverified transferability of integration mechanisms for overcoming ICA dilemmas developed in the Western context (Kim et al. 2022, but also because of China's unique regime of authoritarian environmentalism and its top-down hierarchical control system (Li and Wu 2018; Liu et al. 2021). To inspire local officials' environmental preferences, China's central authority has enforced an environmental target responsibility system and introduced ecological indicators to the official ranking tournament since 2007 (Zhang and Yan 2022). With insufficient public participation, the local government's incentive to participate in environmental collaboration depends more on the enhancement of political promotion (selective benefits) than on the scale effects of environmental improvement (collective benefits). Consequently, benefit distribution could be more decisive in environmental collaboration than benefit enhancement among Chinese localities, as well as in the Western context (Wang 2014). Furthermore, the widely and frequently applied non-institutionalized (or personalized) superior intervention has detracted from the certainty and consistency of top-down policy guidance regarding local environmental governance

(Zhang and Wang 2022). Consequently, additional interlocal relation capitals and self-organized networks are required to reduce transaction costs and risks and to avoid defection problems in collaboration (Yi et al. 2024). In addition to the well-established "competing for growth" structure of interlocal relations, it is vitally important to identify the latent elements and their combinations that facilitate mutual trust and self-organization among Chinese local governments.

This research conducts a configurational analysis of the major factors affecting interlocal collaborations in China, based on a sample of 20 national-level urban agglomerations from 2012 to 2018. We extracted five explanatory variables that were proved to facilitate environmental collaborative practice in relevant studies (Ansell and Gash 2008; Emerson et al. 2012; Liu et al. 2021), including the intervention of a superior level of authority, a prehistory of coordination or cooperation, shared common knowledge, informal intergovernmental relations, and power imbalance. A qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) was then conducted to investigate the combinations of these five preconditions for the achievement of interlocal environmental collaboration. The QCA reported two prominent variables (informal intergovernmental relations and strong superior intervention) and produced four optimal composite paths that lead the collaborative conditions to intended practices. The findings are discussed by referring to the activities of urban clusters in their collaborative environmental governance.

## Research design

### Method

Evidence from current case studies shows that the impacts of collaborative conditions are intertwined and should be examined synthetically as to how they combine to facilitate collaborative practice (Emerson et al. 2012; Liu et al. 2021; Rifaid et al. 2023). Therefore, this research applies a multi-value qualitative comparative analysis (mvQCA) methodology to capture and examine the combined effects of these conditional factors. The QCA method describes cases as configurations of conditions and uses Boolean minimization processes to link causal conditions to an outcome (Ragin 2000; Sedgwick 2017). The mvQCA is a type of QCA analysis in which conditions and outcomes can be assigned multiple values to indicate their categorized status.

### Samples

We introduced 20 national-level urban agglomerations into our mvQCA analysis (shown in Table 1). Besides the 19 urban agglomerations that were designated in the 13th national Five-Year Plan, our research sample also includes the Changsha-Zhuzhou-Xiangtan city cluster, as it was the initial pilot area of a two-oriented society reform

(resource-saving and environment-friendly) approved by the State Council in 2007. These urban agglomerations are designated by the central government based on the interactive relationships among cities in economic, humanistic, and social domains, and they serve as the foundation for promoting intergovernmental cooperation policies, including those related to environmental protection.

## Measures

The outcome is a dependent variable that measures whether or not an urban agglomeration has established intergovernmental collaboration (*COLL*) regarding air pollution control. There could be various patterns of collaborative environmental governance, ranging from informal collaboration achieved by personal interaction to formal collaboration based on an organizational entity or legal agreement (Yi et al. 2018; Liu et al. 2021). Given that almost all the cities interact with each other in various informal ways, and it is, therefore, hard to identify the difference in collaboration status, we only consider formal mechanisms of collaboration. The outcome variable *COLL* is set to 1 if an urban agglomeration has built one of these formal collaborative practices, and 0 otherwise, as shown in Table 1.

According to the ICA theory, motivation for governments to collaborate in environmental governance derives from the collective benefits shared by all participators by producing efficiencies and outcomes of scale in the integral environmental improvement, as well as by internalizing spillover problems and the selective benefits for the advancement of individual interests (political and career incentives) of local officials (Feiock 2007). Collaborative practice may also be impeded by transaction costs, mainly reflected as information costs and negotiation costs at the early stage of collaboration, and by the potential risks arising from coordination, division, and defection issues throughout the collaborative process (Feiock 2007; Feiock 2013). By reviewing pertinent literature, we have identified five explanatory variables that influence the progression of gains/benefits or the mitigation of costs/risks associated with environmental collaborative practices: the intervention of a superior level of authority, a prehistory of coordination or cooperation, shared common knowledge, informal intergovernmental relations, and power imbalance. The following measurements are employed to assess these five conditional factors.

- Intervention of superior-level authority (*SUPE*) is the first conditional variable measuring the degree to which superior levels of government promote or even participate in the formation of interlocal collaboration. Higher-level authorities can intervene both institutionally and non-institutionally. The variable *SUPE* is set to 1 if the superior authorities have launched special plans on collaborative air pollution control, and 2 if they have also taken additional non-institutionalized measures.
- A prehistory of cooperation or collaboration (*HIST*) is the second conditional variable that captures the facilitating impact of prior experience of collaboration. Collaborative experience or capacity can be acquired in different ways. The variable *HIST* is set to 1 if an urban agglomeration has previously established a joint

prevention mechanism or cooperation agreement on air or water pollution, and 0 otherwise.

- Shared common knowledge (*KNOW*) is the third conditional variable that measures both the salience of air pollution in an urban agglomeration and the difference in pollution levels among other cities in the region. We use the Air Quality Index (AQI) to proxy for the air pollution level for each city, and the average AQI to measure the overall air quality of an urban agglomeration. After calculating both the average AQI and the coefficient of variation of city-level AQI (taking the reciprocal) for each urban agglomeration, we use the SPSS system clustering command to divide the 20 samples into two categories: high shared common knowledge (*KNOW* = 1) and low shared common knowledge (*KNOW* = 0).
- Informal intergovernmental relations (*RELA*) is the fourth conditional variable that measures the intensity of the inter-city social network established primarily by the interpersonal networks of city managers. Considering that collaboration cannot be established without the participation of the core cities in each region, we only consider the leadership transfer of chief officials between two core cities or between a core city and other cities within an urban agglomeration.
- Power imbalance (*POWE*) is the fifth conditional variable that measures the structural status of each urban agglomeration. In China, each city has been designated different administrative levels and accordingly granted equivalent political discourse, resource capability, and external influence (Yi et al. 2018). In some urban agglomerations, all the cities are at the same administrative level, while in others, there will be one or two cities at a higher administrative level than their neighbors. The variable *POWE* is set to 0, 1, and 2 to indicate the number of cities with higher administrative levels within an urban agglomeration.

**Table 1.** A multi-value scale of the condition and outcome variables

| Code | Case (urban agglomeration) | *COLL* | *SUPE* | *HIST* | *KNOW* | *RELA* | *POWE* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | Yangtze River Delta | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | Pearl River Delta | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | Wuhan and the surrounding areas | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 5 | Changsha-Zhuzhou-Xiangtan | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 6 | Chengdu-Chongqing | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 7 | Harbin-Changchun | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 8 | Shandong | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | South Central Liaoning | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| 10 | West coast of the Taiwan Strait | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 11 | Guanzhong region of Shaanxi | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 12 | The central plains in Henan | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 13 | Beibu Gulf | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 14 | Northern slope of the Tianshan Mountains | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 15 | Hohhot-Baotou-Ordos-Yulin | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 16 | North Central Shanxi | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 17 | City belt along the Yellow River in Ningxia | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 18 | Lanzhou-Xining | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 19 | Central Yunnan | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 20 | Central Guizhou | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*Source: Authors.*

## Results

*Analysis of single conditions*

We conducted the analysis of single conditions by calculating the values of consistency and coverage of the outcome variables under different conditions. The results demonstrate that $RELA_1$ are the necessary conditions for the establishment of collaboration, as both the values of consistency and coverage are high (greater than 0.9). In addition, the values of consistency and coverage of $SUPE_0$ and $RELA_0$ are 0, indicating that the achievement of collaboration must be on condition of the intervention of a superior-level authority and informal intergovernmental relations. We also complement the ICA literature by demonstrating that an informal intergovernmental relationship is another fundamental condition facilitating collaboration. Interpersonal networks built from leadership transfer promote interlocal communication, develop mutual trust, and encourage peer support, all of which can bridge social capital for the formation of a self-organized network and reduce transaction costs or preconceived risks of collaboration.

*Configuration analysis of the achievement of intergovernmental collaboration*

In the configuration analysis, we used the intermediate solution produced by the mvQCA software to identify optimal configurations for the outcome variable of reaching interlocal collaboration. As shown in Panel A of Table 2, mvQCA reports four solutions for building collaborative practice. Three of the four solutions comprise multiple possibilities due to the different value statuses of condition variables, and most of the covered cases of

every solution are duplicated from each other. Therefore, we converted each of the three solutions to its simplified path with only one possibility and unique covered cases.

As results in Panel B show, $RELA_1$ and $SUPE_2$ are both the core and necessary conditions that contribute to the achievement of collaborative environmental governance, which is consistent with the examination of necessary conditions. The two configurations with high coverage (50% and 33.3%, respectively) contain both of these conditions. In summary, as for most of the urban agglomerations in China (10 out of 12), the combination of conditions for $COLL_1$ can be written as $RELA_1 * SUPE_2 * (POWE_0 + HIST_1 * POWE_1)$. This new configuration suggests that dyads need intense informal relations and strong superior intervention, and either a balanced network structure or one dominant actor combined with a prehistory of collaboration to achieve interlocal collaboration. Cases 6 (Chengdu-Chongqing) and 3 (Pearl River Delta) have one and two dominant actors within the regions, respectively. Under conditions of informal intergovernmental relations ($RELA_1$) and institutionalized superior intervention ($SUPE_1$), when there is an existing imbalanced power structure of a collaborative network, a high level of shared common knowledge ($KNOW_1$) has to be combined to establish collaboration.

**Table 2.** Configuration analysis of antecedents contributing to the achievement of intergovernmental collaboration

| Configuration | Raw coverage | Covered cases | Solution coverage |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A: $COLL_1$: Intermediate solutions* | | | |
| 1. $SUPE_2*HIST_1*RELA_1*POWE_{0,1}$ | 0.583 | 1, 2, 4, 5, 11, 16, 19 | 1.0 (12/12) |
| 2. $SUPE_2*RELA_1*POWE_0$ | 0.5 | 5, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19 | |
| 3. $SUPE_{1,2}*HIST_1*KNOW_1*RELA_1*POWE_1$ | 0.333 | 1, 2, 4, 6 | |
| 4. $SUPE_1*HIST_1*KNOW_1*RELA_1*POWE_{1,2}$ | 0.167 | 3, 6 | |
| *Panel B: $COLL_1$: Simplified configurations.* | | | |
| 1. $RELA_1*SUPE_2*POWE_0$ | | 5, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19 | |
| 2. $RELA_1*SUPE_2*HIST_1*POWE_1$ | | 1, 2, 4, 11 | |
| 3. $RELA_1*SUPE_1*HIST_1*KNOW_1*POWE_1$ | | 6 | |
| 4. $RELA_1*SUPE_1*HIST_1*KNOW_1*POWE_2$ | | 3 | |

*Source: Authors.*

*Configuration analysis of failing to establish intergovernmental collaboration*

In the configuration analysis of failing to establish collaboration ($COLL_0$), mvQCA produces four intermediate solutions, each of which contains all five conditions. As the results of the intermediate solutions are not concise enough to be adopted (Liu et al. 2021), we chose to use more logical residuals to obtain the parsimonious solutions, as reported in Panel A of Table 3. The second configuration comprises two possibilities for the actual path and has repeated covered cases with the third configuration, so we converted it to its simplified path with only one possibility and unique covered cases, as shown in Panel B. As discussed above, the initial analysis of necessary conditions demonstrates that both informal intergovernmental relations and superior interventions are necessary for collaboration. This finding is also reflected in the simplified configurations of failing to establish collaboration. As Panel B shows, among the eight cases failing to establish collaboration, 87.5% and 62.5% of these can be attributed to the absence of informal intergovernmental relations and superior intervention, respectively. Three of the eight cases have two dominant actors but low levels of shared common knowledge, and two have institutionalized superior intervention but no prehistory of collaboration.

**Table 3.** Configuration analysis of antecedents failing to establish interlocal collaboration

| **Configuration** | **Raw coverage** | **Covered cases** | **Solution coverage** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Panel A: $COLL_0$: Parsimonious solutions* | | | |
| 1. $RELA_0$ | 0.875 | 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 20 | |
| 2. $SUPE_{0,1}$*$HIST_0$ | 0.75 | 7, 10, 13, 15, 18, 20 | 1.0 |
| 3. $SUPE_0$ | 0.625 | 7, 9, 13, 15, 18 | (8/8) |
| 4. $KNOW_0$*$POWE_2$ | 0.375 | 7, 8, 18 | |
| *Panel B: $COLL_0$: Simplified configurations* | | | |
| 1. $RELA_0$ | | 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 20 | |
| 2. $SUPE_0$ | | 7, 9, 13, 15, 18 | |
| 3. $KNOW_0$*$POWE_2$ | | 7, 8, 18 | |
| 4. $SUPE_1$*$HIST_0$ | | 10, 20 | |

*Source: Authors.*

## Discussion

*Institutionalized and campaign-style intervention of superior authorities*

We propose an explanatory mechanism to distinguish and evaluate the different effects of superior intervention by dividing it into two patterns: institutionalized and non-institutionalized (or personalized). A cross-case analysis indicated that the achievement of environmental collaboration is dependent on the condition of superior intervention, and that urban agglomerations are more likely to build collaboration if there is personalized, top-down political motivation besides the general institutionalized guidance. These findings extend the explanatory mechanism of superior authorities by indicating stronger promoting effects of personalized intervention than those of institutionalized guidance. Personalized intervention is seen in actions such as keynote speeches or even in the direct participation of superior political officials in interlocal collaboration, operating in a pattern of campaign-style practice based on political motivation or ideological requirements (Liu et al. 2014; van der Kamp 2021). Such top-down campaigns can force local governors to set differences of perception and interest aside and quickly establish environmental collaboration.

The results of the configurational analysis also demonstrate that superior intervention cannot separately facilitate collaboration and that collaboration is achieved only by combining the conditions of intergovernmental self-organized networks and coordinated interest relations. In this regard, we also contribute to the debate regarding the functional fragmentation of superior authorities by indicating that personalized political intervention (widely and frequently used by Chinese authorities) could be insufficient due to deficiencies of certainty and consistency. For example, Jinan and Qingdao, two leading cities in long-standing competition in Shandong province, tried to establish collaboration in 2016 under the promotion of Guo Shuqing, the former governor of Shandong province. However, following an unanticipated turnover of provincial leadership in 2017, there have been no further documented collaborative activities between the two cities. Therefore, in addition to the non-institutionalized, campaign-style political motivations that initiate interlocal collaboration, institutional mechanisms should also be developed to advance the formation of designed organizations, the building of social capital, and the enforcement of collaborative plans. This can mitigate the policy fluctuations and inconsistency brought by leadership rotation and produce lasting effects from temporary personalized intervention (Emerson et al. 2012; Kim et al. 2022).

*Informal intergovernmental relations and self-organized networks*

Consistent with ICA theory that considers informal networks as the initiation of collaborative practice (Feiock 2007; Feiock 2013; Yi et al. 2018), we found that informal intergovernmental relations act as a fundamental conditional element in establishing environmental collaboration. Although the political invention of superiors temporarily motivates collaborative action, the transaction costs and risks remain and can even accumulate because more actors are involved. In this regard, lasting collaborative environmental governance

requires the condition of interlocal self-organized networks and organizations. Established informal intergovernmental relations can mitigate transaction costs by facilitating joint understanding and objective integration, promoting policy learning and transfer, and coordinating complex decisions within the formal structure (Feiock 2013; Keast and Mandell 2014). Our findings from China suggest an effective strategy for fostering informal interregional connectivity in a broader context: the establishment of social networks grounded in interpersonal and informal interactions. Beyond the exchange programs for officials across jurisdictions, collaborative projects, including public welfare initiatives that engage officials from multiple regions, can expand the horizon of ego actors in selecting potential partners, accumulate social capital and trust, and lay the foundation for future environmental cooperative endeavors among regions.

The findings also enrich the study literature on the interaction between self-organized networks and designed networks, the two ways of forming intergovernmental networks and facilitating interlocal collaborations (Yi et al. 2024). The results demonstrate that all urban agglomerations that have established environmental collaboration have at least one chief official transferred between the constituent cities. On one hand, leadership transfer can create links between officials in the separate administrative locations they serve, and so promote the formation of informal intergovernmental relations and self-organized networks (Yi and Chen 2019). On the other hand, in China, the appointment of chief officials at a subnational level is determined by the superior authorities, indicating that leadership transfers may be a designed practice in routine bureaucratic management (Yi et al. 2024). Based on these considerations, we can assume that in addition to suggested methods such as shared meals and organized social events, which can be demanding and exhausting (Keast and Mandell 2014), informal relations could also be developed from designed networks through planned leadership transfers. Indicating the facilitating effects of superior authorities on the cultivation of interlocal informal relations complements the findings of Kwon et al. (2014), who argued that regional authorities could crowd out or substitute self-organized cooperative network relations.

*Network structure and benefits distribution in collaborative environmental governance*

The motivation of local officials to participate in environmental collaboration may primarily derive from the expected advancement of administrative performance and political opportunity. Therefore, selective benefits (i.e., individual interest) and the distribution of benefits may be more decisive in the formation of environmental collaboration than the integral improvement of collective benefits. The network structure substantially determines the distribution of benefits in collaboration, as strong actors may dominate the collaboration process, leading to uneven distribution of discourse and benefits. We, thus, support the arguments of Ansell and Gash (2008) by offering evidence that half of the urban agglomerations that have established collaboration present a balanced power structure.

However, some researchers challenge this argument by asserting that a regional fugleman is conducive to facilitating collaboration by promoting knowledge transfer, integrating distributed resources, and seeking support from superior authorities (Liu et al. 2021).

We support this viewpoint in our finding that five of the twelve urban agglomerations established collaboration through the lead of dominant actors. We also advance the debate in two ways. Firstly, we found that in comparison to the configuration of a balanced power structure, the configurations including dominant actors were combined with the condition variables of collaboration history or shared common knowledge. This finding indicates that the facilitating effects of regional leadership are dependent on the condition of established interest relations or coordinated benefits distribution. Secondly, the results of the analysis of failing to establish a collaboration point to the urban agglomerations that have two regional leaders, but without shared common knowledge. Too many leading actors may complicate the interest relations within a network structure and consequently impede the formation of collaborative networks.

For example, in Liaoning, the collaborative initiatives of its two main cities, Shenyang and Dalian, could be undermined by constant competing interests and disparities in collaborative benefits. The difference in environmental conditions between the two cities has led to discrepancies in the input and potential benefit of collaboration and difficulty in coordinating the distribution of benefits. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that they separately established environmental collaboration by clustering their neighboring prefectural-level cities in 2018 (Shenyang surrounding cities) and 2019 (Dalian coastal urban belt). This kind of part collaboration was also established in Shandong and the Pearl River Delta, the other two urban agglomerations with competing regional leaders. The path to environmental collaboration within a region with an imbalanced power structure and competitive interest relations appears to be through restating the tactical sub-regionalism that is based on partially integrated benefits and orientation rather than attempting to collaborate on a huge scale (Schafran 2014).

## Conclusion

This study performs a configurational analysis of the relationship between collaborative conditions and practices in China. Results demonstrate that environmental collaboration cannot be established without the conditions of informal intergovernmental relations and the intervention of superior authorities. Based on the concurrence of these two conditions, urban agglomerations could establish collaboration by further combining balanced power structures or combining a dominant actor and a collaboration prehistory. Our findings evoke theoretical and practical implications in the following ways:

1. Higher-level authorities can intervene both institutionally and non-institutionally. Although personalized, campaign-style superior political intervention could be effective in temporarily motivating collaborative action, it could be insufficient due to its lack of certainty and consistency. Therefore, although non-institutional interventions can effectively trigger intergovernmental collaboration, the sustainability of such collaboration depends on institutional interventions. Upon initiating

collaboration, policymakers ought to implement a range of institutionalized mechanisms, including regulations on opportunistic behavior and transparency of information, to alleviate the policy fluctuations and inconsistency brought by leadership rotation.

2. This study demonstrates the necessity and sufficiency of informal intergovernmental relations in interlocal environmental collaboration. Moreover, informal and self-organized networks are not necessarily formed by potentially demanding and exhausting building methods, such as shared meals and organized social events, but could also be developed from designed networks through planned leadership transfers. Policymakers at the superior level ought to focus on the cultivation of social capital, which constitutes the fundamental basis for intergovernmental collaboration, by deliberately facilitating official exchanges among diverse jurisdictions and strengthening cooperative ventures in joint events.
3. This research advances the debate on the controversial impact of power imbalance in two ways. On one hand, the achievement of regional leaders in initiating collaboration is on the condition of established interest relations or coordinated benefits distribution. On the other hand, urban agglomerations with two or more leading actors have difficulty in establishing collaboration due to increasing competing interlocal relations. In this regard, a tactical sub-regionalism based on partially integrated benefits and preferences is suggested to pave the way for feasible collaborative practice.

This study recognizes several limitations that deserve consideration. First, our examination of antecedent factors is embedded within China's distinct context, which may restrict the generalizability of our conclusions to other political and cultural environments. To address this limitation, future research endeavors could employ a multi-national, cross-comparative framework to investigate how varying governance systems influence collaborative outcomes. Secondly, while the QCA utilized in this study offers valuable insights, it has certain limitations in capturing the dynamic evolution of influencing factors. Consequently, a longitudinal study is warranted to examine the long-term sustainability of collaboration, shedding light on the enduring influence of various conditional factors that facilitate environmental collaborations.

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# SĄLYGINĖS KONFIGURACIJOS TARPVYRIAUSYBINIAM BENDRDARBIAVIMUI APLINKOSAUGOS SRITYJE MIESTŲ AGLOMERACIJOSE

**Anotacija.** Šis tyrimas tiria, kaip sąlyginiai elementai kartu skatina tarpvyriausybinę (centriniu ir vietiniu lygiu) bendradarbiavimo veiklą, susijusią su oro taršos kontrole Kinijos miestų aglomeracijose. Taikant daugiareikšmę kokybinę lyginamąją analizę, išvados rodo, kad tam bendradarbiavimui aplinkosaugos srityje reikalingos dvi būtinos sąlygos: neformalūs tarpvyriausybiniai santykiai ir aukštesnių valdžios institucijų įsikišimas kartu su subalansuotomis galios struktūromis arba bendradarbiavimo patirties panaudojimas. Be to, lyginamoji analizė rodo, kad, pirma, nors personalizuotas, neinstitucionalizuotas aukštesnio valdžios lygio įsikišimas gali būti veiksmingas inicijuojant bendradarbiavimą, taip pat turėtų būti taikomi institucionalizuoti mechanizmai, siekiant paspartinti sukurtų organizacijų formavimąsi ir sušvelninti politikos neatitikimus, atsirandančius dėl vadovų rotacijos. Antra, ilgalaikiam bendradarbiaujančiam aplinkos valdymui reikalingos neformalių tarpvyriausybinių santykių ir savarankiškai organizuotų tinklų sąlygos, kurios tradiciškai kuriamos iš sukurtų tinklų per suplanuotą vadovybės perdavimą. Trečia, tarp Kinijos vietos valdžios institucijų selektyvinė nauda (t. y. individualūs interesai) ir naudos paskirstymas gali būti labiau lemiamas formuojant bendradarbiavimą aplinkosaugos srityje nei visapusiškas kolektyvinės naudos gerinimas. Taip pat būtina, kad taktinis subregionizmas, pagrįstas iš dalies integruota nauda ir pirmenybėmis, sumažintų bendradarbiavimo sandorių sąnaudas, ypač miestų aglomeracijose, kuriose dominuoja du ar daugiau lyderių.

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# THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY IN MEDAN CITY

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**Abstract.** The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges for public policy in various countries, particularly in terms of economic resilience and the support provided by governments. This study aims to analyze the early impacts of the pandemic on household economic resilience and public policy responses in Medan, Indonesia. The data used in this research were derived from a survey conducted between April 8 and April 20, 2020, covering 867 households. Although the data reflect the initial conditions of the pandemic, the findings indicate gaps in access to social assistance and the unevenness of policy implementation. This article also discusses the role of public policy in mitigating the economic impacts on vulnerable groups. Furthermore, it recommends the need for more inclusive

and responsive public policies to address long-term crises, with an emphasis on more equitable distribution of assistance. This study contributes to updating the existing literature on economic resilience during the pandemic and provides insights for policymakers in designing more adaptive public policies.

***Keywords:*** *public policy, economic resilience, urban community.*
***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *Viešoji politika, ekonominis atsparumas, miesto bendruomenė, pasaulinė pandeminė nelaimė.*
**JEL classification:** A13, E71, H12, I15

## 1. Introduction

Community economic resilience is an essential area of research during the COVID-19 pandemic, as this global crisis presented substantial economic challenges for people worldwide. Investigating the factors that contribute to community economic resilience can provide valuable insights into how to bolster resilience in the face of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Shammi demonstrates that enhancing the capacity of community economic resilience can mitigate the adverse social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Shammi et al. 2020). Similarly, some researchers report that a community's economic resilience is contingent upon factors such as resource accessibility, financial inclusion, and income diversification (Östh et al. 2015; Barajas et al. 2020; Lee et al. 2022).

Exploring the economic resilience of urban communities during the COVID-19 pandemic can provide valuable insights into how cities can effectively navigate major economic crises. In a recent publication, Cui et al. (2022) investigate the economic resilience of urban communities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research reveals that economic diversification, skill and entrepreneurship development, and access to resources are crucial factors in enhancing the economic resilience of urban communities during pandemics. Hu et al. (2022) illustrate that a city's economic resilience is also contingent upon government support and the implementation of appropriate policies, such as financial assistance and debt restructuring.

Economic resilience has become an increasingly important topic in the era of globalization and complex economic challenges, including pandemics such as COVID-19. The concept of economic resilience refers to the ability of an economic system to survive and recover from economic crises in the short and long term. Through research, factors that influence economic resilience can be identified, including economic policy, technological innovation, and institutional capacity. For instance, Gross and Sampat (2021) found that government policy support and technological innovation can enhance the ability of an industrial sector to withstand an economic crisis. Similarly, Guillán Montero & Le Blanc, (2020) demonstrated that strong institutional capacity can facilitate a swift and effective response to economic crises. Thus, research on economic resilience can significantly contribute to

existing knowledge on how economic systems can survive and recover from economic crises and aid in developing appropriate policies to address future economic challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy of urban communities. The pandemic has caused a decline in income and has hindered the ability of urban residents to meet their basic needs, such as food and clothing (Rasel 2020). This is mainly due to the implementation of social and economic restrictions that have led to a decrease in economic activity in cities. Furthermore, the pandemic has resulted in a notable increase in the unemployment rate in urban areas (Hossain 2021). In addition, the industrial and trade sectors in cities have also been adversely affected, with a significant decline in turnover and profits reported (Açikgöz and Günay 2020). As a result, many urban dwellers are struggling to maintain their employment and earn sufficient income to meet their daily needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled urban communities to adapt and explore novel approaches to sustain their economic livelihoods. Numerous studies indicate that many urban communities have demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in tackling the economic challenges posed by the pandemic. For instance, Sarker et al. (2022) report that a large number of street vendors in Dhaka, Bangladesh, have resorted to online sales to counter the decline in physical store sales. Furthermore, some urban communities have diversified their economic activities and shifted to new sectors, such as the food and beverage industry and sanitation products, which are in high demand during the pandemic (Memon et al. 2021). In this context, the resourcefulness and creativity of the urban community have proven to be pivotal in sustaining their economic viability during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Concept of economic resilience

The concept of economic resilience refers to the ability of a region to withstand and recover from economic, social, and environmental shocks that may occur (Kousky et al. 2018). This concept is important to understand in order to enhance the economic resilience of a region (Bristow 2010). One of several factors that can affect the level of resilience of a region includes investment in sustainable infrastructure (Choguill 1996). This concept encompasses factors such as economic diversification, labor market flexibility, the availability of high-quality human resources, and strong institutional support (Meerow et al. 2016). Investment in sustainable infrastructure is crucial in increasing the resilience of a region, as good infrastructure will affect the region's ability to recover from economic shocks (Briguglio et al. 2009).

### 2.2. Economic diversification and resilience

Economic diversification also plays a crucial role in increasing the resilience of a region. According to Meerow et al. (2016), economic diversification can help reduce the region's dependence on a particular economic sector, so that when a shock occurs in that sector, the impact on the region is not as significant. The development of a flexible labor market is also an important factor in increasing the resilience of a region. Labor market flexibility allows the region to adapt to changing economic conditions, thereby helping to reduce the impact of economic shocks (Meerow et al. 2016). Effective institutional support is also a crucial factor in increasing the resilience of a region (Bristow 2010).

### 2.3. Labor market flexibility and resilience

Several studies related to economic resilience indicate that investment in sustainable infrastructure can help increase the resilience of a region (Choguill 1996). Economic diversification and labor market flexibility are also important factors in enhancing regional resilience (Meerow et al. 2016). The importance of economic resilience has been increasingly recognized by policymakers, especially in the context of sustainable urban development (Briguglio et al. 2008). This requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to regional development (Meerow et al. 2016).

### 2.4. Economic resilience and the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the global economy, including increased unemployment rates and decreased economic growth (Baldwin et al. 2020). However, there are several concepts that can help countries and regions to withstand and recover from the pandemic's effects, one of which is the concept of economic resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global crisis that has paralyzed many economic sectors and has prompted a debate about the importance of the concept of economic resilience (Dean et al. 2021). This concept is critical in the context of the pandemic because it has shown that a country's level of economic resilience can affect its ability to recover from unexpected shocks and crises (Dean et al. 2021).

### 2.5. Institutional support and resilience

Several studies have shown that factors such as economic diversification, innovation, and appropriate fiscal policies can help increase a country's level of economic resilience in facing the pandemic (Tian et al. 2022). Investments in sustainable infrastructure and strong institutions are also essential factors in improving economic resilience (Choguill 1996). However, the implementation of the concept of economic resilience is not easy and requires integrated efforts from the government, businesses, and society (Meerow et al.

2016). This includes efforts to develop policies and programs that support economic diversification, labor market flexibility, quality human resources, as well as the building of cooperation among sectors and regions. The importance of economic resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for an integrated strategy to build and maintain it, both at the national and international levels (Meerow et al. 2016). This requires cooperation and collaboration among countries and sectors, as well as strong policy and institutional support (Tian et al. 2022).

## 3. Research methods

This study collected household data from Medan, the third-largest urban center in Indonesia, which accounts for 3% of the country's COVID-19 cases. Despite this seemingly modest figure, Medan ranks among the top three most populous cities in Indonesia, with 0.98% of the national population and a density 3.86 times higher than the national average. The city's high prevalence of COVID-19 is further influenced by its role as a hub for international travel through its airport. To ensure sample representativeness in this voluntary survey, descriptive statistical tests were conducted.

The research examines household economic resilience in response to government-mandated physical distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data was collected via an electronic survey targeting diverse respondents. While electronic questionnaires may introduce response bias, their practicality under constraints of time, space, and resources is well-documented (Cooper et al. 2006). Widespread smartphone ownership mitigates accessibility concerns (Puspitasari and Ishii 2016). To reduce bias, the questionnaire focused on household-level information and accounted for economic class disparities through family income data.

The survey instrument was adapted from Alinovi et al. (2008) to fit the Medan context, with additional questions on family size, income sources, physical distancing patterns, and economic resilience (Alinovi et al. 2008). Anonymity and voluntary participation were ensured (Cooper et al. 2006).

The data encompassed nominal, ordinal, and interval categories, collected via Google Forms and distributed through social media. After rigorous screening, 867 valid responses from Medan residents were analyzed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA), Kruskal–Wallis testing, and Spearman's rank correlation (Siegel 1956). ANOVA assessed group differences in ratio/interval data, while Kruskal–Wallis addressed ordinal/nominal data. These non-parametric tests, free from parametric assumptions, offered key insights into urban household economic resilience during the pandemic.

## 4. Results and discussions

The data analysis conducted in this study encompassed ANOVA, Kruskal–Wallis, and Spearman's rank correlation (Siegel 1956; Field 2009). Tables 1.a., 1.b., and 1.c. display data indicating that the majority of respondents adhered to moderate or strict levels of physical distancing, with a negligible proportion failing to comply. Concerning the main source of family income, nearly half of the respondents were salaried individuals, including civil servants, military personnel, police officers, pensioners, and private employees, with the remainder dispersed across other groups such as entrepreneurs, daily/uncertain wage workers, weekly wage earners, and project-based income earners. This distribution is noteworthy, as it effectively divides the respondents into two broad categories, namely employees and non-employees. With respect to estimating the duration of economic resilience amid physical distancing measures, the sample exhibited an even distribution across the proposed schemes, including those below 2 weeks, 2–4 weeks, 4–12 weeks, and over 12 weeks.

**Table 1.a.** Descriptive statistics of characteristics of respondents based on a pattern of physical distancing

| | | **Pattern of physical distancing** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Implement social distancing strictly (N = 248)** | | **Social/physical distancing with outdoor/ outside activity (N = 594)** | | **Do not apply social distancing (N = 25)** | |
| | | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| Gender | Male | 81 | 32.7 | 260 | 43.8 | 11 | 44.0 |
| | Female | 167 | 67.3 | 334 | 56.2 | 14 | 56.0 |
| Age | | Mean = 31.45 | SD = 11.59 | Mean = 32.40 | SD = 11.61 | Mean = 29.24 | SD = 10.03 |
| Marital status | Married with a child/ children | 49 | 19.8 | 111 | 18.7 | 4 | 16.0 |
| | Married | 87 | 35.1 | 203 | 34.2 | 8 | 32.0 |
| | Single | 109 | 44.0 | 266 | 44.8 | 11 | 44.0 |
| | Widow/widower | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 0.5 | 2 | 8.0 |
| | Widow/widower with a child/children | 3 | 1.2 | 11 | 1.9 | 0 | 0.0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Educational background | Primary school | 0 | 0.0 | 12 | 2.0 | 1 | 4.0 |
| | Junior high school | 3 | 1.2 | 15 | 2.5 | 3 | 12.0 |
| | Senior high school | 98 | 39.5 | 146 | 41.4 | 12 | 48.0 |
| | Diploma/bachelor's degree | 92 | 20.6 | 226 | 38.0 | 7 | 28.0 |
| | Master's degree | 51 | 20.6 | 87 | 14.6 | 2 | 8.0 |
| | Doctorate | 4 | 1.6 | 8 | 1.3 | 0 | 0.0 |

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 1.b.** Descriptive statistics of the characteristics of respondents based on economic resilience

| | | **If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically?** | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **< 2 weeks (N = 190)** | | **2–4 Weeks (N = 282)** | | **4–12 Weeks (N = 204)** | | **> 12 Weeks (N = 191)** | |
| | | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| Gender | Male | 62 | 32.6 | 113 | 40.1 | 94 | 46.1 | 83 | 43.5 |
| | Female | 128 | 67.4 | 169 | 59.5 | 110 | 53.9 | 108 | 56.5 |
| Age | | Mean = 31.90 | SD = 11.59 | Mean = 31.89 | SD = 11.89 | Mean = 31.48 | SD = 10.87 | Mean = 33.00 | SD = 11.82 |
| Marital status | Married with a child/children | 31 | 16.8 | 43 | 15.2 | 40 | 19.6 | 49 | 25.7 |
| | Married | 71 | 37.4 | 99 | 35.1 | 71 | 34.8 | 57 | 29.8 |
| | Single | 82 | 43.2 | 135 | 47.9 | 88 | 43.1 | 81 | 42.4 |
| | Widow/widower | 4 | 1.6 | 1 | 0.4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Widow/widower with a child/ children | 2 | 1.1 | 4 | 1.9 | 5 | 2.5 | 3 | 1.6 |
| Educational background | Primary school | 4 | 2.1 | 7 | 2.5 | 1 | 0,5 | 1 | 0.5 |
| | Junior high school | 10 | 5.3 | 9 | 3.2 | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 0,5 |
| | Senior high school | 96 | 50.5 | 131 | 46.5 | 67 | 32.8 | 62 | 32.5 |
| | Diploma/bachelor's degree | 68 | 35.8 | 98 | 34.8 | 93 | 45.6 | 66 | 34.6 |
| | Master's degree | 11 | 5.8 | 36 | 12.8 | 38 | 18.6 | 55 | 28.8 |
| | Doctorate | 1 | 0.5 | 1 | 0.4 | 4 | 2.0 | 6 | 3.1 |

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 1.c.** Descriptive statistics of the characteristics of respondents based on the source of the family's main income

| | | Source of the family's main income | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Monthly salary as a civil servant, military, police, pensioner, or private employee (N = 467)** | | **Business or entrepreneurship (N = 144)** | | **Workers with daily/uncertain income (informal workers) (N = 170** | | **Workers with a weekly income (N = 41)** | | **Workers with project-based income (N = 45)** | |
| | | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** | **N** | **%** |
| Gender | Male | 187 | 40.0 | 56 | 38.9 | 71 | 41.8 | 17 | 41.5 | 21 | 46.7 |
| | Female | 280 | 60.0 | 88 | 61.1 | 99 | 58.2 | 24 | 58.5 | 24 | 53.3 |
| Age | | Mean = 32.68 | SD = 11.07 | Mean = 28.20 | SD = 9.83 | Mean = 34.25 | SD = 13.55 | Mean = 31.00 | SD = 12.37 | Mean = 30.29 | SD = 10.05 |
| Marital status | Married with a child/ children | 101 | 21.6 | 22 | 15.3 | 30 | 17.6 | 7 | 17.1 | 4 | 8.9 |
| | Married | 161 | 34.5 | 45 | 31.3 | 61 | 35.9 | 15 | 36.6 | 16 | 35.6 |
| | Single | 199 | 42.6 | 73 | 50.7 | 74 | 43.5 | 16 | 39.0 | 24 | 53.3 |
| | Widow/ widower | 1 | 0.2 | 2 | 1.4 | 1 | 0.6 | 1 | 2.4 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | Widow/ widower with a child/ children | 5 | 1.1 | 2 | 1.4 | 4 | 2.4 | 2 | 4.9 | 1 | 2.2 |
| Educational background | Primary school | 2 | 0.4 | 1 | 0.7 | 7 | 4.1 | 3 | 7.3 | 0 | 0.0 |
| | Junior high school | 4 | 0.9 | 1 | 0.7 | 11 | 6.5 | 4 | 9.8 | 1 | 2.2 |
| | Senior high school | 125 | 26.8 | 82 | 56.9 | 105 | 61.8 | 28 | 68.3 | 16 | 35.6 |
| | Diploma/ bachelor's degree | 203 | 43.5 | 51 | 35.4 | 45 | 26.5 | 5 | 12.2 | 21 | 46.7 |
| | Master's degree | 123 | 26.3 | 8 | 5.6 | 2 | 1.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 15.6 |
| | Doctorate | 10 | 2.1 | 1 | 0.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.4 | 0 | 0.0 |

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

Tables 2.a., 2.b., 2.c., 2.d., and 2.e. present the disparities in responses across the resilience variables examined within the group of respondents. The significance of the differences was determined by the number of p-values that were less than 0.05. ANOVA and Kruskal–Wallis tests were employed to analyze the data (Siegel 1956). Based on the p-values of each item, the data indicates that respondents who practiced physical distancing in a strict or moderate manner, as well as those who did not comply with physical distancing measures, did not differ significantly in terms of income and food accessibility, access to basic services, social safety nets, and assets. However, there were variations observed in adaptive capacity and stability for some items (Rahmadana 2020).

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between physical distancing measures and economic security. The findings of this study also add to the growing body of research on the impact of physical distancing measures on economic security during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several studies have examined the relationship between physical distancing measures and various aspects of economic security, including income, employment, and access to basic needs. Several previous studies have explored this relationship and found similar results. A study by Blundell examined the impact of COVID-19 on household finances in the United Kingdom and found that while income had decreased for many households, social safety nets and government support programs had helped mitigate these effects (Blundell et al. 2020). This finding is consistent with the current study's results, which suggest that income and social safety nets were not significantly different between respondents who practiced physical distancing and those who did not.

Similarly, a study by Bonaccorsi explored the relationship between physical distancing measures and economic activity in Italy and found that while there were short-term negative impacts on economic activity, these effects were mitigated by government support programs and the eventual lifting of physical distancing measures (Bonaccorsi et al. 2020). This finding is also consistent with the current study's results, which suggest that economic stability was not significantly different between respondents who practiced physical distancing and those who did not.

A study by Brouard explored the impact of COVID-19 on social and economic inequalities in France and found that while there were initial concerns about increased inequality due to physical distancing measures, government support programs and social safety nets helped mitigate these effects (Brouard et al. 2020). This finding is, again, consistent with the current study's results, which suggest that social safety nets were not significantly different between respondents who practiced physical distancing and those who did not.

Other studies have explored the impact of physical distancing measures on specific industries or populations. For example, a study by Králiková examined the impact of COVID-19 on the hotel industry in China and found that while there were initial negative impacts on the industry, government support programs helped mitigate these effects (Králiková et al. 2022). Similarly, a study by Jesline explored the impact of physical distancing measures on migrant workers in India and found that while there were initial concerns about their economic security, government support programs and social safety nets helped

mitigate these effects (Jesline et al. 2021).

A study by Singh and Adhikari found that strict physical distancing measures were associated with reduced income and employment, particularly for low-income individuals (Singh and Adhikari 2020). However, a study by Tarr found that compliance with physical distancing measures was positively associated with economic resilience and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances (Tarr et al. 2022).

In terms of access to basic services, a study by Chakraborty and Maity found that physical distancing measures can disrupt supply chains and impact the availability of essential goods and services (Chakraborty and Maity 2020). However, a study by van der Auwera found that the implementation of social safety nets can help mitigate these effects and promote economic security (van der Auwera et al. 2021).

Other studies have examined the impact of physical distancing measures on specific populations, such as migrant workers and older adults. These studies have found that physical distancing measures can exacerbate existing economic disparities and increase social isolation (Buffel et al. 2020; Zhang et al. 2021).

Overall, these studies suggest that while physical distancing measures can have negative economic impacts, government support programs and social safety nets can help mitigate these effects. The current study's results add to this body of research by suggesting that income, social safety nets, and economic stability were not significantly different between respondents who practiced physical distancing and those who did not, but that there were variations in adaptive capacity and stability for some items.

The following findings indicate that groups of respondents distinguished by the main source of income and the estimated duration of economic resilience exhibited significant differences in almost all items, including income and food accessibility, access to basic services, social safety nets, assets, adaptive capacity, and stability. Notably, increases in water bills, access to aid, and the number of families did not show any significant differences among respondents who were categorized based on physical distancing patterns, sources of income, and the estimated duration of economic resilience.

The results of the study indicate that the groups of respondents distinguished by the main source of income and the estimated duration of economic resilience exhibited significant differences in almost all items, which is consistent with previous research in the field of economics and social sciences (Groh et al. 2016; Xue et al. 2021). These differences include income and food accessibility, access to basic services, social safety nets, assets, adaptive capacity, and stability, which are all key indicators of economic resilience and well-being (Aldrich 2012; Yuan et al. 2017).

**Table 2.a.** Comparative analysis related to the pattern of physical distancing, the source of the main income, and economic resilience

| | | **Income and food access** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Income** | **Number of family members** | **Income per-capita** | **Shopping patterns in accommo-dating daily food needs under normal circumstances** | **Shopping patterns during physical distancing** |
| Pattern of social/ physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 0.462 | 1.242 | 2.561 | 2.581 | 20.213 |
| | Sig | 0.630 | 0.289 | 0.078 | 0.275 | 0.000** |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 4.238 | 13.367 | 223.092 | 47.581 | 46.926 |
| | Sig | 0.002** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** |
| If physical distan-cing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 14.249 | 0.794 | 21.247 | 16.174 | 42.387 |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.497 | 0.000** | 0.001** | 0.000** |

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; * Significant at the 0.05 level*

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 2.b.** Comparative analysis related to the pattern of physical distancing, the source of the main income, and economic resilience

| | | Access to basic services | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Type of health services** | **Quality of health services** | **Quality of the education system** | **Mobility disrupted during physical distancing** | **Transportation restrictions during physical distancing** | **Access to clean water during physical distancing** | **Ability to pay water bills during physical distancing** | **Increasing water bills during physical distancing** | **Getting a water bill subsidy during physical distancing** |
| Pattern of social/physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 3.639 | 8.674 | 4.568 | 4.006 | 18.661 | 2.538 | 6.768 | 2.619 | 0.660 |
| | Sig | 0.162 | 0.013* | 0.102 | 0.135 | 0.000** | 0.281 | 0.034 | 0.270 | 0.719 |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 76.363 | 42.787 | 47.639 | 27.471 | 10.917 | 13.915 | 111.489 | 4.851 | 18.920 |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.028* | 0.008** | 0.000** | 0.303 | 0.001** |
| If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 41.27 | 17.523 | 8.002 | 10.253 | 5.309 | 9.274 | 111.291 | 1.322 | 7.001 |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.001** | 0.046* | 0.017* | 0.151 | 0.026* | 0.000** | 0.724 | 0.072 |

| Access to electricity during physical distancing | | Access to basic services | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ability to pay electricity bills during physical distancing | Increasing electricity bills during physical distancing | Getting an electricity bill subsidy during physical distancing | Access to the internet during physical distancing | Ability to pay internet bills during physical distancing | Increasing internet bill during physical distancing | Getting an internet bill subsidy during physical distancing | | |
| Pattern of social/physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 5.118 | 2.513 | 6.568 | 1.120 | 0.480 | 1.117 | 5.424 | 2.288 | |
| | Sig | 0.077 | 0.285 | 0.037* | 0.571 | 0.786 | 0.572 | 0.066 | 0.319 | |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 7.391 | 104.385 | 16.113 | 15.667 | 45.059 | 86.062 | 1.045 | 11.208 | |
| | Sig | 0.117 | 0.000** | 0.003** | 0.004** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.903 | 0.024* | |
| If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 34.339 | 123.387 | 7.221 | 10.462 | 44.569 | 106.94 | 9.771 | 7.003 | |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.065 | 0.015* | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.021* | 0.072 | |

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; * Significant at the 0.05 level*

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 2.c.** Comparative analysis related to the pattern of physical distancing, the source of the main income, and economic resilience

| | | Having a side job during physical distancing | Additional income from a side job that is able to meet the needs of a family |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pattern of social/physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 0.501 | 1.833 |
| | Sig | 0.779 | 0.400 |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 17.115 | 12.849 |
| | Sig | 0.002** | 0.012* |
| If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 10.061 | 9.098 |
| | Sig | 0.018* | 0.028* |

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; * Significant at the 0.05 level*

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 2.d.** Comparative analysis related to the pattern of physical distancing, the source of the main income, and economic resilience

| | | Valuable assets (gold and silver) | Immovable assets (land and buildings) | Vehicle for daily activities (motorbikes or cars) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pattern of social/physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 2.551 | 6.553 | 15.312 |
| | Sig | 0.279 | 0.038* | 0.000** |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 53.159 | 16.259 | 12.348 |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.003** | 0.015* |
| If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 45.532 | 44.653 | 12.526 |
| | Sig | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.006** |

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; * Significant at the 0.05 level*

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

**Table 2.e.** Comparative analysis related to the pattern of physical distancing, the source of the main income, and economic resilience

| | | Stability | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number of family members who worked before physical distancing | Number of family members who lost their jobs/ income during physical distancing | Income condition during physical distancing | Spending conditions during physical distancing | Having health insurance | Having insurance for assets (motorbike, car, house, and others) | Having debts | One of your family members has a credit card |
| Pattern of social/physical distance | F-test; Chi-Square | 1.444 | 1.753 | 1.042 | 8.338 | 25.675 | 7.092 | 6.133 | 1.200 |
| | Sig | 0.237 | 0.174 | 0.594 | 0.015* | 0.000** | 0.029* | 0.047* | 0.549 |
| Source of the family's main income | F-test; Chi-Square | 2.332 | 15.981 | 133.333 | 20.420 | 92.300 | 43.222 | 18.843 | 31.741 |
| | Sig | 0.054 | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.001** | 0.000** |
| If physical distancing continues to apply, how long will you and your family survive economically? | F-test; Chi-Square | 1.701 | 11.085 | 53.791 | 0.635 | 65.661 | 15.568 | 10.418 | 26.016 |
| | Sig | 0.165 | 0.000** | 0.000** | 0.888 | 0.000** | 0.001** | 0.015 | 0.000** |

*** Significant at the 0.01 level; * Significant at the 0.05 level.*

*Source: Rahmadana (2020)*

Some researchers have argued that the relationship between income and economic resilience is complex and nuanced, and that other factors, such as education, social networks, and access to credit, can also play a critical role in shaping an individual or community's ability to withstand economic shocks (De et al. 2022; Yuan et al. 2017). Furthermore, the lack of significant differences observed in the items related to water bills, access to aid, and the number of families suggests that these factors may not be as salient in determining economic resilience during a pandemic compared to other factors, such as income stability and access to social safety nets (Lahey and de Villota 2013; Lin and Chang 2020).

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on economic resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and underscore the importance of considering multiple dimensions of well-being and resilience when designing policies and programs aimed at supporting vulnerable individuals and communities (Cutter et al. 2008; Yuan et al. 2017).

This research also indicates that water consumption patterns tend to remain consistent across different community conditions. While aid or loans may not be a critical aspect for all sample categories, other expertise that can yield economic benefits is an essential consideration.

Finally, the number of families did not serve as a distinguishing factor, possibly due to the large number of family members, coupled with a considerable proportion of economically productive families. The data highlights the patterns and characteristics that render the Medan community attractive in terms of its economic resilience.

The study's finding that the number of families did not distinguish respondents is in line with a study on the economic impact of COVID-19 in Indonesia, which found that households with more family members had higher economic resilience due to the sharing of resources (Deloitte 2020). Another study conducted in Indonesia also found that households with higher levels of education and larger family sizes have greater resilience in times of economic hardship (Susilowati 2020).

The study's focus on economic resilience is relevant to the context of Indonesia, which is prone to economic shocks due to its reliance on commodity exports and susceptibility to natural disasters. A study on the economic resilience of Indonesian households found that households with higher incomes, greater education levels, and access to financial services have greater economic resilience (UNICEF et al. 2022).

The study's findings on the impact of physical distancing patterns and sources of income on economic resilience are also relevant to the Indonesian context. A study on the impact of COVID-19 on the Indonesian economy found that strict physical distancing measures had a greater impact on low-income households and those in the informal sector (Habir and Wardana 2020). Another study on the impact of COVID-19 on the Indonesian economy found that workers in the informal sector, who make up a significant proportion of the workforce, were most affected by the pandemic (IBCWE 2020).

In conclusion, the study's findings on the economic resilience of the Medan community provide valuable insights for policymakers and researchers interested in understanding the

factors that contribute to economic resilience in Indonesia. The study highlights the importance of education, income, and access to financial services for economic resilience and the need to consider the impact of physical distancing measures on vulnerable households.

## 5. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply impacted household economic resilience, particularly for informal workers and those in the tourism sector. While government social assistance policies offered some relief, uneven implementation and misalignment with societal needs underscore the need for policy improvements. Current policies favor the formal sector and large corporations, leaving the informal workforce—Indonesia's largest employment segment—struggling to access support. Inclusive policies focusing on equitable aid distribution are critical for protecting the most vulnerable groups. Key policy recommendations include improving access to and efficiency in social assistance distribution by refining administrative systems, updating beneficiary databases to include informal workers, and ensuring aid reaches underserved areas. Tailored programs for the informal sector, such as fiscal incentives or job-based social assistance, can better address the needs of this critical workforce. Transparency and accountability are essential for public trust and effective policy implementation. Transparency platforms can enable public monitoring and feedback, ensuring fair and efficient aid distribution. Beyond immediate relief, long-term strategies are vital for building economic resilience. These include holistic social protection reforms, skill development initiatives, financial support for small businesses, and labor capacity-building programs to foster sustainable growth and prepare for future shocks. By addressing short-term challenges and focusing on long-term recovery, these policies aim to create a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economic future.

## Supplementary materials

Supplementary material associated with this article can be found in the online version at https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/2jtn5dcnvd/1.

## Author contributions

All authors were involved in the research design and contributed to writing the manuscript.

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# COVID – 19 PANDEMIJOS POVEIKIS EKONOMINIAM ATSPARUMUI IR VIEŠAJAI POLITIKAI: MEDANO MIESTO SOCIALINĖS IR EKONOMINĖS POLITKOS ANALIZĖ

**Anotacija.** COVID-19 pandemija sukėlė didelių iššūkių įvairių šalių viešajai politikai, ypač ekonominio atsparumo ir vyriausybių teikiamos paramos atžvilgiu. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama išanalizuoti ankstyvą pandemijos poveikį namų ūkių ekonominiam atsparumui ir viešosios politikos atsakams Medano mieste, Indonezijoje. Šiame tyrime naudojami duomenys gauti iš 2020 m. balandžio 8 d. iki balandžio 20 d. atliktos apklausos, kurioje dalyvavo 867 namų ūkiai. Nors duomenys atspindi pradines pandemijos sąlygas, išvados rodo prieigos prie socialinės paramos spragas ir politikos įgyvendinimo netolygumą. Šiame straipsnyje taip pat aptariamas viešosios politikos vaidmuo mažinant ekonominį poveikį pažeidžiamoms grupėms. Be to, joje rekomenduojama, kad ilgalaikėms krizėms spręsti reikia labiau įtraukiančios ir labiau reaguojančios viešosios politikos, pabrėžiant teisingesnį paramos paskirstymą. Šis tyrimas padeda atnaujinti esamą literatūrą apie ekonominį atsparumą pandemijos metu ir suteikia politikos formuotojams įžvalgų kuriant labiau prisitaikančią viešąją politiką.

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# STATE POLICY OF UKRAINE'S EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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**Abstract.** The article examines the relationship between the state policy of the European integration of Ukraine and the innovative development of social entrepreneurship as an important tool for solving socio-economic problems. The role of social entrepreneurship in ensuring sustainable development, creating new jobs for vulnerable groups of the population, and introducing innovative approaches to solving current social challenges is considered. Special attention is paid to the European experience of supporting social enterprises through social investment mechanisms, tax incentives, integration into public procurement, and the development of sustainable ecosystems in cooperation with civil society organizations and the private sector. The article also highlights the main barriers to the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, including the lack of a clear legislative framework, limited financial resources, insufficient coordination between state institutions, and poor public awareness of social business. Recommendations for the implementation of the state strategy aimed at integrating European standards, developing social investment, stimulating innovations, and creating a favorable environment for the functioning of social enterprises in Ukraine are proposed. The research methodology includes a systemic, comparative, and structural–functional analysis, which provides an integrated approach to studying the impact of the European integration process on the development of social entrepreneurship. The results confirm that the implementation of European practices will contribute not only to increasing the efficiency of social entrepreneurship but also to solving important socio-economic problems Ukraine faces.

***Keywords:*** *social entrepreneurship, European integration, state policy, sustainable*

*development, social investment, regulatory framework.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *socialinis verslumas, Europos integracija, valstybės politika, darnus vystymasis, socialinės investicijos, reguliavimo bazė.*

## Introduction

Social entrepreneurship plays an important role in Ukraine's European integration course, contributing to solving social challenges and sustainable economic development. Despite the effectiveness of European models, this sector in Ukraine remains normatively unregulated and insufficiently researched, which is especially relevant in the context of post-war reconstruction (Klenin and Mishchenko 2023). Financial mechanisms can ensure the scaling of social enterprises, but the lack of a clear legal framework and sustainable support makes it difficult to implement best practices (Kosach et al. 2021). Scientific discussions are mostly limited to theoretical advantages, without analyzing the practical implementation of the European integration policy. Therefore, it is necessary to determine regulatory, financial, and institutional mechanisms for adapting the European experience to Ukrainian realities. The novelty of the study lies in the substantiation of strategic approaches for the effective involvement of social entrepreneurship in overcoming socio-economic challenges and post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

## Methods

The study is based on qualitative methods and an interdisciplinary approach, since social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is just beginning to form, and there is no official legislative regulation or state statistics. This complicates the systematic analysis of the sector and limits access to statistical data. Because of this, the main emphasis is placed on comparative analysis, which allows for comparing the Ukrainian context with European models of social business support and structural and functional analysis, which reveals the relationships between regulatory, financial, and institutional factors that could contribute to its development. Due to the lack of an extensive empirical base in Ukraine, the study uses available quantitative data from international organizations, including the European Commission, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the British Council, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Thus, the results of the analysis of the dynamics of the sector's development, reflecting the growth trends in the number of social enterprises in 2008–2020, are included (Kamenko 2020). The study also takes into account the analysis of data from the Catalogue of Social Enterprises, which records 56 active initiatives. This allows us to outline the main areas of activity of social enterprises in Ukraine, namely services, education, culture, and food products. The main emphasis is not on assessing the existing state support mechanisms, which actually do not exist in

Ukraine, but on developing potential approaches to their creation, strategies for financing, institutional development, and adaptation of European practices that can contribute to the formation of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine.

## Literature review

Social entrepreneurship, as mentioned above, is becoming a key tool for solving socio-economic problems in the world. For Ukraine, in the context of European integration, public policy reforms contribute to the development of the innovation potential of this sector. According to the concept of inclusive growth, social entrepreneurship has a dual role: It creates social innovation and ensures the sustainable development of society (Bakker and McMullen 2023). It solves problems that are often not covered by the state or traditional businesses (Swanson and Zhang 2012). European integration opens up new opportunities for access to financial resources, European markets, and best practices. Social entrepreneurship is an activity focused on social impact through market mechanisms. It combines business profitability and solving important societal problems (Boldyzhar and Khokhlova 2024). Social entrepreneurs, according to Melro and Oliveira, are "agents of change" who create innovative models to address social challenges (Melro and Oliveira 2017). This allows for the mobilization of human and financial resources to achieve goals that go beyond ordinary business. Among the key features of social entrepreneurship are innovation and the ability to optimize resources and scale social impact. Social entrepreneurs work in niches that are left out of the attention of the state or business (Byelov et al. 2023). Contemporary challenges, such as social inequality, unemployment, environmental crisis, and a lack of inclusiveness in the economy, require new approaches. In this context, social entrepreneurship is both an alternative and a catalyst for change (Bansal et al. 2019). It generates new opportunities for those facing significant constraints (Nepal 2024) and, through innovative business models, ensures economic sustainability and efficiency. According to Dotsenko and Matvichuk (Dotsenko and Matviychuk 2021), a proper assessment of the investment attractiveness of enterprises becomes the basis for the formation of sustainable development models, which can serve as an important factor in supporting social entrepreneurship. At the same time, Ilchenko (2022) emphasizes that innovation is a key conceptual element for overcoming socio-economic challenges and building effective social entrepreneurship in Ukraine. Other scholars share a similar view: Kravchuk et al. (2021) analyze the strategic management of business processes in the field of innovative entrepreneurship, emphasizing the need for flexible management decisions. The study by Lukianchuk and Tkachuk (2019) suggests that the implementation of an innovation strategy is positively correlated with the economic effect for both traditional and social enterprises. In turn, Braunagel and Anfilov (2022) emphasize that social entrepreneurship can be a modern vector of economic development because it is aimed at solving social problems, which are not always covered by traditional business models. In the post-war reconstruction of

Ukraine's economy, social enterprises are becoming even more important. Klenin and and Mishchenko (2023) identifies the conceptual foundations of state support for social entrepreneurship, which include institutional and financial assistance, as well as tax incentives. At the same time, Kosach et al. (2021) consider the financial mechanism of innovation and investment development as one of the key factors that can ensure the sustainable development of enterprises, in particular, social ones.

## Results

In the context of Ukraine's European integration, social entrepreneurship plays an important role in the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring equal access to education and healthcare, and promoting environmental sustainability (Sustainable Development Goals 2024). The European model demonstrates effective interaction between the state, civil society, and business, relying on institutional support, tax benefits, grants, and infrastructure for the development of social initiatives (Social Enterprises and Their Ecosystems in Europe 2020). In Ukraine, social entrepreneurship is a promising but underdeveloped area that faces challenges such as legal uncertainty, lack of funding, and limited access to markets (Kokot 2020, p. 27). This is in contrast to European countries, such as the United Kingdom, where the Better Society Capital fund operates to support social initiatives ("Our impact" 2023). European practice is based on the creation of sustainable ecosystems with the interaction of state institutions, communities, and business (Social Enterprises and Their Ecosystems in Europe 2020, p. 138), which is promising for Ukraine. Research highlights the ability of social entrepreneurs to respond innovatively to challenges, due to flexibility, compared to traditional government structures (Gigauri and Damenia 2020).

This approach is optimal for Ukraine, where state support for social problems remains limited. Ukraine's European integration policy creates opportunities for cooperation with European partners, in particular through social impact investments and EU grant programs. Social entrepreneurship requires not only state support but also the active involvement of the private sector, international organizations, and civil society to build partnerships (Gigauri and Damenia 2020). Access to financial platforms, such as EU4Business and Horizon Europe, and grant programs opens up new prospects for the implementation of social impact projects (Directory of Donors and Financial Institutions 2024).

In Europe, social enterprises are focused on solving social problems and are often funded by government subsidies, grants, and donations. The British model adopted by Ukraine provides for a clear social mission, reinvestment of profits, independence from the state, and accountability. To support social enterprises in the UK, Better Society Capital operates, which invests in the sector through financial intermediaries, as well as popular crowdfunding mechanisms and "community shares." At the same time, the government creates conditions for the development of the sector, as social entrepreneurship contributes to economic

revival in depressed regions. The United States of America follows a more liberal approach, where social entrepreneurship is identified with the entrepreneurial activities of public organizations that earn money from the administration of services and direct income to statutory activities. Historically, this sector has grown out of the field of philanthropy, and since the 1980s, non-governmental organizations have begun to actively commercialize their activities. The state supports this direction less than in Europe, limiting itself to funds such as the White House Social Innovation Fund (American and European Pathways of Social Entrepreneurship 2013).

Despite the support of donors, the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine depends on institutional support, a transparent legal framework, and effective coordination at the level of public policy (Hladkii and Momot 2023; Lubberink 2019; Tišma et al. 2024). Ukraine needs to develop legislative initiatives to create favorable conditions for social entrepreneurs. European experience shows that a successful regulatory framework includes tax incentives and simplified access to financial resources (Hemels 2022). The Nordic model can serve as an example of effective policy. It combines public funding, citizen participation, and cooperative traditions. The state creates infrastructure through educational programs, incubators, and research centers, promoting innovation to solve social problems. Support includes public–private partnerships, public procurement, and flexible regulation that promotes inclusive development and social solidarity. Social enterprises in this system become laboratories for social welfare renewal, involving vulnerable groups in economic life (Lundgaard Andersen et al. 2016).

The assessment of the dynamics of the development of social enterprises in Ukraine is complicated by the lack of complete statistical data. However, the available information shows an increase in the number of such enterprises from 2014 to 2020. Until 2014, the sector was in its infancy. The increase in activity began in 2015, thanks to the social activity of citizens and support programs. Especially rapid growth was observed in 2018–2020, when socially oriented businesses became more active as a response to socio-economic challenges.

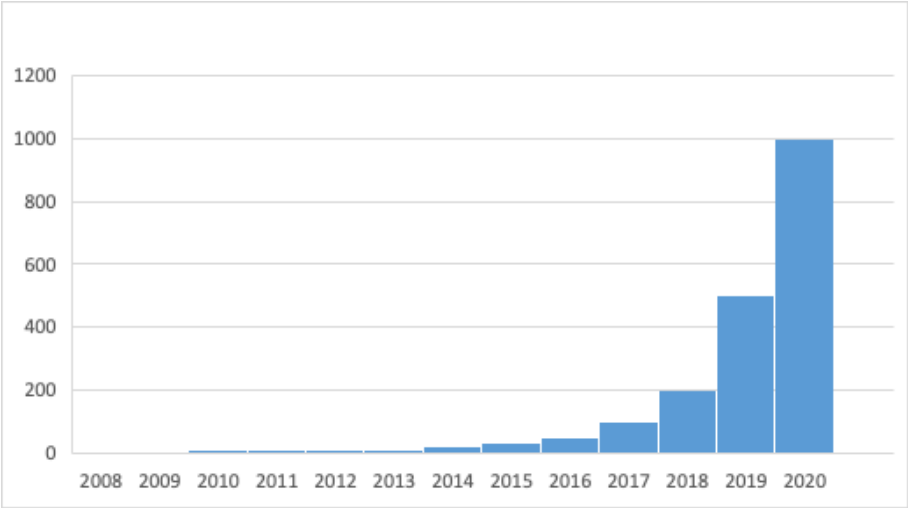


**Figure 1.** Dynamics of the development of social enterprises in Ukraine in 2008–2020

*Source: independently formed by the author based on Kamenko (2020), Social Entrepreneurship in Ukraine: Economic and Legal Analysis*

The lack of a legal definition and a state register of social enterprises in Ukraine makes it impossible to systematically record these enterprises. The sector is developing mainly due to public initiatives and international support, but due to the lack of official recognition and state incentives, the monitoring of its activities remains fragmented. The negative connotation of the term "social" and the lack of incentive measures further complicate the identification and study of this area. An analysis of data from the Social Enterprise Catalog, which includes 56 enterprises, revealed the main market trends. Social enterprises mainly operate in the service, education, culture, and food sectors. These industries traditionally combine economic activity with solving social problems, which makes them the most convenient for social business. Due to the lack of a consolidated register of social enterprises, this analysis is based on available sources, but it confirms the importance of systematizing information and state support for the development (Ilchenko and Kiselev 2020).

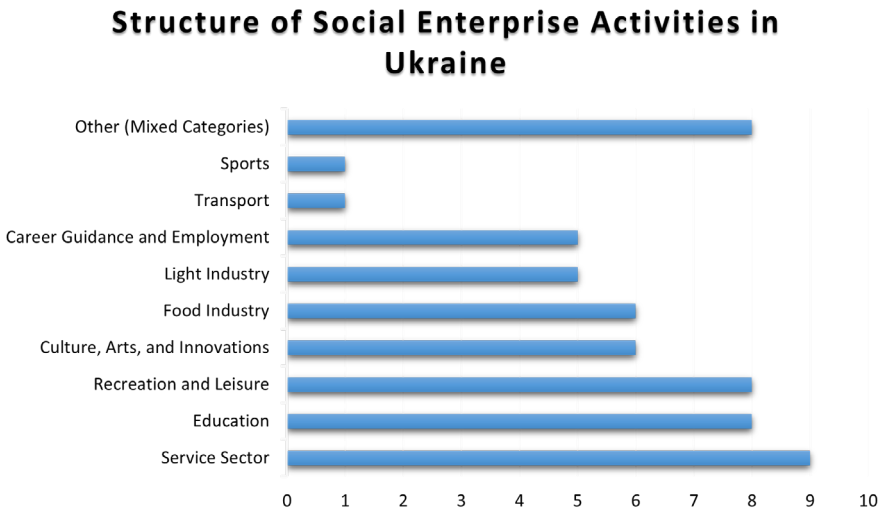


**Figure 2.** Structure of social enterprises in Ukraine

*Source: independently formed by the author based on Free Thread (2025), Social Enterprise*

Social entrepreneurship is an innovative business model that combines profit with solving social problems. In today's world, social entrepreneurship plays an increasingly important role, contributing to solving global problems and having a positive impact on society. For example, TOMS®, which operates in countries such as the United States, Mexico, India, and Haiti, implements the "One Purchase, One Help" program: For every pair of shoes sold, it donates a new pair of shoes to children in need. Another socially responsible company, Warby Parker, implements vision correction initiatives in developing countries, including India, Ghana, Rwanda, and Bangladesh, providing access to glasses for millions of people. Meanwhile, KickStart International focuses on improving the lives of rural people in Africa, especially in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, by implementing innovative agricultural technologies that help increase farmers' yields and income. The US-based Ashoka Foundation supports social entrepreneurs with high social impact in more than 90 countries, including India, Brazil, Nigeria, and the Philippines, providing them with financial resources and expert assistance. These examples highlight how social enterprises drive change and develop society on a global level (Mykhalchuk and Bendiuh 2021). In Ukraine, social entrepreneurship is constrained by the lack of legislative regulation. Despite attempts to create a special status for such enterprises, they remain within the general tax framework due to the imperfection of draft laws. However, thanks to grants and the support of foreign investors, successful social initiatives, such as environmental projects or services for people with disabilities, are developing in the country. Legislative consolidation of social entrepreneurship could become the basis for large-scale implementation of social innovations and

effective solution of social problems (Plissa, Tsyupka, and Muntyan 2024). In 2022, 179 such enterprises operated in Ukraine, which is 31% less than in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and military aggression. These enterprises provide jobs for people with disabilities, who make up 67% of employees, even though 80% of enterprises suffered economic losses, and 35% lost fixed assets. The majority faced high energy prices (52%), lack of working capital (48%), and low solvency of customers (46%). Financing is mainly carried out at the expense of profits (70%), but it is not enough - only 15% receive grants, and 8% use loans. To resume operations, 63% of enterprises need up to UAH 1 million, and 48% need affordable loans for equipment modernization. At the same time, 22% of enterprises have refocused on the production of goods for humanitarian needs, demonstrating flexibility and ability to respond to challenges (Analytical Report on the results of a survey of social enterprises of public associations of persons with disabilities in Ukraine on their condition and needs during the war 2023).

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is not developing fast enough due to a serious obstacle, namely the lack of legislation that would determine the status, functions, and mechanisms of support for social enterprises (Mykhalchuk and Bendiuh 2021). With the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has gained special importance, and entities are responding to social challenges and receiving active support from international grant programs. The war led to an increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), destruction of infrastructure, and loss of jobs, to which social enterprises responded by creating new jobs, retraining the population, and providing psychological assistance. Grant programs have made it possible to scale their activities, introduce new technologies, and contribute to economic recovery. An example is the EU4Youth project "Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship," where students developed innovative business ideas to solve social problems. In June 2024, at the project's award ceremony in Kyiv, 15 winning projects received grants for the development of initiatives in the field of healthcare, inclusion, ecology, and technology (in particular, bionic prostheses, adaptive clothing, and mobile applications for accessibility). The project is supported by the EU and international organizations that provide financial and educational assistance. Such initiatives confirm the role of social business in the recovery of the country, promoting economic activity, integrating youth into entrepreneurship, and strengthening civil society. (Junior Achievement Ukraine 2024).

Within the framework of modern social conditions of Ukraine, the development of social entrepreneurship has become an important element in solving social problems, such as unemployment, economic recovery, and support for vulnerable groups of the population. As stated in the research, social entrepreneurship in Ukraine is based on innovative ideas and innovative business models that allow solving complex social problems through entrepreneurial activity.

One of the key features of social entrepreneurship is its focus on solving specific social problems using sustainable business mechanisms. This allows for the creation of employment opportunities for vulnerable populations, such as persons with disabilities, war

veterans, or IDPs, as well as the offer of innovative products and services that contribute to societal change. Ukrainian initiatives, in particular the Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship project, demonstrate the effectiveness of supporting youth business ideas through grant programs. This project has become a catalyst for the creation of new enterprises operating in the fields of ecology, healthcare, and education. Not only does it financially support the development of innovative solutions, but it also creates a conducive environment for entrepreneurs to learn and grow. Social entrepreneurship also stimulates the integration of new approaches to solving environmental problems, in particular through the development of renewable energy, waste recycling, and the use of environmentally friendly materials. At the same time, the role of social businesses in expanding access to important services such as health care, inclusive education, and mental health support is growing (Novyk 2022).

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential, especially among young people, who perceive it as a tool for influencing society and solving current problems. According to the EU4Youth project "Recovery through Social Entrepreneurship," 59% of young people are familiar with the term "social entrepreneurship," and 36% are interested in starting a social business. The main motivating factors for setting up social business are the opportunity to combine earnings with socially useful activities, influence positive changes and support local initiatives. Despite the interest, there are significant obstacles to the development of social entrepreneurship. Young people identify the main challenges as the long war (65%), electricity shortage (59%), tax increases (51%), and low purchasing power of the population (43%). The possibility of fraudulent schemes in this area (28%) and doubts about business profitability (27%) are also of concern. (Social Business: Young People's Opinion on the New Direction of Entrepreneurship 2024). This indicates the need to support young entrepreneurs through legislative regulation and the creation of a stable environment. The most promising areas for social entrepreneurship are the provision of social services (32%), the creation of jobs for vulnerable categories (29%), and the production of socially significant goods (25%). The vast majority of respondents plan to implement projects locally (49%) or online (36%), which emphasizes the potential for the development of regional and digital initiatives. Young people show a high interest in learning business skills.

However, the active interest of young people, combined with educational programs and institutional support, creates favorable conditions for the development of social entrepreneurship as an important tool for change in society. If we consider the results of a survey among young people aged 16–35 conducted in 2024 by the Center for Analysis and Sociological Research (CISR) of the International Republican Institute (IRI) within the framework of the USAID "Dream and Act" program, the first thing that catches the eye is that among working respondents who are not entrepreneurs (n=1200), 71% said that they have already thought about starting their own business, while 29% do not even consider such an opportunity. The main factors hindering young people from starting a business were the lack of start-up capital (39%) and general instability due to the war (24%), followed by the lack of special knowledge and skills (11%). At the same time, 9% admitted that they do not

want to do business at all, and 8% do not feel confident enough. Another 7% do not have a clear business idea, and 4% point to age restrictions, working conditions, or lack of formal rights. Finally, several other obstacles, such as taxes, bureaucracy, or fears of corruption risks, also have their percentage, but in total they score less than the main barriers (Results of the Ukrainian Youth Survey 2024).

## Discussion

Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential in solving socio-economic problems, but its development is limited by the lack of a regulatory framework, lack of funding, and insufficient state support. European experience shows that the successful integration of social business into the national economy involves complex financial mechanisms, tax incentives, and institutional support. At the same time, in the EU countries, social enterprises receive state subsidies and grants, while in Ukraine, this sector remains dependent on international donors. Comparative analysis confirms that the adaptation of European models can contribute to the development of social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, in particular through the creation of specialized financial instruments and the legislative definition of its status. Institutional support and the introduction of stimulating tax policies can contribute to the growth of social entrepreneurship and its integration into the country's sustainable development strategy.

## Conclusions

1. Social entrepreneurship in Ukraine has significant potential in solving socio-economic problems, but its development is complicated by the lack of legal regulation, financial incentives, and state support.
2. Comparison with European models shows the effectiveness of the system of subsidies, tax benefits, and social investment, which ensures the sustainability and scalability of social business.
3. The war and economic instability have affected social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, but thanks to the active support of international grant programs, the sector continues to adapt, expanding humanitarian activities and creating jobs for vulnerable groups.
4. Lack of access to finance remains a key problem for the development of social entrepreneurship, which requires the creation of specialized support mechanisms at the national level.
5. To ensure the sustainable development of social entrepreneurship, it is necessary to adapt European approaches, including the development of a national strategy that combines legislative, financial, and institutional support mechanisms.

## Recommendations

1. Legislative regulation is the adoption of a law that will determine the status of social entrepreneurship and criteria for its identification, as well as registration and reporting mechanisms.
2. Financial support means the creation of specialized programs of preferential lending, subsidies, and grants for social enterprises, as well as the involvement of international financial partners.
3. Tax incentives are the introduction of reduced tax rates or tax incentives for enterprises that reinvest profits in social projects and employ vulnerable categories of the population.
4. Institutional support means the creation of a state register of social enterprises and the development of training programs and consulting centers for social entrepreneurs.
5. Promotion of social entrepreneurship involves conducting educational campaigns and integrating social business into public procurement and regional development strategies.

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# UKRAINOS VALSTYBĖS EUROPOS INTEGRACIJOS POLITIKA IR JOS POVEIKIS INOVATYVIAI SOCIALINIO VERSLUMO PLĖTRAI

**Anotacija.** Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Ukrainos valstybinės integracijos į Europą politikos ir socialinio verslumo, kaip svarbaus socialinių ir ekonominių problemų sprendimo įrankio, novatoriškos plėtros ryšys. Svarstomas socialinio verslumo vaidmuo užtikrinant darnų vystymąsi, kuriant naujas darbo vietas pažeidžiamoms gyventojų grupėms ir diegiant inovatyvius būdus sprendžiant dabartinius socialinius iššūkius. įmonėms pasitelkiant socialinių investicijų mechanizmus, mokesčių lengvatas, integruojant į viešuosius pirkimus ir kuriant tvarias ekosistemas bendradarbiaujant su pilietinės visuomenės organizacijomis ir privačiu sektoriumi. Straipsnyje taip pat akcentuojamos pagrindinės kliūtys socialinio verslumo plėtrai Ukrainoje, įskaitant aiškios teisinės bazės nebuvimą, ribotus finansinius išteklius, nepakankamą valstybės institucijų koordinavimą ir menką visuomenės informuotumą apie socialinį verslą. Siūlomos rekomendacijos įgyvendinti valstybės strategiją, skirtą europinių standartų integravimui, socialinių investicijų plėtrai, inovacijų skatinimui ir palankios aplinkos socialinėms įmonėms funkcionavimui Ukrainoje kūrimui. Tyrimo metodika apima sisteminę, lyginamąją ir struktūrinę-funkcinę analizę, kuri suteikė integruotą požiūrį į Europos integracijos proceso įtakos socialinio verslumo plėtrai tyrimą. Rezultatai patvirtina, kad europinių praktikų diegimas prisidės ne tik prie socialinio verslumo efektyvumo didinimo, bet ir prie svarbių socialinių-ekonominių problemų, su kuriomis susiduria Ukraina, sprendimų.

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# ADAPTIVE INNOVATION AND TAX SERVICE PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF REGIONAL REVENUE AGENCIES DURING A PANDEMIC CRISIS

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**Abstract.** Tax revenues of the Special Region of Yogyakarta and Central Java Provincial Governments declined during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Amid this crisis, tax service innovation initiatives emerged as a critical response. This study aims to explain the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic, tax performance, and service innovation implementation during 2020–2024 in two Indonesian provinces with distinct governance characteristics. Using adaptive governance theory and qualitative analysis through a comparative case study approach, we conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. The findings reveal that tax service innovations significantly influenced regional tax revenue performance during the pandemic through three key characteristics: (1) flexible cross-organizational service cooperation schemes, (2) implementation of equitable cost-benefit distribution principles, and (3) innovation execution based on competitive incentive schemes. Central Java's more comprehensive digital transformation and broader partnership strategy performed better than Yogyakarta's hybrid approach. This study contributes to adaptive governance literature by demonstrating how flexible arrangements in public service innovation can enhance organizational resilience during crises.

***Keywords:*** *policy innovation, adaptive governance, tax administration, local government, pandemic.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *politikos naujovės, prisitaikantis valdymas, mokesčių administravimas, vietos valdžia, pandemija.*

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered unprecedented challenges for public organizations worldwide, particularly in tax revenue collection and service delivery. Global economic contraction of 3.9%, coupled with the loss of 255 million jobs and the emergence of 119–124 million new poor citizens (UNCTAD 2022), severely impacted government fiscal capacities. In Indonesia, this translated to a national budget deficit of IDR 947 trillion, with state revenues declining by 15.9% and expenditures increasing by 12.3% (Kemenkeu 2021). At the local level, regions heavily dependent on tourism and education, like Yogyakarta, saw hotel occupancy rates plummet from 52.93% to 24.91% (BPS 2021). Similarly, in Central Java, where agriculture dominates the economy, the farmers' terms of trade decreased from 106.00 to 101.49, while unemployment rose from 4.44% to 6.48% (BPS 2022). These conditions necessitated rapid adaptation in public service delivery, particularly in tax administration.

Previous research has extensively examined pandemic impacts on tax systems and organizational responses. European studies demonstrate significant tax revenue declines in 2020, followed by a recovery in 2022 (Țibulcă 2022). In the United States, state tax revenues decreased by $106 billion (Clemens and Veuger 2020), while Lithuania experienced impacts primarily on indirect taxes (Dubauskas 2021). Research also highlights how organizations leveraged the pandemic to accelerate innovation, particularly in digital transformation and service delivery (Shahzad and Imran 2021; Nosike et al. 2023). Notably, some regions successfully utilized the crisis to strengthen fiscal decentralization through policy innovations (Smoke et al. 2022), demonstrating the potential for organizational adaptation during crises.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into pandemic impacts on tax administration, a significant gap exists in understanding how adaptive governance mechanisms influence public service innovation, particularly when comparing local government systems. Although studies have examined adaptive governance in various contexts (Janssen and van der Voort 2016; Steelman 2016), few have investigated its role in public service innovation during crises, especially in developing countries with diverse governance traditions. This research addresses this gap by analyzing how two Indonesian provinces with distinct administrative characteristics implemented tax service innovations during the pandemic, aiming to explain the relationship between crisis response, innovation implementation, and performance outcomes.

Building on adaptive governance theory, we argue that successful tax service innovation

during crises depends on three key factors: flexible organizational arrangements, equitable distribution of costs and benefits, and competitive incentive structures. This argument is supported by preliminary evidence showing divergent performance outcomes between Central Java and Yogyakarta despite facing similar pandemic challenges. While both regions experienced initial revenue declines, their different approaches to innovation implementation, particularly in digital transformation and partnership strategies, led to varying recovery success, suggesting the critical role of adaptive governance mechanisms in crisis response.

## Literature review

***Prior research: bureaucratic response and innovation during the pandemic***

Studies examining the relationship between COVID-19, economic conditions, and policy innovation have been conducted across various national contexts. Susilawati et al. (2020) investigated the pandemic impacts on Indonesia's economy, finding significant contractions in transportation, tourism, trade, and household sectors. Similarly, Țibulcă (2022) analyzed pandemic effects on EU tax revenues, documenting substantial declines in 2020 followed by a recovery in 2022. Notably, Dubauskas (2021) found that direct taxes in Lithuania remained relatively stable, with impacts primarily affecting indirect taxes like value added tax. These studies demonstrate the pandemic's differential impacts across economic sectors and tax types.

***Adaptive governance and innovation***

Adaptive governance emerges as a relatively new paradigm in public administration and policy studies, originally developed in environmental management literature. Chaffin et al. (2014) describe adaptive governance as coordination-based resource management regimes responding to rapid environmental changes. This framework has gained increasing relevance amid globalization and worldwide changes (Cleaver and Whaley 2018), influenced by concepts including new ecology, commons governance, and co-management. Arnold et al. (2017) identify systematic changes driving uncertainty and complexity, encompassing social-political, ecosystem, and institutional transformations. This theoretical foundation provides crucial insights for understanding organizational responses to crises.

***Research gap and theoretical framework***

While extensive literature exists on adaptive governance, few studies examine its relationship with public service innovation, particularly regarding organizational flexibility. Studies have explored adaptive governance in market dynamics (Ahmed et al. 2024), social learning (Johannesen 2013), and corporate responsibility (Zhang et al. 2020; Cao 2023). However, there remains limited research comparing different government systems' implementation of public service innovation, especially contrasting feudal and merit-based local governance systems. As shown in Figure 1, this represents a significant opportunity for theoretical advancement.

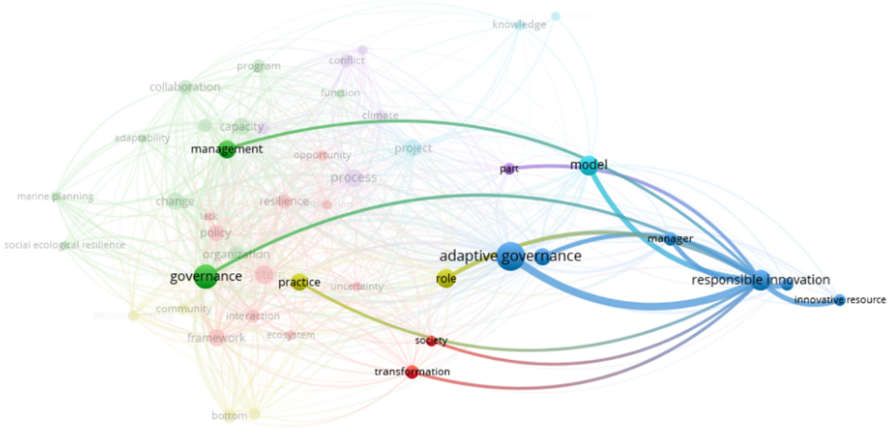


**Figure 1.** Research gap by VOSviewer
*Source: authors*

***Flexible arrangements in public service innovation***

The theoretical framework of flexible arrangements provides a valuable lens for analyzing public service innovation. Van Buuren et al. (2015) identify three key elements: flexible processes, flexible content, and flexible organizational structures. These elements interact with potential barriers, including interest conflicts, unclear responsibility distribution, and stakeholder trust issues. This framework aligns with our research on comparing innovation implementation across different governance contexts, particularly during crises.

***Implementation challenges and success factors***

Studies reveal varying success rates in policy innovation during the pandemic. While some regions successfully leveraged the crisis for innovation acceleration (Al-Khasawneh 2022; Ba and Bai 2021), others faced significant implementation challenges. Gupta and Liu (2020) identified barriers, including tax concessions, political fragmentation, and weak tax administration in low-income countries. These findings highlight the importance of understanding contextual factors in innovation implementation success.

## Research method

This study's analysis unit encompasses two regional tax revenue agencies: Bapenda Jateng (the regional revenue agency of Central Java) and BPKA DIY (the regional financial and asset management agency of the Special Region of Yogyakarta) .These organizations were selected based on their distinctive characteristics in implementing tax service innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in vehicle tax collection services. The temporal scope covers the period from 2020 to 2024, focusing on the transformative phase

of public service delivery during and after the peak of the pandemic crisis.

This research employs a qualitative comparative case study design to examine how adaptive governance mechanisms influence tax service innovation and performance outcomes. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of complex organizational phenomena while facilitating systematic case comparison (Guetterman and Fetters 2018). The comparative design enables us to identify patterns in how different institutional contexts shape innovation implementation and effectiveness, particularly in flexible arrangements, cost-benefit distribution, and incentive structures. The case study design is structured around three analyses: first, innovation management is analyzed using the inner organizational component framework developed by Cummings and Worley (2016); second, the service delivery structure is examined through the theory of flexible arrangements; and third, the implementation of accomplishments and challenges is evaluated using the theory of constraints of flexible arrangements.

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling, comprising senior officials from both agencies, middle managers responsible for innovation implementation, and frontline service personnel. Additionally, we included external stakeholders such as representatives from partner organizations, including digital payment platforms, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and traditional banking institutions. This diverse participant pool ensures comprehensive coverage of different perspectives on innovation implementation and outcomes.

Data collection involved multiple methods to ensure triangulation and robust findings. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, each lasting 60–90 minutes, conducted between January 2023 and June 2024. These were complemented by direct observation of service delivery processes at both agencies and document analysis of internal reports, policy documents, and performance data. Secondary data included regional financial reports, tax collection statistics, and public service satisfaction surveys from both provinces.

The analysis followed a systematic coding process using NVivo software, employing deductive and inductive approaches. Initial coding was guided by theoretical frameworks of adaptive governance and flexible arrangements while allowing for emergent themes from the data. The analysis proceeded through three stages: within-case analysis to identify unique patterns in each agency; cross-case analysis to compare innovation implementation approaches and outcomes; and theoretical interpretation to develop insights about the relationship between adaptive governance mechanisms and innovation performance. We employed member checking with critical informants and peer debriefing among researchers to enhance reliability.

## Results

This section details the tax performance and innovation strategies (flexible

arrangements) implemented by two government entities, Bapenda Jateng and BPKA DIY, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis begins with an overview of the tax performance in each organization, followed by the innovation initiatives introduced in response to tax performance shifts. The innovations are categorized into decision-making processes, policy content, and organizational structure. Lastly, the barriers to flexible arrangements are discussed, including authority distribution, cost, benefit sharing, and issues of distrust.

***Tax performance and policy responses***

Bapenda Jateng and BPKA DIY both manage motor vehicle tax (PKB) policies within their respective jurisdictions, Semarang and Yogyakarta, as designated by the central government. The fiscal adjustments made by these entities during the pandemic reflect divergent strategies. In Yogyakarta, BPKA DIY revised its revenue targets due to pandemic-related constraints. It reduced regional tax income targets from IDR 1.8 trillion to IDR 1.5 trillion in 2020 and from IDR 1.7 trillion to IDR 1.6 trillion in 2021. Specifically, the PKB target in 2020 was reduced from IDR 901 billion to IDR 796 billion, with a marginal increase in 2021 from IDR 843 billion to IDR 845 billion.

In contrast, Central Java maintained its revenue targets across various categories, including PKB, adhering to the initial projections despite the pandemic's economic impact. Despite budget revisions in 2020 and 2021 through Provincial Regulations No. 10/2020 and No. 4/2021, the revenue targets remained unchanged, demonstrating Central Java's commitment to original fiscal goals.

***Innovations in response to tax performance***

Both BPKA DIY and Bapenda Jateng implemented a range of innovations to enhance tax collection and service delivery (detailed in Table 1).

**Table 1.** Innovations in tax collection and service delivery

| Category | Yogyakarta (BPKA DIY) | Central Java (Bapenda Jateng) |
|---|---|---|
| **Technology innovations** | • Collaborated with Bank BPD DIY for PKB payments via mobile banking. | • Launched "SAKPOLE," which was updated to "NEW SAKPOLE" for seamless PKB payment processing from data collection to verification via WhatsApp.<br>• Offered a fully digital end-to-end service for PKB verification and issuance. |

| Category | Yogyakarta (BPKA DIY) | Central Java (Bapenda Jateng) |
|---|---|---|
| **Strategic innovations** | • Adopted a hybrid service model, blending physical and digital services.<br>• Had limited partnerships with BPD DIY, Go-Jek, and Jogja Kita. | • Implemented a holistic digital pathway from payment to STNK issuance.<br>• Had a broader network of partnerships with Pos Indonesia, national banks, and marketplace platforms. |
| **Organizational and structural innovations** | • Had minimal structural adjustments with no major organizational changes or new staffing specific to the pandemic response. | • Introduced SAMSAT Budiman with flexible organizational arrangements via partnerships with BUMDes.<br>• Distributed responsibilities for infrastructure and operations to local entities while maintaining verification and approval authority within Bapenda Jateng. |
| **Measurement system innovations** | • Adjusted income targets to reflect the economic downturn. | • Retained pre-pandemic revenue goals, showing a stricter approach to fiscal measurement amidst COVID-19 impacts. |

*Source: data analysis (2024)*

This table effectively contrasts each province's approaches across various innovation categories to enhance tax collection and service delivery.

***Barriers to flexible arrangements***

a) Authority distribution

BPKA DIY and Bapenda Jateng faced varying challenges in distributing authority for policy innovation programs, especially where strategic partnerships were involved. For instance, in Yogyakarta there is E-Posti program that is in partnership with Bank BPD DIY, BPD handled transaction administration while BPKA retained registration and verification control. Conversely, Central Java's SAMSAT Budiman operated with a more complex authority distribution across Bapenda, Bank Jateng, and local BUMDes entities, with each party handling distinct operational responsibilities.

b) Cost and benefit sharing

Various financial models underpinned the programs, from DIY's wholly self-funded Info PKB DIY app to more collaborative cost-sharing models. For instance, E-Posti shared costs between BPKA DIY and BPD based on operational competencies. Central Java's SAMSAT Budiman implemented a unique competitive benefit-sharing mechanism, where benefits to BUMDes increased with higher service transaction volumes (see Table 2).

c) Distrust

Both provinces utilized criteria and monitoring systems to manage trust in partnerships. For example, DIY established standards for strategic partners and declined partnerships where standards were unmet, as with Tokopedia. Similarly, Central Java required legal status for BUMDes in SAMSAT Budiman partnerships, establishing trust by ensuring that entities met formal qualifications.

**Table 2.** Competitive benefit-sharing model in SAMSAT Budiman

| No. | Type | Transaction activity | Incentive description (Rp = Indonesian Rupiah) | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Agent Operational Support | 11–50 | Rp. 150,000.00 | Given monthly to new agents for the first three months |
| 2 | Transaction Fee Level 1 | 51–100 | Rp. 75,000.00 | Provided monthly with progressive increases based on the cumulative transactions by the agent |
| 3 | Transaction Fee Level 2 | 101–200 | Rp. 100,000.00 | |
| 4 | Transaction Fee Level 3 | 201–300 | Rp. 150,000.00 | |
| 5 | Transaction Fee Level 4 | 301–400 | Rp. 200,000.00 | |
| 6 | Transaction Fee Level 5 | 401–500 | Rp. 225,000.00 | |
| 7 | Transaction Fee Level 6 | 501–600 | Rp. 250,000.00 | |
| 8 | Transaction Fee Level 7 | 601–700 | Rp. 275,000.00 | |
| 9 | Transaction Fee Level 8 | 701–800 | Rp. 300,000.00 | |
| 10 | Transaction Fee Level 9 | 801–900 | Rp. 325,000.00 | |
| 11 | Transaction Fee Level 10 | 901–1000 | Rp. 350,000.00 | |
| 12 | Transaction Fee Level 11 | 1001–1100 | Rp. 375,000.00 | |
| 13 | Transaction Fee Level 12 | 1101–1200 | Rp. 400,000.00 | |
| 14 | Transaction Fee Level 13 | 1201–1300 | Rp. 425,000.00 | |
| 15 | Transaction Fee Level 14 | 1301–1400 | Rp. 450,000.00 | |
| 16 | Transaction Fee Level 15 | 1401–1500 | Rp. 500,000.00 | |
| 17 | Transaction Fee Level 16 | > 1501 | Rp. 550,000.00 | |

*Source: Data Analysis (2024)*

This comprehensive analysis highlights the variations in tax performance and flexible innovations across regions, providing a foundation for future studies on public sector adaptability in fiscal crises. Further studies could investigate the long-term impact of these innovations on regional tax compliance and economic recovery.

## Discussion

***Comparison of DIY innovation (flexible arrangement) with Central Java innovation***

A comparison between innovation governance in Central Java and Special Region of Yogyakarta can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Comparison of innovation governance

| Indicator | Central Java | Yogyakarta |
|---|---|---|
| **Decision-making process** | Flexible | Flexible |
| **Policy content** | Flexible | Flexible |
| **Organizational structure** | Inflexible | Inflexible |
| **Distribution of authority** | Competency-based | Competency-based |
| **Sharing of costs and benefits** | Competitive incentive scheme | Centralized |
| **Trust building** | Training and standardization | Standardization and monitoring |

*Source: Data Analysis (2024)*

Table 3 shows the decision-making process when the two organizations collaborated with partners. First, both DIY and Central Java decision-making were flexible using the decision-making process indicators. By using social media tools to turn inputs into outputs, both organizations use a combination of top-down schemes, bottom-up schemes, and strategic partnership schemes in a flexible manner. Second, regarding policy content indicators, DIY and Central Java policy innovations are flexible. The word flexible here refers to the sense that the content of innovation policies always adapts to changes in the situation. However, when examined more closely, the level of flexibility of the content of policy innovation in Central Java is higher, in the sense that strategic partners are given more freedom to adjust policy content. Third, seen from the organizational structure indicator, the DIY and Central Java policy innovations are classified as inflexible. This is evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, as neither organization adjusted its organizational structure. Interesting findings emerged from Central Java—by implementing the SAMSAT Budiman innovation, Central Java initiated organizational development indirectly through

a partnership scheme. Fourth, seen from the indicator of authority distribution, DIY and Central Java use competence as the basis for building an authority distribution scheme. Fifth, regarding cost and benefit sharing indicators, DIY shares the costs and benefits arising from innovation policies centrally. Meanwhile, Central Java builds a cost and benefit-sharing scheme emphasizing competitive incentives (especially for SAMSAT Budiman).

Finally, the two regions use different strategies regarding trust-building or distrust management indicators. DIY uses standardization and monitoring as the basis of innovation policy, while Central Java uses training and standardization as the basis.

***Comparison of DIY Component design with Central Java***

A comparison between the design of policy innovation components in Central Java and Special Region of Yogyakarta can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Comparison of policy innovation component designs

| Component | Central Java | Yogyakarta |
|---|---|---|
| **Technology** | Full digitalization | Hybrid |
| **Strategy** | Full digitalization and extensive partnerships | Limited digitalization and partnerships |
| **Organizational structure and human resources** | No pandemic task force and additional human resources | No pandemic task force and additional human resources |
| **Measurement system** | PKB revenue target remains | PKB revenue target lowered |

*Source: Data Analysis (2024)*

Table 4 shows the components that make up policy innovation. The technology component distinguishes innovation policies in DIY and Central Java. DIY uses mixed or hybrid digitalization as a tool to realize innovation goals. Mixed digitalization can be seen when DIY processes PKB payments to vehicle registration letter printing, which are not entirely digital. Meanwhile, Central Java conducts full digitalization from payment to e-STNK printing.

The strategy component is the second component involved in innovation policy. Field data shows that DIY uses digitalization and limited partnerships as innovation strategies. Meanwhile, Central Java applies full digitalization and extensive partnerships as the strategy relies upon. Central Java shows broad partnerships by involving as many strategic partners as possible, ranging from banks, digital platforms, state owned enterprises, and BUMDes to modern minimarket networks.

Organizational structure and human resources are the third components involved in innovation. The data shows that, like DIY, Central Java did not change the organizational structure of HR components. Both decided that the organizational structure during the COVID-19 pandemic did not need to be changed. Central Java and DIY did not form

special task forces or task forces ordered to carry out special functions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, neither increased the number of human resources specifically as a step to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Implementing tax service innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed significant differences in adaptive governance approaches between Central Java and Yogyakarta. The primary finding indicates Central Java's comprehensive digital transformation strategy and extensive partnership network demonstrated superior adaptability to Yogyakarta's hybrid approach. This finding extends Janssen and van der Voort's (2016) work on adaptive governance by showing how flexible arrangements translate into measurable performance improvements. For instance, Central Java's SAKPOLE platform achieved a 95% digital service adoption rate, compared to Yogyakarta's 60% adoption rate of hybrid services, demonstrating the effectiveness of comprehensive digital transformation strategies.

The organizational structure and authority distribution patterns emerged as critical factors in innovation implementation success. While both regions maintained formal organizational structures, Central Java's approach to distributed authority through the SAMSAT Budiman program created more effective service delivery networks. This aligns with van Buuren et al.'s (2015) findings on flexible arrangements in governance. The evidence shows that Central Java's distributed authority model enabled 234 service points through partnerships. At the same time, Yogyakarta's centralized approach limited service delivery to 45 locations, indicating the superiority of flexible organizational arrangements during crises.

Different approaches to measurement systems and performance targets yielded contrasting outcomes. Central Java's decision to maintain original revenue targets while implementing competitive incentive structures proved more effective than Yogyakarta's target reduction strategy. This observation supports Arnold et al.'s (2017) emphasis on adaptive performance management in crisis response.

Trust-building mechanisms and partnership management strategies significantly influenced innovation outcomes. Central Java's proactive approach to building trust through capacity building and standardization programs fostered more sustainable partnerships than Yogyakarta's monitoring-focused approach. This finding extends Cleaver and Whaley's (2018) work on trust in adaptive governance systems. The comparative data shows that Central Java maintained 85% of its crisis-period partnerships post-pandemic, while Yogyakarta retained only 45%, highlighting the importance of robust trust-building mechanisms.

The cost-benefit distribution model emerged as a crucial differentiator in innovation success. Central Java's competitive incentive structure in the SAMSAT Budiman program, which rewarded performance-based outcomes, proved more effective than Yogyakarta's fixed-cost model. This aligns with Smoke et al.'s (2022) findings on distributed innovation benefits. The evidence shows that partner organizations in Central Java's model achieved average revenue increases of 25%, compared to 8% in Yogyakarta's model, demonstrating the effectiveness of performance-based incentive structures.

The study reveals that successful public service innovation during crises requires integrating three key elements: comprehensive digital transformation, distributed authority structures, and performance-based incentive systems. This finding contributes to the theoretical understanding of adaptive governance and practical insights for public sector innovation. The comparative analysis of Central Java and Yogyakarta's experiences provides empirical evidence that organizations achieving higher levels of integration across these dimensions demonstrate superior crisis resilience and innovation outcomes.

## Conclusion

1. This study advances our understanding of adaptive governance and public service innovation during crises through a comparative analysis of tax service innovations in two Indonesian provinces during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our findings demonstrate that successful innovation implementation depends on three critical factors: flexible cross-organizational service cooperation, equitable cost-benefit distribution, and competitive incentive structures. Compared to Yogyakarta's hybrid approach, the superior performance of Central Java's comprehensive digital transformation and broad partnership strategy provides compelling evidence for the importance of integrated adaptive governance mechanisms in crisis response.
2. The research makes several theoretical contributions to the literature on adaptive governance and public sector innovation. First, it extends existing frameworks by demonstrating how flexible arrangements operate in public service delivery during crises. Second, it identifies specific mechanisms through which adaptive governance enhances organizational resilience. Third, it provides empirical evidence for the relationship between innovation implementation approaches and performance outcomes in different institutional contexts.
3. Our findings offer practitioners valuable insights for designing effective public service innovations. The success of Central Java's SAMSAT Budiman program, particularly its competitive incentive structure and distributed authority model, provides a practical template for public organizations seeking to enhance service delivery resilience. However, implementation success requires careful attention to trust-building mechanisms, partner capacity development, and sustainable incentive structures.
4. The study's limitations include its focus on two Indonesian provinces and the specific context of tax administration. Future research could examine the applicability of these findings in different cultural contexts and public service domains. Additionally, longitudinal studies could investigate the long-term sustainability of crisis-driven innovations and their impact on organizational performance.

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# ADAPTYVIOS INOVACIJOS IR MOKESČIŲ PASLAUGŲ VEIKSMAI: REGIONŲ PAJAMŲ AGENTŪRŲ PALYGINAMASIS TYRIMAS PANDEMINĖS KRIZĖS METU

**Anotacija.** Per COVID-19 pandemiją 2020 m. sumažėjo Jogjakartos specialiojo regiono ir Centrinės Javos provincijų vyriausybių mokestinės pajamos. Per šią krizę mokesčių paslaugų inovacijų iniciatyvos tapo svarbiu atsaku. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama paaiškinti ryšį tarp COVID-19 pandemijos, mokesčių efektyvumo ir paslaugų naujovių diegimo 2020–2024 m. dviejose Indonezijos provincijose, turinčiose skirtingas valdymo ypatybes. Naudodami adaptyvaus valdymo teoriją ir kokybinę analizę taikydami lyginamojo atvejo tyrimo metodą, atlikome pusiau struktūrinius interviu su pagrindinėmis suinteresuotosiomis šalimis. Išvados atskleidžia, kad mokesčių paslaugų inovacijos pandemijos metu reikšmingai paveikė regionų mokestines pajamas dėl trijų pagrindinių savybių: (1) lankščios tarporganizacinės paslaugų bendradarbiavimo schemos, (2) teisingo kaštų ir naudos paskirstymo principų įgyvendinimas ir (3) inovacijų įgyvendinimas, pagrįstas konkurencingomis skatinimo schemomis. Išsamesnė Centrinės Javos skaitmeninė transformacija ir platesnė partnerystės strategija veikė geriau nei Jogjakartos hibridinis metodas. Šis tyrimas prisideda prie adaptyvaus valdymo tobulinimo, parodydamas, kaip lanksti viešųjų paslaugų inovacijų tvarka gali padidinti organizacijos atsparumą krizių metu.

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# NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN: HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF FUNDING

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the evolution and current state of financing of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kazakhstan. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between international donors and state structures at different stages of civil society development. Key challenges, such as dependence on grants, changes in legislation, and a low level of private donations, are discussed. Based on the analysis of current trends, recommendations are offered to improve the financial sustainability of NGOs through diversifying funding sources, strengthening partnerships with the state, and developing social entrepreneurship. Kazakhstan, after the January 2022 events, faced the need for real and profound changes, including in the sphere of interaction with the non-governmental sector. However, one of the most challenging aspects of NGO development, which directly affects the sustainability of the sector, is the issue of financing the activities of organizations. To realize the goal, the authors used and analyzed statistical data for 2018–2021, regulatory legal acts, and results of research conducted on this topic earlier.

The research has shown that today, there is a prevalence of state funding of NGOs with decreasing support from international donors and weak development of other alternative sources. Such a bias, despite the existing need for state support for the development of the

sector, at this stage actualizes iversification of funding sources, activation of NGOs themselves to expand the visibility of organizations, and the manifestation of political will to build real partnerships.

***Key words:*** *NGOs, government grants, Kazakhstan, civil society, state social order.*
***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *NVO (nevyriausybinės organizacijos), valstybės dotacijos, Kazachstanas, pilietinė visuomenė, valstybės socialinė tvarka.*

## Introduction

This article explores the history and current state of financing for NGOs in Kazakhstan. By analyzing the evolution of funding sources, including government grants, international aid, and contributions from private companies and citizens, the article highlights key trends and shifts in NGO support over time. Additionally, it examines factors influencing the financial stability of NGOs and their interactions with public and private structures. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape, reference is made to recent research and reports by organizations focusing on civil society in Kazakhstan.

The events of January 2022 served as a shocking moment for Kazakhstan, with the reasons, nature, and motives of these events still lacking clear and unified assessments. In the immediate aftermath, the President of Kazakhstan criticized "grief activists," referring to individuals identifying as "human rights defenders," "free media," and "foreign" figures (Inform.kz 2022), indirectly linking them to civil society. However, in subsequent discussions and assessments of the events, such rhetoric was not reiterated. Of note is the debate surrounding amendments to the Law "On Elections," which proposes the exclusion of NGOs receiving foreign funding from participating in elections.

In Kazakhstan, the term "NGO" encompasses a wide range of organizations, including associations, foundations, public unions, and professional or sectoral unions. However, within the framework of the state social order, not all such entities qualify as NGOs. According to Kazakhstani legislation, NGOs are defined as organizations voluntarily established by citizens to achieve social, cultural, educational, or other publicly significant goals. For example, trade unions and professional associations may only qualify as NGOs if they meet specific legal conditions, as outlined in the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Non-Profit Organizations" (Law of RK 2001).

This discussion raises several pressing questions: What is the current state of NGO funding in Kazakhstan? Why is this issue critical for the development of civil society? What barriers must be overcome to establish a "new" and effective system of interaction between the government and civil society?

By addressing these questions, the article aims to provide insights into the challenges and opportunities for the NGO sector, offering recommendations to strengthen its role in fostering public well-being and supporting democratic development.

## Literature review

The academic literature underscores the critical role of NGOs as intermediaries between the state and civil society, particularly during periods of socio-economic transition. Recent studies show the importance of various civil sector agents in strengthening democracy (Bernhard 2020; Mietzner 2021; Sénit 2020), supporting and strengthening social help through various mechanisms of interactions with the government and private sector (Bindman et al. 2019; Mirvis and Googins 2018; Mok et al. 2021; Nurmala et al. 2018), disseminating new practices and achieving sustainable development (Kurz 2021; Sénit 2020), and helping the state with the fight against the spreading of COVID-19 (Huda et al. 2021; Jiang 2020; Raimo et al. 2021).

NGOs play a leading role in the processes mentioned above. According to the United Nations, an NGO is defined as "a non-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which is organized on a local, national, or international level to address issues in supporting public good" (UN n.d.).

The NGO sector in Central Asia is still in the process of establishing its position and influence. This is largely due to the relatively recent independence of the countries in the region, as well as the specific nature of their political regimes and patterns of interaction with civil society. In addition, the prevailing political culture continues to be shaped by the Soviet legacy, which limits the full development of participatory practices and civic engagement.

Nevertheless, data from the World Bank and the Civil Society Participation Index indicate a gradual positive trend. The index, which evaluates the extent and quality of civic participation on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high), shows incremental improvements in several Central Asian countries. For instance, the Republic of Kyrgyzstan improved its score from 5 in 2018 to 6 in 2020; Kazakhstan progressed from 2 to 3; and Uzbekistan advanced from 1 to 3 over the same period. These changes suggest increasing openness to civil society and growing institutional awareness of its role.

However, it is important to emphasize that, with the exception of Kazakhstan, civil society participation indicators across the region remain significantly below the global average (World Bank, n.d.). This highlights that civil society in Central Asia is still undergoing a formative phase, marked by both structural constraints and gradual institutional adaptation.

Furthermore, despite the existence of certain barriers, the NGO sector of countries of the region is undergoing some changes, which are, to some degree, facilitated by steps of governmental bodies to establish interaction mechanisms and support the development of civil society.

One of the key factors affecting the sustainability of NGOs in developing countries is access to consistent and adequate funding (de Lacerda Sanglard et al. 2022; Ebenezer et al. 2020; Gajdova and Majduchova 2018). In contexts where civic participation is low, support from the business sector is limited, and interactions with government bodies are

complex, NGOs often face significant challenges to their survival. These structural constraints serve as major obstacles to their long-term viability. Empirical studies focusing on Central Asia-particularly Kazakhstan-highlight that insufficient funding, a lack of diversified income sources, and inefficiencies within existing governmental support mechanisms continue to hinder the development of NGOs and, by extension, the broader civil society sector (Makhmutova and Akhmetova 2011; Naidenova et al. 2019; Turdubaeva 2018).In this regard, this article attempts to do an in-depth analysis of existing mechanisms and sources of NGO funding in Kazakhstan, identify barriers that hinder the sustainable development of NGOs, and propose recommendations for further development of this sector. Research is based on analysis of primary statistical data from 2018 to 2021, regulatory legal acts on issues of NGO funding, as well as analysis of secondary research data on existing literature on this topic.

## Materials and methods

The study utilizes a mixed-method approach, both qualitative and quantitative, which provides an in-depth and multidimensional analysis of the evolution and current state of NGO funding in Kazakhstan. It also focuses on the impact of the January 2022 events on the civil sector and grant support. The research design is descriptive and analytical, aimed at studying the dynamics of state and international funding of NGOs and identifying challenges and opportunities after the January 2022 events. The analysis of documents and reports includes the study of normative acts and strategies regulating state social contracting and grant support to NGOs in Kazakhstan.

## Results and analysis

**History of the development of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan, and the issue of funding their activities**

***First phase.*** The emergence of the NGO sector in modern Kazakhstan dates back to the mid-80s, when several public organizations, independent trade unions, and media were created in the Kazakh SSR in the wake of the "perestroika" process. For instance, the "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" anti-nuclear movement is considered one of the prominent examples of an NGO of that period of time. According to S. D'yachenko (2007), from 1984 to 1994, about 400 NGOs were functioning in the territory of Kazakhstan.

In 1991, in response to the need for a legal framework to regulate emerging forms of societal engagement, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic enacted the law On Public Associations of the Kazakh SSR. This legislation formally defined the concept of public associations and listed the types of organizations falling under this category. These included political parties, mass movements, trade and professional unions, women's organizations,

veterans' associations, organizations for persons with disabilities, youth and children's organizations, as well as scientific, technical, cultural, educational, sports, and other voluntary societies, including art unions and associations (Adilet.kz, n.d.).

The law was significant in that it introduced the principle of non-interference: the state was not to intervene in the internal affairs of public associations, and, conversely, public associations were expected not to interfere in the activities of the state.

***Second phase.*** Since the mid-1990s, there has been a quantitative growth of NGOs (Diachenko 2007), with a low level of interest in the sector on the part of the state, which can be explained by the difficult socio-political and economic situation of a young and weak state. The main source of funding for that period was international donors (Alymkulova and Seipulnik 2005), which contributed to the emergence of the first sustainable and experienced NGOs in Kazakhstan that operate in the country to this day. This situation, however, pushed back the creation of their own civic culture based on the Kazakh context and experience.

During this period, the state began to take initial steps toward establishing cooperation with the civil sector. In 1996, the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On Public Associations was adopted, which marked a significant departure from the earlier law of the Kazakh SSR. The new legislation introduced provisions allowing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to interact with state bodies through formal agreements and contracts for the provision of specific services (Zakon.kz, n.d.). In other words, this law laid the foundation for the concept of state–NGO cooperation and introduced a potential new source of funding for NGO activities.

However, it is important to note that the 1996 law did not include provisions requiring NGOs to submit financial reports either to their members or to the broader public. Despite its adoption, the relationship between state institutions and NGOs largely remained formal and superficial (Pierobon, 2016), which hindered the development of alternative, state-supported funding mechanisms for civil society.

Third phase. The late 1990s and early 2000s marked the beginning of more active interaction between the state and the NGO sector. During this phase, institutional platforms for cooperation were established, facilitated by the emergence of proactive and experienced organizations (Lapins and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012), as well as the state's growing interest in democratization, partnership-building, and oversight of the sector. As part of these developments, a pilot competition for NGO projects was held in 2003, resulting in the implementation of 20 projects worth 10.7 million tenge. This initiative continued in subsequent years, with 20 projects funded for 9.7 million tenge in 2004 and 50 projects for over 59.7 million tenge in 2005 (Nukezhanov n.d.).

***Fourth phase.*** This phase marked the consolidation of state funding mechanisms for NGOs through the adoption of the Law On State Social Order in 2005, allowing the government to become a key donor for NGOs. During this period, Kazakhstan's political regime strengthened, intensifying efforts to diminish opposition and reduce NGO reliance on international grants and influence (Pierobon 2016).

The law provided a stable funding source, supporting smaller and regional NGOs without access to international grants. However, it also led to the artificial expansion of the sector, including the rise of "one-day" organizations and government-organized non-governmental organizations (also known as GONGOs), alongside corruption (Ovcharenko 2005). Consequently, NGOs, in some cases, diverged from their mission to serve as an independent "third party" between the state and society.

State funding for social orders increased significantly during this period, rising from 53.3 million KZT (approximately 124,000 USD) in 2005 to over 1 billion KZT (approximately 2.4 million USD) by 2010 (Petrenko, 2019). By 2020, 59.4% of NGOs identified the state as their primary source of funding (Kaidarova, 2020). Despite this progress, issues of transparency in the selection process for state-funded organizations and the effectiveness of implemented projects remained unresolved. Reports by international organizations and discussions at civil forums concluded that state funding—when combined with international grants—was still insufficient to support sustainable NGO development due to inequality of access, lack of transparency, and limited organizational capacity (Kaznacheyev, n.d.; Chebotaryov, 2012; Makhmutova and Akhmetova, 2011).Despite these developments, transparency in selecting organizations for state funding, as well as the effectiveness of implemented projects, remained problematic. Reports by international organizations and discussions at civil forums concluded that state funding, combined with international grants, was insufficient to ensure sustainable NGO development due to inequality in access, lack of transparency, and weak organizational capacity (Kaznacheyev n.d.; Makhmutova and Akhmetova 2011).

***Fifth phase.*** After 2010, government budget expenditures on social contracting for NGOs continued to grow, while international funding and grants steadily declined. In 2016, new mechanisms to support the sector were introduced, including state grants and awards for NGOs. To facilitate the implementation of these measures, the Center for Support of Civil Initiatives was established, acting as the operator of state grants and overseeing the execution of this state support program.

In addition, the government implemented new measures to enhance oversight of NGOs by launching the NGO Registration Database in 2017. Although registration in this database was initially voluntary, only registered NGOs that submitted annual reports on their activities were granted access to state funding through grants, bonuses, and social contracting. This development elicited mixed reactions, being perceived both as a form of state intervention in the civil sector and as an effort to exercise control over NGO activities.

This phase highlights the growing role of the state in shaping the NGO sector, balancing increased financial support with mechanisms aimed at regulating and monitoring the activities of NGOs.

**Characteristics of the NGO sector in Kazakhstan**

According to the data of the Bureau of National Statistics for 2020, there are more than 21,000 registered NGOs in Kazakhstan; however, only 13,000 organizations are active, which means that about 40% of registered NGOs do not operate, and this confirms the

instability of the sector. Furthermore, considering the current situation in the non-governmental sector, it could be noted that there is a regional imbalance, as well as a low representation of rural NGOs, despite the fact that 41% of the country's population lives in rural areas. Therefore, as a percentage of the total number of active NGOs, 33% of organizations operate in the two republican cities of Almaty and Nur-Sultan, whereas only 18% of organizations operate in rural areas (Kaidarova 2020).

When examining the funding landscape and its sources for NGOs, several key trends emerge. According to a survey of NGO representatives presented in the 2020 National Report on the State of the Civil Sector, 59.4% of respondents identified government funding as their primary source of income. Additionally, 11.7% reported receiving support from foreign donors and grants, while 20.8% relied on donations from local legal entities. Interestingly, more than a third (37%) indicated that they use their own personal funds to sustain operations. Other sources of funding were less common, with only 9.8% citing membership fees and 9.4% mentioning income generated through commercial activities.

## Discussion. Financing the NGO sector: status quo

These findings highlight the diverse but uneven funding base for NGOs in Kazakhstan, prompting a broader discussion on the sector's financial sustainability. The heavy reliance on government funding underscores the need for greater diversification, as overdependence on a single source can limit operational flexibility and independence. Moreover, the limited contributions from membership fees and commercial activities raise questions about the sector's capacity to generate self-sustaining revenue. This discussion calls for a closer examination of how NGOs can enhance their fundraising strategies, engage local communities more effectively, and build partnerships with private and international stakeholders to secure a more stable and diverse financial base. The government currently acts as the primary source of funding for NGOs in Kazakhstan. This is the result of a systematic policy aimed at increasing influence in this sector and building interaction, as reflected in funding volumes. According to official data, in the first years of the state social order program in 2005, approximately 60 million tenge were allocated for project implementation. By 2010, this amount exceeded 1 billion tenge, reaching 6 billion tenge in 2015 and continuing to grow.

**State social order funding (2018–2021)**

Between 2018 and 2021, funding for the state social order consistently exceeded 15 billion tenge, predominantly sourced from local budgets. As shown in Table 1, those years saw an increase in funding from local executive bodies, while central-level funding declined. This may indicate a more targeted approach to providing socially important services to regional populations. The funding allocated for the implementation of the state social order in Kazakhstan from 2018 to 2021 is presented in Table 1. The amounts are shown in both the national currency (Kazakhstani tenge [KZT]) and recalculated into U.S. dollars (USD)

based on the average annual exchange rates for each year.

**Table 1.** State Social Order Funding, 2018–2021 (in KZT and USD, thousand)
*(The calculations are based on the following average exchange rates: 2018: 1 USD = 344.71 KZT; 2019: 1 USD = 382.75 KZT; 2020: 1 USD = 412.95 KZT; 2021: 1 USD = 424.43 KZT)*

| Year | Republican budget (KZT, thousand) | Local budget (KZT, thousand) | Republican budget (USD, thousand) | Local budget (USD, thousand) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 541,599.1 | 18,635,964.4 | 1,571.17 | 54,062.73 |
| 2019 | 476,216.4 | 16,930,513.7 | 1,244.20 | 44,233.87 |
| 2020 | 126,118.5 | 21,724,694.5 | 305.41 | 52,608.53 |
| 2021 | 92,806.3 | 19,513,706.5 | 218.66 | 45,976.27 |

*Source of data: Ministry of Finance of RK*

These conversions provide a clearer understanding of the funding levels in international monetary terms, facilitating comparisons and analysis.

In the context of implementing state social order projects, the majority of funding is allocated to social assistance and welfare, as well as the development of culture, sports, tourism, and the information space, as illustrated in Table 2. Conversely, the least amount of funding is directed toward projects in agriculture, environmental protection, wildlife conservation, and land relations. A potential risk in this area is the possibility of a shift in government policy priorities during emergencies (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), which could leave NGOs specializing in narrow fields and relying primarily on state social orders without financial support.

**Table 2.** The volume of financing of the state social order by directions, 2018–2021 (in USD, thousand)

| Year | Total (USD, thousand) | General public services (USD, thousand) | Public order, security, legal, judicial, penitentiary activities (USD, thousand) | Education (USD, thousand) | Healthcare (USD, thousand) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | 55,633.91 | 2,558.63 | 535.61 | 1,061.40 | 843.94 |
| 2019 | 45,478.07 | 1,624.68 | 304.64 | 1,216.59 | 596.80 |
| 2020 | 52,913.94 | 1,158.47 | 172.13 | 772.86 | 410.53 |
| 2021 | 46,194.93 | 1,786.90 | 53.43 | 553.93 | 195.84 |

***Exchange rates used: 2018:*** *1 USD = 344.71 KZT;* ***2019:*** *1 USD = 382.75 KZT;* ***2020:*** *1 USD = 412.95 KZT;* ***2021:*** *1 USD = 424.43 KZT Source of data: Ministry of Finance of RK*

Another source of state funding is the granting of NGO projects through the unified Civil Initiatives Support Center, as well as annual awards for the most effective and

successful NGOs.

According to the Civil Initiatives Support Center, from the date of establishment in 2016, more than 400 projects for a total of more than 7 billion tenge were implemented (CISC.kz 2022). However, the situation in 2018 around bankruptcy and liquidation of the Bank of Astana, when the Center was not able to withdraw its cash deposits from the bank to pay for the implementation of projects, showed the presence of management risks in this sector.

If we examine the literature on the NGO sector in Kazakhstan, it could be observed that most of the research includes country studies of civil society and NGOs by various international organizations. Moreover, these studies are aimed at studying the current state of NGOs and identifying obstacles for the development of this sector (Makhmutova and Akhmetova 2011; Naidenova et al. 2019; Turdubaeva 2018). The issue of funding the activities of NGOs is mentioned as one of the barriers to the sustainability of the sector and its development. According to the main argument of the research, the existing state mechanisms for financial support of NGOs are not fully transparent—there is a manifestation of favoritism and corruption, and there is an imbalance in the distribution of grants and social contracting.

Furthermore, the second largest source of funding for the activities of Kazakhstani NGOs is international grants from various global actors. In 2018, by a decree of the Government of Kazakhstan, a list of foreign grant-making entities was approved, comprising 98 organizations. These included financial institutions (such as the Asian Development Bank and the Eurasian Development Bank); public foundations (including the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives); international organizations (UN, WHO, IAEA, OSCE); and governmental agencies (such as USAID, the European Union, the Government of Canada, and the U.S. Department of State) (Adilet.kz 2018). According to the Ministry of Information and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, approximately 200 NGOs in the country receive international funding each year, totaling around 5 billion tenge (Sputnik Kazakhstan 2018). Additionally, according to the U.S. Department of State budget data, nearly $5 million has been allocated over the past three years to programs supporting countries in Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia (USAID 2022).

In addition, it should be noted that not every organization receives or participates in competitions to implement projects funded by international donors. According to representatives of NGOs, non-governmental organizations themselves note that only the most experienced and qualified organizations have the opportunity to receive grants (Pierobon 2016); therefore, for young organizations with little experience and institutional human resources, it is difficult to receive such type of funding. Furthermore, another barrier for NGO funding is the topics and purposes of grants, which mostly depend on the international and domestic agenda of the organization providing grants.

For instance, in 2020, the Soros Foundation-Kazakhstan allocated more than 360 million tenge to NGOs in the form of grants for the implementation of various projects (Soros

Foundation-Kazakhstan 2020). At the same time, about 45% (more than 168 million tenge) of the allocated funds were directed to projects dedicated to socio-political issues: the protection of rights and freedoms, transparency, and accountability of state policy. In order to develop the NGO sector in Kazakhstan, new sources of funding should be introduced, by developing financing sources such as entrepreneurial business activities, charity, and interaction with the private sector, for instance. Crowdfunding mechanisms could be one of the ways to solve this problem. The Ministry of Public Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, together with experts in the field of civil society and representatives of NGOs, developed and approved new rules for grant financing. In total, more than 17 thousand NGOs work in the country, and more than 21 thousand public organizations are registered. To date, the number of people employed in the civil sector is about 25 thousand people.

To date, work is underway to create grant and award management services as part of automating the process of accepting and processing grant applications. The main purpose of the platform is digitalization and automation of grant-granting processes, the simplification of application review procedures, and the prevention of corruption risks.

## Conclusion

Since gaining independence, Kazakhstan's NGO sector has undergone significant development, progressing through a formative phase in which international donors served as the primary source of funding. This support enabled organizations to survive, gain experience, and lay the foundation for a robust civil sector. Additionally, the active involvement of the state, through financial, legislative, and institutional support, has fostered stronger interactions between NGOs and government agencies, contributing to the sector's quantitative and qualitative growth. Over time, the reduction in international donor assistance has reshaped the funding landscape for NGOs, shifting the primary sources of financial support. In the 1990s and early 2000s, international grants were the mainstay of NGO funding (Diachenko 2007). However, since the adoption of the 2005 Law on State Social Order, the government has become the principal financier, providing funding through state social orders and grants. Today, the NGO sector faces the critical task of diversifying its funding sources. This can be achieved by increasing public engagement in NGO activities, launching targeted information campaigns, fostering networks, and promoting creativity and transparency within the sector. Concurrently, the state must take concrete steps to build genuine partnerships with NGOs, ensuring long-term collaboration and mutual support.

In conclusion, the analysis of the history and current state of NGO financing in Kazakhstan highlights several key trends and challenges. The variety of funding sources-ranging from government grants to contributions by international donors and private individuals-plays a pivotal role in shaping NGO activities. However, the dynamic nature of funding, influenced by socio-economic fluctuations, presents ongoing challenges to financial sustainability. To address these, NGOs must focus on versatile fundraising strategies,

strengthening partnerships with the business sector, and further diversifying their sources of support.

For the sustainable development of Kazakhstan's NGO sector, it is essential to continually monitor the financial environment, promote effective funding models, and emphasize the sector's social significance. By doing so, NGOs can enhance their contributions to public well-being and secure their role as a vital component of civil society.

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# NEVYRIAUSYBINĖS ORGANIZACIJOS (NVO) KAZACHSTANE: ISTORIJA IR DABARTINĖ FINANSAVIMO BŪKLĖ

**Anotacija.** Šiame straipsnyje analizuojama nevyriausybinių organizacijų (NVO) finansavimo raida ir dabartinė padėtis Kazachstane. Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas tarptautinių donorų ir valstybės struktūrų sąveikai skirtinguose pilietinės visuomenės vystymosi etapuose. Aptariami pagrindiniai iššūkiai, tokie kaip priklausomybė nuo dotacijų, įstatymų pakeitimai ir mažas privačių aukų lygis. Remiantis dabartinių tendencijų analize, siūlomos rekomendacijos gerinti NVO finansinį tvarumą diversifikuojant finansavimo šaltinius, stiprinant partnerystę su valstybe ir plėtojant socialinį verslumą. Kazachstanas po 2022 m. sausio mėn. įvykių susidūrė su realių ir esminių pokyčių poreikiu, įskaitant sąveikos su nevyriausybiniu sektoriumi srityje. Tačiau vienas iš sudėtingiausių NVO plėtros aspektų, kuris tiesiogiai veikia sektoriaus tvarumą, yra organizacijų veiklos finansavimo klausimas. Tikslui įgyvendinti autoriai panaudojo ir išanalizavo 2018-2021 metų statistinius duomenis, norminius teisės aktus, taip pat anksčiau šia tema atliktų tyrimų rezultatus.

Tyrimas parodė, kaip šiandien vyrauja valstybės finansavimas NVO, mažėjant tarptautinių donorų paramai ir silpnai plėtojant kitus alternatyvius šaltinius. Nepaisant esamo valstybės paramos sektoriaus plėtrai poreikio, šiame etape būtina aktualizuoti finansavimo šaltinių diversifikavimą, pačių NVO aktyvinimą, siekiant plėsti organizacijų matomumą, bei kurti realias partnerystes.

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# EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES: EXPERIENCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** In the era of globalization and accelerated societal transformation, corruption continues to represent a critical challenge across both scholarly discourse and practical governance. It erodes democratic principles, hinders economic development, and compromises social equity. Therefore, the implementation of robust anti-corruption measures is essential for strengthening public administration systems, fostering public confidence in government institutions, and promoting transparency.

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies in Kazakhstan, highlight successful preventive practices, and propose recommendations to enhance anti-corruption mechanisms within the system of public administration.

Considering the breadth of the documents examined, the study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis techniques.

The outcomes of this research may serve as a valuable resource for public administration bodies and civil society institutions in formulating anti-corruption initiatives and refining existing policies.

***Keywords:*** *corruption, anti-corruption strategy, public service, corruption prevention, public service.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *korupcija, kovos su korupcija strategija, valstybės tarnyba, korupcijos prevencija, viešoji tarnyba.*

## Introduction

Corruption continues to be a widespread problem affecting institutions of public administration, the private sector, and business environments across the globe. It poses a significant barrier to socio-economic progress and weakens the effectiveness of governmental structures.

Importantly, corruption and the measures to counteract it are not solely contemporary concerns. Historical evidence indicates that corrupt practices existed as early as ancient civilizations, including those of Egypt and Rome.

In ancient Roman law, the term "corruption" can be found, derived from the Latin word "*corrumpere*," which means "to destroy, break, or unlawfully bribe" (Arvind 2001). Similarly, ancient Egyptian inscriptions advised: "When you appear before your superior, bow your head, for it will save your household; defiance will bring you trouble." (Tomsinov 2004)

Although the manifestations of corruption evolve with changing circumstances, its core essence remains constant. And while the foundations of corruption in ancient times differ significantly from contemporary examples, the principle remains unchanged (Transparency International 2024).

One key distinction between modern and ancient corruption is its globalized nature. In the present day, corruption transcends national boundaries, infiltrating international organizations and posing a threat to the global legal order. It is now recognized as an international problem that jeopardizes the integrity of worldwide governance systems (Lipinsky et al. 2019).

## Literature review

The effectiveness of a country's anti-corruption efforts and the level of corruption within its borders are critical factors that enhance its reputation. The level of corruption directly influences foreign direct investment inflows, political negotiations, and the country's standing on the global stage (Karlina and Kochneva 2023).

Although corruption can arise in various forms and poses numerous risks, its persistence is frequently associated with systemic flaws in the institutional design of public governance. Ambiguous and contradictory legislation, along with a general lack of accessibility and clarity for the population, grants public officials significant interpretive latitude. This, in turn, reinforces informal power structures within state institutions and elevates the likelihood of arbitrary administrative decisions. In public administration, corruption is often rooted in the concentration of monopolistic authority and the broad discretionary powers held by officials (Vashalomitdze 2021).

Monopolistic power is more prevalent in economically developed countries, while discretionary power is commonly observed in developing nations.

However, successful anti-corruption efforts require not only the active engagement of public authorities but also the commitment of the business community and civil society in combating corruption (Gaynullin et al. 2024).

Adam Smith, an economist, studied the impact of corruption on economic development. In his works, he demonstrates how corruption leads to a decrease in investment, the deterioration of public services, and the slowdown of economic growth, particularly in countries with transition economies (Semenkova 1979).

Richard Thaler, a professor of economics, explored how corruption affects social inequality and the quality of public governance. His works emphasize that corruption can create barriers to the development of democracy and undermine citizens' trust in state institutions (Thaler 2017).

Daron Acemoglu, an economist and co-author of the book Why Nations Fail, conducted research on the impact of corruption on the economic development of India and China. In his analysis, he found that high levels of corruption are associated with slower economic growth. When governments are susceptible to corruption, the amount of investment in critical sectors, such as infrastructure and education, decreases, negatively affecting long-term development prospects (Acemoglu and Robinson 2020).

Anti-corruption legislation is being developed and strictly enforced across countries worldwide. Dedicated state agencies tasked with combating corruption have been established, and penalties for corruption-related offenses are becoming increasingly severe.

In the fight against corruption, efforts are not limited to contemporary legal measures but also extend to the formulation of precise anti-corruption policies. Furthermore, in an ever-changing world, strategies and action plans are being devised to adapt to new challenges in combating corruption.

Singapore's anti-corruption framework, grounded in well-regulated legal documents and proactive measures, has demonstrated the possibility of significantly reducing corruption levels within a short period.

Singapore has successfully reduced corruption to minimal levels through a combination of political will, effective legislative reforms, the integrity of an incorruptible authorized body, and the independence of the judiciary. The clarity of reform objectives for the entire population, along with the strict implementation of these reforms, has produced unprecedented results recognized globally (Arvind 2001).

In addition to the Singapore model, the Hong Kong model of anti-corruption can also be highlighted. According to the works of renowned British scholar Alan Doig, Botswana has achieved significant success by adopting Hong Kong's anti-corruption model. Botswana's anti-corruption strategy consists of three main components: investigation, anti-corruption education, and preventive measures (Chi 2024).

However, the lack of a clear formula for corruption offenses means that adopting foreign models may not always yield positive results. According to Professor Rob McCusker, a renowned scholar of Teesside University, corruption is a phenomenon primarily driven by the wrongful actions of individuals. In his research, the scholar emphasizes the need to

conduct social and cultural studies before developing anti-corruption strategies. He also advocates for adapting international practices to align with national characteristics (McCusker 2006).

The renowned scholar Gibson, in his works, argues that the development of anti-corruption strategies contributes to the enhancement of effective governance mechanisms within state institutions and helps build public trust in governmental bodies (Disch et al. 2009).

However, it is clear that without eliminating bureaucratic barriers within state institutions, the implementation of any strategy will be difficult (Chidi and Ibrahim 2020).

After gaining independence, the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted the fight against corruption as one of the state's strategic priorities. The first major strategic document in the history of independent Kazakhstan, the "Kazakhstan-2030" development strategy, also outlined an uncompromising anti-corruption plan. Moreover, the current "Kazakhstan-2050" development strategy also places significant emphasis on combating corruption.

Based on these national strategic documents, specific strategic plans aimed at reducing corruption have been adopted and are being implemented. These include the "Anti-Corruption Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2015–2025" (now repealed) and the "Concept of the Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026".

Additionally, the "National Report on Anti-Corruption Efforts" is published annually to explain the results of work carried out based on these strategic documents.

Thanks to the initiatives outlined in these documents, a number of comprehensive measures have been implemented in the country. However, despite the adopted measures, the number of corruption offenses remains high in Kazakhstan. Therefore, questioning the effectiveness of the country's anti-corruption strategies is a legitimate phenomenon. (Talgatuly et. al. 2025)

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's strategic documents has not been widely analyzed in the scientific literature. Additionally, there is a lack of specific research on the relevance and effectiveness of the anti-corruption measures taken.

## Methodology

To assess the effectiveness of anti-corruption strategies, this study explores not only the current and past strategies adopted by the Republic of Kazakhstan but also a broader array of related materials, including national programs, legal frameworks, political declarations, annual reports, media publications, and other relevant sources. A comprehensive document review was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Content analysis was chosen as the primary methodological tool for this research.

The distinctive value of content analysis lies in its ability to interpret written sources within their broader social and institutional contexts. This method facilitates the systematic extraction and classification of structured data from documentary sources. In particular,

the analysis of legal documents and official reports is essential for understanding the nature and effectiveness of anti-corruption policies implemented in Kazakhstan.

By applying content analysis, the study allows for a simultaneous examination of qualitative insights and quantitative indicators. The textual review of anti-corruption policy documents reveals their key principles, instruments, and strategic directions, while the integration of quantitative metrics supports the evaluation of their practical implementation and overall effectiveness.The advantage of content analysis in the study is that it allows the researcher to eliminate personal bias from the analytical process6 (Lindberg et al. 2023).

The fight against corruption in Kazakhstan is multifaceted and comprehensive. Given the large number of documents, legislations, and reports, content analysis provides an effective method for systematically processing extensive data and drawing unified conclusions. This approach plays a significant role in identifying patterns between strategies and their outcomes, as well as in detecting trends within the research.

In the process of content analysis, anti-corruption strategies and action plans will be assessed through quantitative examination of the criminal corruption landscape in Kazakhstan. This assessment will incorporate the Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization committed to combating corruption and evaluating its prevalence worldwide.

The collected data will be organized into structured formats, including tables and bar graphs. These visual tools will serve as the basis for drawing preliminary conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption policies. To interpret the data, the study will employ general theoretical methods such as comparative analysis, synthesis, generalization, induction, and deduction.

## Results and discussion

Since gaining independence, the importance of combating corruption has been firmly established in politically significant state documents. The Republic of Kazakhstan's first and most comprehensive strategic document, the "Kazakhstan-2030" strategy, published in 1997, highlights the importance of a strong fight against corruption on six occasions. According to this document, by the year 2000, Kazakhstan was to establish a professional government, complete reforms in public service and government operations, and prioritize the fight against corruption and abuse of power (Kazakhstan-2030: Increase in Prosperity 1997). In the "Kazakhstan-2030" strategic document, corruption is described as an incomplete set of "qualities" that were nurtured by the former bureaucratic regime and, in recent years, have transitioned from a hidden form to an open one (Kazakhstan-2030 Increase in Prosperity 1997).

As a consequence of this strategy, measures were undertaken to reinforce democratic principles, enhance transparency and accountability within public administration, and foster public trust in governmental institutions. In 1998, the Republic of Kazakhstan enacted

the "Law on Combating Corruption," aimed at attracting skilled professionals to the civil service and establishing conditions that promote integrity and loyalty among public officials. This legislation laid down fundamental anti-corruption principles, including mechanisms for oversight, prevention, control, and prohibition.

Notably, it was the first law within the Commonwealth of Independent States to explicitly define the objectives, guiding principles, and operational mechanisms of authorized bodies tasked with combating corruption.

From 2001 onward, state programs designed to combat corruption were implemented pursuant to this law. These programs involved evaluating the existing corruption landscape and formulating action plans to address urgent challenges in the short term.

The initial comprehensive anti-corruption strategy, which included both situational analysis and future planning, was adopted in 2014 and covered the period from 2015 to 2025. However, in response to the accelerating effects of globalization and evolving societal expectations, a new policy framework was developed. On February 2, 2022, the President of Kazakhstan approved the "Concept of Kazakhstan's Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026," which consolidated national experiences and integrated leading international best practices in anti-corruption efforts.

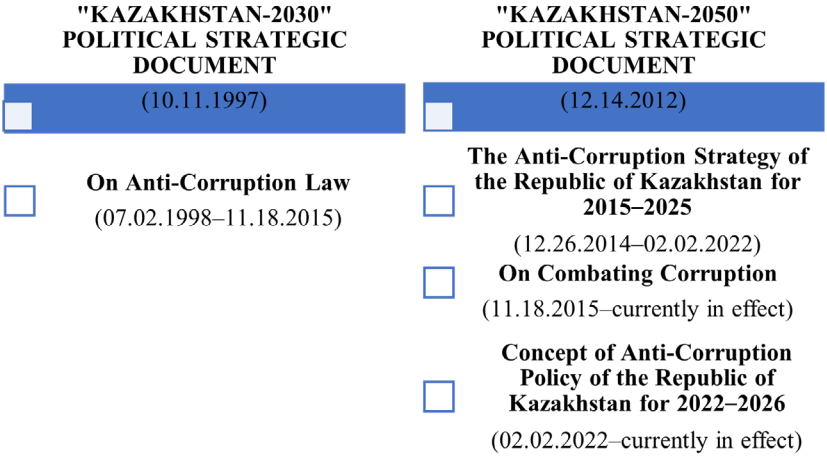



**Figure 1.** Political documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan

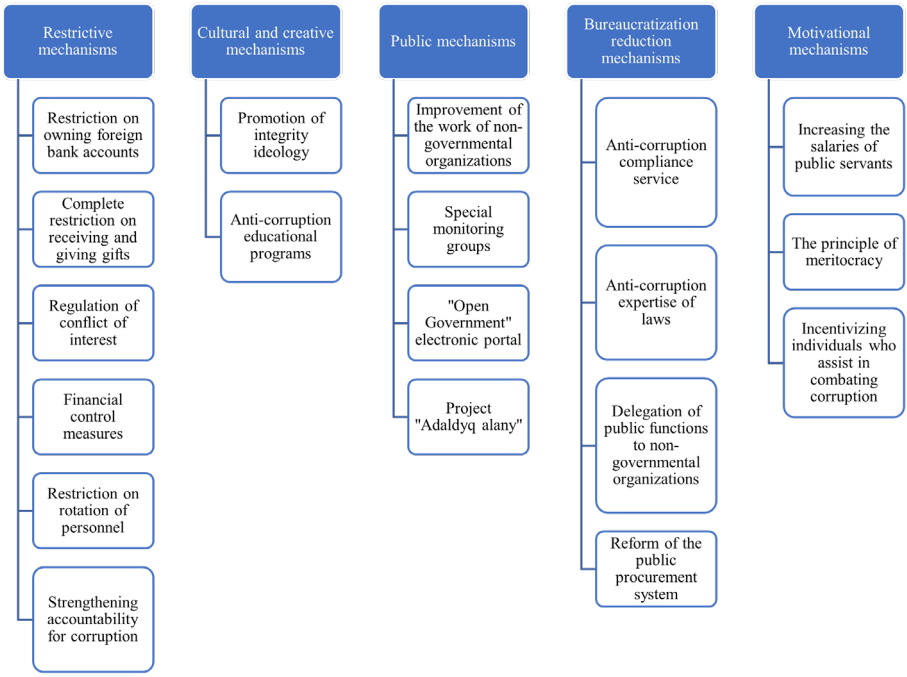
*Source: authors*

As shown in the table above, in the history of independent Kazakhstan, two strategic documents with the primary goal of combating corruption can be observed.

The initial strategic document, developed on the foundation of the Republic of Kazakhstan's Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015–2025, represented a significant milestone through the repeal of the Law "On Combating Corruption" and the enactment of the Law

"On Anti-Corruption Measures." Unlike its predecessor, the new legislation emphasizes not only the fight against corruption but also its prevention, adopting a holistic approach to mitigating corruption risks. The primary priorities of this anti-corruption strategy are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The best mechanisms for preventing corruption




*Source: authors*

The author will classify the strategic priorities into five distinct categories. According to the table, only one of these measures functions as a response mechanism that activates after a corruption incident has occurred—the enhancement of accountability for those involved in corrupt activities. In contrast, the remaining measures comprise a range of preventative actions designed to inhibit corruption before it takes place.

In the course of implementing this strategy, the authorized body recognized in the fight against corruption, the Anti-Corruption Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Anti-Corruption Service), has established the main principles of its activities. These include effective prevention, widespread public awareness, constructive cooperation with society, and the integration of criminal and legal measures (The Concept of Anti-Corruption Policy of the

Republic of Kazakhstan, 2022).

The authorized body established the Corruption Prevention Institute, which has played a crucial role in curbing corruption within the public service and promoting integrity throughout society. Furthermore, emphasis was placed on empowering non-governmental organizations, allowing them to act as public oversight entities within the public administration sector. Active engagement from civil society and the broader public was encouraged through opportunities to attend public service performance reports, offer recommendations, interact directly with senior officials, and pose questions. Government transparency underwent rigorous scrutiny, with the authorized body conducting relevant assessments. The strategic focus transitioned from merely addressing the consequences of corruption to tackling its root causes. To this end, the authorized body performed both external and internal analyses alongside ongoing anti-corruption monitoring aimed at identifying and mitigating corruption risks within public administration.

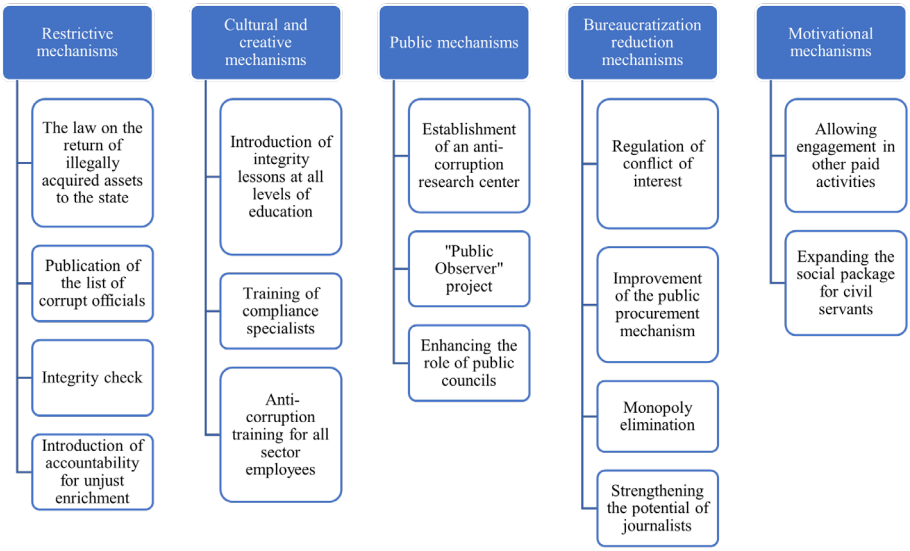
Historically, the authorized body combating corruption operated as a largely closed and punitive institution. However, with the implementation of this strategic framework, it opened public-facing offices and fostered closer collaboration with the citizenry. During this period, robust partnerships were also formed with international anti-corruption organizations.

During the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2015–2025, a number of deficiencies became apparent. Among the key issues were the absence of a holistic and systematic approach to corruption prevention, the limited application of sociological research in evaluating the outcomes of anti-corruption initiatives and the performance of public institutions and the authorized body, as well as the insufficient institutional readiness to maintain the required level of transparency.

These shortcomings were directly acknowledged in the strategic document, which demonstrates the capacity of the public administration system to recognize its own weaknesses and undertake corrective measures.

Subsequently, the article proceeds to analyze the effectiveness of the current Anti-Corruption Policy Concept for 2022–2026, as detailed in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The best mechanisms for preventing corruption




*Source: authors*

Tables 1 and 2 outline the most effective mechanisms currently utilized in Kazakhstan to prevent corruption. The selection of these mechanisms is substantiated by their practical integration into the national anti-corruption framework. These instruments serve as core components of the country's preventive strategy and are regularly subjected to performance evaluations within the broader context of anti-corruption policy implementation.

These mechanisms are also embedded in the National Report on Anti-Corruption Activities, a key strategic document that provides an overview of the status and results of anti-corruption efforts in Kazakhstan. Their inclusion is based both on assessments conducted by competent authorities and on recommendations from international organizations specializing in anti-corruption regulation.

Therefore, the mechanisms highlighted in this study are not only practically relevant but are also continuously monitored, underscoring their essential role in establishing a sustainable anti-corruption infrastructure in the country.

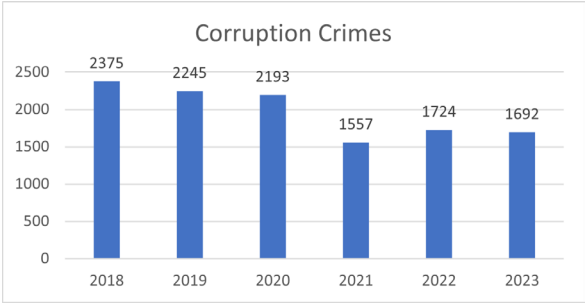
According to the implementation plan of the Anti-Corruption Policy for 2022–2026, the efforts undertaken aim to enhance earlier initiatives introduced in the initial strategic document while also incorporating international best practices.

Modifications to the original mechanisms, informed by foreign anti-corruption organizations, are designed to optimize their operation and ensure consistency. As a result

of these improvements, the preventive tools managed by the authorized body have been systematized, and standardized criteria for evaluating their effectiveness have been introduced. The measures outlined in the strategic document indicate that Kazakhstan is aligning its anti-corruption development with elements of the Singaporean model.

This strategic approach emphasizes a dual focus: cultivating a culture of integrity among civil servants and society at large, while simultaneously enforcing strict punitive measures. Throughout the implementation of these plans, several key objectives have been achieved, leading to a noticeable decline in corruption-related offenses.

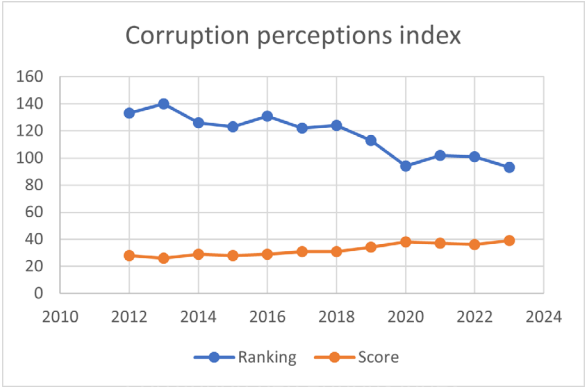
**Diagram 1.** Corruption crimes in the Republic of Kazakhstan




*Source: National Report on Combating Corruption*

In addition, the international non-governmental organization Transparency International provides a positive assessment of the results of the anti-corruption mechanisms in our country.

**Diagram 2.** Corruption perceptions index by Transparency International




*Source: Transparency International (https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/kazakhstan)*

As a result of the long-standing anti-corruption policy in the country, for the first time in history, Moody's agency assigned a "stable" rating to the Republic of Kazakhstan due to progress in public administration and anti-corruption efforts (Moody's Ratings n.d.).

## Conclusion

Kazakhstan's anti-corruption policies have evolved significantly over the years, with legal reforms, institutional restructuring, and increased transparency efforts playing a central role in the fight against corruption. However, despite these initiatives, challenges remain in fully eradicating corrupt practices, ensuring consistent enforcement, and fostering a culture of integrity. This study has analyzed the effectiveness of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption strategies and identified both strengths and areas for improvement.

While legislative advancements and institutional mechanisms have contributed to increased public awareness and stricter penalties for corruption-related offenses, the persistence of corrupt practices suggests that additional measures are necessary. To enhance the efficiency of Kazakhstan's anti-corruption framework, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening institutional accountability**
   - Improve inter-agency coordination to prevent overlapping functions and enhance the efficiency of law enforcement bodies tasked with corruption prevention.
2. **Enhancing public engagement and whistleblower protection**
   - Encourage the participation of civil society organizations and private sector actors in anti-corruption monitoring efforts.
3. **Leveraging digital innovations**
   - Expand the use of artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics to improve transparency in government procurement and financial transactions.
   - Develop digital platforms for citizens to report corruption anonymously, increasing accessibility and participation in anti-corruption efforts.
4. **Improving the legal framework and enforcement**
   - Close existing legislative loopholes that enable corrupt practices and ensure consistent application of anti-bribery laws.
   - Increase the severity of punishments for high-level corruption offenses to deter misconduct at all levels of governance.
5. **Fostering ethical leadership and public sector integrity**
   - Establish clear career incentives for ethical behavior, ensuring that promotions and professional growth are tied to integrity and compliance with anti-corruption regulations.
6. **Conducting regular policy evaluations and adaptations**

– Establish mechanisms for continuous assessment of anti-corruption policies to measure their real-world impact and effectiveness.

By implementing these recommendations, Kazakhstan can further strengthen its anti-corruption framework, reduce vulnerabilities within its governance institutions, and foster a culture of integrity. While progress has been made, sustained efforts, policy refinements, and active societal participation will be key to ensuring a long-term and effective fight against corruption.

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# ANTIKORUPCINIŲ STRATEGIJŲ VEIKSMINGUMAS: PATIRTIS IR PASIEKIMAI KAZACHSTANE

Anotacija. Globalizacijos ir sparčios visuomenės raidos kontekste korupcijos problema išlieka viena aktualiausių temų tiek akademinėje sferoje, tiek praktikoje. Korupcija griauna demokratijos pagrindus, stabdo ekonominę pažangą ir kenkia socialiniam teisingumui. Taigi veiksmingos kovos su korupcija pastangos yra itin svarbios viešojo administravimo institucijoms, didinant visuomenės pasitikėjimą valstybės institucijomis ir užtikrinant skaidrumą.

Šio tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti antikorupcinių strategijų veiksmingumą Kazachstane, nustatyti geriausią korupcijos prevencijos praktiką ir pateikti rekomendacijas, kaip tobulinti kovos su korupcija mechanizmus viešajame administravime.

Atsižvelgiant į analizuojamų dokumentų apimtį, tyrimas buvo atliktas taikant tiek kokybinius, tiek kiekybinius turinio analizės metodus.

Šio tyrimo išvados gali būti panaudotos kuriant viešojo administravimo ir pilietinės visuomenės organizacijų kovos su korupcija planus bei tobulinant esamus mechanizmus.

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VIEŠOJI POLITIKA IR ADMINISTRAVIMAS
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# IMPACT OF PRACTICAL CONSTRAINTS ON PROMOTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF MOROCCAN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

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**Abstract.** This article aims to analyze the determining factors for the adoption of sustainable procurement in Moroccan public bodies. It also aims to highlight the impact of several practical constraints on the development of sustainability in public procurement. Thus, our methodology is exclusively quantitative and relies on a survey conducted through a questionnaire targeting a sample of 410 officials in the field of public procurement. The collected data were analyzed using the partial least squares method (SmartPLS). The study highlights the importance of implementing public policies to promote sustainable procurement, as well as the need to strengthen governance, training, awareness, and dissemination in this field.

***Keywords:*** *sustainable public procurement, promotion factors, practical constraints, sustainable development, public organizations.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *Tvarūs viešieji pirkimai, skatinimo veiksniai, praktiniai suvaržymai,*

*darnus vystymasis, viešosios organizacijos.*
***JEL classification:*** H57, Q58, D73

## Introduction

Public procurement accounts for roughly 24% of gross domestic product (GDP) in Morocco, 14% of the GDP within the European Union, and 12% of that in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (Below 2017). In many developing countries, this proportion can reach up to 30% of GDP (UNEP 2017). For several decades, governments worldwide have actively sought to mitigate the adverse effects associated with production and consumption processes through sustainable procurement (Ho et al. 2010). For several years, governments globally have been working to mitigate the adverse effects of production and consumption by promoting sustainable procurement practices (WCED 1987). Sustainable public procurement reflects a concern for economic, social, and environmental aspects in procurement decisions (Brammer and Walker 2011). This requires the adoption of sustainable approaches that balance these three aspects for both the current and future generations (WCED 1987), as well as their interrelations (Lozano 2008).

Our analysis aims to examine the perception of public officials regarding sustainable procurement. It highlights the influence of various practical constraints on the development of sustainability in public procurement in Morocco. To achieve this, we will first explain the concepts utilized in this research, then analyze the factors promoting sustainability and the barriers to the development of sustainable procurement based on a review of specialized literature. Finally, the last section is dedicated to presenting the results of our quantitative study.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1. Economic factors and barriers

In the context of sustainable public procurement, costs enable public entities to make more informed and sustainable purchasing decisions by considering long-term economic impacts (Brammer and Walker 2011; Georghiou et al. 2014). Thus, the integration of sustainability criteria into supplier selection and evaluation processes is synonymous with economic innovation (Uyarra et al. 2014; Brammer and Walker 2011). Moreover, pooled procurement increases bargaining power with suppliers. Such demand aggregation through consortium purchasing is, for example, recommended in the National Procurement Strategy for local governments as a means to make procurement more cost-effective (Walker and Preuss 2008). Additionally, the advancement of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in sustainable public procurement is an economic factor promoting sustainability

(Karjalainen and Kemppainen 2008).

The practical and successful implementation of sustainable public procurement faces multiple constraints that limit its development. Budgetary constraints are major obstacles (Schaltegger and Burritt 2010). Thus, sustainable public procurement often requires significant initial investments (Meehan and Bryde 2011). Moreover, there is an additional constraint related to the perception of value, as public buyers often believe that the long-term benefits of sustainable procurement are insufficient compared to the immediate cost savings (Brammer and Walker 2011; Walker and Brammer 2012). Additionally, the lack of training (Brammer and Walker 2011; Laing 2003) and awareness (Brammer and Walker 2011; Testa et al. 2014) are obstacles to the development of sustainable public procurement. In this regard, the absence of advance payments or flexible credit terms limits the participation of SMEs in sustainable public contracts (Loader 2013). Thus, the lack of material resources is the most frequently cited obstacle to the implementation of sustainable procurement. Approximately one-third of public sector organizations emphasized that products derived from sustainable practices were perceived as more expensive than competing products, and their budgets did not allow for the expansion of sustainable procurement practices (Min and Galle 2001; Rao and Holt 2005). Similarly, the perception of high costs may discourage public organizations from adopting sustainable practices in the absence of sufficient financial incentives (Walker and Brammer 2009).

### 1.2. Social factors and barriers

The social aspect of sustainability implies that public administrations should ensure suppliers adhere to fair labor conditions by monitoring compliance with child labor laws, inspecting suppliers' premises to ensure that they are not using substandard facilities, and paying their workers a fair wage by requiring them to provide a decent salary above the minimum wage established in the country (Brammer and Walker 2011; Carter and Jennings 2004). In this regard, the professional inclusion of people with disabilities through the implementation of public procurement policies that promote the employment of disabled individuals can also serve as a lever for supplier companies to adopt more inclusive practices, thereby contributing to a more equitable labor market (Solomon and Solomon 2006). According to an exploratory study conducted by Fernández-Pérez and Luque-Vílchez (2024), a relevant observation in this context is the emphasis on employing at least 2% of individuals with disabilities among the workforce, with the usage frequency of this indicator ranging from 53.33% in 2017 to 75% in 2019. Similarly, the implementation of gender-responsive procurement, which prioritizes awarding public contracts to women-owned businesses, is an increasingly adopted strategy to promote both gender equality and economic sustainability (Williams 2024).

Moreover, several social constraints are associated with the development of sustainable public procurement—for instance, products and services sourced ethically or from suppliers adhering to high social standards are often more expensive than conventional

alternatives due to higher production costs related to fair worker compensation and the adoption of responsible labor practices (McCrudden 2004). Furthermore, for an organization to successfully adopt sustainable procurement practices, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the concept of sustainable procurement itself, along with the relevant governmental policies and frameworks that underpin its implementation (Brammer and Walker 2011). Sustainability is, in itself, a contested and complex concept, and procurement professionals may lack the necessary skills due to the absence of senior leadership in the field and the knowledge required to successfully implement sustainable procurement (Meehan and Bryde 2011; Brammer and Walker 2011). Practitioners frequently cite the lack of knowledge as a potential barrier to sustainable procurement (Brammer and Walker 2011; Meehan and Bryde 2011), and studies have found that procurement officials are uncertain about the ethical and social issues involved in their purchasing decisions (Copper et al. 2000). The obstacles mentioned in the conceptual model developed by Brammer and Walker (2011), which draw inspiration from the works of Gelderman et al. (2006), include the incentives and pressures placed on staff regarding sustainable procurement. These challenges are partly attributable to the absence of an organizational culture focused on sustainability (Gonzalez-Padron et al. 2008; O'Brien 1999). Moreover, the complexity and rigidity of public procurement processes, which require significant administrative and legal resources, often exclude SMEs and innovative actors (Karjalainen and Kemppainen 2008). Additionally, the lack of coordination and standardization of sustainability criteria among different public administrations leads to a fragmentation of sustainable procurement practices (Brammer and Walker 2011).

### 1.3. Environmental factors and barriers

In the literature, five types of variables are identified as contributing to the promotion of sustainability in public procurement. These variables are as follows: (i) the use of life cycle analysis to evaluate the ecological impact of products and packaging, (ii) the requirement for suppliers to commit to waste minimization, (iii) the implementation of procurement strategies that promote the reduction, reuse, and recycling of materials, (iv) the reduction of materials (Brammer and Walker 2011; Carter and Carter 1998; Carter and Jennings 2004), and (v) Eco-labels encourage suppliers to innovate and improve the environmental footprint of their offerings, thereby contributing to a greener economy (Brammer and Walker 2011; El Haddadi et al. 2021).

Public environmental policy in public procurement faces three major obstacles. The first is related to the analysis of perceived costs and benefits before committing to a sustainable procurement policy (Brammer and Walker 2011; Gelderman et al. 2006). The second obstacle refers to the lack of availability of products and the higher costs associated with sustainable procurement (Brammer and Walker 2011; Gelderman et al. 2006; Norton 1995). In the same vein, the conceptual model of (Brammer and Walker 2011), which was adapted by Gelderman et al. (2006), highlights the lack of availability of sustainable

products (Norton 1995), given that many goods and services acquired by the public sector are highly specified (Brammer and Walker 2011). Sustainable and non-sustainable products vary in terms of their substitutability (Norton 1995). As explained by Brammer and Walker (2011), the provision of green energy or recycled paper can be more easily substituted than specialized medical equipment.

The analysis of this literature review has led us to the development of three key hypotheses, which will be assessed through practical investigations:

- $\mathbf{H_{1:}}$ Economic and financial constraints (EFC) negatively impact the promotion of sustainability in public procurement (PSPP).
- $\mathbf{H_2}$: Organizational and cultural constraints (OCC) negatively impact the PSPP.
- $\mathbf{H_3}$: Structural constraints (SC) hinder the PSPP.

## 2. Methodology

This study explores the impact of practical constraints on sustainability in public procurement in Morocco, using a quantitative methodology. Public entities defined by Article 2 of Morocco's public procurement decree were targeted, with data collected via a Google Forms questionnaire (Brammer and Walker 2011). A non-probability sampling method (Heckathorn 2002) was used to capture diverse perspectives. The data were analyzed using SmartPLS, employing open coding to identify and categorize patterns until " category saturation " was reached (Miles and Huberman 1994). This approach highlights key practical constraints affecting the adoption of sustainable procurement practices.

**Table 1.** Operationalization of promotion factors in the PSPP

| PSPP | Code | Items |
|---|---|---|
| Economic factors (EF) | EF1 | Costs |
| | EF2 | Economic innovation |
| | EF3 | Planning requirements |
| | EF4 | Purchasing pooling / joint procurement among project owners |
| | EF5 | Advances to SMEs |
| Social factors (SF) | SF1 | Guarantee that providers comply with child labor laws |
| | SF2 | Workplace inspections by labor inspectors to ensure favorable use of service providers' facilities |
| | SF3 | Request for service providers to pay a living wage above the national minimum wage |
| | SF4 | Professional inclusion of individuals with disabilities |
| | SF5 | Gender equality |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Environmental factors (ENF) | ENF1 | Life cycle analysis of products and packaging |
| | ENF2 | Request for service providers to commit to waste minimization |
| | ENF3 | Participation in the design of dismantlable, recyclable, or reusable products |
| | ENF4 | Labels |
| | ENF5 | Material reduction |

**Table 2.** Operationalization of development constraints in sustainable public procurement

| | Code | Items |
|---|---|---|
| EFC | EFC1 | High costs |
| | EFC2 | Insufficiency of the benefits of sustainable purchasing |
| | EFC3 | Lack of progress |
| | EFC4 | Lack of material resources |
| | EFC5 | Lack of financial incentives |
| OCC | OCC1 | Lack of training |
| | OCC2 | Lack of awareness |
| | OCC3 | Lack of knowledge |
| | OCC4 | Lack of skills |
| | OCC5 | Lack of an organizational culture focused on sustainability |
| SC | SC1 | Inaccessibility of sustainable supply sources |
| | SC2 | Unavailability of sustainable products from suppliers |
| | SC3 | Specialization of goods and services |
| | SC4 | Complexity and rigidity of public procurement processes |
| | SC5 | Lack of coordination and standardization of sustainability criteria among public administrations |

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics by category of public buyers

| | Female | % | Male | % | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Local authority | 123.00 | 30.00 | 176.00 | 42.93 | 299.00 | 72.93 |
| Public institutions and enterprises | 22.00 | 5.37 | 29.00 | 7.07 | 51.00 | 12.44 |
| State service/ministry | 31.00 | 7.56 | 29.00 | 7.07 | 60.00 | 14.63 |
| N | 176.00 | 42.93 | 234.00 | 57.07 | 410.00 | 100.00 |

### 3.2. Measurement model

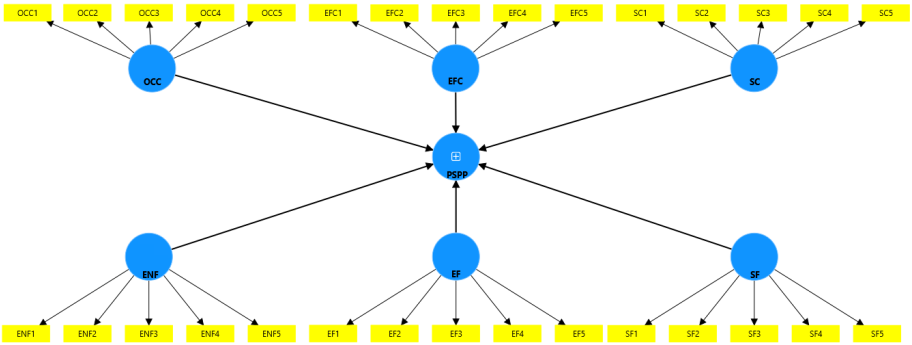


**Figure 1.** First-order measurement model using the repeated indicators approach https://www.smartpls.com.

**Table 4.** Internal consistency and convergent validity of measurement scales

| | Outer loadings | Cronbach's alpha* | Composite reliability (rho_a)** | Composite reliability (rho_c)** | AVE*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EF1 | 0,759 | 0,884 | 0,898 | 0,914 | 0,680 |
| EF2 | 0,824 | | | | |
| EF3 | 0,848 | | | | |
| EF4 | 0,842 | | | | |
| EF5 | 0,847 | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ENF1 | 0,963 | 0,901 | 0,935 | 0,931 | 0,735 |
| ENF2 | 0,704 | | | | |
| ENF3 | 0,966 | | | | |
| ENF4 | 0,635 | | | | |
| ENF5 | 0,958 | | | | |
| SF1 | 0,912 | 0,895 | 0,904 | 0,923 | 0,708 |
| SF2 | 0,705 | | | | |
| SF3 | 0,804 | | | | |
| SF4 | 0,878 | | | | |
| SF5 | 0,892 | | | | |
| EFC1 | 0,709 | 0,778 | 0,783 | 0,849 | 0,530 |
| EFC2 | 0,702 | | | | |
| EFC3 | 0,699 | | | | |
| EFC4 | 0,700 | | | | |
| EFC5 | 0,822 | | | | |
| OCC1 | 0,845 | 0,883 | 0,952 | 0,912 | 0,677 |
| OCC2 | 0,765 | | | | |
| OCC3 | 0,899 | | | | |
| OCC4 | 0,718 | | | | |
| OCC5 | 0,873 | | | | |
| SC1 | 0,756 | 0,841 | 0,967 | 0,854 | 0,539 |
| SC2 | 0,737 | | | | |
| SC3 | 0,730 | | | | |
| SC4 | 0,745 | | | | |
| SC5 | 0,702 | | | | |

*Note : * Cronbach's alpha = > 0,70; ** Composite reliability = > 0,70; and *** AVEs = > 0,50 (Hair et al. 2022)*

**Table 5.** Discriminant validity

| | EF | EFC | ENF | OCC | SC | SF |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EF | 0,825 | | | | | |
| EFC | -0,730 | 0,728 | | | | |
| ENF | 0,616 | -0,468 | 0,857 | | | |
| OCC | -0,283 | 0,268 | -0,551 | 0,823 | | |
| SC | -0,463 | 0,385 | -0,443 | 0,304 | 0,734 | |
| SF | 0,758 | -0,608 | 0,707 | -0,315 | -0,439 | 0,842 |

The second-order factor is a combination of PSPP factors in the public sector (Brammer and Walker 2011).

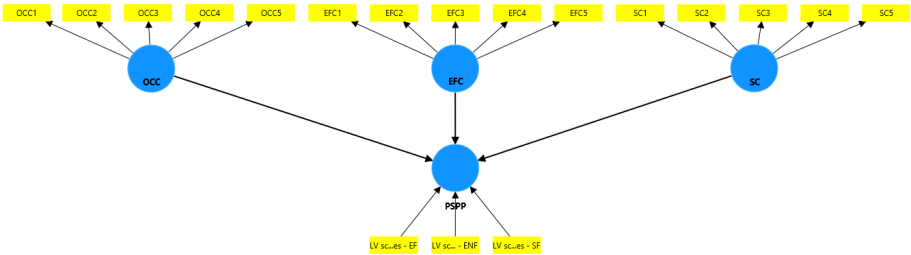


**Figure 2.** Second-order measurement model https://www.smartpls.com.

**Table 6.** Validation of the second-order construct

| | Weight* | T statistics (\|O/STDEV\|) | P values | VIF** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| LV scores - EF -> PSPP | 0,780 | 9,559 | 0,000 | 2,425 |
| LV scores - ENF -> PSPP | 0,163 | 1,728 | 0,042 | 2,062 |
| LV scores - SF -> PSPP | 0,135 | 1,730 | 0,042 | 3,007 |

*Note: * Weight > 0,10 and ** VIF > 5 (Hair et al. 2022)*

### 3.3. Structural model assessment

#### 3.3.1. The model's goodness of fit (GoF)

**Table 7.** Model's GoF

| | $R^{2*}$ | $R^2$ adjusted |
|---|---|---|
| PSPP | 0,604 | 0,601 |

*Note: * $R^2$ > 0,10 (Hair et al. 2022)*

### 3.3.2. GoF of the model

$$GoF = \sqrt{(\overline{R^2} \times \overline{AVE^2})} = 0.596 \quad (1)$$

*Note: GoF > 0,36 (Wetzels and Odekerken-Schröder 2009)*

### 3.3.3. Path coefficient of the structural model and regression result

**Table 8.** Path coefficient of the structural model and regression result

| Hypo | Relationship | Path coefficient (β) | P values | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | EFC -> PSPP | -0,628 | 0,000 | Supported* |
| H2 | OCC -> PSPP | -0,134 | 0,001 | Supported** |
| H3 | SC -> PSPP | -0,196 | 0,000 | Supported* |

Note: * p = < 0,01, ** p = < 0,05.

## 4. Structural model

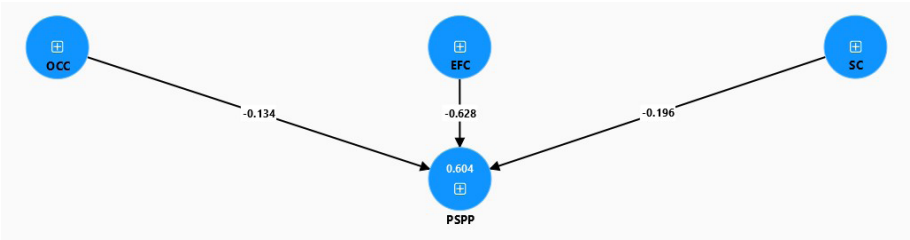


**Figure 3.** Structural model https://www.smartpls.com.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

According to Table 8, our analysis shows a negative and significant impact (β = -0.628, p < 0.001) of EFC on PSPP in Morocco—this means that the $H_1$ is accepted. Similarly, the impact of OCC is negative and significant on PSPP in Morocco (β = -0.134, p < 0.002)—this means that our $H_2$ is accepted. Finally, the impact of SC on PSPP in Morocco is negative and significant (β = -0.196, p < 0.001)—this means that the third hypothesis of our research is accepted. Thus, our results align with recent studies on the impact of these practical constraints on PSPP. Structural constraints, such as the SC1, SC2, SC3, SC4, and SC5 (Welz and Stuermer 2020), continue to grow and tend to exacerbate EFC, such as EFC1,

EFC2, EFC3, EFC4, and the absence of EFC5 (Bansal and Roth 2000; Rao and Holt 2005). Moreover, despite the growing importance of sustainable development policies implemented by Morocco, OCC as OCC1, OCC2, OCC3, OCC4, and OCC5 focused on sustainability, continue to hinder the widespread adoption of sustainable public procurement. Finally, additional challenges persist, notably the absence of an adequate regulatory framework and insufficient government commitment to sustainable development practices. These issues hinder the integration of sustainable practices despite the growing demand for eco-friendly solutions (Oyewobi and Jimoh 2022).

Beyond its three dimensions, economic, social, and environmental, the sustainable development of public procurement in Morocco also relies on three additional strategic levers. Firstly, the establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework serves as a fundamental lever to effectively guide and regulate sustainable public procurement practices. Secondly, the establishment of clear and comprehensive guidelines for public administration personnel is crucial. These guidelines, designed as practical tools, would facilitate the adoption of sustainability principles within organizations, thereby contributing to a gradual shift in organizational attitudes and a more effective integration of sustainable development goals. Finally, the focus on awareness and training for public managers is essential. In-depth training not only fosters a better understanding of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of sustainable procurement but also enhances the skills necessary to implement these practices effectively.

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# PRAKTINIŲ SUVARŽYMŲ POVEIKIS SKATINANT VIEŠŲJŲ PIRKIMŲ TVARUMĄ MAROKE

**Anotacija.** Šio straipsnio tikslas – išanalizuoti veiksnius, lemiančius tvarių pirkimų vykdymą Maroko viešosiose įstaigose. Taip pat siekiama pabrėžti kelių praktinių suvaržymų poveikį viešųjų pirkimų tvarumo plėtrai. Taigi mūsų metodika yra išskirtinai kiekybinė ir remiasi apklausa, atlikta anketos būdu, atrinkus 410 pareigūnų, atsakingų už viešųjų pirkimų sritį. Surinkti duomenys buvo analizuojami taikant dalinių mažiausių kvadratų metodą (SMART-PLS). Tyrime pabrėžiama viešosios politikos įgyvendinimo svarba skatinant tvarius pirkimus, taip pat poreikis stiprinti valdymą, mokymą, informuotumą ir sklaidą šioje srityje.

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# THE MODEL OF INTEREST ALIGNMENT GAPS IN THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PROCESS USING THE SERVQUAL APPROACH

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**Abstract.** The interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process have been identified in the analysis of scientific literature by various authors, yet these insights are often presented in a fragmented manner, lacking a cohesive, systematic framework. There is also a lack of definitions that clearly describe this phenomenon; therefore, an interpretivist approach can be used to identify these gaps in the scientific literature. The authors of this paper apply a systematic approach while examining this phenomenon, with the main aim of developing a theoretical interest alignment gap model in the democratic political process. For this purpose, the SERVQUAL model of gaps was used and adapted to the political process. This model will allow scholars from different countries to explore the systematic interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process in different contexts.

***Keywords:*** *interest alignment gaps, democratic policy process, SERVQUAL gaps model.*
***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *Interesų derinimo spragos, demokratinės politikos procesas, Servqual spragų modelis.*

## Introduction

The democratic political process is fundamental to the well-being of democratic societies. It is often seen as a mechanism that serves the public interest by ensuring that citizens' needs are reflected in governance. However, there are challenges to the effectiveness of this governance:

– Public participation. This is essential to democratic governance since it allows citizens to influence decision-making processes and represent the public interest. This participation of citizens is evaluated as a feature of a democratic regime (Agomor 2023). For example, platforms for public participation are being developed, particularly involving non-governmental organisations, although challenges remain in

raising the level of participation and awareness among the public (Mirlina 2019). The effective involvement of external participants in the political process is crucial for the implementation of the public interest, as these actors represent different interests in the public sphere (Lisovska et al. 2023).

- Challenges in defining the public interest. The concept of the "public interest" is often criticized for being ambiguous and difficult to define. It is seen as an obligation for politicians to work for the common good of society, but the concept of the "public interest" is also often seen as an empty concept (Koslowski 2004). When attempting to pinpoint what it means, it is perceived to be the obligation of politicians to work for the common good of society. Political philosophers have largely ignored the question of the public interest, resulting in a lack of conceptual clarity (Boot 2022). In the procedural view of interest alignment in the political process, the public interest agenda is often formulated by institutions in the initial drafting of the legislation. Factors such as lobbying, officials' prejudices, and lack of awareness also affect this process, distorting the public interest. Moreover, the alignment of draft legislation is dominated by the institutions and their managers rather than by external interest groups, which also creates competition between public and institutional, and sometimes private (narrow) interests. The democratization of the political processes and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders are key to ensuring that the public interest is truly represented.
- Impact on democratic processes. The democratic nature of elections is no longer questioned, but are they indeed democratic? If we look at the ability of candidates to access the arena of political debate, or if we look at contemporary elections in different contexts, can they really be considered democratic? The democratization of candidate selection processes is hypothetical and aims to strengthen political participation and trust in democracy. However, systematic analysis needs to be completed to confirm these effects (Put et al. 2014). Democracy should be seen as a political project rather than a static state that requires continuous engagement and adaptation for the effectiveness of social rights and public policies (Suxberger 2014). Democratic processes, such as fair elections, the representation of interests and their alignment process, and freedom of speech—that is, participatory democracy—are the foundations of public trust in the political system and active participation in public governance.
- The use of information systems (artificial intelligence, big data, robotic process automation, etc.) has been observed as shaping public opinion on social networks. This is an emerging area of research that has significant implications for democratic processes of public opinion formation and can be used as a tool to manipulate public interest. According to the authors, this area of research should receive additional attention.

The analysis of the academic literature has shown that contemporary research on the evaluation of the democratic political process focuses mainly on the following:

- Frameworks for assessing the quality of the participatory process by identifying aspects of the quality of participation, including representation, independence, influence of interested parties, transparency, and structured decision-making. Additional aspects such as quality of deliberation, reduction of bureaucracy, and cost-effectiveness are also considered important criteria when assessing the state of democracy (Moysan and Ródenas-Rigla 2023).
- Democratic accountability. This involves a three-step process: information delivery, discussions, and results, which are essential for effective policy evaluation. *Ex-ante* and *ex-post* evaluations contribute to accountability by providing information that facilitates discussions and informs decision-makers (Han 2023). However, these mechanisms play only a formal role in some democracies.
- Democratic culture in organizations. The development of a psychometric measure of democratic culture in organizations emphasizes factors such as citizen participation, tolerance, and organizational citizenship. These factors are crucial for fostering a democratic environment in organizations, promoting inclusiveness and participation (Lucas et al. 2021). In a democratic society, political culture may be dependent on political change, and there may be a lack of mechanisms to reduce this dependence.
- A democratic system based on AI. The Levels of Democracy framework assesses the democratic nature of decision-making processes in AI governance. It aims to enhance public participation and trust. This framework can help organizations increase the legitimacy of their decisions and maintain accountability (Ovadya et al. 2024). However, the authors note that there are also threats to democracy associated with the use of AI in democratic systems.

As a phenomenon, the divergence of interests in the democratic political process has been analyzed from a number of angles, with a focus on the influence of organized interest groups, the role of the media, and the dynamics of political support. These studies highlight the complex interaction between public opinion, interest groups, and policy outcomes, and they reveal the mechanisms and challenges involved in matching public needs with policy choices. Such challenges are as follows:

- The influence of organized interest groups: Interest groups, such as lobby groups, play an important role in the alignment of interests to influence policymakers. The alignment of these interests with public opinion can influence policy coherence, particularly when it comes to challenging the status quo. If the public supports change but interest groups do not, policy is less likely to reflect public needs (Rasmussen et al. 2021).
- Media content and policy coherence: Media content analysis has been used to examine the impact of organized interests on policy coherence. In Germany and Denmark, it has been found that the media can amplify the influence of interest groups, especially when public opinion favors a change in the status quo (Rasmussen et al. 2021). In democracy-building, the use of the media can expand gaps in

the dominance of socially privileged groups over the public interest. This highlights the dual role of the media in aggravating and reducing gaps in the alignment of interests in the political process (Nisbet 2008).

– Political support and representation of public interests: Political support is unevenly distributed across policy areas such as education, small businesses, and health. This gap of political attention varies across countries over time, affecting citizens' perceptions of democracy and its institutions (Martini and Quaranta 2020). In addition to the political rhetoric of the pre-electoral candidates, external factors also play a role.

In summary, the interest alignment gap as a phenomenon has been analyzed through the following points of view: the influence of interests, the compatibility between media and politics, political support and public interest representation, and the interaction between interests and policy results. However, other studies determine interest alignment gaps in a fragmented manner. These can only be identified by applying an interpretive approach.

According to the scientific literature and experience of practical participation in the policy process, **the authors formulate a scientific problem**: the interest alignment gaps in the democratic policy process have been determined both by the scientists and practitioners, nonetheless, after analyzing the academic research, and no studies were found that systematically examine this phenomenon. It is also difficult to assess this phenomenon in the scientific literature because there is no specific concept that describes it.

While addressing these research gaps, the following chapters of this paper develop a theoretical model of interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process through the lens of systems theory. To ensure the democratic nature of the political process, the alignment of public interests—the process of interest alignment (and its results) and the alignment of results with the public interest—plays a key role. Thus, **the aim of this study** is to develop a theoretical model of the interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process. This model would provide a framework and guidelines for further empirical research. To achieve this aim, the authors apply approaches of systems theory and the SERVQUAL model.

## Theoretical framework

### Literature review

### 1. A systemic approach for identifying the alignment of interest gaps in the democratic policy process

Theories of political process systems and process management can help to understand the political process by applying strategies to reconcile interests in the political process.

This perspective enables a detailed analysis of how different interests are being aligned and balanced within the broader framework of political and social systems. Based on a systematic approach, the dynamic interactions between public and institutional interests and results, and how they are reconciled (policy outcomes) and aligned (process) in the political process, can be better understood.

The diagnosis of the political process should be an essential function of democratic systems, it is a challenge and an opportunity for contemporary democratic theory and democratic systems. The application of models of system theory to the analysis of the political process has its own history—the expectation that quantitative analysis and innovative methods would answer the problematic questions of the political process remains unfulfilled. Systems theory has been applied using a variety of qualitative methodologies. This theory is fundamentally different from various institutionalist approaches that dominate in theory and policy-making practice (Stewart and Ayres 2001).

The authors believe that the application of a systemic approach could diagnose interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process, and once the extent of the problem has been identified, other models and methods based on the theory of systems could be applied to diagnose the alignment of interests in the political process. In accordance with these findings, the gaps identifying the alignment of interests, firstly as a result of policy and the political process, would be identified. The alignment of interests is an intermediate result of successful policy implementation.

Deming formulated the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle in 1982, which is the key concept in quality management and continuous improvement. The cycle is widely used to improve productivity and efficiency in various organizational processes. The Deming cycle is not a one-size-fits-all solution applicable in all contexts, but it has proven to be effective in many areas, especially in Western cultures and stable environments. The main aspects of the Deming cycle, its applications, and limitations are discussed below.

Planning (Plan): This stage includes setting the goal, creating the plan, defining success metrics, and activating the plan. The establishment of clear goals and processes is essential to achieve the desired results (Kemenade 2014).

Implementation (Do): This phase involves implementing the plan on a small scale to test its effectiveness. It is crucial to execute the plan while collecting data for further analysis. For instance, in a manufacturing context, this might involve trial runs or pilot projects (La Verde et al., 2019).

Evaluation (Check) During the Check phase, the outcomes of the Do phase are monitored and evaluated against the expected results. This involves rigorous data analysis to verify the success of the plan and identify any discrepancies or areas for improvement (La Verde et al., 2019).

Adjustment of actions (Act): Based on the analysis, this stage involves the adjustment of actions to improve the process. If the plan is successful, it is standardized and implemented on a larger scale. If not, the cycle is repeated according to a revised plan (Kemenade 2014).

In summary, the Deming cycle is used for identifying the alignment of interest gaps,

juxtaposed with the stages of the political process as elements of a process designed to ensure the quality of its results.

## 2. Research of the political process: analysis of policy stages models

The idea that the political process can be perceived as a series of decision-making stages was first put forward by Lasswell. He also formulated the functions of the decision-making process: 1) planning, 2) development and maintenance of alternatives, 3) adoption of general rules, 4) description of rule-governed behavior, 5) final descriptions of behavior, 6) evaluation of policy, and 7) implementation of policy (Lasswell 1956). It was P. A. Sabatier (1993) who formulated the "supporting coalitions" model consisting of three stages, which are divided into further sub-steps, to analyze the policy process: a) agenda-setting, b) formulation, and c) implementation. The importance of stages model is also confirmed by other scholars (Howlett and Giest 2012).

The stages model has been widely used, modified, and integrated into the analysis of the political process. Scholars have also devoted time to synthesizing the step models of past researchers and, after discussion, concluded to use the term "policy cycle," incorporating five classic phases of the process presented, but refined by Lasswell, mapped to problem-solving stages (Fischer and Miller 2017).

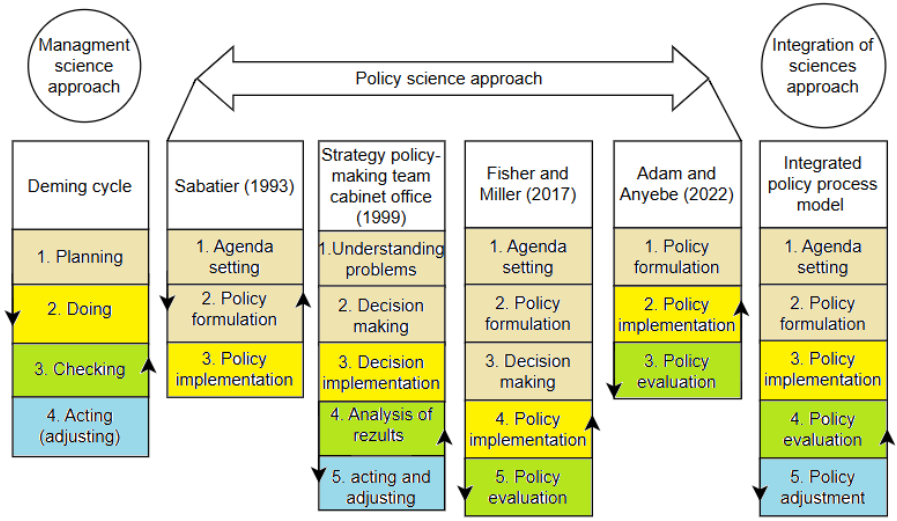
**Table 1.** The political phases of applied problem-solving and the stages of the policy cycle

| **Phases of applied problem-solving** | **Stages of the policy cycle** |
|---|---|
| Problem Identification | Agenda Setting |
| Proposition of Solution | Policy Formulation |
| Selection of Solution | Decision-Making |
| Action of Solution | Policy Implementation |
| Monitoring of Results | Policy Evaluation |

*Source: compiled according to the Public Policy Analysis Handbook (Fischer and Miller 2017)*

After evaluating the stages models of the policy process presented in the scientific literature (Sabatier 1993; Strategy Policy Making Team, Cabinet Office 1999; Fischer and Miller 2017; Anyebe 2022), the authors of this paper compare them with the stages of the Deming cycle as a model ensuring the quality of process. They conclude that policy cycle models lack the action-adjustment stage, which is important for ensuring the quality of results. A synthesis of the stepwise models is presented below:

**Figure 1.** Synthesizing models of policy process steps: integrating management and political science approaches




*Source: compiled by the authors, based on an analysis and synthesis of the models presented in this section (the colors were chosen to reflect the Deming PDCA cycle and its relationship to the steps presented by political science), highlighting how these steps fit into the policy decision-making process. Each color represents a specific phase of PDCA, revealing its links to the theoretical phases of policy analysis and how these phases help to structure the policy process to ensure continuous improvement and efficiency.*

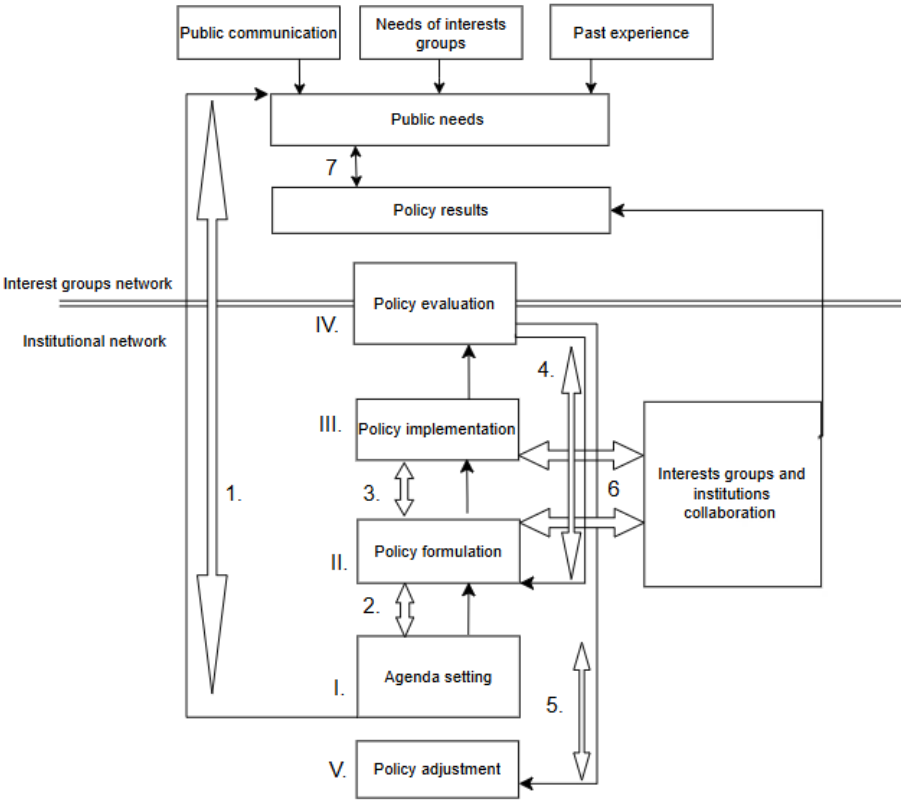
## Results

### I. A research perspective using the SERVQUAL model

To examine the gaps in the alignment of interests in the democratic political process, we will use the political process steps model adapted by the authors of this paper and the SERVQUAL gaps model. Between these stages of the political process, gaps in the (re) alignment of interests are emerging. As the SERVQUAL model has not been applied to analyze the political process and the quality of its results, in this study, it has been adapted to the subject for the alignment of public interests in the political process to identify gaps in the results of this process. It is formed from two groups of interested parties: public interest groups and institutional networks. In the public interest network, interests are shaped through a) public relations and discourse, b) the needs of interest groups, and c) experience. In the context of generated public interests, regulation is perceived as the outcome of policy. Institutions first exchange knowledge with a network of public interest

groups (knowledge management) and, considering the expectations formed, take the next step of defining the problem and, in some cases, incorporate the issues into the political agenda, where the political process begins. In the second stage, legislation is formulated; in the third stage, it is implemented; in the fourth stage, it is evaluated; and in the fifth stage, actions are adjusted.

**Figure 2.** The model of interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process




*Source: compiled by the authors based on the Politic cycle model and the Parasuman gap model*

II. Interpreting interest alignment gaps in the democratic political process:

1. **A gap in the perception of the public needs.** Occurs in defining the problem and putting it on the agenda, examples:
   a. The systematizing of knowledge from the network of interest groups and the definition of the issue creates a gap between the expectations of interest groups and the inclusion of the issue in the political agenda.
   b. Once the public interest has been perceived and defined, it is not on the political agenda for a variety of reasons (objective and subjective).
   c. The public interest is shaped by politicians and bureaucrats with inaccurate disclosure of real public needs.
2. **The policy formulation gap.** Policy formulation creates a gap between the public problem defined in the political agenda and the formulation of its solving solutions.

   *The public interest on the political agenda has been misaligned in the formulation of the policy (course) to address it.*

3. **Policy implementation gap**. A gap appears between the formulated policy (set course) and the implemented policy (legislation). For example, if the policy is to increase the share of renewable energy in the final consumption balance, sub-legislation is adopted that creates barriers to the development of renewable energy.

   *The formulated policy (course) is changed by its implementation (sub-legislation).*

4. **The *ex-ante* policy assessment gap.** While providing the policy process with information on potential policy outcomes, the necessary information for the policy formulation stage of the process is not being provided.
5. **The *ex-post* policy evaluation gap.** For example, policy adjustment does not provide the necessary information for the policy adjustment (feedback) phase.
6. **The cooperation gap.** The gap between the formulation of a solution to a problem (course) and its implementation (legislation) is due to an unsystematic process of coordination of interests.
7. **The public needs and policy outcomes gap.** The gap between policy outcomes and public expectations without satisfying the public interest.

The gaps in the alignment of interests in the policy process are outlined above, and a model is provided to help understand at which stages of the policy process they occur. To use the SERVQUAL gap model, an expert interview is conducted to rank these gaps. The authors of this paper propose to use a similar approach, using expert interviews to rank the gaps in a ten-point system and to further investigate possibilities to improve the democratic political process as a practical result, and to make further research in defining the root causes of these gaps as a scientific result.

## Conclusions

a. The challenges of contemporary democracies are the level of public participation, the democratic nature of the electoral process, and the process of understanding the public interest, meanwhile the main research focuses on assessing the quality of the participatory process, the accountability of democratic processes, the democratic culture in organizations, and the impact of AI. One of the prerequisites for democracy is a democratic process of interest alignment in politics; however, all these areas of research have not been systematically analyzed. Taking this into account, the authors presume that a systematic approach to analyze the gaps of interest alignment in the democratic political process is one of the methods of bridging this scientific gap.
b. By analyzing the stages model as a tool for the analysis of the political process, which was first formulated by Lasswell (1956), and its transformations, and by paralleling it with the stages of Deming's cycle as a condition for the quality of the process, it has been found that the political science in the analysis of the political process lacks the stage of adjustment of actions. After the integration of the approaches of political and management sciences and the development of the adapted model, it would be possible to analyze the process through the prism of its quality.
c. Applying The SERVQUAL approach, the following gaps in the structure of the model of the democratic policy process were identified: gaps in the perception of the public interest, gaps in the formulation of policy, gaps in the implementation of policy, gaps in the *ex-ante* evaluation of policy, gaps in the ex post evaluation of the relevance of the implemented policy results to the public interest, gaps in the cooperation in the formulation and implementation of policy, and a gap in the relevance between public needs and policy results.
d. There are two types of gaps: gaps in the alignment of interests as a process and gaps in the alignment of interests as policy results. There is a lack of terms to describe these two phenomena, both in English and in Lithuanian. To sum up, the implementation of distinction would be a scientific breakthrough for research in this field.

## Further scientific research directions

1. The existence of interest alignment gaps has been identified in this paper; they have been classified, and a model of their analysis, based on a systems approach, has been presented. According to systems theory, if gaps of interest alignment exist, the problem should be sought in the interest alignment process. It is, therefore, an additional, related research area. The authors propose to use a phenomenological research approach to participate in the political process of interest alignment and

to document the researcher's experiences. The next stage will be to formulate, from the researcher's experiences, the gaps of interest alignment in the political process and to present them systematically through the cross-sections of the spaces of interest alignment.

2. Public needs (that is, the public interest) and policy formulations are both on the political agenda, but there is a gap between the two, which has a significant impact on public welfare. Feedback in the political process and effective feedback mechanisms could address this democratic challenge. Further research should focus on this phenomenon through the prism of feedback in the political process.
3. AI is a pervasive phenomenon in the information space, and its active use is gaining momentum and beginning to dominate in public discourse. The authors of this article identify it as a particularly pressing issue for modern democracies, affecting elections, public interest, and decision-makers. They also identify a lack of research to monitor this phenomenon and to move toward practical solutions to this problem in the next stages.

Please consider adding a DOI for references 2, 3, 13, and 22.

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# INTERESŲ DERINIMO SPRAGŲ MODELIS DEMOKRATINIAME POLITINIAME PROCESE TAIKANT SERVQUAL METODĄ

**Anotacija.** Analizuojant mokslinę literatūrą, bei su teorinių tyrimų pagalba nustatyta, kad interesų derinimo politiniame procese spragų neišvengta, tačiau šios spragos nebuvo pateiktos sistemingai. Mokslinei problemai spręsti iškeltas šio tyrimo tikslas: sukurti teorinį interesų derinimo spragų demokratiniame politiniame procese modelį. Šio tikslo siekiama moksline literatūros analize, teorinių interesų derinimo politiniame procese spragų nagrinėjimu ir sistemingai organizuotu jų pristatymu, taikant SERVQUAL metodą. Demokratinės politikos proceso spragas identifikuojančio modelio struktūra buvo sukurta SERVQUAL metodu ir identifikuotos tokios spragos: viešojo intereso suvokimo spragos, politikos formavimo spragos, politikos įgyvendinimo spragos, politikos ex ante vertinimo spragos, vykdomos politikos rezultatų atitikties viešajam interesui ex post vertinimo spragos, visuomenės poreikių ir bendradarbiavimo politikos formavimo ir politikos atitikimo spragos.

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# THE FUTURE OF WORK: PESTLE ANALYSIS OF FLEXIBLE WORK IN KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** This article examines the macroeconomic factors influencing flexible work in Kazakhstan, addressing the roles of political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental (PESTLE) factors. The research explores two main questions: (1) How significant are each of these factors in shaping flexible working in Kazakhstan? and (2) Are there statistically significant differences in their impact? The study employed an expert survey, which was analyzed using descriptive statistics and an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The findings highlight the pivotal role of technological and social factors in driving flexible work adoption, while environmental considerations remain less influential. The findings provide empirical insights into the dynamics of flexible work in Kazakhstan, offering a foundation for policy recommendations aimed at fostering a more adaptive and resilient labor market.

**Keywords:** *flexible work, public policy, Kazakhstan, labor legislation, work–life balance, expert survey.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *lankstus darbas, viešoji politika, Kazachstanas, darbo teisės aktai, darbo ir asmeninio gyvenimo pusiausvyra, ekspertų apklausa.*

## Introduction

Flexible working has become a more prominent feature of the modern labor market, reflecting the needs of both employees and employers as globalization, digitalization, and demographic shifts take place. The work environment has become more diverse and dynamic, emphasizing knowledge, skills, and flexibility (Barley et al. 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic, which erupted in 2020, profoundly impacted the global economy, health

systems, and society. As countries worldwide implemented measures to contain the virus, including vaccines and effective treatments, the pandemic also drove significant changes in working patterns. As a result of the crisis, more and more organizations are acknowledging the value of flexible work in attracting and retaining talent (Spurk and Straub 2020, 1).

Despite growing recognition of flexible work, existing research remains fragmented, with limited focus on its macroeconomic and policy implications. This study addresses that gap by analyzing PESTLE factors shaping flexible employment, particularly in Kazakhstan. During the 2020 lockdown, organizations in Kazakhstan swiftly implemented telework and flexible schedules. Following COVID-19, the government actively modernized labor laws, incorporating remote work and flexible hours into the Labor Code to align with global trends (Alshanskaya et al. 2024, 639).

Our research, conducted at a time when the role of the macroeconomic environment in shaping flexible employment is more crucial than ever, aims to provide valuable insights into the relative impact of various factors influencing flexible jobs and assess the likelihood of changes in these factors. By doing so, we aim to deepen our understanding of the macroeconomic environment's role in shaping labor market trends.

## Literature review

Flexible working encompasses a range of working patterns, including reduced hours, non-standard work hours, various types of remote working, and compressed workweeks. The emergence of this concept began gaining traction among scholars in the late 20th century. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the adoption of flexible work (Spurk and Straub 2020, 1–2). As a result, the existing body of literature on flexible work has expanded, offering insights into the advantages and challenges of flexible work across various sectors, industries, and countries. However, most studies on flexible work remain micro-level in focus, examining individual or organizational experiences, preferences, and outcomes related to flexible work arrangements (Gerards et al. 2018, 517; Shepherd-Banigan et al. 2016, 103; Bellmann et al. 2021, 425).

This micro-level focus, while valuable, tends to overlook macroeconomic factors, particularly those related to PESTLE influences. This gap is particularly relevant for Kazakhstan, where flexible employment is still evolving. Our study addresses this by employing a PESTLE analysis to systematically assess the macroeconomic and policy-related drivers and barriers shaping flexible work arrangements. Each category is described below in the context of flexible work.

Research on political influences in flexible working highlights the role of government policies and labor regulations. Burgoon and Dekker (2010, 126) argue that flexible work policies often respond to economic uncertainty, with measures like employment subsidies stabilizing labor markets (Carranza et al. 2020, 3). However, in some European countries, particularly Germany, access to flexible work is shaped by collective bargaining and

firm-level negotiations rather than direct state intervention (Lyness et al. 2012, 1023).

Economic transformations are analyzed for their impact on labor market flexibility and evolving work arrangements. Empirical evidence links flexible employment to shifts in economic structures, particularly in economies where the service sector dominates gross domestic product (Geng and He 2021, 307). At the same time, Morelli et al. (2020, 187) emphasize that global economic shifts are driving industrial economies from mass production toward more customized, service-oriented models. The rise of Industry 4.0 has facilitated the adoption of flexible organizational structures, integrating automation, artificial intelligence, and smart manufacturing. However, while these advancements enhance productivity and efficiency, they also pose challenges such as workforce displacement in traditional manufacturing sectors (Morelli et al. 2020, 187–188).

Flexible work is also driven by demographic shifts and societal trends. While it boosts labor market participation and work–life balance, it also raises concerns about job insecurity and inequality. Some studies see flexible jobs as stepping-stones to stable employment in many European labor markets (Auray and Lepage-Saucier 2021, 1), while others highlight risks such as social fragmentation and income insecurity (Nemteanu et al. 2021, 65). For instance, platform work is often perceived as a "social equalizer," offering income opportunities for disadvantaged groups (Hoang et al. 2020, 682), particularly in remote jobs (Schor and Vallas 2021, 369).

Many studies argue that advancements in information and communication technologies (ICT) have also significantly shaped the evolution of flexible work arrangements. These technological developments offer a range of advantages, such as increased productivity, improved well-being, better work–life balance, and more significant opportunities for women and caregivers to engage in paid work (Gerards et al. 2018, 523–527). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these trends, driving the rise of "on-demand" work facilitated by digital platforms, which is often part-time and irregular (Fudge and Mundlak 2020). However, Alfes et al. (2022, 4362–4363) highlight the challenges associated with these technological advances, particularly in maintaining a balance between flexibility and employee well-being.

Legal frameworks are closely linked to flexible working, as highlighted by several key studies that explore the intersection of law, policy, and work arrangements. The UK's "right to request" policy (Cooper and Baird 2015, 568) and legislative changes in Germany and the Netherlands (Hegewisch 2005, 104) illustrate how policies can institutionalize flexible work. Glowacka (2020, 113) explores Austria's legislative efforts to enhance work flexibility, focusing on balancing worker autonomy with job security.

Research on the environmental impact of flexible work is still emerging, particularly in less developed countries, whereas developed nations have made more progress in this area. Studies indicate that flexible work can contribute to sustainability goals by reducing emissions and traffic congestion (Ge et al. 2018, 83; Kelly et al. 2022, 3). Moreover, work schedule adjustments have been proposed as a strategy to mitigate climate-induced labor market disruptions (Feriga et al. 2025, 104).

This literature review underscores a significant shift in the understanding of flexible work, particularly from the pre-pandemic to the pandemic or post-pandemic periods. Flexible work is still evolving, but it has broader implications in emerging economies that are still unexplored.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

a) How do PESTLE factors shape flexible employment in Kazakhstan?

b) Are there statistically significant differences in the impact of these factors?

By adding structured PESTLE analysis to the research, we can bridge the gap by extending traditional frameworks and evaluating the external macroeconomic and institutional conditions that shape flexible work. Our objective is to offer a broader understanding of the forces behind or against flexible work arrangements, resulting in valuable insights for policymakers, businesses, and researchers.

## Methodology

We developed the methodology to collect and analyze expert opinions through a structured survey. Its goal was to capture insights and evaluate the relative importance of various PESTLE factors influencing flexible work. Initially, we identified the primary factors through a comprehensive literature review and preliminary discussions with field experts. This step ensured that the survey encompassed the most relevant aspects of PESTLE factors. To gather insights and collect expert opinions, we conducted an online survey. The survey questionnaire was created using Google Forms and targeted 51 professionals specializing in labor economics and economic and public policy.

Participants with different professional backgrounds were recruited using a purposeful sampling technique, which included employees from central and local government bodies, academics, researchers from universities and research centers, and independent researchers. The selection process took into account the participants' professional expertise, academic credentials, and practical experience to guarantee their knowledge of flexible work and related PESTLE factors. The participants were chosen not because they were representative but because they were "information-rich cases" (Patton 2014, 43). We distributed the survey link via personal and professional networks, and recipients were encouraged to share it within their professional circles. The survey briefly explained the study's purpose, and respondents were allowed to delete their responses.

Participants assessed each PESTLE factor by providing ratings on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 (little importance) to 5 (significant importance), for 5 variables in each category. The survey also collected socio-demographic information, including participants' gender, age, education, total number of years working, and type of workplace. All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0. Descriptive statistics for quantitative variables were reported in terms of frequencies and percentages. Additionally, an ANOVA was applied to test for significant differences between the perceived importance of different

PESTLE factors.

## Results

The internal consistency of the responses for each PESTLE factor was measured using Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient to ensure the reliability. The results showed acceptable to high reliability for most factors: Social Factors (α = 0.653), Legal Factors (α = 0.843), Economic Factors (α = 0.793), Technological Factors (α = 0.868), Political Factors (α = 0.634), and Environmental Factors (α = 0.893). While the values observed for Political (α = 0.634) and Social factors (α = 0.653) were slightly below the generally accepted threshold of 0.7, they still provide valuable insights for exploratory research. These findings validate the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

Based on expert feedback, the descriptive analysis of PESTLE factors highlights the multifaceted interactions among the determinants shaping the development of flexible employment. The resulting mean values and standard deviations (SDs) are presented in Table 1.

The findings indicate that among technological factors, the development of IT and telecommunications scored the highest (mean = 4.63; SD = 0.66). Advancements in digital platforms (mean = 4.55) and automation (mean = 4.33) further underscore technology's critical role in enabling flexible work. Political factors, however, have varying levels of significance. Employment support initiatives (mean = 4.10) are perceived as particularly impactful. At the same time, labor legislation improvements (mean = 4.10) are proving higher values in legal factors, which indicate the need for a regulatory framework for flexible working arrangements.

Economic and social factors present a mixed picture. In the opinion of the experts, the development of the service economy (mean = 4.16) is a critical driver. At the same time, there are more varied expert opinions on factors such as slowing economic growth and inequality as moderately influential, reflecting the complexity of economic dynamics. Social factors, including education (mean = 4.08) and work–life balance (mean = 4.06), emphasize their connection to flexible work. In contrast, the low mean score for trade unions (mean = 2.47; SD = 1.29) indicates a diminished role or substantial divergence in expert views.

Finally, environmental factors demonstrate emerging relevance. While the business transition to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategies (mean = 3.29) signals growing awareness, the relatively low influence of factors like environmental degradation suggests that they still need to be central to the discourse on flexible work in the country.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

| | Min | Max | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Political Factors** | | | | |
| Geopolitical tensions | 1 | 5 | 3.59 | 1.22 |
| Employment support initiatives | 2 | 5 | 4.10 | 0.83 |
| Development of local governance | 1 | 5 | 3.22 | 1.06 |
| Active labor market programs | 1 | 5 | 3.82 | 0.97 |
| Passive labor market programs | 1 | 5 | 3.51 | 1.19 |
| **Economic Factors** | | | | |
| Slowing economic growth rates | 1 | 5 | 3.98 | 1.10 |
| Escalation of consumer price inflation | 1 | 5 | 3.80 | 1.13 |
| Expansion of the service sector | 2 | 5 | 4.16 | 0.64 |
| Weak economic diversification | 1 | 5 | 3.76 | 1.07 |
| Inequality | 1 | 5 | 3.96 | 1.06 |
| **Social Factors** | | | | |
| Shifts in the demographic structure of society | 1 | 5 | 3.90 | 0.94 |
| Heightened importance of work–life balance | 1 | 5 | 4.06 | 1.03 |
| Enhanced role of education | 1 | 5 | 4.08 | 1.07 |
| Trade unions | 1 | 5 | 2.47 | 1.29 |
| Rising labor mobility | 1 | 5 | 3.59 | 0.98 |
| **Technological Factors** | | | | |
| Advancements in automation and robotics | 1 | 5 | 4.33 | 0.93 |
| Progress in IT and telecommunications | 2 | 5 | 4.63 | 0.66 |
| Evolution of artificial intelligence | 1 | 5 | 4.10 | 1.08 |
| Emergence of digital work platforms | 2 | 5 | 4.55 | 0.73 |
| Inequities in access to digital technologies | 1 | 5 | 3.96 | 1.08 |
| Legal Factors | | | | |
| Improvements in tax legislation | 1 | 5 | 3.69 | 1.26 |
| Updates to labor laws | 1 | 5 | 4.10 | 0.96 |
| Protection of workers' rights and social guarantees | 1 | 5 | 3.76 | 1.11 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Institutional and legal support for various forms of employment | 1 | 5 | 3.88 | 1.05 |
| Initiatives in training and retraining of workers | 1 | 5 | 3.59 | 1.06 |
| **Environmental Factors** | | | | |
| Climate change | 1 | 5 | 3.02 | 1.10 |
| Environmental degradation | 1 | 5 | 2.92 | 1.21 |
| Advancements in green innovations | 1 | 5 | 3.00 | 1.17 |
| Adoption of ESG strategies by businesses | 1 | 5 | 3.29 | 1.14 |
| Increased public awareness of environmental issues | 1 | 5 | 2.96 | 1.23 |

*Source: Authors*

Each PESTLE dimension is represented in Table 2 in terms of its minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean, and standard deviation (SD):

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistical values of the six PESTLE indicators

| PESTLE Dimensions | Min | Max | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Political (P) | 2,20 | 5.00 | 3.6471 | 0.68 |
| Economic (E) | 1.60 | 5.00 | 3.9333 | 0.75 |
| Social (S) | 1.80 | 5.00 | 3.6196 | 0.69 |
| Technological (T) | 1.40 | 5.00 | 4.3137 | 0.74 |
| Legal (L) | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.8039 | 0.85 |
| Environmental (*E*) | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.0392 | 0.98 |

*Note: From this point on, E refers to Environmental factors, while E refers to Economic factors.*
*Source: Authors*

The analysis suggests that technological factors are perceived as the most significant, with the highest mean score (mean = 4.31), reflecting strong expert agreement on their central role in driving modern development. Conversely, the environmental dimension holds the lowest mean (mean = 3.04), indicating a comparatively lower perceived impact. Notably, the environmental dimension also shows the most significant variability (SD = 0.98), pointing to divergent expert views on the urgency of sustainability challenges (see Table 2).

**Table 3.** The results of the RM ANOVA (Comparison between the importance of the six PESTLE dimensions)

| Wilks' Lambda | F-value | Effect Size ($\eta^2$) | Differences | Mean Difference ($M_{diff}$) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **0.414** | **12.997** | **0.586** | **P – E** | -.286 |
| | | | **P – S** | .027 |
| | | | **P – T** | -.667* |
| | | | **P – *E*** | .608* |
| | | | **P – L** | -.157 |
| | | | **E – S** | .314 |
| | | | **E – T** | -.380* |
| | | | **E – *E*** | .894* |
| | | | **E – L** | .129 |
| | | | **S – T** | -.694* |
| | | | **S – *E*** | .580* |
| | | | **S – L** | -.184* |
| | | | **T – *E*** | 1.275* |
| | | | **T – L** | .510* |
| | | | **E – L** | -.765* |

*Note: * p-value < .001*

*Source: Authors*

The Repeated Measures ANOVA (RM ANOVA) confirmed significant differences in how respondents perceive the importance of the six PESTLE dimensions. The Wilks' Lambda value of 0.414 suggests a significant variation in the ratings of the PESTLE dimensions, as confirmed by the F-value of 12.997, with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.586$) (see Table 3).

Technological (T) factors consistently outperformed other dimensions, showing differences with Political (P) (Mdiff = -0.667), Economic (E) (Mdiff = -0.380), Social (S) (Mdiff = -0.694), and Environmental (*E*) (Mdiff = 1.275). Political (P), Social (S), and Legal (L) dimensions displayed intermediate ratings, with fewer significant pairwise differences. Environmental (*E*) factors received the lowest ratings overall, though they showed significant differences with Social (S) (Mdiff = 0.314). This dimension did not differ significantly from Political (P) or Legal (L) factors.

## Discussion

Our research indicates that technological factors are the most influential in flexible working. However, existing studies highlight that ICT is an enabler rather than a direct driver of flexible work (Bailey and Kurland 2002, 384; Messenger and Gschwind 2016, 205). While ICT facilitates flexible work, its effectiveness depends on digital infrastructure, including internet access, computer usage, and digital literacy. For instance, countries with advanced ICT systems, such as the Nordic states and Switzerland, have achieved higher telework adoption rates, while those with weaker digital infrastructure, such as Bulgaria and Romania, face significant barriers (Sostero et al. 2020, 58–59).

However, technological advancements alone do not guarantee the widespread adoption of flexible work. Research suggests that social factors play a critical role in determining how technology is integrated into work environments (Wajcman et al. 2010, 257). Our findings also highlight the crucial role of work–life balance as a key social factor in facilitating flexible work, particularly for women. This aligns with global trends emphasizing the importance of flexibility in supporting women's employment. These results are consistent with Fuller and Hirsh (2018, 3), who suggest that flexible work arrangements can mitigate gender-based wage disparities by improving access to higher-wage employment opportunities. At the same time, Palumbo (2020, 786), for instance, argues that specific human resource management practices tailored to the needs of flexible workers should be designed, recognizing the special challenges that affect the activities and the performances of people who work from home.

According to our findings, environmental factors were the least favored, suggesting that flexible work adoption in Kazakhstan is not primarily driven by environmental benefits. However, international studies show that flexible work arrangements, including remote work and flexible hours, significantly reduce traffic congestion and environmental impact (Ge et al. 2018, 83). Similarly, a two-day-a-week remote work model in Ireland could eliminate approximately 1 billion car commuter miles annually, leading to substantial environmental gains (Kelly et al. 2022, 3–4).

The legal framework governing flexible work in the context of Kazakhstan has been evolving to accommodate emerging labor market trends. Recent legal reforms, such as those permitting remote work and flexible hours, represent a step forward in enabling flexible employment. This trend aligns with international models where strong legal frameworks support flexible work adoption. For instance, the UK's "right to request" policy (Cooper and Baird 2015, 575; Bird and Brown 2018, 53) institutionalized flexible work, though it remains a request-based right rather than a guaranteed entitlement (Dobbins 2021, 35–37). In Germany and the Netherlands, employees have been granted the right to request flexible work adjustments since 2000, though restrictions based on company size and other factors remain in place (Fouarge and Baaijens 2004, 20–22). These examples underline the importance of balancing legal reforms with practical considerations to ensure equitable and effective implementation.

The importance of employment support policies in shaping these dynamics is highlighted by the findings of this study. This can correspond with the perspective that economic uncertainty necessitates more robust state-backed social protection for temporary or part-time workers. Burgoon and Dekker (2010, 138) found that these types of employment in Europe frequently increase workers' perceptions of economic insecurity. As a result, it can heighten the population's vulnerability and raise the need for social welfare policies. During the COVID-19 crisis, many EU countries introduced measures that combined temporary employment subsidies, reduced work hours, and greater flexibility to sustain employment (Carranza et al. 2020, 5–6).

This study further underscores a significant correlation between the growing demand for flexible work and the evolving service-oriented economy, reflecting the global labor market trends. The growth of digitally enabled crowd work, the rise of freelancing, the use of platform ecosystems (Kapoor et al. 2021, 94), and the intensity of project-based work were challenging standard full-time employment models (Hagel et al. 2017, 34–37). For instance, Chen et al. (2019, 2735) demonstrated that real-time flexibility enables workers, such as Uber drivers, to adjust their work schedules to unpredictable changes in reservation wages and earn over twice the surplus compared to less flexible arrangements. These trends indicate that flexible work arrangements will continue to expand, necessitating adaptive policies that balance worker protections with labor market flexibility.

## Conclusion

1. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of flexible work in Kazakhstan, examining its prevalence, influencing factors, and implications for labor market policies. Using a PESTLE framework and statistical analysis, the research pinpoints the main factors that influence flexible work arrangements and provides empirical insights into their role in Kazakhstan's labor market transformation. Furthermore, our study contributes to the ongoing debate about flexible work by highlighting the interaction between technological advancements, societal changes, regulatory and policy frameworks, as well as economic conditions.
2. Kazakhstan is moving towards adopting more flexible work arrangements, but infrastructure, cultural attitudes, and legal frameworks pose challenges. Flexible work arrangements will likely grow in the coming years due to the increasing demand for work–life balance, technological advancements, and labor laws.
3. To facilitate this transition, policymakers should develop a comprehensive national strategy that integrates flexible work into broader labor market policies. This strategy should ensure that flexible work models remain adaptable to future challenges, fostering a dynamic and resilient workforce. To implement key measures, it is important to invest in digital infrastructure, reform regulatory policies, and provide targeted incentives for businesses to adopt flexible employment practices.

Kazakhstan could incorporate mechanisms like a "right to request" flexible work arrangements, similar to those in developed countries, to give employees greater flexibility while maintaining stability in the labor market, based on international best practices.

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# DARBO ATEITIS: LANKSTAUS DARBO PEST ANALIZĖ KAZACHSTANE

**Anotacija.** Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjami makroekonominiai veiksniai, darantys įtaką lanksčiam darbui Kazachstane, sprendžiant politinių, ekonominių, socialinių, technologinių, aplinkosaugos ir teisinių PEST (PESTEL) veiksnių vaidmenis. Tyrime nagrinėjami du pagrindiniai klausimai: (1) Kiek kiekvienas iš šių veiksnių yra reikšmingas formuojant lankstų darbą Kazachstane? ir (2) Ar yra statistiškai reikšmingų jų poveikio skirtumų? Tyrime buvo atlikta ekspertų apklausa, kuri buvo analizuojama naudojant aprašomąją statistiką su ANOVA (trumposios dispersinės analizės) pagalba. Išvadose pabrėžiamas esminis technologinių ir socialinių veiksnių vaidmuo skatinant lankstų darbo priėmimą, o aplinkosaugos aspektai išlieka mažiau įtakingi. Išvados suteikia empirinių įžvalgų apie lankstaus darbo dinamiką Kazachstane ir sudaro pagrindą politikos rekomendacijoms, kuriomis siekiama skatinti labiau prisitaikančią ir atsparesnę darbo rinką.

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# THE APPLICATION OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** In the context of globalization, digitalization, and rapid changes in the socio-economic environment, innovative management technologies are becoming the most important tool for improving the efficiency of the public administration system.

Special attention is paid to the issue of the level of acceptance and involvement of civil servants in the process of changes from traditional to innovative decision-making methods by means of a sociological survey conducted by the authors. Modern challenges require state bodies to not only adapt to new technological trends but also to transform the mechanisms of interaction with citizens and optimize the internal work of state structures.

Innovative management technologies, such as digitalization, digital transformation, and project management can theoretically enhance the transparency, accessibility, and efficiency of public administration, however in practice, public authorities and civil servants are not fully such changes.

**Keywords:** *innovations, innovative management technologies, public administration, digitalization, public management, transformation.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *Inovacijos, inovatyvios valdymo technologijos, viešasis administravimas, skaitmenizavimas, viešasis valdymas, transformacijos.*

## Introduction

Today, the public administration system around the world is undergoing changes due to the introduction of new management methods through the use of digital technologies, project management, artificial intelligence, and other technologies.

In Kazakhstan, new management methods are also being implemented. For example, the Concept for the Development of Public Administration in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on February 26, 2021, No. 522, stipulates that the principle of a professional state includes the requirement for government agencies to seek new and innovative solutions to problems and to use modern methods of service delivery.

At the same time, the readiness of the public administration to change must become the key principle of the daily activities of all government bodies. This will ensure a continuous, systematic mechanism for improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the public apparatus.

Moreover, this document includes the concept of total digitalization of the public administration system, which will lead to progressive and sustainable development of the state.

When considering and analyzing the issue of implementing innovative management technologies in the public administration system based on foreign authors, in general, it is clear that the adoption of public sector innovation methodologies has many positive benefits, including increased awareness of social issues, better practices based on broad citizen experience, and increased trust between government and the public (Reddel and Woolcock 2004). However, the approaches of innovations implemented in the private sector depend on the context, and they are not so easy to implement in the public sector (Lui et al. 2011). Innovations in public administration are usually implemented within the political cycle. Managers instruct government agencies to expand, abandon, or create new technologies in public administration. On the basis of a political decision, state bodies respond to these instructions and implement the necessary changes in their work.

At the same time, as noted by some authors, such as Alexandra Collm and Kuno Schedler (2017), public administration is exposed to numerous stakeholders, whose requirements it must meet simultaneously. For the administration, each of these stakeholder groups is a reference point system with its own values, expectations, and logic of actions and reasoning. In the modern world, a completely differentiated society, these reference systems almost never agree with each other—they exist on their own. For public administration,

this means that it cannot rely on a single group (for example, politics as the main one), but in the end, it will be forced to meet partially contradictory requirements, which leads to certain difficulties.

Complexity in this context means that the situation is not predictable for the state administration, since it cannot be controlled like a machine, adjusting the screws and applying given rules. Usually, complexity arises when a large number of authors—that is, stakeholders who are unable or unwilling to reach a mutual understanding—influence the situation. From a systems theory perspective, an administration can respond to the increasing complexity of its orientation systems in a variety of ways. It can try to simplify complexity by ignoring individual needs and requirements. It can allow certain perspectives or logics to prevail over others. This makes it easier to deal with problems within the administration. However, if this approach is chosen, it does so at the expense of a limited perception of changes in those areas that are ignored. To solve such problems in public administration, it is proposed to apply innovative approaches, through which all interested parties will be properly satisfied.

The introduction and improvement of innovation means that the state apparatus is better able to cope with the unpredictable modern-day situations. It must be open to new things and be prepared for the risks involved.

## Literature review

As practice shows, government organizations introduce innovations to solve changing problems or perform tasks. For this purpose, they develop and implement new procedures, services, and internal processes. In all countries, innovations in the public administration system are implemented in stages.

So, the introduction of an e-government in Kazakhstan in the early stages, from 2007 to 2010, which widely utilized information and communication technologies, allowed for a qualitatively new level of access for citizens and organizations to government information and facilitated the implementation of new innovative management technologies in government bodies (Junusbekova 2013). At the same time, for more effective innovation activities and digitalization of government bodies, many strategic documents of the Public Administration Planning System were updated to include targeted indicators related to the use of information technologies. To ensure successful implementation, a System for the Annual Assessment of the Effectiveness of Government Agencies was developed in the country, with one of the evaluation indicators being the assessment of the use of various innovations by government bodies, including digital technologies (Junusbekova 2013).

Thus, in the past decade, the pressure on government agencies to innovate has increased in order to be able to cope with the vast social, economic, and environmental challenges. This situation is complicated by the tendency of state apparatuses to provide their services of high quality, with maximum availability and maximum efficiency, with increasingly

limited resources. Combined with the aforementioned complexity, the main task of public administrations within the emerging empty state is to solve complex problems. Increasing requirements, coupled with limited resources and increased complexity, indicate that public administrations are faced with the need to find new and innovative approaches.

In academic research, the concepts of "digital transformation" and "project management" are widely discussed in the context of introducing innovative management technologies in the field of public administration. The main focus is not so much on creating new business models, but on improving the efficiency and accessibility of public services for citizens. This is because the development of new business models is not a priority for the public sector (Meijer and Bekkers 2015).

Many researchers have been paying attention to digital transformation in the public sector for a long time and understand its importance. Some definitions focus more on the use of new technologies to make public information accessible to citizens, while other definitions focus more on the use of new technologies to make public services accessible. Some definitions emphasize interaction with citizens through the use of information and communication technologies.

The main advantage of digital transformation lies in the improvement and expansion of public services provided, which ultimately contributes to improving the efficiency of the public sector. Theoretical models aimed at the development of digital technologies and transformation within public organizations suggest that in the future, the development of e-government will increasingly focus on using the public sector as a strategic tool for business (McCarthy et al. 2024).

In addition to digital transformation, many researchers believe that one of the innovative management technologies is also the introduction of project management in the public administration system.

Project management is a systematic approach to implementing innovations based on the use of modern project management methods and tools. It includes defining project objectives, developing plans (and allocating resources to achieve them), and monitoring and controlling the completion of tasks. Project management helps to minimize risks, improve project efficiency, and ensure compliance with deadlines and budgets.

There are currently many scientific studies on the topic of innovative management technologies, including project management and digital transformation, and the definition of the concept should be considered in the table below (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Definitions of innovative management technologies, project management, and digital transformation

| No. | Authors | Definition |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Anaphat and Supawadee<br>International Journal of science and technology (2023) | Management innovation focuses on creating new things, changing results for the better, and improving efficiency, efficiency, and satisfaction. |
| 2. | Cinar and Simms<br>Public Management Review (2024) | Innovative management technologies are understood as the adoption, creation, or development of ideas, objects, and practices that are new units for making managerial decisions. |
| 3. | Margetts<br>Public policy and administration (2021) | Information systems form the basis of management tools, and innovative technologies open up new opportunities for public administration. |
| 4. | Mazur and Shapiro<br>Project management: handbook (2010) | Project management methodology is for organizing, planning, directing, and coordinating labor, financial, and other activities. It also encompasses material and technical resources during the project cycle. |
| 5. | Stolterman and Croon Fors<br>Information systems research: relevant theory and informed practice (2004) | In a broad sense, digital transformation refers to changes in all aspects of society associated with the use of digital technologies. |
| 6. | Gray and Rumpe<br>Software and Systems Modeling (2017) | Digital transformation is a key trend across various industries and sectors, as well as in the economy and social sphere. |

*Source: [3, 5, 11, 16, 17, 21]*

Table 1 shows definitions that, in our opinion, cover both innovative management technologies in general and project management, as well as digital transformation, including the methodology for organizing, planning, and coordinating the use of human and material resources in order to effectively achieve project goals.

The rapidly changing environment and expectations of society have a significant impact on the public service. In this regard, there is a need for continuous improvement of management methods and tools to effectively respond to current challenges and achieve strategic national development goals. In this context, project management includes modern methods and practices that contribute to the more effective achievement of goals and management of projects and programs.

Today, project management is a science-based concept of effective management with a wide range of tools, models, and methods applicable to the implementation of projects of

any scale. Unlike traditional management, project management is characterized by flexibility, consistency, and integrity. The project model is developed carefully, subjected to a comprehensive analysis, and only then implemented. Project management, as an innovative approach to management, is of considerable interest both for the scientific community and for practitioners—that is, managers of organizations of various levels and nature, including the private and public sectors.

Thus, decision-making on project management tools and the introduction of digital technologies in the field of public administration, as one of the types of innovative management technologies in the field of public administration, are key tools for improving the efficiency of the public administration system itself in many countries, including the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Materials and methods

The authors used content analysis based on a literature review of scientific research on the introduction of innovative technologies in the public administration system.

In addition, the authors conducted an empirical research method, in particular in the form of quantitative research by conducting a sociological survey among civil servants (at central and local levels) of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In addition, the article used the following methods of scientific research: analysis and synthesis of information provided by scientific publications on the development of innovative management technologies implemented in the public administration system. The theoretical, methodological, and information base is based on the publications of scientists. Based on the analysis, we come to the conclusion that correctly developed approaches to the introduction of innovative management technologies will lead to effective interaction between state bodies and society.

The purpose of this study is to develop recommendations for improving the approaches introduced by innovative management technologies in the public administration system of the Republic of Kazakhstan, such as digital transformation and project management.

## Research results

Experts estimate the level of implementation of innovative technologies in the public administration system in the Republic of Kazakhstan as average. At the same time, Kazakhstan is actively implementing various information and communication technologies in the public sector. However, there is still much room for improvement.

Today, Kazakhstan is developing a Digital Code that will form a single legal space for the development of the digital economy and digital transformation of public administration.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, special attention is currently being paid to the introduction of innovative technologies, in particular, one of the main national projects of the country is the national project "Technological Breakthrough through Digitalization, Science, and Innovation," approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 12, 2021 No. 727, the purpose of which is to make Kazakhstan a modern country with management through digital transformation, making decisions based on reliable data, ensuring the efficient and secure use of infrastructure in the digital age, and increasing the contribution of science to the socio-economic development of the country.

In accordance with the Rules for project management, approved by the Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated May 30, 2021 No. 358, project management is designed to ensure the effective implementation of the tasks of state bodies by introducing a new organizational culture and a project-network model of public administration based on modern technologies.

According to the National Information Technologies Joint-Stock Company the largest company in the information technology market of Kazakhstan, there are 28 electronic information platforms in the country that provide various types of services to both state bodies and the population.

From the conducted analysis, the authors revealed that out of 28 electronic information platforms, there are 11 information projects in the field of public administration, nine projects in the social sphere that provide public services, five projects in the field of business, and three projects in the field of legal relations.

At the same time, for a more comprehensive analysis of the public administration system, the authors conducted research to determine the level of implementation of innovative management technologies at the local and central levels of public administration.

This research was conducted using an electronic questionnaire sent to respondents. The survey was conducted using the Google Forms application. The questionnaire was sent to central and local executive bodies in all 20 administrative territorial units of Kazakhstan, including 17 regions and three cities of republican significance.

Here is the translation of the provided text into English: According to the results of the conducted analysis, out of the total number of respondents, which included 363 individuals aged 18 and older, 221 (60.9%) were women and 142 (39.1%) were men. Among the respondents working in local executive bodies, 304 (83.7%) were from local authorities, 15 (4.1%) were from central government bodies, 30 (8.2%) were from territorial subdivisions of central government bodies, and 14 (3.9%) were from other state bodies. In the study, 282 (80.7%) specialists, 56 (15.4%) managers, and approximately 25 people (4%) in other positions participated. The survey indicated how well government employees understood the definition of "innovative management technologies," and a number of response options were provided for this definition (Table 2). The survey indicated the extent to which civil servants understand the definition of "innovative management technologies," where a number of possible answers were given for this definition (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Definition of the concept of "innovative management technologies"

| No. | What are "innovative management technologies"? | Number of selected answer options (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | New technologies and ideas implemented in the public administration system | 40.8% |
| 2. | Application of new and modern tools and approaches in the process of organizing and managing state bodies and structures | 36.1% |
| 3. | Digital technologies and the transformation of digital systems | 8.8% |
| 4. | Various changes in the management system at the level of society or its parts, which set themselves the task of achieving certain goals or solving specific tasks related to the development and functioning of the system | 8.3% |
| 5. | Digitized public service delivery systems | 6% |

*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

Based on this data, it should be concluded that respondents share this definition between new technologies and ideas introduced into the public administration system, as well as the use of new and modern tools and approaches in the process of organizing and managing state bodies and structures.

When asked whether the organization in which the respondents work has a strategy for introducing innovative management technologies, such as the use of project management in decision-making and digital technologies, the majority of respondents (46.8%) answered yes, 34.4% of respondents answered that their organization does not have any strategies for introducing new technologies, and 18.7% of respondents said that they do not have information about any changes in relation to the implementation of innovative technologies.

For the question about who in their organization contributes to the efficiency of using innovative technologies, a number of possible answers were given by the respondents. Respondents included first-line managers, information and communication technology specialists responsible for digitalization, and heads of structural divisions. Some respondents found it difficult to answer, and others provided a more open version of an answer at their own discretion.

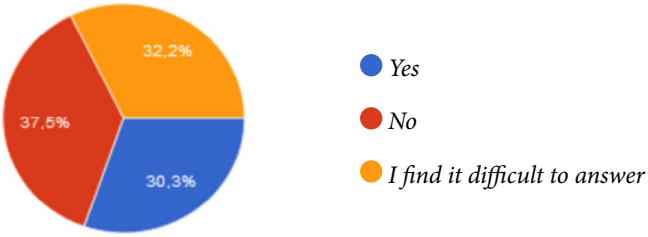
For this question, the largest response (27%) was that the use of innovative technologies was attributed to the specialist responsible for digitalization. Among the open responses, 0.6% of respondents believed that the merit is shared—that is, the entire organization.

Further, to distinguish between innovative management technologies, such as the use of project management and digitalization, separate questions were compiled for each such technology.

When asked whether the organization uses a project-based approach for

decision-making, the majority (37.5%) of respondents said no, 32.2% found it difficult to answer, and only 30.3% of respondents answered positively (Figure 1).

***Figure 1.*** Is project management used in your organization?




*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

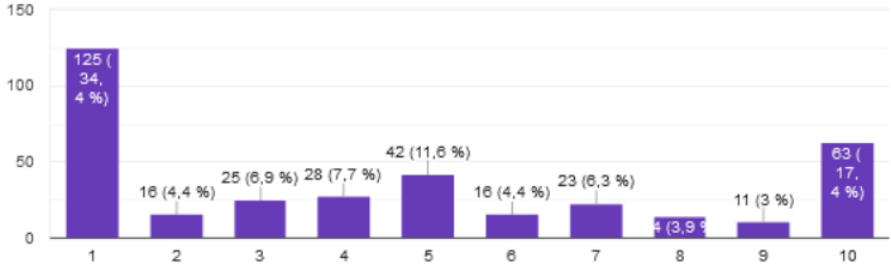
The majority of respondents answered that they do not use the project approach and found it difficult to answer. For the next question regarding whether there are regulatory legal acts on project management adopted by the state body, the majority (43.5%) answered no, 33.9% of respondents found it difficult to answer, and only 22.6% of respondents answered yes. The results are visible in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Are there any regulatory legal acts on project management adopted by your state body?

*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

Regarding the assessment of the level of project management implementation in public administration systems, it was revealed that 125 respondents (34.4%) rated the level of project management implementation as 1 (1 point is the lowest and 10 points is the highest), which shows a low indicator of project approach implementation (Figure 3).

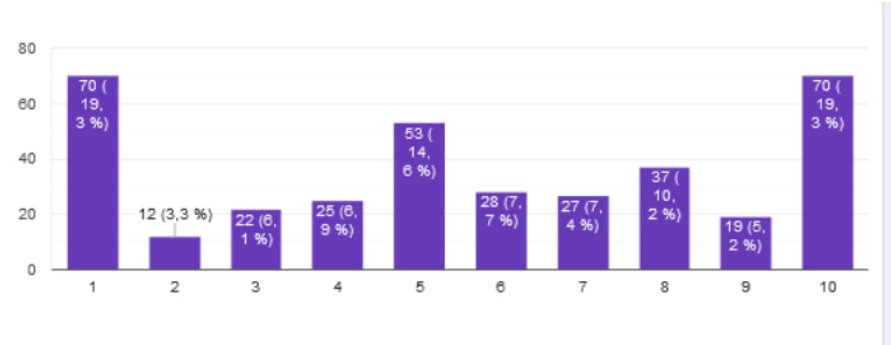
**Figure 3.** The level of project management implementation in public administration systems




*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

As for the introduction of digital technologies, the analysis of the results of the questionnaire showed that, in contrast to project management, the level of assessment of the use of digital technologies is significantly higher. According to the presented schedule, it was revealed that 70 people each rated the lowest and highest level (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** The level of use of digital technologies in the public administration system




*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

After determining the assessment of satisfaction with the use of digital technologies in the public administration system, respondents had to answer the question of how the public administration system has changed in the use of digital technologies in recent years. The results of this question were very positive, as the majority of respondents answered that they had noticed a significant change (Figure 5).

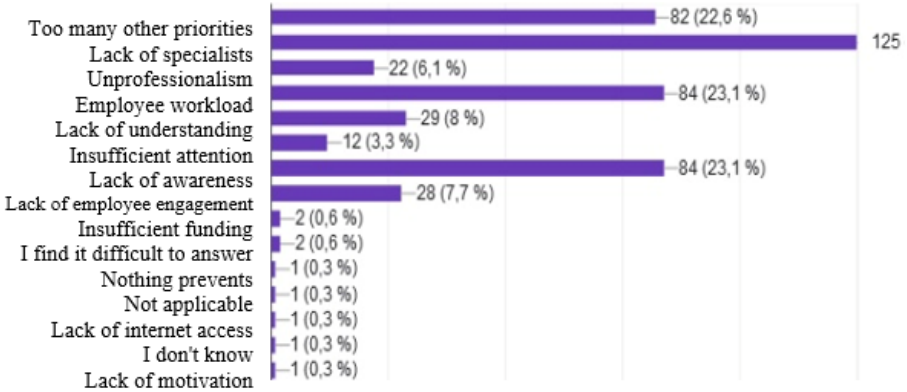
**Figure 5.** Changes in the public administration system when using digital technologies in recent years

*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

To determine the reasons for the unwillingness and inability to implement innovative management technologies in public administration bodies, a question was asked about what prevents the respondent's organization from effectively implementing innovative management technologies. Respondents were allowed to give their own specific reasons, and a number of main problems were identified.

The majority of respondents, 125 people (34.4%), pointed to the lack of qualified specialists in their field, and one person (0.3%) attributed issues to the lack of internet access (Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Problems in the implementation of innovative management technologies in the public administration system



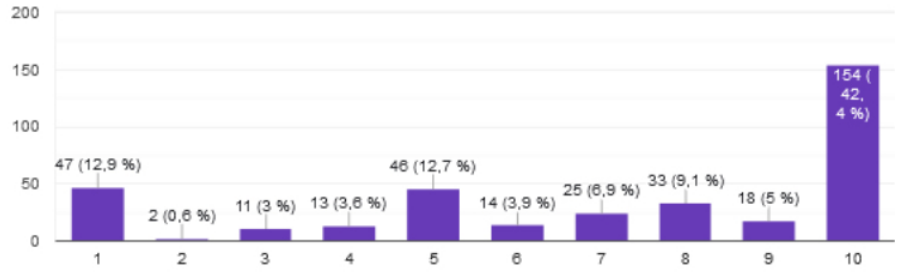

*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

Based on this question, it was revealed that the lack of employees, the lack of management involvement, and the lack of competence of existing employees lead to the inefficient implementation of innovative management technologies.

To solve these problems, the research survey asked whether training and seminars on professional development are needed in terms of skills in implementing and using innovative management technologies (and how the degree of importance for improving competencies is assessed: 0 – I can't answer; 1 – low; 10 – high). The data on the question was optimal, meaning that employees, despite their workload and the transition to a new management, showed a desire to learn something new and embrace changes.

For example, 154 people (42.4%) scored 10 points, which is the highest indicator, while 47 people (12.9%) scored 1 point (Figure 7).

**Figure 7.** Conducting training and seminars on professional development services




*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

At the end of the research survey, the respondents were asked an open question regarding recommendations for improving competencies in the implementation of innovative management technologies in the public administration system of the Republic of Kazakhstan. One of the most popular responses was the suggestion to hold training and seminars (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Recommendations for improving the implementation of innovative management technologies in the public administration system

| No. | Suggestions and recommendations | Quantity (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Conduct seminars, courses, training, etc. on teaching innovative technologies. | 5.5% |
| 2. | Organize advanced training for employees. | 1.4% |
| 3. | Improve and modernize technical equipment. | 0.6% |
| 4. | Conduct a thorough analysis of the use and implementation of innovative management technologies. | 0.6% |
| 5. | Raise employee awareness. | 0.6% |
| 6. | Increase the number of employees responsible for digitalization. | 1.2% |
| 7. | Learn and use international experience. | 0.6% |
| 8. | Improve digital literacy not only of employees, but also of the country's population. | 0.3% |
| 9. | Conduct open discussions. | 0.3% |
| 10. | Send employees to an offline format abroad to gain knowledge and experience in the field of innovative technologies. | 0.6% |
| 11. | Conduct practical training from experts in this field. | 0.99% |
| 12. | Motivate employees to use and apply IT. Support from top managers. Often, managers are not interested because they are not used to working with technology. Also, optimize the routine work that leads to the increased workload of employees (bureaucracy, constant reports, and references). | 1.2% |
| 13 | Create a modern and effective education system that meets the challenges of modern times, which would be a key factor in developing and realizing the country's innovative potential. One of the directions of innovative development of education is the development of a digital educational environment that ensures high-quality accessibility of additional professional (pedagogical) education. | 0.3% |
| 14. | Foster team engagement and cohesion. | 0.3% |
| 15. | Increase the salary of employees. | 0.3% |
| 16. | Increase the internet speed. | 1.2% |

*Source: compiled by the authors on the basis of the conducted sociological survey*

## Discussion and conclusions

One of the first steps in implementing innovative management technologies in the Republic of Kazakhstan was the development of state information systems and expanding citizens' access to electronic services. In 2006, the "Electronic Government" law was adopted, which became the basis for the creation and implementation of the system of electronic public services. This allowed citizens and legal entities to receive various state services via the internet, significantly reducing waiting times and increasing service accessibility.

During this period, document management automation systems in government agencies were actively developed, which ensured increased efficiency of government employees' work and reduced bureaucratic barriers. In the following decades, Kazakhstan continued the active implementation of innovative technologies in management practices. In 2013, the "Digital Kazakhstan" strategy was adopted, aimed at developing the digital economy and improving the quality of public services. As part of this strategy, areas such as the use of cloud technologies, big data, and analytics for improving the quality of public administration were actively developed. In 2018, a new government services portal was launched, significantly improving the accessibility and convenience of service delivery for citizens. Blockchain technologies are also actively being implemented to ensure transparency and data security. In recent years, areas such as the use of artificial intelligence for forecasting and improving the performance of government agencies, as well as the development of systems for monitoring and analyzing the activities of state bodies based on big data, have been actively developing.

Today, the innovative technologies being implemented in the system of government agencies directly affect the Government Effectiveness Index, created by the World Bank.

The obtained analysis of the results of a sociological survey and the policy pursued in the country through the development of regulatory legal acts shows a contradictory situation. The conducted sociological survey indicates that the level of implementation of innovative management technologies is low, especially noticeable at the local state level. As the analysis of the survey results shows, the main problems are as follows:

1) A lack of qualified specialists in this industry
2) Employees who do not understand why changes are necessary and how important such changes are
3) A lack of involvement of heads of state bodies in the implementation of innovative management technologies
4) A focus on employees prioritizing main tasks in their work over the introduction of new technologies
5) A lack of motivation and unwillingness to embrace changes
6) Insufficient funding from the Government for the necessary industry-specific equipment and specialists

Nevertheless, as the results of the study show, despite the existing problems, civil servants are still ready to study and adopt new management technologies in the public

administration system. Respondents suggest that they should train and attract as many specialists as possible in their industry, and learn and be prepared for changes that will lead to large-scale changes and changes in the quality of public services. This will increase the efficiency of public administration in the country as a whole. To achieve this result, respondents offered their ideas and positions on this issue. Many felt that to fill the gap in the lack of qualified specialists, it is necessary to conduct high-quality theoretical and practical training from key experts, including international ones in their field, motivate employees from the first heads of state bodies, work as a team, and provide employees with all the necessary equipment, including improving the quality and speed of the internet in all regions of the country.

The above shows that the regulatory framework and policy in the field of public administration are fully ready for changes and the use of innovative management technologies in the public administration system of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

An important aspect of improving the application of innovative technologies by government employees is the creation of educational programs, seminars, and training aimed at preparing specialists in digital technologies, information systems, and project management.

At the same time, special attention must be given to the employees of government structures at the local level, ensuring the integration and necessary infrastructure for innovative technologies.

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# INOVATYVIŲ TECHNOLOGIJŲ TAIKYMAS KAZACHSTANO RESPUBLIKOS VALDYME

Anotacija. Globalizacijos, skaitmeninimo ir sparčių pokyčių socio-ekonominėje aplinkos kontekste inovatyvios valdymo technologijos tampa svarbiausiu įrankiu gerinant viešojo administravimo sistemos efektyvumą.

Ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas klausimui apie valstybės tarnautojų priėmimo ir įsitraukimo lygį pereinant nuo tradicinių sprendimų priėmimo metodų prie inovatyvių, naudojant šios straipsnio autorių atliktą sociologinį tyrimą. Šiuolaikiniai iššūkiai reikalauja, kad valstybės institucijos ne tik prisitaikytų prie naujų technologinių tendencijų, bet ir transformuotų sąveikos su piliečiais mechanizmus bei optimizuotų vidaus valstybės struktūrų darbą.

Inovatyvios valdymo technologijos, tokios kaip skaitmeninimas, skaitmeninė transformacija ir projektų valdymas teoriniu požiūriu gali reikšmingai padidinti viešojo administravimo skaidrumą, prieinamumą ir efektyvumą, tačiau reikia nustatyti kiek praktikoje viešosios valdžios institucijos ir valstybės tarnautojai yra pasirengę tokiems pokyčiams.

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# ACCESSIBILITY OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR MALES, FEMALES, AND PERSONS WHO BALANCE FAMILY AND OCCUPATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE WORKING IN THE UKRAINIAN ENERGY SECTOR

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**Abstract**. The article is devoted to the approbation of tools for quantitative assessment of the involvement of men, women, and persons who must balance professional and family responsibilities in order to participate in corporate professional training programs in the context of ensuring the stability of the energy industry of Ukraine in war conditions and post-war recovery.

The database was obtained through an online poll taken by employees of enterprises and institutions of the energy sector (the survey population n = 290). The indicator of the frequency of participation in corporate professional training in the annual dimension is applied both for all employed women and men and for women and men who are employed at the same qualification level. The evidence obtained shows that to attract women involved in raising children and create truly equal conditions for them, employers need to develop special procedures and forms of participation in training programs, which involve additional costs. We also justified that in a period of post-war recovery, it is possible to maintain the representation of women at key levels of the management hierarchy only if the privileged position of men returning from the war is, to some extent, balanced by the high professional competence of women who expect to retain the positions occupied during the period of men's employment in military operations. Accordingly, the tools we have proposed for assessing and analyzing the intensity of involvement of women and men in corporate professional training programs are becoming increasingly relevant for analytical support of policies aimed at maintaining the representation of women in energy management structures during the post-war recovery period.

***Keywords:*** *gender, equality, corporate training programs, professional mobility, energetic.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *lyčių lygybė, įmonių mokymo programos, profesinis mobilumas, energetika.*

## Introduction

Gender equality in career opportunities of the Ukrainian energy sector has traditionally been considered in the context of sector development and integration into the European Energy Space (Dyachuk et al. 2019). However, after Russia's full-scale invasion began, energy, like other sectors, faced a radical reduction in the supply of male labor due to mobilization against the backdrop of increased demand, in particular due to large-scale destruction and energy generation and distribution working in overloaded regimes. Accordingly, the ability of energy enterprises to meet their personnel needs based on female labor supply has become no longer a desirable component of development, but a necessary condition for survival. Thus, institutional reforms and efforts aimed at eliminating gender discrimination in the energy sector in the pre-war period have become a significant factor in the stability of energy enterprises in wartime (Poruch 2023). Thus, studies that provide an assessment of the effectiveness of gender equality policies in the Ukrainian energy sector create the necessary basis for explaining the successes and problems of resistance of individual enterprises, energy sectors, and the industry as a whole in the conditions of a full-scale invasion. Accordingly, this article is aimed at solving two tasks. The first is the approbation of methodology for quantitatively assessing gender equality in the area of employee involvement in corporate professional development programs. The second is to clarify the effectiveness of gender equality policies in issues of access to corporate professional development programs in the pre-war years, as an important factor in the sustainability of the Ukrainian energy sector in conditions of critical limitation of the male labor supply.

## Literature analysis

The focus on the gender-based involvement characteristics in corporate skill-development programs is delineated within "bonding and selection" models (Lazear 1981; Salop and Salop 1976). This theory, in the context of strategic decisions on investing in human capital, demonstrates that employers will consider women of fertile age less inclined to permanent employment and prefer to hire men for positions that involve highly specialized training. The idea that women of fertile age are more prone to shifts in working life and prefer to invest in universal skills (which retain value in the event of workplace change) rather than in specialized ones (focused on a specific enterprise) can find empirical confirmation in different returns from tenure for women and men. "Lower returns to tenure for women could be due to employer discrimination based on rational expectations about women's attachment to jobs. For example, if employers engage in statistical discrimination, then the perception of women as less stable workers could lead employers to systematically not hire women for jobs with opportunities for specific training or learning." (Munasinghe et al. 2008, 1297)

At the same time, studies based on the data of Ukrainian enterprises mostly ignore both

the general features of the position of women in the organization and the specifics of their access to career growth opportunities. In particular, the connection between the activity of involvement in professional training and risks of their switching to another employer, or even competitor, as was researched by Verba (2011), Pedchenko et al. (2021), Balabanyuk (2011), and Harun (2019). For employers, the staff's professional mobility growth is accompanied by an increase in the cost of professional training, paid by the employee to ensure compliance of employees' competencies with the requirements of the workplace (Laptev 2018; Kuybida and Shpektorenko 2018; Tyshchenko et al. 2022).

However, even in widely cited publications (Blau and Winkler 2017; OECD 2012) quantitative characteristics that can be used to assess the involvement of staff (a certain group, selected by professional qualifications or socio-demographic characteristics) in corporate training programs do not have an unambiguous interpretation, even in the context of a particular strategy of enterprise or society (Handrahan 2004). The opportunity to define the link between characteristics of involvement in corporate training programs and the socio-demographic characteristics of employees should allow for the localizing of both of the reasons that limit the professional mobility of workers and reserves available for Ukrainian society to ensure the stability of the energy industry in the conditions of war and the militarization of the economy, thanks to the improvement of the conditions of female human capital accumulation through corporate training programs (Chiva 2023).

The range of local research devoted to gender aspects of employment in Ukrainian energy notes the high level of standardization of conditions of access to career development programs (Kyrylenko et al. 2024; Tyshchenko et al. 2022; Dyachuk et al. 2019). Such standardization, caused by powerful state regulation that strictly determines the periodicity and forms of conducting professional training and professional development, as well as the requirements for seniority in certain groups of positions and workplaces, has significantly reduced the variability of career trajectories based on the personal characteristics of employees (Tyshchenko et al. 2022).

These factors significantly reduce the explanatory capacity of "female" and "male" functions for investment in "on-the-job training" (Iversen et al. 2020; Cool 2010), as workplace parameters contribute to the features of access to corporate training much more than a person's human capital characteristics. So, the personal characteristics of human capital acquire a new meaning: They show the extent to which employers provide women and men with equal access to corporate vocational training programs and the extent to which involvement in family responsibilities affects women's and men's opportunities to take advantage of opportunities created by employers. The same approach was used in the research devoted to factors of women's career resilience in male-dominated industries (Linnenluecke 2017; Bimrose and Hearne 2012), and similar methods were used for exploring the role of inclusiveness of economic development for improving regional financial capacities (Sakti et al. 2024). And this allows the authors to arm themselves with an additional criterion and additional dimension of gender inequality: If women are less involved by employers in corporate vocational training programs, this can be interpreted as a sign of gender-based

limitations.

Thus, in this article, we test tools that allow us to operationalize the abstract "bonding and selection" model to study gender equality in access to corporate training programs in the Ukrainian energy sector. In particular, the question that is formulated within the "bonding and selection" model is as follows: Why do employers invest less in women's professional development? (Lazear 1981; Salop and Salop 1976). We also propose consideration of the question: Why are women employed mainly in professional groups that employers involve less intensively in professional training? This context was studied by Tyshchenko et al. (2022). We propose consideration of the issue of different returns on investment in training for women and men (Munasinghe et al. 2008; Pereira and Martins 2004; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004) through an analysis of differences in the frequency of involvement of women and men belonging to the same professional group in corporate professional training. In such analysis, belonging to the same professional group serves as a sign of equal or similar investments in human capital, as was proposed by Tyshchenko et al. (2022). Finally, we propose to use the socio-demographic status of women belonging to the same professional group but with different marital status to quantitatively assess the restrictions imposed on the professional mobility of energy workers by comparing their frequency of involvement in corporate training programs—a task that was formulated but not solved by Kyrylenko et al. (2024).

Accordingly, the contribution of our article in the development of international research, devoted to problems of gender equality in access to factors of professional mobility, is aimed at increasing the visibility of the set of national cases and illustrating the connection between human rights, equality, non-discrimination, and the capacity for sustainable development of organizations and society as a whole. To improve the local research, we propose the development of quantitative assessment tools with indicators of the frequency of involvement in corporate training programs and principles of their application for gender equation analysis.

## Methodology

The primary set of information was received through an online poll taken by people involved in the enterprises and institutions of the energy sector (the survey population n = 290). The sampling is not representative of the entire population of the energy sector workers, by territorial or industry-specific structure. Within the sampling, the share of the extractive and energy-generating industries workers is lower than their proportion in general among all energy sector workers of Ukraine—the proportion of government regulation workers is significantly higher compared to the general number. However, all of the professional qualifications groups have been represented in the sampling, starting from the unskilled workers (first level qualification group according to the «ISCO-08») up to the top management members of the energy companies (fourth level qualification group

according to the «ISCO-08»). At the same time, the poll procedure conditions provided equal chances to women and men from each professional qualifications group to partake in the survey. This provision allows researchers to use the results to illustrate the general characteristics and tendencies of equal gender access to the corporate skill development programs and involvement of women and men at different levels of the professional qualifications hierarchy.

Among those surveyed, 4.1% were upper management representatives from energy companies and government regulation institutions (heads of companies, departments, and sections—8th level according to the classification used in the research); 21.0% were of representatives of the commercial and technical management (deputies of managers and heads of functioning services within the departments—7th qualification level); 36.6% were highly qualified specialists (leading, head specialists—6th qualification level); 23.8% were qualified technical and commercial specialists (5th qualification level); and 14.5% were technical office workers and physical laborers (skilled and unskilled— 4th and lower qualification levels).

The distribution of the overall number of those surveyed by qualifications level is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Professional and qualitative structure of the sample

| **Professional qualification group** | Women | | | Men | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Respondents | % of the number of respondents of both genders according to qualification level | % of all women respondents | Respondents | % of the number of respondents of both genders according to qualification level | % of all men respondents |
| Upper management | 7 | 58.3 | 4.8 | 5 | 41.7 | 3.5 |
| Management | 15 | 24.6 | 10.2 | 46 | 75.4 | 32.2 |
| Highly trained professionals | 66 | 62.3 | 44.9 | 40 | 37.7 | 28.0 |
| Trained professionals | 41 | 59.4 | 27.9 | 28 | 40.6 | 19.6 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Technical office labor and physical labor, both skilled and unskilled (qualification level 4 and lower) | 18 | 42.9 | 12.2 | 24 | 57.1 | 16.8 |
| **All** | **147** | **50.7** | | **143** | **49.3** | |

For evaluating the intensity of involvement in corporate professional training programs, we propose the average frequency of involvement during the period of employment at the enterprise, which is calculated separately for each type of corporate training using the formula:

$$AF = N / Y, \text{ were: } (1)$$

*AF* – average number of training programs completed during employment at the enterprise, times per year

*N* – total number of training programs completed by an employee during their time at the company

*Y* – number of years of work in a company

## Results and discussion

During the first stage, we compare the indicators for women and men who are on the same qualification level (Table 2).

The data in the table indicates that, at the time of the poll (the second quarter of 2021), the surveyed women were somewhat less likely to be involved in training while released from work. However, according to aggregated data for all women and men included in the sampling, the obtained differences can be considered statistically significant only with a probability of error of about 20% (differences are significant only at p=0.2). Similarly, the differences for each of the professional qualification groups are not statistically significant, which indicates the proximity of involvement intensity for both genders in corporate training programs with release from work.

**Table 2.** The frequency of involvement in corporate training programs (with release from work)

| **Professional qualification group** | Women | | | Men | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Per annum | % of the indicator for all respondents of the corresponding qualification level | % of the same indicator for men | Per annum | % of the indicator for all respondents of the corresponding qualification level | % of the same indicator for women |
| Upper management | 7 | 58.3 | 4.8 | 5 | 41.7 | 3.5 |
| Management | 15 | 24.6 | 10.2 | 46 | 75.4 | 32.2 |
| Highly trained professionals | 66 | 62.3 | 44.9 | 40 | 37.7 | 28.0 |
| Trained professionals | 41 | 59.4 | 27.9 | 28 | 40.6 | 19.6 |
| Technical office labor and physical labor, both skilled and unskilled (qualification level 4 and lower) | 18 | 42.9 | 12.2 | 24 | 57.1 | 16.8 |
| **All** | **0.19** | 85.9 | 75.67 | **0.26** | 113.55 | 132.15 |

The data provided shows that the differences between women and men within each professional qualification level are less significant than the differences between different professional qualification levels. Thus, the leading factor differentiating the frequency of involvement of women and men in corporate training programs is the varying representation of men and women at professional qualification levels. Consequently, the lag in the involvement of women is due to their lower presence at the levels of the hierarchy, which are characterized by more intensive training. Conversely, a higher number of women are employed at levels where the intensity of training is lower than the average for all professional qualification levels.

Next, we will compare the frequency of participation in corporate training programs

of women and men, based on the hypothesis of the importance of family status as a factor differentiating the frequency of involvement in corporate training programs (Table 3).

The given data shows significant differences in the frequency of participation in training programs between women involved and not involved in raising children: about a 12% difference in programs with releasing from work and about 27% in programs without such releasing (differences significant at p=0.1). We interpret such differences as evidence that the skill development programs offered to staff (especially in relation to in-service programs) are not fully suitable to the needs of women involved in raising children. At the same time, the level of involvement of women, not only in corporate professional training programs but also in generally filling vacancies, has still not gained sufficient importance among managers of energy enterprises. Until now, the need for certain organizational and technical changes to adapt the production environment to the needs of women is perceived by managers as a reason to focus on male labor supply (Poruch 2023).

**Table 3.** The frequency of involvement in corporate training programs for women and men with varying family circumstances

| **Indicator** | Women | | | Men | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All | Directly involved in raising children | Not involved in raising children | All | Directly involved in raising children | Not involved in raising children |
| Involved in corporate training programs (with releasing from work) per annum | 0.19 | 0.18 | 0.20 | 0.26 | 0.26 | 0.25 |
| The percentage of the relevant indicator for the opposite gender | 75.67 | 69.52 | 80.49 | 132.15 | 143.84 | 124.24 |
| Involved in corporate training programs (when not released from work) per annum | 0.41 | 0.34 | 0.46 | 0.45 | 0.47 | 0.44 |
| The percentage of the relevant indicator for the opposite gender | 91.26 | 72.19 | 106.36 | 109.58 | 138.53 | 94.02 |

A large-scale reduction in the number of the economically active population is a common problem for both the energy and other sectors of economic activity in Ukraine. Such a trend had a significant impact on business models already before the war and has strengthened with the mobilization of human resources (mostly male) for military recruitment.

The severity of this problem for businesses in Ukraine has traditionally been mitigated by the stagnation of national production scales and the possibility of labor replacement by capital. However, the development of the industry, the implementation of projects that aim to expand the scale of production, and the qualitative improvement of the organizational and technical level are extremely difficult under such conditions. A significant part of the surveyed managers of energy enterprises points to the lack of staff with demanded competencies as a critical issue for the energy sector, limiting the choice of business strategies for development and adaptation to new challenges (Poruch 2021; Poruch 2023). At the same time, the presence of large-scale "traditionally male" employment segments at the enterprises is perceived by most managers as a fact of life and not as an opportunity to improve the enterprise's provision of qualified personnel.

Differences between women and men in involvement in corporate training programs are evident. Additionally, the differences between genders in the group of respondents involved in raising children are significantly greater than for the group of respondents (women and men) who are not involved in raising minors. The indicator of the frequency of participation in training programs with releasing from work for women raising minor children is only 69.5% of the corresponding indicator for men, and for women not involved in raising children, 80.5%.

In the training programs without releasing from work, the rate of women who are involved in raising children equals 72.2% of the corresponding rate for men, while women who are not involved in raising minors participate in such programs more often than men—the rate for women is 106.4% of the indicator for men.

We also noted significant differences observed in terms of the frequency of involvement in training of men and women with different years of work at the enterprise. For the group of women with an employment duration of more than 12 years, the average frequency of involvement in corporate training programs is close to 0.3, compared to 0.19 on average for female respondents. At the same time, for men, the analogous difference is smaller—men with more than 12 years of work experience have a frequency of involvement in corporate training of 0.32 against the average rate for all male respondents of 0.26.

In general, there is a tendency toward "the more experience, the smaller the gap in involvement in corporate training programs for women, compared to men." This trend is consistent with the thesis about the "leading" and "peripheral" segments of employment, which is widespread in the scientific literature (Lukiyanova 2010; Libanova 2015). At the same time, in the conditions of Ukraine, the main factor in getting into the "leading" segment of employment is the length of service, which is valued by employers more than the investments made in human capital at the early stages of a working career. A widespread explanation for this situation is the predominance of paternalistic principles of wage differentiation in Ukraine and other post-Soviet countries: Loyalty to the employer, which manifests itself through the length of service, affects the salary amount to a greater extent than the scale of investment in human capital (Libanova 2015). In addition, the employer's propensity to invest in human capital increases with increasing length of service (at least

up to a certain limit), which is also characteristic of social and labor relations in developed countries (Fevre 2003; Pereira and Martins 2004; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 2004) and can be traced to the system of factors of wage differentiation in post-Soviet countries and Ukraine.

The results of the calculations described above evidence that aggregated indicators of the frequency of participation in skill development programs for women and men are relatively close (differences become statistically significant only at p=0.2), and the identified differences are primarily caused by a greater representation of men at those professional qualification levels that are characterized by more intensive participation in training programs. This data proves that the problems of unequal access are not related to the gender status of "women" but to the incomplete adaptation of the formats of training programs to the needs of women who contend with family and work responsibilities.

The presence of the specific needs of women (in our study, women who raise minor children) is emphasized by significant differences in the frequency of participation in skill-development programs of women involved and not involved in raising children. Additionally, the fact that the training programs offered by energy enterprises (especially training without releasing from work) do not fully meet the needs of women who raise minors is supported by the fact that the rate of participation of women lags behind the similar rate for men.

So, there are signs of a typical problem: The principles of access gender equality are implemented better when lower additional costs are associated with compliance. After all, it is easier to attract women to skill-development programs when they are offered the same conditions as men. As a result, the additional burden of raising children, which traditionally rests mainly on women (curiously, men who are involved in raising children participate more actively in professional development programs than men who are not involved in raising children) leads to a lower availability of corporate skill-development programs (according to research results, this is especially evident in relation to on-the-job training) for women who combine family and professional responsibilities.

## Conclusions and suggestions

1. To attract women involved in raising children and create truly equal conditions for them, employers need to develop special procedures and forms of participation in skill-development programs, which involve additional costs. It is the additional costs (currently easily measurable) required to achieve real equality in corporate skill-development program access for men and women that traditionally cause gender inequality. After all, the costs of achieving such equality are easily measured and arise already in the current period, while the benefits of achieving gender equality take longer to achieve and require a certain method for substantiating their quantitative assessment.

2. However, the additional costs of attracting women, particularly those who combine

professional and parental responsibilities, to corporate vocational training programs during the war period provide two areas of motivation:

The current problems of the energy sector due to the reduction of male labor supply eliminate the reasons that determined the existence of "predominantly male" professions in the energy sector, in particular, the insufficient qualifications of female applicants, which becomes a condition for survival for energy enterprises.

Due to the features of the post-war period, in particular, the expected return of mobilized male workers to their jobs, it seems as though maintaining the representation of women at key levels of the management hierarchy is only possible if the privileged position of men returning from the war is, to some extent, balanced by the high professional competence of women who expect to retain the positions occupied during the period of men's employment in military operations.

Accordingly, the tools we have proposed for assessing and analyzing the intensity of involvement of women and men in corporate professional training programs are becoming increasingly relevant for analytical support of policies aimed at maintaining the representation of women in energy management structures during the post-war recovery period.

3. Despite the fact that some of the differences found are statistically significant only at p=0.2 (a relatively high probability of disproving the hypothesis of the significance of the differences), a simple mechanical sample expansion will allow for sufficiently reliable results and the applying of indicator of frequency of involvement in corporate training programs will lead to well-grounded results in differentiating the conditions for professional growth that women and men, and those who combine employment with parental responsibilities have in the energy sector.

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M. Tyshchenko

# KARJEROS PLĖTROS PROGRAMŲ PRIEINAMUMAS VYRAMS, MOTERIMS, ASMENIMS KURIE DERINA PROFESINES PAREIGAS UKRAINOS ENERGETIKOS SEKTORIUJE

**Anotacija.** Straipsnis skirtas moterų ir vyrų, asmenų, profesinių ir šeiminių įsipareigojimų vykdymą derinančių su įmonių profesinio mokymo programomis, įtraukimo kiekybinio įvertinimo priemonių aprobacijai, siekiant užtikrinti Ukrainos energetikos pramonės stabilumą karo sąlygomis ir atsigauti po karo.

Duomenų bazė buvo gauta per internetinę apklausą, kurią atliko energetikos sektoriaus įmonių ir įstaigų darbuotojai (apklausos populiacija n = 290). Dalyvavimo įmonių profesiniuose mokymuose dažnumo metinėje dimensijoje rodiklis taikomas tiek visoms dirbančioms moterims ir vyrams, tiek moterims ir vyrams, kurie dirba pagal tą patį kvalifikacijos lygį. Gauti įrodymai, kad darbdaviai, norėdami pritraukti vaikus auginančias moteris ir sudaryti joms išties lygias sąlygas, turi parengti specialias procedūras ir dalyvavimo mokymo programose formas, kurios reikalauja papildomų išlaidų. Taip pat pagrindėme, kad pokario atsigavimo laikotarpiu išlaikyti moterų atstovavimą pagrindiniuose valdymo hierarchijos lygmenyse įmanoma tik tuo atveju, jei iš karo grįžusių vyrų privilegijuotą padėtį tam tikru mastu atsveria aukšta moterų, tikisinčių išlaikyti pareigas, užimtas vyrų įdarbinimo karinėse operacijose laikotarpiu, profesinė kompetencija. Atitinkamai, mūsų siūlomos priemonės moterų ir vyrų įsitraukimo į įmonių profesinio mokymo programas intensyvumui įvertinti ir analizuoti tampa vis aktualesnės remiant politiką, kuria siekiama išlaikyti moterų atstovavimą energetikos valdymo struktūrose pokario atsigavimo laikotarpiu.

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# THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON THE VALUE FORMATION IN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY DURING THE CRISIS

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**Abstract.** The study examines the impact of political communication on the formation and transformation of values in Ukrainian society during the crisis caused by Russian military aggression. The aim of the study is to analyze the impact of political communication

on the formation of public values in Ukraine during the current crisis. The analysis of sociological data revealed significant changes in public attitudes and value orientations of Ukrainians after the start of a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining methods of quantitative sociological public opinion polling, content analysis, statistical analysis, and qualitative evaluation of political messaging strategies. The obtained data indicate a significantly increased support for European integration, increased trust in political institutions, intensified feeling of national unity and cohesion of European integration, and democratic ideals. The effectiveness of the government's multi-channel communication strategy, combining traditional mass media and social networks, was revealed. The study demonstrates regional differences in changes in value orientations, with the greatest increase in pro-European attitudes in the South and East of Ukraine. National stability, European integration, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are defined as key topics of political communication. The study also emphasizes that effective political communication in Ukraine during the crisis contributed to significant transformations of social values. Furthermore, communication proved to be an important tool for mobilizing public support, social cohesion, and strengthening national identity. Recommendations are provided for effective public engagement and promotion of values that strengthen national unity and democratic institutions during a crisis. Further research may focus on the development of strategic ways of supporting positive changes in the post-conflict period.

***Key words:*** *political communication, society, values, crisis, public opinion, national unity.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *politinė komunikacija, visuomenė, vertybės, krizė, viešoji nuomonė, tautinė vienybė.*

## Introduction and literature review

In recent years, political communication and its impact on public values have undergone significant transformations, especially in countries that have faced large-scale threats and major crises. The narratives created and transmitted by political figures significantly influence population cohesion, their unifying actions, and their ability to adapt to complex realities. Ukraine, which is defending itself against Russian military aggression, provides a unique case study for how political messages shape public perceptions, beliefs, and values during an emergency.

The importance of effective political communication in crisis situations cannot be overestimated. In the Ukrainian context, state and civil society organizations faced the need to form effective communication strategies under martial law conditions and pressure from Russia to provide information. Therefore, it was necessary to build a concept of supporting national unity for the domestic audience and consolidate international support globally. Communication is not only a means of disseminating important information but also a tool for mobilizing public support, social unity, and strengthening national identity.

Public opinion is formed in different ways due to the influence of mass media and new media (Klymonchuk et al. 2024), socio-political activity, and the positioning of public organizations (Lukach et al. 2022). It should be noted that in recent years, Ukrainian society has demonstrated significant changes in value orientations. During the crisis, political communication has supported European integration sentiments, increased trust in public authorities, and strengthened national identity. These changes have influenced Ukraine's geopolitical positioning, making it part of the European democratic space. The aim of this study is to analyze the influence mechanisms of political communication on the formation and evolution of public values in Ukraine during the current crisis. The aim was achieved through the fulfillment of the following research objectives:

1. Analyze key themes and narratives that dominated the political communications of Ukrainian authorities since the start of the full-scale war.
2. Evaluate changes in public opinion and value orientations of Ukrainian citizens through comparative analysis before and after the full-scale invasion.
3. Assess the effectiveness of various communication channels and platforms (social media, traditional media, and official state platforms) in disseminating political messages and shaping public discourse.
4. Determine the impact of political communication on strengthening national unity, promoting democratic values, and shaping Ukraine's international image.

The intersection of political communication and public values, especially in times of crisis, is a subject of increasing scholarly interest. The researchers emphasize the critical role of communication during crises, arguing that effective messages can mitigate negative impact and even create opportunities for positive change (Sanjeev et al. 2021). In the context of political crises, the importance of politicians' communication in planning events, managing public perception, and maintaining legitimacy is emphasized (Chukwu 2023).

The researchers (Grossman 2022) examine the unique challenges that war and conflict pose to political communication and argue that the media play a critical role in shaping public understanding of conflict, while political actors compete to control the narrative. In the Ukrainian context, Glapiak (2023) determines how the state's communication strategies have evolved in response to the Russian information war, emphasizing the need for proactive and coordinated messaging.

Political discourse at the institutional level reflects a complex picture of the country's political sphere. It reveals the dynamics of the struggle for power between various political actors and groups of influence, while outlining the key ideological vectors and articulating the interests of specific political forces. Discourse also serves as a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and purposefully influencing the consciousness of specific audiences (Kurmanova et al. 2021, 213). The effectiveness of political communications largely depends on the skillful use of a wide range of verbal techniques, which include both rational argumentation and more sophisticated methods of psychological influence and manipulation of the recipients' consciousness (Golubovskaya et al. 2022, 37).

The Euromaidan revolution of 2013–2014 was a significant turning point in Ukrainian

political communication and value orientations (Sæther 2023, 29), when social media and mass communication networks contributed to the mobilization of protesters and the spread of pro-democratic values. Ukraine's proximity to the European Union (EU) opens up an opportunity to spread EU values as the country strengthens its ties with the West. Identity research demonstrates that Russian military aggression has led to stronger support for EU values in the Eastern and Southern Russian-speaking regions. Regional differences are explained by socio-demographic and linguistic differences (Akaliyski and Reeskens 2023, 523).

The emergence of digital and social media has significantly changed the field of political communication. Researchers emphasize the role of social media technologies (distribution of propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation of mass consciousness) in shaping public opinion and influencing society (Shmalenko and Mitina 2024, 11; Bulbeniuk 2024, 14). Through social networks, politicians formed relevant topics that strengthened national identity, namely the issue of combating Russian aggression, European support, and helping victims of military aggression (Pavliuc 2022). The dynamic development of digital media is also aimed at strengthening Ukrainian national identity in political communications. Ukrainian digital mass media, preserving the traditions of free media, have reached a high level in the analysis of facts that truthfully and adequately reflect the political processes in Ukraine and its participation in international events (Kotišová and van der Velden 2023, 9).

Existing studies provide important information about various aspects of political communication and value changes in Ukraine. But not enough analytical materials have been developed regarding political communication in the value formation of Ukrainian society, where there are rapid changes in values in societies facing existential threats. The study tries to eliminate certain gaps through a comprehensive analysis of the impact of political communication on the values of Ukrainian society during the current crisis.

## Methodology

### Research design

The research design involved the use of individual results of sociological surveys conducted in several stages during 2022–2024. The procedure provided for the following steps: (1) determining the changes in key value orientations, (2) establishing the frequency of key topics in political communication based on media (TV, press, social networks, Internet portals), (3) determining audience reach and credibility, (4) establishing the level of interest of government institutions in citizens' obtaining more knowledge about politics, (5) finding out the degree of citizen support for political forces; (6) establishing trust in social institutions. This made it possible to conduct a comparative analysis of changes in value orientations, trust in government institutions, support for European integration, and other key indicators. The procedure was finalized by the interpretation of the results

(identification of key trends and changes in social values under the influence of political communication in crisis conditions).

The content analysis of the spread of political messages and the formation of public discourse identified the key directions of value orientations. Secondary sources, including public opinion polls conducted by leading sociological organizations of Ukraine, were analyzed. These include the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), the Razumkov Centre, the Sociological Group "Rating," and others (Razumkov Centre 2023; Razumkov Centre 2024a; Razumkov Centre 2024b; Razumkov Centre 2024c; USAID 2022; USAID 2023; Sociological Group "Rating" 2023; KIIS 2021; KIIS 2023; KIIS 2024) before and after a full-scale Russian invasion.

## Sampling

The research sample was based on data from sociological surveys conducted by leading Ukrainian research organizations. The KIIS survey is a representative multi-stage sample of the adult population of Ukraine (18 years and older) living in the country. The sample population is 1,000 respondents. The statistical sampling error does not exceed 1.4–3.4% (KIIS 2021; KIIS 2023; KIIS 2024). The survey by the Razumkov Centre is a nationwide representative survey. The sample population is 2,000 respondents (over the age of 18) in all regions of Ukraine, with the exception of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The theoretical sampling error does not exceed 2.3% (Razumkov Centre 2023; Razumkov Centre 2024a; Razumkov Centre 2024b; Razumkov Centre 2024c). The survey of the Sociological Group "Rating" included respondents aged 18 years and older in all regions, except temporarily occupied territories of Crimea and Donbas. The sample is representative by age, gender, and the type of settlement. The sample population is 1,000 respondents. The representativeness error of the study is no more than 3.1% (The Sociological Group "Rating" 2023). The results related to the subject of the study were singled out from the general array of the obtained data. The main areas of focus were trust in political institutions, attitudes towards European integration, perceptions of national identity, views on democracy and governance, views on foreign policy, and international relations. A comparative analysis was conducted to study changes in value orientations before and after the onset of the current crisis, which involves identifying significant changes in public opinion and society's values.

## Methods

The following methods were used in the study:

- A comparative method to study changes in value orientations before and after the onset of the crisis regarding support for European integration, trust in government institutions, national unity, etc.

- A content analysis to identify the effectiveness of various communication channels (social networks, news sites, television, radio, print media) in spreading political messages
- A sociological survey of public opinion, including region-specific, to identify differences in changes in value orientations between different regions of Ukraine (West, Centre, South, and East)
- A statistical analysis for processing quantitative data obtained from surveys and determining statistically significant changes in the studied indicators

## Results

Data processing provides insight into the influence of political communication on the value formation in Ukrainian society during the current crisis. The results are presented in several key areas from different sources. An analysis of public opinion polls before and after the full-scale Russian invasion shows noticeable changes in public values and attitudes (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Changes in the main value orientations in Ukraine

| Value orientation | 2022 (%) | 2024 (%) | Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Support for European integration | 53.6 | 79.4 | +25.8 |
| Confidence in the President of Ukraine | 36.2 | 49.6 | +13.4 |
| Confidence in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine | 18.7 | 19.3 | +0.6 |
| Confidence in the Government of Ukraine | 21.5 | 21.6 | +0.1 |
| National unity/cohesion | 37 | 44 | +7.0 |
| Support for democratic governance | 53.6 | 61.2 | +7.6 |
| A positive view of Ukrainian identity | 72.9 | 76.2 | +3.3 |

*Source: table based on Razumkov Centre (2024a), Razumkov Centre (2024b), Razumkov Centre (2024c), and KIIS (2024)*

The data show significant growth in all measured value orientations, with particularly notable changes in support for EU integration, trust in government, and the importance of national unity. The greatest growth is observed in support for European integration, which indicates a significant strengthening of pro-European sentiments in Ukrainian society as a reaction to Russian aggression and the search for alternative geopolitical landmarks. Confidence in the authorities has increased, which indicates the consolidation of society around state institutions in times of crisis and is associated with effective crisis communication and leadership during wartime.

An analysis of social media data and expert interviews revealed the effectiveness of

various communication channels for spreading political messages and shaping public discourse (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Consumption of national sources of information

| Media | Audience 2022 (%) | Confidence level in 2022 (%) | Audience 2023 (%) | Confidence level 2023 (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social networks | 74 | 60 | 76 | 59 |
| News sites | 42 | 54 | 41 | 56 |
| TV | 36 | 48 | 30 | 49 |
| Broadcast | 11 | 23 | 10 | 28 |
| Print media | 3 | 16 | 3 | 24 |

*Source: table based on USAID (2022) and USAID (2023)*

There is a shift from traditional media to digital platforms, including social media and news sites. The data emphasize the importance of a diversified approach to political communication, with a special emphasis on digital platforms, but not neglecting traditional media, which still enjoy the trust of a large part of the population.

The interest of government institutions in obtaining more knowledge about politics by citizens is presented in Figure 1. The majority of respondents believe that the institutions of power are not very interested or only slightly interested in citizens getting more knowledge about politics. Analyzing Figure 1, it can be noted that government institutions should pay more attention to the political education programs for citizens. Communication on the importance of political literacy for the functioning of a democratic society needs to be improved.

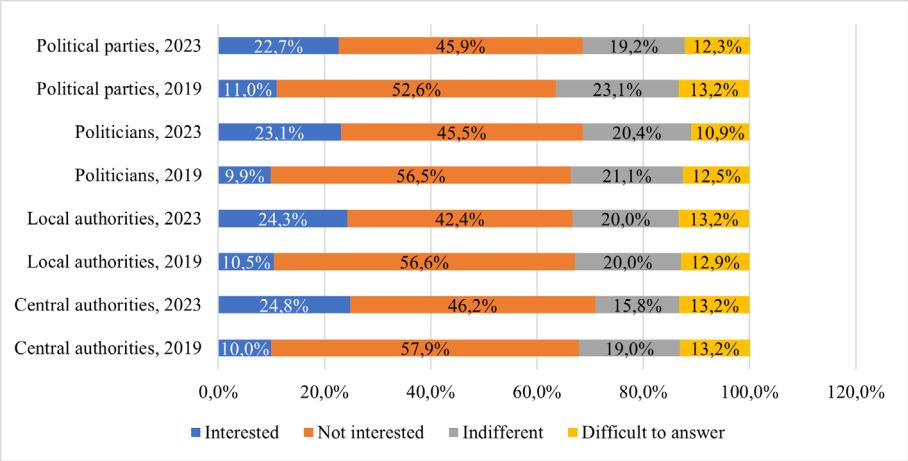


**Figure 1.** Interest of government institutions in citizens gaining more knowledge about politics

*Source: developed by the authors, based on the Razumkov Centre (2023)*

Trust in information sources shows a slight decline for most information sources from 2022 to 2023, except for a few categories (Figure 2).

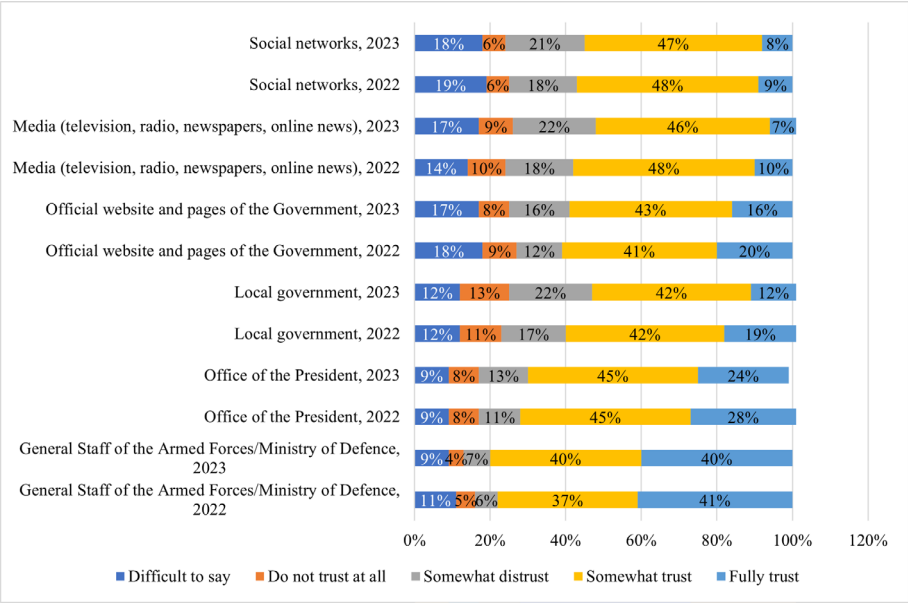


**Figure 2.** Trust in sources of information, 2022 and 2023

*Source: developed by the authors, based on USAID (2022) and USAID (2023)*

The general decrease in trust may be related to the duration of the crisis situation and possible "news fatigue." A high level of trust in national television can be the result of effective crisis communication through this channel. The growing trust in social networks may indicate their growing role in shaping public opinion and disseminating information. The results emphasize the importance of a diversified approach to political communication, taking into account different levels of trust in different sources of information. They also indicate the need for constant monitoring and adaptation of communication strategies according to changes in public trust in different media platforms.

The study identified several key communication strategies that were particularly effective in shaping public values: a consistent message about European integration and reforms, emphasis on shared historical and cultural narratives, regular updates on the military situation and national defense efforts, and promotion of civic activism and volunteering. Content analysis shows that the strategies contributed to the strengthening of national identity, fostering a sense of common purpose, and strengthening democratic values among the Ukrainian population.

Some regional differences in how political communication influenced value orientations were revealed (Table 3).

**Table 3**. Regional differences in value changes

| Region | Support for EU integration (2021–2023) | Confidence in the government (2022–2023) | National unity (2022–2024) |
|---|---|---|---|
| West | +9.5% | -28% | +4.5% |
| Centre | +4.5% | -26% | +4% |
| South | +18.5% | -23% | +4% |
| East | +13.5% | -23% | +5% |

*Source: table based on Sociological Group "Rating" (2023); KIIS (2021); KIIS (2023); KIIS (2024)*

The greatest increase in support for integration into the EU is observed in the South and East. In view of the traditionally pro-Russian attitudes of these regions before the invasion, this indicates the effectiveness of political communication in changing public opinion and value orientations. There is a general decline in trust in the government in all regions, which can be linked to the crisis and possible mistrust of government measures. The growth of national unity is noticeable in all regions, especially in the West and the Center, which may be the result of the state's efforts to strengthen national identity and counter external threats.

In general, Table 3 demonstrates positive shifts in the value orientations of the population of Ukraine, which is the result of effective political communication and adaptation to new challenges. The effect was most pronounced in regions that traditionally had other political orientations, indicating a shift in public opinion in response to current events and government communication strategies. Although all regions showed positive changes, the

scale of change was generally greater in the South and East—regions that were traditionally considered to be more pro-Russian in the past. The results provide a comprehensive overview of how political communication influenced the values of Ukrainian society during the current crisis. The results demonstrate significant changes in public opinion and value orientations, the effectiveness of various communication strategies, and the crucial role of coherent information exchange in shaping public perception.

## Discussion

Significant shifts in value orientations recorded in public opinion polls indicate a fundamental transformation of Ukrainian society. In particular, the sharp increase in support for European integration, trust in the government, and the importance of national unity indicate the consolidation of society around a common vision of Ukraine's future. This is consistent with theories of crisis communication, which claim that external threats can lead to increased internal cohesion and support for government institutions. Research on the transformation of Ukrainian identity during the war confirms the findings regarding the strengthening of the sense of national unity (Glapiak 2023, 25). The research (Sæther 2023, 44; Pavliuc 2023) on the geopolitical orientations of Ukrainians correlates with data on growing support for democratic values and European integration.

The critical role of political communication in maintaining morale, coordinating civilian support for defense efforts, and promoting social cohesion underscores the importance of effective crisis communication. The growing level of trust in government institutions and support for their approach to crisis management testify to the success of communication efforts. The research (Chukwu 2023, 125; Balasubramanian and Fernandes 2022) on the role of leadership communication of politicians during a crisis confirms the conclusions about the importance of consistent and transparent communication of the government.

More significant shifts in the South and East of Ukraine, which have traditionally been considered more pro-Russian, may indicate a reassessment of geopolitical views in these regions as a result of the ongoing conflict. This highlights the importance of adapting communication strategies to regional specifics and historical contexts. The analysis of regional features of political attitudes conducted by a team of researchers (Akaliyski and Reeskens 2023, 528) does not fully confirm the observation of regional variations in changing value orientations. The mentioned work emphasizes a certain lack of acceptance of European values in the Western regions of Ukraine, referring to a significant level of conservative religious views. This issue can be explained by differences in different methodologies used in sociological surveys.

The balance between traditional and new media in spreading political messages is particularly revealing. While the president's televised addresses remain the most trusted source of information, high engagement rates on social media indicate the growing importance of these platforms, especially for younger audiences. This emphasizes the need for a

multi-channel approach to political communication to effectively reach different demographic groups. A study (Kotišová and van der Velden 2023, 10) on the influence of social networks on the formation of public opinion in Ukraine is consistent with the conclusions about the importance of these platforms in political communication.

The analysis of key topics in political communication reveals a clear strategy aimed at strengthening national identity, promoting democratic values, and positioning Ukraine as part of the European community. The effectiveness of such a strategy is reflected in a significant increase in support for European integration and a strengthening of the sense of national identity. The results of the conducted research reveal a deep and multifaceted influence of political communication on the value formation in Ukrainian society during the current crisis.

## Research limitations

The results of the study evidence the significant influence of political communication on the value formation in Ukrainian society during the current crisis. Despite the comprehensive approach, the study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results.

1. The study covers a relatively short period of time since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The long-term effects of political communication on value formation may differ.

2. Access to some regions, especially the occupied territories, was limited because of the current situation in Ukraine, which could affect the representativeness of the sample.

3. The extreme conditions of war may have led to temporary changes in public attitudes that may not reflect stable, long-term trends.

Although the use of mixed methods increases the reliability of the results, each method has its limitations. For example, public opinion polls may have influenced the current situation, and social media analysis may not have fully covered all demographic groups.

## Recommendations

The results of the conducted research give grounds to note that it is possible to propose several directions in terms of practical aspects. The key should be the development of differentiated communication strategies for different regions of Ukraine, including online media. In order to increase trust in state institutions, it is advisable to develop programs to increase the transparency of the activities of government bodies. In addition, an important step will be the development of a strategy for rapid response to misinformation and the introduction of a system for constant monitoring of changes in public values and the effectiveness of communication strategies.

## Conclusions

1. The study demonstrates the comprehensive influence of political communication on the value formation in Ukrainian society during the current crisis. The results show significant changes in public values and attitudes, in particular, increased support for European integration, increased trust in political institutions, and increased importance of national unity. A comparative analysis of public opinion polls before and after the invasion revealed significant changes in public attitudes and values. A significant intensification of pro-European sentiments, national unity, and the level of trust in the authorities indicates the consolidation of society around a common vision of Ukraine's future. Content analysis of political speeches, statements, and publications in social networks showed the dominance of such topics as national stability and unity, European integration, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.
2. So, political communication in Ukraine during the crisis contributed to significant changes in public values and attitudes, which testifies to its importance as a tool for mobilizing public support, social unity, and national identity. It was found that political communication played an important role in rallying the population, shaping international opinion, and strengthening a sense of common purpose and values among citizens. A multi-channel communication strategy that combines traditional media with active use of social networks to reach different demographic groups is effective. Regional differences in the change of value orientations were revealed, which emphasize the need for adapted communication approaches. The obtained results can be used by state authorities, political parties, public organizations, and the media to improve political communication, strengthen national unity, and support democratic processes in Ukraine during the current crisis. Further research may focus on developing strategies to support positive change in the post-conflict period.

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# POLITINĖS KOMUNIKACIJOS POVEIKIS VERTYBIŲ FORMAVIMUI UKRAINOS VISUOMENĖJE KRIZĖS METU

Anotacija. Tyrime nagrinėjama politinės komunikacijos įtaka vertybių formavimuisi ir transformacijai Ukrainos visuomenėje per Rusijos karinės agresijos sukeltą krizę. Tyrimo tikslas – išanalizuoti politinės komunikacijos įtaką viešųjų vertybių formavimuisi Ukrainoje dabartinės krizės metu. Sociologinių duomenų analizė atskleidė esminius ukrainiečių visuomenės požiūrio ir vertybinių orientacijų pokyčius 2022 m. prasidėjus visapusei Rusijos invazijai. Tyrime taikomas mišrus metodas, derinant kiekybinės sociologinės visuomenės nuomonės apklausos, turinio analizės, statistinės analizės ir kokybinio politinių pranešimų strategijų vertinimo metodus. Gauti duomenys rodo ženkliai išaugusią paramą Europos integracijai, padidėjusį pasitikėjimą politinėmis institucijomis, sustiprėjusį nacionalinės vienybės jausmą ir Europos integracijos bei demokratinių idealų sanglaudą. Atskleistas vyriausybės daugiakanalės komunikacijos strategijos, jungiančios tradicines žiniasklaidos priemones ir socialinius tinklus, efektyvumas. Tyrimas parodo regioninius vertybinių orientacijų pokyčių skirtumus, o labiausiai proeuropietiškas požiūris auga Ukrainos pietuose ir rytuose. Nacionalinis stabilumas, Europos integracija, suverenitetas ir teritorinis vientisumas yra apibrėžiami kaip pagrindinės politinės komunikacijos temos. Tyrime taip pat pabrėžiama, kad efektyvi politinė komunikacija Ukrainoje krizės metu prisidėjo prie reikšmingų socialinių vertybių transformacijų. Be to, komunikacija pasirodė esanti svarbi visuomenės paramos telkimo, socialinės sanglaudos ir tautinės tapatybės stiprinimo priemonė. Pateikiamos rekomendacijos efektyviam visuomenės įtraukimui ir vertybių, stiprinančių tautinę vienybę ir demokratines institucijas, propagavimui krizės metu. Tolesni tyrimai gali būti sutelkti į strateginių būdų, kaip palaikyti teigiamus pokyčius pokonfliktiniu laikotarpiu, kūrimą.

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# ASSESSING SINGAPORE'S TALENT MIGRATION POLICY: EXPLORING ITS EFFECT AND EFFECTIVENESS

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**Abstract.** The Singaporean government is currently advocating for improved and more effective talent migration policies. However, recent studies indicate that numerous high-skilled migrants in Singapore encounter challenges related to precarious employment, temporary residence, and the risk of downward mobility. In light of this apparent conflict, the authors scrutinize the impact and efficacy of Singapore's recent talent migration policy to understand its effectiveness in achieving stated policy objectives. The authors conducted policy documents, analyzed the contents of mass media, and conducted semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that although the recent policy has influenced migration flow, economy, and prosperity and has the power to produce results, it has proven ineffective in achieving certain stated policy objectives. This study contributes valuable insights to the existing literature on migration management and policy effectiveness, offering policymakers and stakeholders a deeper understanding of the complexities and potential gaps in talent migration policies in Singapore.

***Keywords:*** *immigration policy, policy effectiveness, Singapore, White Paper on Population.*

***Reikšminiai žodžiai:*** *imigracijos politika; politikos veiksmingumas; Singapūras; Baltoji gyventojų knyga.*

## Introduction

Immigration is a prominent policy priority for Singapore, driven by the constraints of its population size and natural resources. To tap the talents of the best individuals around the world, regardless of nationality, gender, ethnicity, or social background, Singapore has a diverse migration policy. Aiming to become a global hub for high-tech and knowledge-intensive industries, the country strategically invests in its local talent pool by attracting highly skilled transnational migrants.

Extensive literature affirms that Singapore's talent migration policy plays a key role in its development and national prosperity. These policies have markedly improved the quality of its talent pool, international competitiveness, and scientific and technological innovation capabilities. In the 2018 Global Talent Competitiveness Index, Singapore was ranked second globally, and first in Asia, closely following Switzerland. From 2000 to 2019, Singapore more than doubled its total number of research and development personnel (Liu 2022). Moreover, Singapore boasts an impressive adult literacy rate of 97.6%, with more than 70% of its educated residents proficient in two or more languages (Department of Statistics Singapore 2021). The presence of skilled human resources has significantly contributed to Singapore's economic progress, with the nation securing the eighth spot in the 2021 World Intellectual Property Organization Global Innovation Index. Singapore's gross domestic product (GDP) has remained stable at S$315–345 billion annually since 2010, with GDP growth reported at 3.6% in 2022 (Ministry of Trade and Industry Singapore 2023). Overall, Singapore's immigration policy of attracting science, technology, and innovation talent has been a good example for many developing countries. As of June 2024, there were 3.64 million citizens and 0.54 million Permanent Residents (PRs). In total, there were 4.18 million residents. Non-resident , which include our foreign workforce across all pass types, dependents, and international students, totaled 1.86 million. Overall, Singapore's total population stood at 6.04 million (see Figure 1).

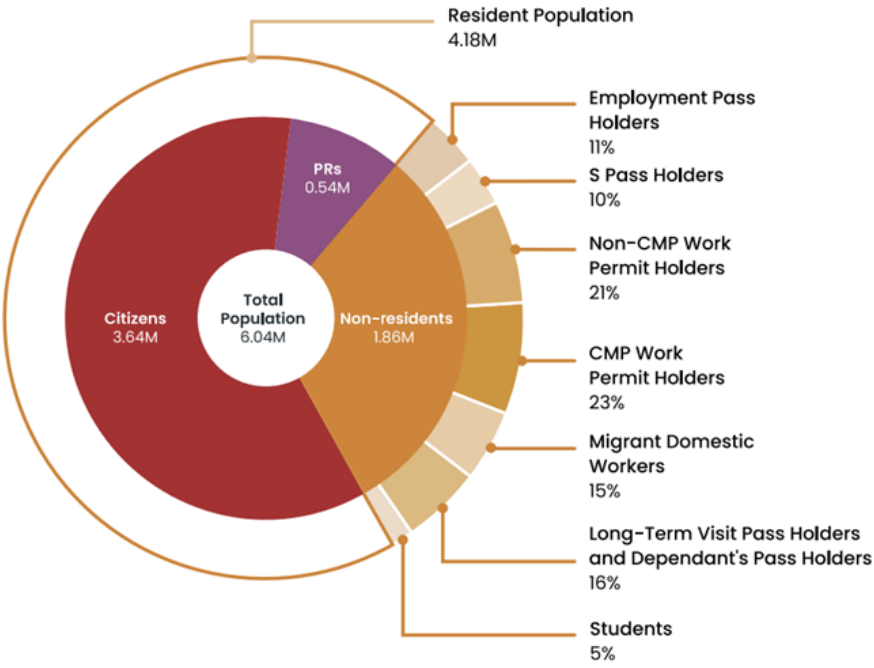



**Figure 1.** Singapore's total population as of June 2024
*Source: Department of Statistics, Ministry of Manpower, Singapore*

Several countries have adopted immigration policies similar to Singapore's. For example, Canada's Express Entry system also offers a temporary foreign worker program for industries that require low-skilled workers, opening up the possibility of permanent residence for certain categories. New Zealand's immigration policy also aims to attract skilled migrants through a points-based system by regulating the migration of low-skilled workers through temporary work visas, ensuring that such workers meet specific labor market needs. The UAE relies heavily on foreign labor and makes a clear distinction between skilled and low-skilled workers. While skilled migrants may have access to long-term residency, low-skilled workers tend to work on temporary contracts with limited rights, reflecting a model similar to Singapore's approach.

Despite Singapore's success in becoming a model for many developing countries in attracting talent, recent studies show the challenges faced by many highly skilled immigrants in the country. They face job insecurity and uncertain living conditions associated with precarious work, temporary accommodation, and the risk of downward mobility (Zhan and Zhou 2019, 1654–1672). Despite the government's repeated push to create meaningful migration outcomes for Singapore, an increasing sense of antagonism also exists among Singaporeans toward the government's migration management approach. The literature

notes unprecedented protests, xenophobia, and resentment among locals (Leong 2011, 559–572; Gomes 2013, 21–40) who perceive foreign talented immigrants, especially from mainland China, as insufficient and undesirable (Yang 2017, 29–45).

Recognizing the need for better and more effective talent migration policies, the Singaporean government adopted the White Paper for Population in 2013. Its main objective was to maintain a balance between the economy's need for immigrants, the sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. However, despite the recent increase in investment in these goals, the effectiveness of these approaches to migration management remains unclear and debatable, given the challenges described above.

Hence, this study endeavors to elucidate the intricate and debated role of immigration policies in Singapore. Our focus lies in assessing and comprehending the effects and effectiveness of Singapore's most recent talent migration policy. Although policies may yield certain effects on migration flow, economy, and prosperity, they can still be perceived as ineffective in terms of achieving their intended policy objectives, such as maintaining and balancing the economy's need for immigrants, sustaining immigration, and social cohesion.

However, this does not mean that previous studies have overlooked the issue; rather, they have been characterized by fragmented information and ideas, leading to a lack of shared understanding of the problem. For example, while some studies examine recent investments in talent migration, such as changes in the protection of native workers and benefits granted to migrants upon entry, others investigate the sentiments and reactions of target populations resulting from these changes (Cerna and Chou 2023; Cerna 2008; Yeoh and Lam 2016). However, none of the existing studies examine the effects and effectiveness of such changes against policy aims, nor do they consider how encounters between implemented changes and target populations may or may not create potential sources of policy failure.

When seen this way, migration policies do not take a single and immutable form but rather transform as they move through their lifecycle (Czaika and de Haas 2013, 487–508; Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161). This implies that implemented changes can appear quite different from the legislated policy aims, and interactions between implemented changes and target populations can further widen the gap between aims and outcomes (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161). Thus, although the implemented policies might produce an effect, this effect might not be sufficient to satisfy the stated policy objectives or might be in the opposite direction of the intended effect.

The central argument of this study is that a comprehensive understanding of the effects and effectiveness of certain migration policies in terms of their ability to yield certain outputs or achieve policy aims necessitates an examination of both their development and implementation processes as well as interactions of such changes with downstream factors and target populations.

The main objectives of this study are to assess and have a comprehensive understanding of the effects and effectiveness of Singapore's talent migration policy framework. The

authors will do so by understanding trends in which Singapore's policy framework has emerged, the implementation processes of that policy framework, as well as interactions of implemented changes with target populations.

To achieve these objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the development and implementation processes of Singapore's latest talent migration policy from 2013 to 2024?
2) How do skilled migrants respond to the migration dynamics in Singapore and act in response to them?

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework employed in this paper is based on the "migration policy effects and effectiveness" framework of Czaika and de Haas (Czaika and De Haas 2013, 487–508). The authors contend that effectiveness pertains to "producing a decided or desired effect," while an effect is the "power to bring about a result." In simpler terms, a policy may have an effect, but that effect may be judged to be too small to achieve the stated policy goal or even contradict the intended effect. Thus, the authors set out to resolve a paradox in migration research by stating that "even if policies have a significant impact on migration, they are nevertheless often perceived as ineffective."

According to Czaika and de Haas, this ineffectiveness occurs because of policy gaps and mutations that filter publicly stated objectives into concrete migration outcomes. The authors argue that migration policy does not take a single, unchanging form, but transforms throughout its life cycle. This means that the legislative policy may be very different from the public policy discourse that led to its creation, and the implemented policy may have even less similarity. Therefore, clarity on the "level"—public discourse, legislation, implementation, and policy outcomes—at which a specific policy is being assessed is crucial (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett 2023, 148–161).

By identifying this fourfold distinction, Czaika and de Haas identify three "immigration policy gaps": the discursive gap, the implementation gap, and the efficacy gap. The authors argue that because each of these three gaps can be quite considerable when combined, they can amount to a wide gulf between policy discourses and policy practices.

The first component, the "discursive gap," highlights the disparity between publicly stated policy rhetoric and the actual policy details laid out on paper. According to Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, while politicians may make broad statements about the need for better migration dynamics and sustainability such as "getting the balance just right—between national identity and cosmopolitan openness, between free market competition and social solidarity" (Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong 2014), the resulting policies themselves can often be more nuanced, specific, and varied (Castles 2004, 852–884).

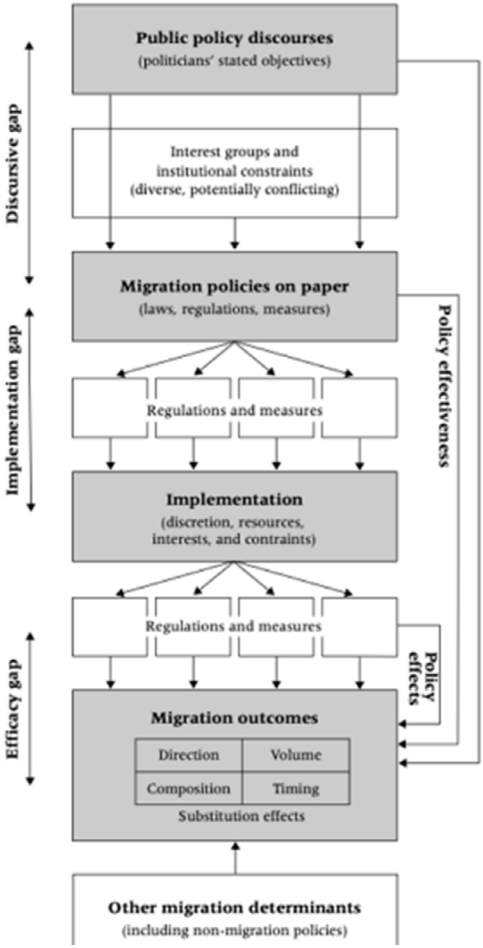
The second component, the "implementation gap," refers to the mismatch between the policy objectives set out on paper and the concrete instruments for implementation.

Various factors, such as inconsistencies in governing documents, lack of financial and human resources, and ineffective enforcement capacity and incentive structures, can contribute to the inability to fully realize policy objectives.

The third and most downstream component is the "efficacy gap," which explores how migrants themselves process and comprehend information and act upon it. According to Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, subjective factors come into play at this stage, making the outcomes less predictable. Castles views migration as a social process and emphasizes the importance of considering subjective factors in an analytical perspective, arguing that "migrants are not simply isolated individuals responding to market incentives and bureaucratic rules, but social beings who seek to achieve better outcomes for themselves and their families by actively shaping the migration process" (Castles 2004, 852–884). In other words, beyond politics, migrants actively perceive and act on the information they receive, thereby co-determining migration outcomes.

To address both research questions, the authors used the theoretical framework of Czaika and de Haas (see Figure 2). As the effectiveness of talent migration management in Singapore remains unclear and controversial despite the recent increase in attention and investment, this scheme allows for negative behavioral assumptions. However, limited policy action is not an automatic «policy failure." Instead, Singapore's immigration policy might be "ineffective" in meeting the stated policy aims of sustainability and social harmony.

**Figure 2.** Migration policy effects and effectiveness




To conclude, the conceptual framework of Czaika and de Haas has been widely used to evaluate programs and policy analyses across various migration areas. It is particularly relevant for exploring and assessing the complexities and contradictions in Singapore's migration policy and understanding the potential reasons behind the policy's perceived ineffectiveness. By applying this framework, this study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of Singapore's talent migration policy and its alignment with the policy objectives of sustainability and social harmony.

## Methodology

Based on the characteristics outlined above, an exploratory case study approach was selected for this study. Although exploratory case studies are employed to gain a deeper understanding of a complex, unclear, or new phenomenon for which little or no systematic knowledge exists (Kumar 2018; Shields and Rangarajan 2013; van Thiel 2014), most research topics have the potential for "innovation" or ongoing "newness." Despite the Singaporean migration management topic being well-researched and not entirely new, it still possesses the potential for novel insights. Thus, an exploratory case study has been particularly useful in assessing Singapore's talent migration policy framework and exploring its effects and effectiveness.

The adoption of an exploratory research design does not imply that a study is purely inductive. Instead, despite the intention of obtaining inductive insights and exploring the contested role of Singapore's talent migration policy, the study also incorporates prior assumptions and a theoretical approach that appeared most suitable and potentially insightful. Thus, this study also takes on an explanatory and theory-testing character.

As policy-level case studies can be characterized using multiple sources of evidence, the data collection methods for this study also included content analysis, document evaluation, and interviews with participants. To address research question 1, the authors analyzed the contents of mass media to identify the discrepancies between publicly stated discourses and actual migration policies in the form of laws. The aim was to uncover publicly stated discourses, but the authors did not use discourse analysis because discourse analysis studies underlying power dynamics, social structures, and ideologies. Thus, the content analysis was the most convenient—it helped us explore general trends and patterns in communication, such as recurring themes or topics, and compare them with policy as it is laid out on paper. The authors also conducted document evaluations to assess the gap between policies as documented on paper and their actual implementation. To answer research question 2, the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with participants to determine how migrants themselves process and comprehend the information they receive and act upon it, thereby co-determining policy outcomes.

Media is a primary tool used by governments to transmit and communicate their policy rhetoric. Thus, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the media content. The sampling strategy for media content analysis sought relevance in terms of information, content, and insights it provided.

Purposive sampling involves selecting a media content that is the most relevant to our research. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which contents and information were selected because they provided the best insights to achieve study objectives.

Among the types of purposive sampling, we chose critical case sampling. Critical case sampling helped us to select a small number of important cases that are likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton

2002). Therefore, we extracted a representative sample from sources such as the media center of the prime minister (Strategy Group Singapore), the Department of Statistics Singapore (https://www.singstat.gov.sg), and official news websites of the government from 2013 until 2023 that yield the most critical information.

Twenty participants who were current or former expatriate workers in Singapore were chosen for semi-structured interviews. The participants were university professors, workers of international organizations and multinational companies, and directors and employees of small private companies. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, specifically employing maximal variation sampling, a form of purposeful sampling that examines the problem from all available angles, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Etikan et al. 2015). Given the small sample pool, this sampling strategy enabled the selection of candidates across a broad spectrum relating to the study's topic, facilitating a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Thus, the authors sent out emails to these potential participants whose emails were found on the open corporate webpages. Initially, we sent the emails to thirty people, and among these thirty people, twenty agreed to participate. As mentioned earlier, participants were selected based on their diverse backgrounds in terms of their home country and profession. All participants have been working in Singapore already more than five years.

For the data analysis, the authors coded all the data retrieved from the media content, policy programs, and interviews following our research questions, which consequently became the section headings. Following this, a deductive analysis was conducted based on the postulations of policy effect and effectiveness theory. Although the deducted data helped to facilitate the exploration of the phenomenon, inductive analysis was also performed to further develop recurring themes that emerged from the content analyzed or perceptions reported.

The research presented in this paper is in accordance with international scientific ethical principles, meaning it strictly adheres to the principles and norms of scientific ethics, such as citing sources correctly, referring to the used literature indicating the authors, maintaining the standard of academic integrity and scientific honesty, and not allowing fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism of research results. The process and results of the study did not cause any physical, moral, or mental harm, including stress and discomfort, to participants (people or animals).

## Results

**What are the development and implementation processes of Singapore's latest talent migration policy?**

## The discursive gap

As mentioned earlier, a considerable gap might exist between official policy discourses expressed on media platforms and actual migration policies. Therefore, to identify potential discursive gaps, the authors first examined government bureaucrats' official speeches on the Population White Paper on the Strategy Group Singapore media platform.

An evaluation of these speeches from 2013 until the present reveals that the stated policy objectives in these speeches do not align with any previous policy rhetoric. For example, in the previous policy rhetoric, politicians mostly stressed the need for talented foreign migrants in Singapore, focusing on their relevant skillsets, experience, and expertise. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of moving beyond merely attracting talent to also retaining it. However, in the speech delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean at the Media Conference on the Population White Paper in 2013, a shift in emphasis can be observed. Instead of primarily stressing the need for talented foreign migrants, the Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the importance of achieving balance in Singapore's population policies. In his speech at the media conference in January 2013, the Deputy Prime Minister emphasized three main points for the sustainable population in Singapore: strengthening Singapore's core, creating good jobs for Singaporeans, and ensuring a high-quality living environment. Although the remarks made by the Deputy Prime Minister still acknowledge the intake of immigrants at a measured pace, he mostly stressed the significance of the Singaporean core.

Following this, in the Parliamentary Debate on Population White Paper in February 2013, Minister Grace Fu further specified policy objectives for sustaining a strong Singaporean core, encouraging marriage and parenthood, and calibrating the pace of immigration. According to the Minister's speech, while pursuing efforts to increase marriage and parenthood are priorities for the Singapore government, it acknowledges that improving birth rates can take time. Thus, the Minister addresses how immigration will continue in Singapore in the coming years, albeit at a slower rate.

Specifically, the Minister emphasized how Singapore reduced the number of permanent residencies (PRs) granted from a high of 79,000 in 2008 to an average of 29,000 in 2013 and how the government will control the number and length of stay of foreign talent in the future through a range of administrative measures, such as salaries, quotas, and comprehensive criteria. The Minister's speech also highlighted how Long-Term Visa Passes (LTVP) or LTVP+ will be granted to immigrants instead of PRs.

Singapore's former Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, during his meeting at Downing Street in London in March 2014, underlined how Singapore was seeking to offer a high-quality living and cultural environment at the crossroads of the East and West, stating that "Our city is our country. Hence, we must get the balance just right—between national identity and cosmopolitan openness, between free market competition and social solidarity." Overall, although the general discourse surrounding the White Paper on Population is to strike a balance between Singapore's core and immigrants, the content of speeches of

government bureaucrats has shifted toward performing well politically rather than having any meaningful or predictable impact on social harmony and the sustainability of immigration.

However, to capture the potential discursive gap, the authors further analyzed Singapore's immigration policy. Despite the White Paper on Population being an official address by the head of the Singapore state rather than a policy paper, it is the primary organizational basis of Singapore's public policy for immigration. In addition, the White Paper is the only document that lays out publicly stated policy objectives on paper because laws, rules, and regulations do not have any specific objectives and are considered instruments of implementation rather than policy papers. Thus, the authors analyzed the White Paper on Population 2013 as the primary policy to determine whether a gap exists between discourses expressed on media platforms and actual policies outlined on paper.

An assessment of this policy document suggests that although the narratives presented by government bureaucrats may appear to be influenced by political pressures, the actual policy objectives, as outlined on paper, aim to address the existing economic and demographic constraints of the island state. This policy paper outlines several primary goals, including the maintenance of a strong Singaporean core, the creation of favorable opportunities for Singaporeans, the promotion of a high-quality living environment, and the management of population trajectories.

The analysis of the section titled "MAINTAINING STRONG SINGAPOREAN CORE" reveals that while the government's primary objective is to encourage marriage and parenthood in Singapore to improve declining demographics, welcoming immigrants to Singapore is also crucial. The policy document indicates that 40% of Singaporeans marry non-Singaporeans each year, and the government aims to supplement the smaller cohort of younger Singaporeans with immigrants.

The section "CREATING GOOD OPPORTUNITIES FOR SINGAPOREANS" emphasizes the need for a significant number of foreign immigrants to complement the Singaporean core in the workforce. The projected slowdown in the growth rate of the Singaporean workforce necessitates skilled foreign immigrants to improve productivity. While the policy document acknowledges the increasing qualifications and education levels of the native Singaporean workforce, it also highlights the challenge of sustaining high productivity growth due to the slow growth rate of the local workforce. Therefore, in the "POPULATION TRAJECTORIES" section, the document describes plans to further increase the population to 6.5–6.9 million by 2030, of which 3.6–3.8 million (or 55%) are citizens, to prevent the country from aging.

Overall, although policy discourses expressed on media platforms emphasize the Singaporean core and more restrictive policies, the White Paper on Population mostly highlights the need for a significant number of foreign immigrants. The evidence suggests that Singapore's immigration policy objectives, as laid out in the document, have not become more restrictive than policy discourses suggest. Instead, the policy document mostly addresses the intake of skilled immigrants, which aligns with the capital's primary interest,

sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. While this gap between official policy discourses expressed on media platforms and actual migration policies might not have many implications, the inconsistency of information can create diverse anticipations, rumors, complicated expectations, or tensions.

## The implementation gap

While legislative policies are designed to address existing economic and demographic challenges of the island nation, specific implementation tools such as financial and human resources, enforcement capabilities, and incentive structures may lead to different outcomes. Thus, in order to examine potential discrepancies between the policy goals laid out on paper and the results of implementation, the authors first analyzed how instruments, such as the work pass system for highly skilled immigrants, admission mechanisms, and other laws, rules, and regulations, are calibrated to achieve the stated policy goals.

An analysis of the work pass system for talented immigrants revealed that the government has been consistent in aligning this system with its policy objectives over the last decade. The Employment of Foreign Manpower Act classifies immigrants as foreign talent and foreign workers, requiring all foreigners who intend to work in Singapore to hold a valid pass. Highly skilled migrants can enter Singapore through an Employment Pass (EP: P1, P2, or Q1) or as entrepreneurs through the EntrePass. Those admitted based on the EP or EntrePass must earn substantially more than foreign workers, earning a monthly salary of at least S$5,000. Additionally, the salary threshold increases progressively with age, reaching S$10,500 for those aged 45 years and above.

Recognizing the potential impact of excessive immigration on the economy and national culture (as stated in the White Paper on Population), the Singaporean government introduced a two-stage eligibility framework starting from September 1, 2023. In addition to meeting the qualifying salary (Stage 1), EP candidates are now also subject to a points-based Complementarity Assessment Framework (COMPASS). This discretion allows Singapore to assess the settlement capacity of candidates for immigration and select high-quality foreign professionals. According to the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, COMPASS provides businesses with greater clarity and certainty in manpower planning to address the issue of the slowing workforce growth rate in Singapore. COMPASS has four foundational criteria—salary, qualifications, diversity, and support for local employment—as well as two bonus criteria—skill bonus and strategic economic priorities bonus. EP applications are evaluated based on a holistic set of attributes, in which candidates must score from 0 to 20 for each category under COMPASS.

To better address concerns over job competition from foreigners and to protect the Singaporean core, the Singapore government implemented the Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) in 2013. In recent years, the FCF has facilitated the enforcement capacity of Singapore to improve its employment processes. In many cases, private companies and employers have considerable discretion in implementing policies. Thus, under the FCF,

job advertising requirements were introduced for all businesses, mandating that job listings must be posted on a local job advertising platform for a minimum of 28 consecutive days (previously 14 days) before an employer can hire an immigrant for the same position. Detailed guidelines were provided to ensure fair evaluation of all Singaporean applicants and to prevent discrimination against them. However, the FCF guidelines state that the advertisement may contain the phrase "Singaporeans only," while phrases such as "EP holders preferred/desirable/only" and "Work Passes will be applied for successful candidates" should be avoided. While this leaves considerable room for subjective interpretation by immigrants, potentially leading to implementation gaps in terms of social harmony and sustainability of immigration, nevertheless, according to a statement from the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore government has invested in human and financial resources and has tasked the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) to track and maintain a list of employers suspected of discriminatory employment practices. Employers with a "higher percentage" of foreign workers than their industry peers or those that had received complaints were placed on FCF's watch list, prompting TAFEP to investigate their hiring procedures. Some organizations were removed from the list only after demonstrating a "strong commitment to improving their hiring practices" (Kamil 2020).

Regarding incentive structures and benefits for migrants upon entry, the Singapore government made significant changes to narrow access to PR. In response to the growing demand for fairness from native citizens, Singapore reduced the number of newly granted PRs from 79,167 in 2008 to 29,265 in 2010 and introduced differentiation measures. This seems to be due to housing and educational issues in the country. As migrants can own government-built public housing (HDB flats) after becoming citizens, and PRs can also purchase HDB resale flats, this triggered a feeling of unfairness among some native-born citizens (Zhan et al. 2020). The increasing number of children among newly naturalized citizens and PRs in the public school system also created a sense of unfairness among native-born citizens.

In terms of family unification, the Ministry of Manpower has increased the minimum monthly salary that EP holders must meet to apply for a Dependent Pass for legal spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21 (from S$4,000 to S$6,000). The salary threshold to apply for a long-term Visit Pass for parents has also increased from S$3,000 to S$9,000.

Overall, while the policy objectives as they are laid out on paper mostly address the intake of skilled immigrants, which aligns with the capital's primary interest, sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion, the abovementioned instruments of implementation point in a different direction. Most of the instruments leave considerable room for subjective interpretation, creating a potential for social discrimination and problems with integration and social cohesion. In addition, while protecting the Singaporean core is important, the imposed restrictions could prove ineffective in attracting skilled immigrants in the future. Thus, to identify efficiency gaps and better understand why, how, and when migration management problems arise, we must examine the reasoning and actions of people on the ground.

**How do skilled migrants respond to migration dynamics in Singapore and act upon them?**

The efficacy gap

Finally, the efficacy gap refers to the extent to which the policy change, once implemented, can have a meaningful impact. To understand how immigration policy is experienced and influenced by those directly affected, the authors conducted interviews with skilled migrants who had already migrated to Singapore.

In general, most of the interviewed migrants had a clear idea of why they chose Singapore as a host country and how the processes worked to obtain employment passes. While some decided to migrate to Singapore based on recommendations from their relatives, most skilled migrants chose Singapore as their destination country for economic reasons. As one respondent explained:

> People migrate to Singapore because, unlike many other countries, the corporate taxes in Singapore are very low. This allows for substantial savings when earning a good income.

All interviewed participants described obtaining employment passes to work in Singapore as being straightforward and clear. However, most skilled migrants interviewed believed that employment passes did not guarantee stability, and losing their jobs could result in them being asked to leave the country within 30 days. Most migrants also voiced that many companies in Singapore did not hire foreigners, and if they had to hire many foreigners, they would be under the FCF watchlist and pay additional taxes. Thus, the interviewed participants repeatedly voiced their concerns about being fired at any time with a minimal notice period. Therefore, obtaining PR and citizenship has become a priority for many migrants.

Regarding incentive structures in terms of PRs, citizenship, and family unification, the interviewed migrants encountered a lack of clear information on how these processes worked. Despite policy documents and speeches outlining the policy objectives and instruments for implementation, migrants felt uncertain about the mechanics of obtaining PRs and citizenship, especially regarding the criteria and the general likelihood of acceptance. As one respondent stated:

> Despite the only requirement being an Employment Pass to obtain PR, the process is very difficult and unclear. It lacks transparency and meritocracy, as it is based on race. For example, an Indian intending to obtain PR must compete with other Indians, as each nationality has a limited number of spots. This is not official, but it is an unsaid rule.

Another respondent highlighted the absence of certain criteria for competing with other migrants of certain races:

> The process seems arbitrary and dependent on the mood of migration officers, unlike countries such as Australia and Germany, which have clear point-based criteria.

Although skilled migrants were positive toward native citizens and expressed how Singaporeans were not hostile or racist toward migrants, they voiced their concerns about the lack of measures from the Singaporean government to integrate migrants and discussed how the state-imposed differentiation measures widened the gap between locals and migrants. One respondent asserted:

> I would say native citizens have different discriminatory attitudes toward foreign migrants, depending on their country of origin. Migrants from developed Western countries are more likely to be accepted and embraced by native citizens, whereas those from countries such as China often face mild levels of discrimination.

Interviewees also felt that state-imposed differentiation measures were unfair and harmed integration. One respondent conveyed her sentiment, stating:

> Public education is free in Singapore and of high quality. However, if I decide to have a child in Singapore, my children will not be able to attend public school. Instead, they will have to attend private schools. By contrast, Singaporean children, for example, attend public schools. This divide between locals and migrants is not conducive to the integration process. The Government of Singapore is not particularly interested in integrating migrants.

## Conclusion

1. Findings illustrated that the Singaporean government aims to achieve a sustainable population. Specifically, the authors found that the policy document attempts to address the importance of skilled immigrants, which is the main interest of capital, the sustainability of immigration, and social cohesion. Although the policy objectives on paper are realistic and not detached from the concrete migration experiences of Singapore, the analysis of the implementation gap revealed how most of the instruments of implementation leave considerable room for subjective

interpretation, thereby creating potential for social discrimination and problems with integration.

2. The Government of Singapore had an unclear mechanism for granting PRs and citizenship and put differentiation measures in place, which restrict immigrants' access to public resources and ultimately hinder their integration. As a result, most of the interviewed participants did not stay in Singapore, and those who stayed planned to leave. Furthermore, only a few skilled migrants endorsed Singapore as a destination location, with some even advising against it.
3. The analysis demonstrated that Singapore's immigration policy did not take a singular, unchanging form but transformed throughout its lifecycle. In particular, the government of Singapore seems anxious in its economic planning and confused in its policy twists and turns—advocating nativism in public speeches while pursuing developmentalism that necessitated ever larger numbers of foreign workers in its documented policy (Dobbs and Loh 2019, 206–223). While the population scenario of 6.9 million by 2030 in the White Paper on Population created simmering tensions, xenophobia, and resentment among native citizens, instruments of implementation imposed restrictions on immigrants and inflicted differentiation.

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# SINGAPŪRO TALENTŲ MIGRACIJOS POLITIKA: JOS POVEIKIO IR VEIKSMINGUMO VERTINIMAS

**Anotacija.** Singapūro vyriausybė šiuo metu pasisako už tobulesnę ir veiksmingesnę talentų migracijos politiką. Tačiau naujausi tyrimai rodo, kad daug aukštos kvalifikacijos migrantų Singapūre susiduria su sunkumais, susijusiais su nesaugiu darbu, laikinu gyvenimu ir kitomis problemomis. Atsižvelgdami į šį akivaizdų konfliktą, autoriai tiria naujausios Singapūro talentų migracijos politikos poveikį ir veiksmingumą, kad suprastų jos naudiungumą siekiant nustatytų politikos tikslų. Tyrmo metu buvo išanalizuoti politikos dokumentai, žiniasklaidos priemonių turinys ir atlikti pusiau struktūruoti interviu. Išvados rodo, kad nors pastarojo meto politika turėjo įtakos migracijos srautams, ekonomikai ir gerovei , tačiau, ji pasirodė neveiksminga siekiant tam tikrų nustatytų politikos tikslų. Šis tyrimas suteikia vertingų įžvalgų apie migracijos valdymą ir politikos veiksmingumą, siūlydamas politikos formuotojams ir suinteresuotosioms šalims gilesnį supratimą apie talentų migracijos politikos Singapūre sudėtingumą ir galimas spragas.

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