

PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS' PERFORMANCE IN CRISES: COVID-19 CRISIS IN TURKEY CONTEXT¹

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Abstract

The hard measures of governments and incapacity of public sector were questioned in many societies due to quick spread of Covid-19 in the previous two years. Considering crisis management, public administration and voice orientation literature, this study proposed a negative relationship with public sector performance perception of citizens and their political position in regards to the governing party during Covid-19 outbreak in Turkey. Moreover, political participation and political efficacy would play a contextual role in this negative relationship. Findings of the study indicate that opponent citizens perceive a lower level of performance for public institutions during Covid-19. However, political efficacy of citizens did not amplify this relationship. While high level of political participation amplifies the negative effect of political view on public service performance, it did show a diminishing moderating role in general.

Keywords: *Covid-19, Public Institutions, Performance, Political View, Political Participation, Political Efficacy*

¹ The translation of Turkish (non-English) articles and books were made by the author.

Introduction

Increasingly public institutions have had to deal with considerable, unexpected, disruptive and potentially harmful events in recent years (Comfort et al., 2012). These events can be earthquakes, severe weather, power blackouts, social movements and cyber-attacks (Tierney, 2014). Interventions during excessive events are generally seen as urgent by crisis and disaster management in public administration (Zhang et al., 2018). These treatments and their success or failure are also effective on public opinion and attitudes concerning public organizations. The Covid-19 outbreak is one such event and is significant with regards to public attitude towards public organizations since the beginning of 2020 and it has been a great indicator for the effectiveness of these institutions (Moon, 2020).

The Covid-19 outbreak has become a part in the historical debate of responsiveness of governments and public institutions to crises. All of the political and administrative institutions and economic and financial organizations had to review their capacity during this crisis since current knowledge, regulations, institutional structures and practices could not easily handle Covid-19 easily (Ömürgönülşen, 2020). Indeed the ineffective and unwieldy structure of public administration has been criticized strongly since 1980s (Eryılmaz, 2012). The main purpose of accelerated public administration reforms since that time is closing the gap between the public and the government that is caused by bureaucratic culture and transforming public administration into a more productive, efficient and accountable structure (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This new period has been named as new public management and it aims to re-design public institutions by using private sector methods and techniques. The main reason for this decision is the inability of public bureaucracy to deal with the new neo-liberal economic policy.

The new public management is a transition from bureaucratic and stable public administration to public governance in which all stakeholders are involved in the decision making processes (Osborne, 2006). The history of renewing public administration according to changing circumstances and responding to citizens' demands efficiently and effectively has been almost 50 years in the making. In this context, Covid-19 outbreak is a big challenge for changed and newly designed public institutions. This challenge can be evaluated from many different aspects. For example, performance considerations of citizens about public institutions during outbreak would provide insights for both scholars and policy makers in public administration field.

The primary responsibilities of government and public institutions to combat with pandemic would affect the political perception of citizens (Baekkeskov & Rubin, 2014). Many issues that are related to the outbreak, such as ineffective intervention, inadequate bailouts for citizens, disruptions in education, inadequate capacity in medical institutions, insufficient information for citizens about the pandemic and its ongoing process would cause changes in political views of people. Although the Covid-19 pandemic is inevitable for all people, the performance of governments has played a significant role in its

expanded impact in their lives (Mizrahi et. al., 2021a). Especially, citizens who already have negative opinions about government and the performance of public institutions might find government's crisis management performance inefficient. One of the purposes of this study is to research these claims through a field study. Specifically, this study investigates whether citizens' perceptions of the performance of public institutions during the Covid-19 outbreak is differentiated according to their political views. In this vein, this study contributes to literature by providing evidence about Turkey's context during the Covid-19 crisis. Citizens' perception about public institutions' performance and their political view can be analyzed through political participation and political efficacy (Neshkova & Guo, 2012). Finally, this study tries to find out how citizens' political participation and efficacy play a role on the relationship between political perception and perception about performance of public institutions.

Theoretical background

Public administration and crisis management

The low level of adaptation to social changes, progress and demands by public administration (Aykaç, 2001) has been criticized since the 1980s. They have to change and develop and even be re-designed according to private sector strategies. This new process has been named New Public Management. The issues of administering public organizations with professional managers, defining clear performance standards and measures, focusing more on public institutions' outputs, dividing and downsizing oversized and bulky public organizations, opening public organizations to competition, providing discipline in using public resources and being dynamic and flexible in governing (Hood, 1991) has been discussed. In parallel with these ideas, the efforts to increase the productivity and efficiency in public organizations have been amplified. New techniques like strategic management, management by objectives and total quality management have been transferred into public administration. One of the new approaches that has been adopted into public administration is crisis management (Genç, 2009).

A crisis can be defined as a situation that is severe, unexpected, highly uncertain and needs quick decision-making processes (Rosenthal et al., 2001, p. 5). It is also defined as a threat that needs critical decisions related to basic structures, values and norms of a social system (Boin et al., 2005) and an event that threatens the priorities of decision makers, limits time in decision-making processes and catches the decision makers off guard (Hermann, 1972). As seen in these definitions, a crisis has three components, a serious, comprehensive and unexpected threat, high level of uncertainty and a need for urgent decision-making. Relatedly, crisis management is perceiving and evaluating the signals of a crisis and taking necessary precautions and applying proper resolutions to overcome the situation with minimum damage (Pearson & Clair, 1998). The main purpose of crisis management is conceiving institutions that can predict crises before they happen, decompose the types of crises, take some precautions, learn new things in these circumstances and tidy themselves up

quickly (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Public organizations should plan and apply crisis management techniques like all other organizations (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1997).

Crisis management in public administration is governing in the midst of extensive problems that are the result of institutional structure or managing the environment to prevent disruptions in public service and damages to institutional image. It is also establishing public trust and support in a conscious, systematic and coordinated way (Akdağ & Arklan, 2013). The precautions that can be applied for unexpected problems and crises in public administration are increasing authority delegation in departments in charge, decreasing formalities by increasing initiatives in areas such as common resource usage, overcoming bureaucracy, relieving organizational structure from strict hierarchy and rustiness, extending transfer of authority and flexible management philosophy (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). The most important component of a successful crisis management process is planning and preparation (Baubion, 2013). Public institutions should intervene in crises in a timely manner in addition to tracking institutional and political agenda perfectly. However, structural attributions of a crisis's nature and the responsible institutions and organizations for crisis intervention can be the main problems in crisis management. The unpredictability of crises, ignorance in planning and preparation issues, serious financial losses or organizational structure are the examples of the secondary problems in crisis management (Genç, 2009). Public institutions would be criticized for their incapacity and existence because of their lack of intervention capability to crises timely related to these difficulties. Moreover, modern crises cannot be solved with traditional public administration methods. They can affect a great number of people and a wide geographic region at the same time, trigger so many interrelated and generalized problems and incapacitate the precautions for emergency issues. Also, it takes longer to control modern crises and their threats (Boin & Lagadec, 2000). The public administration should combat contemporary crises more efficiently due to their changing nature. Besides, most public administration products and services are monopolistic. Also, all citizens should benefit from them equally. This equality would cause to give priority to public interest rather than profit maximization. As a result, the effectiveness of public administration in combatting crises will be limited (Eryılmaz, 2012).

The basic expectation of the citizens of public institutions in crises is effective planning and preparations for the possible crises, timely responsiveness and minimizing or even annihilating the damage. When these expectations would not be satisfied, there will be queries about public institutions and doubts about performance and even whether or not they should exist.. If the crisis process cannot be managed and the necessary responses cannot be handled in a timely fashion, perception of citizens towards public institutions and government would be affected negatively (Rosenthal, 2003; Nakamura, 2000; Baubion, 2013). In this manner, the Covid-19 outbreak has tested many public organizations and states concerning their crisis management capability (Ansell et al., 2021).

Covid-19 crisis

Disruptive problems like the Covid-19 outbreak, the climate crisis, global terrorism and vast oil spills have indicated that the public sector often does not have enough capability to manage crises and overcome them. These modern crises are more “complex, turbulent, intriguing, inconsistent, unpredictable and uncertain” (Ansell et al., 2021, p. 949). Covid-19 pandemic is in the group of this kind of crises which affect the whole humanity for a considerably long period in every aspect of life.

The Covid-19 outbreak started in 31st December of 2019 with the report of World Health Organization (WHO) informing the world of an unknown pneumonia cases in Wuhan city of Hubei state in China. In 7th January of 2020, a new type of coronavirus was defined which had not been seen in the human body before that time (WHO, 2020a). This virus was named as 2019-nCoV at the beginning, but later known as Covid-19. It dominated the whole world within three months after emerging in China. Finally, a pandemic was declared on 12th March of 2020 by WHO (WHO, 2020b).

The virus was first diagnosed in Turkey on 11th March of 2020. After detecting the first case of Covid-19 virus, economic and social precautions were employed by the Turkish government. First intervention was made in the education sector. The government closed schools, moving to online education at every level. In addition, travel restrictions were begun, especially into European countries. The first death occurred on 17th March of 2020. After the first findings of Covid-19's serious effects on older people, 65+ years old, the government started a curfew for them, to limit the spread of virus among elder people (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health, 2020). The restrictions were expanded for other age groups in the following days.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 outbreak changed the habits and routines of people drastically in their social life, consumption, entertainment and travel, since ongoing government restrictions in these areas have increased. Despite these restrictions, the pandemic expanded quickly in Turkey. The crisis of Covid-19 was first evident to public health organizations and hospitals. The national healthcare system entered a bottleneck situation due to the sudden increase in the number of patients who needed urgent medical support. However, the significant impact of the outbreak was not observed only in the healthcare system, but also in the industry, education, agriculture, tourism, finance and transportation sectors.

The crises in these sectors also impacted the citizens, which created various expectations with regards to the government and public institutions.. However, the Covid-19 outbreak also became a threshold for Turkey's public institutions in relation with their public administration readiness level for unexpected crises. In this context, this study is necessary to understand the side of the public and their views during pandemic.

Hypotheses development

Unsuccessful governments in crisis management were overthrown in most countries. Even regime shifts happened with a revolutionary aspect (Farazmand, 2007). Actually revolutions are not necessary/Citizens can punish politicians in crisis management by not electing (Baekkeskov & Rubin, 2014). The Covid-19 crisis has shown that all governments are not immune to crises and can be put out of office due to their response to a crisis.

In general, citizens' knowledge and experience about public administration would affect "their satisfaction and performance evaluation" about public institutions (Wang & Wart, 2007, p. 272). For this reason, citizens who have positive thoughts about public institutions in general would probably have a more "positive attitude towards public administration's effectiveness and efficiency in crisis management" (Keele, 2007; Mizrahi et al., 2021b, p. 246). It can also be in the opposite side and if citizens' general thoughts about public institutions are negative, they would perceive public institutions more ineffective and inefficient during crises and crisis management. Additionally, trust in government would affect the perception of citizens towards the public organizations (Bouckaert, 2012). Trust in government reflects the level of certainty of citizens that the government officials prioritize public interest in the long run (Mizrahi et al., 2021b). It would be not surprising that government supporters have higher trust in government. The citizens who have higher level of trust in government might well also think that the methods of government related with crisis management would be efficient and effective (Nannestad, 2008). Related literature also provides evidence that there is a positive relationship between citizens' satisfaction with public institutions' performance and trust in government (Van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003). Relatedly, the perception of citizens about public institutions performance in crisis management would probably differ according to their political view (government supporters vs opponents) since the beginning of Covid-19 outbreak to its stages of expansion. Consequently, the first hypothesis of this study would be:

H1: Citizens' perception about public sector performance during Covid-19 crisis is related to the citizens' political views (negative for opponents – positive for supporters).

Political participation of citizens is one of the foundations in the theory of democracy. Political participation is defined as the efforts of citizens within governmental decision-making processes. Political participation is also related to trust in government. As the number of citizens involved in governmental decision-making processes increases, the level of shared responsibility with government officials would also increase. For this reason, the political participation level of citizens can affect the citizens' perception concerning the performance of public institutions in general. It can also be related with the perception of citizens concerning the government's effectiveness in crisis management, negatively or positively (Mizrahi et al., 2021b). Furthermore, citizens who have higher level of political participation would probably have a higher level of awareness about the performance of public institutions and

consciousness of their problems and operations. In this context, the next hypothesis would be related with the perception of citizens of public institutions' performance during Covid-19 outbreak and the role of higher level of political participation among citizens:

H2: The negative relation with opponent citizens' political view and perception of public sector performance during Covid-19 crisis will be stronger for individuals who have higher level of political participation.

Political efficacy is defined as “the feeling that political and social change is possible and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187). Political efficacy involves two dimensions, internal and external political efficacy (Acock et al., 1985). Internal political efficacy indicates “the confidence and perception of a citizen that he or she can comprehend politics and administrative decisions”. On the other hand, external political efficacy reflects “the beliefs of citizens that public institutions and government are liable to their demands and needs” (Niemi et al., 1991, p. 1407-1408). Although these two dimensions are related with each other, there are some differences between them. While internal political efficacy is more consistent, external political efficacy is more changeable because of political and administrative experiences and circumstances (Kahne & Westheimer, 2006). If an individual has a stronger political efficacy, he or she has more lively political attitudes and behaviors and his or her political participation would be higher. Some beliefs and attitudes of citizens can affect the view and perception of them about public organizations' performance. This can be the belief that he or she can be effective in administrative decisions and government politics, the perception that the individual can affect public administration and the expectation that the demands of a normal citizen would be considered by public officers. All these possible relations can be evaluated through the opponent citizens' attitude and perception who are not satisfied with public organizations controlled by the government and have a higher political efficacy. In this manner, Covid-19 outbreak can be seen as an opportunity to evaluate the current relationships concerning political efficacy and public institutions' performance with a fresh approach. As a result, the last hypothesis would be:

H3: The negative relation concerning opponent citizens' political view and perception about public sector performance during Covid-19 crisis will be stronger for individuals who have higher political efficacy.

All of the proposed hypotheses are summarized in Figure 1.

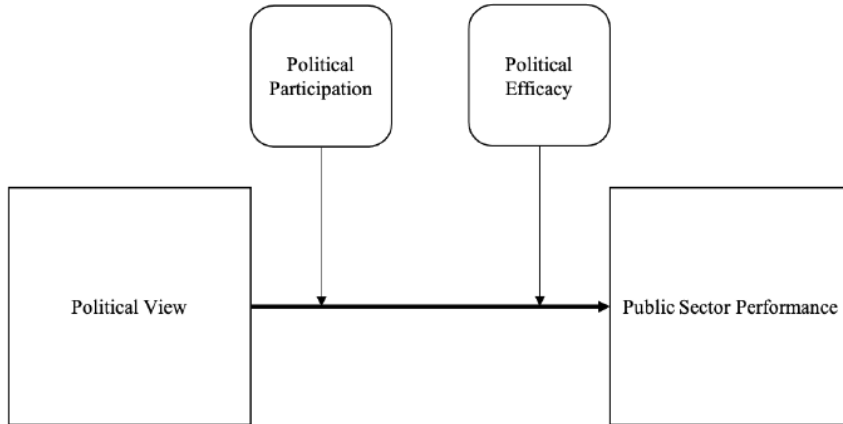


Figure 1. Research Model

Methodology

Study context

This study was conducted in Turkey by applying survey methodology between June 2021 and September 2021. This period overlaps the period during which most of the older people had been vaccinated and lockdowns had been dismantled by the government to aid in economic recovery. The study was applied to citizens in Diyarbakır city in south-eastern part of Turkey that has suffered from terrorism and social movements for almost three decades. As a result, population of the survey is accustomed to crises more than other cities of Turkey. For instance, people of the city are accustomed to lockdowns during periods of increased terrorist attacks in the city. The relationship of the city's people and the government also has a controversial history due to political and minority related problems. The city has a population of 1.517.297 according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2020). This number is high because of migrations from rural areas around it. The average age of the population is younger than the rest of Turkey due to higher birth rates. Since ethnic problems in the history of the city are common, politicization level of population is also higher than other regions. One of the reflections of this higher politicization is the support for Kurdish political movements. Diyarbakır is the most well-known Kurdish city in Turkey with the highest support for Kurdish political parties. These features of the city have caused many conflicts between municipal delegates and the central government in recent years. Two recent mayors of the city from the Kurdish party (HDP) were removed by the central government and governors assigned replacements for their positions. These conflicts would shape the perceptions of citizens in the city and increase the political tension towards public organizations and the government. As a result, performing the study in this context can provide significant findings related with public sector performance and crisis management issues with the stratified and cumulative crises in the history of the city.

Sample

The sample of the study consists of 607 respondents from Diyarbakır city center which was collected through face-to face meetings. Respondents were assured of the anonymity of their answers, especially for their political views. They were also encouraged to answer all the questions to increase the involvement and sample size of the study. Initially, 690 surveys were collected from individuals older than 18 years. The researcher considered the age of respondents since suffrage for Turkish citizens is allowed at 18 years. After removing surveys with missing data and answers, the final sample involves 607 individuals with diverse demographic characteristics.

While 48% of the sample were women, 52% of it were men. This indicator corresponds with total population of Turkey for the year of 2020 according to Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK, 2021). The mean age of the sample is 39.03 (SD=13.14) and monthly income has a mean value of 3280.31 (SD=2517.16). 26% of the sample had a primary level of education and 25% of the sample had graduated from secondary school. Ten percent of the individuals of the sample had a bachelor degree, which is quite a small portion. Although, opponents generally have a higher share in elections, the sample included 50.7% opponents and 49.3% of other political views (government supporters and indecisive individuals). With regards to marital status of participants, 61.4% of them is married, 31.8% is single and 6.8% is divorced or widowed. According to TÜİK, for the year of 2020, 58% of the population is married, 37% of the population is single and 5% of the population is divorced or widowed. Consequently, main demographic variables of the sample correspond with the population demographics and this indicates that the study's sample is representative.

Measures

The survey involves both demographic questions, Yes/No questions and Likert type scales. Likert type scales have been used for construct measurements. Measures of the study were previously used and validated by other scholars (Mizrahi et. al., 2021a; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). Exploratory factor analyses were also used to check construct validity of survey items in Turkey sample. All KMO values of scales are higher than the threshold value of 0.70 and Barlett's significance tests had a p-value below 0.01. Respondents answered construct items on a scale ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree) for political efficacy and public sector performance constructs. There were no reverse coded items in the survey.

Public sector performance

As the dependent variable of the study, this construct was measured using five items which were also used in previous studies about public sector performance during Covid-19 outbreak (Mizrahi et. al., 2021a). The participants were asked to indicate their agreement level by considering the operations of the public institutions during the pandemic. Exploratory factor analysis results indicate that the highest item loading is (0.902) stated as "The

operation of the public sector is professional and not politically biased” and the lowest item loading is “The Turkey’s public sector promotes initiatives and ideas that improves citizen lives” (0.704). The overall variable was measured by the mean value of the all 5 items that load in one factor and showed a high reliability value ($\alpha=0.928$).

Political View

The independent variable in the study was measured by a dummy coded variable that was transformed from a categorical variable with three responses in the original survey. The respondents were asked whether they are close to opponent political group or supporter political group related to the governing party in Turkey. The responses were “Governing Party/Parties”, “Opponent Party/Parties” and “Indecisive”. While the opponents take the value of “1”, the other two groups get the value of “0” in the statistical analyses. No exploratory factor analysis and reliability measures for the political view variable were applied.

Political Participation

The first moderator variable is measured by six items indicating the frequency of respondents’ involvement in particular political activities (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). These political activities include the following: being a member of a political party, following the daily politics, voting regularly in the elections, being involved in political petitions, being a member of a public organization (political party, public committee, or union) and being involved in political meetings and demonstrations. The respondents answered each item on a three-level scale and the overall political participation level of each respondent was calculated by summing the responses of all items. Participants indicated that they been involved in these activities according to the following frequencies: (1) never active, (2) active in the past and (3) active today. An exploratory factor analysis was also applied for the items, with loadings that range between 0.817 and 0.471. We did not exclude any items as per advice from Tabachnick & Fidell (2014). According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2014: p. 476), the minimum value of factor loadings should not be less than 0.32. The Cronbach α value of the items is also reliable which validates political participation measure ($\alpha=0.724$).

Political Efficacy

As the second moderator variable of the study, political efficacy is added to the research model to reflect the citizens’ influence on political system and governmental institutions (Verba et. al., 1995). The original scale had four items but it was adapted to the Turkish context to only three items (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). The overall construct was measured through the mean value of these items. Factor loadings of the items are 0.918, 0.888 and 0.777 respectively. The reliability level of the variable is high and reflects the validation of political efficacy items ($\alpha=0.898$).

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were carried through using JASP statistical software. Gender, education and age variables are included to the analyses as control variables since they are seen the most related demographic characteristics in explaining attitudes and perceptions towards public administration in the literature (Mizrahi et. al., 2021a; Mizrahi et. al., 2021b; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). We have applied Pearson's Correlation test to observe the proposed relationships among variables. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses are used to test the hypothesized relations among independent, moderator and dependent variables. All these analyses were conducted at the 95% confidence interval level.

Results

Table 1 summarizes means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations of the research variables. The findings indicate that respondents have an average value of satisfaction with the public sector during Covid-19 outbreak (Mean = 2.57, S.D = 1.14). Participants also declared a low level of political efficacy (Mean = 2.20, S.D = 1.04) and political participation (Mean = 9.80, S.D = 2.26) in spite of the attributed politization of Diyarbakır's population. As can be seen in Table 1, the inter-correlations among variables do not create a multicollinearity problem with their values that are generally below 0.70. The highest correlation is between political efficacy and public sector performance with the level of 0.75. The negative and significant relationship between political view and public sector performance corresponds with the researchers' expectations. Moreover, the public sector performance seems to be related with age and education levels.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations

Variable	Mean (S.D)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender (1=Women, 2=Men)	1.52 (0.5)	—						
2. Education (1-7)	3.46 (1.42)	-0.06	—					
3. Age (Years)	39.03 (13.14)	0.26***	-0.41***	—				
4. Political View (1=Opponent, 0=Other)	0.50 (0.50)	-0.11**	0.10*	-0.30***	—			
5. Political Participation	9.80 (2.26)	0.33***	0.10**	0.14***	0.07	—		
6. Political Efficacy	2.20 (1.04)	0.04	-0.18***	0.30***	-0.61***	0.06	—	
7. Public Sector Performance	2.57 (1.14)	-0.04	-0.16***	0.30***	-0.54***	0.02	0.75***	—

Note: N=607; * p < .1, ** p < .05, *** p < .01

Table 2 represents regression analyses among the variables of the study framework. Due to the removal of multicollinearity problems during moderation analysis, political participation and political efficacy variables have been mean-centered while running regression analyses (Aiken & West, 1991). In all models, gender and age variables are significantly related with public sector performance. According to findings, respondents who are men would have a lower level perception of public sector performance ($\beta=-0.29$, $p<0.01$;

Model 1) but age positively affects the perception of public sector performance variable ($\beta=0.02$, $p<0.01$; Model 1). Education level as the third control variable has only shown a significant and negative effect on the perception of public sector performance in Model 3 ($\beta=-0.57$, $p<0.01$). As mentioned before, demographic characteristics have a significant impact on citizens' perception of public institutions.

Table 2. Regression Results

Variables	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Intercept	2.01***	0.32	3.19***	0.29	3.77***	0.27	2.73***	0.23
Gender (1=Women, 2=Men)	-0.29***	0.09	-0.32***	0.08	-0.43***	0.07	-0.28***	0.06
Education (1-7)	-0.18	0.25	-0.33	0.21	-0.57***	0.20	-0.11	0.17
Age (Years)	0.02***	0.00	0.01***	0.00	0.00**	0.00	0.00	0.00
Political View (1=Opponent, 0=Other)			-1.16***	0.07	-1.24***	0.07	-0.33***	0.08
Political Participation					0.24***	0.02		
Political Efficacy							0.72***	0.04
Political View *Political Participation					-0.31***	0.03		
Political View *Political Efficacy							-0.08	0.08
R ²	0.11		0.35		0.45		0.60	
Adjusted R ²	0.10		0.34		0.44		0.59	
F	9.73***		35.68***		45.52***		81.48***	

Note: N=607; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

H1 proposes that citizens who are opponents to governing party would have a lower level of perception the public sector performance during Covid-19. The study's first hypothesis is supported since the coefficient of political view variable in Model 2 is negative and significant ($\beta=-1.16$, $p<0.01$). This negative and significant relationship is valid in all regression models. Furthermore, when political view variable is included to regression in Model 2, the explained variance is increased to 35% from the level of 11%. This may indicate that political views of citizens are more determinant than their demographic characteristics to explain the perception towards public organizations. According to H2, the negative relationship between political view and public sector performance would be stronger for individuals who have higher political participation. Model 3 indicates a significant moderating influence of political participation but in the reverse direction of the predictions ($\beta=-0.31$, $p<0.01$). Although political participation has a moderating effect, this effect weakens the negative relationship between political view and public sector performance. As Model 3 illustrates, political participation has a significant and positive effect on public sector performance variable without interacting with the political view ($\beta=0.24$, $p<0.01$). This implies that citizens would perceive public sector performance higher when they are more involved in political actions and daily politics. However, the coefficient of the interaction term in Model 4 is not significant. As a result, there is no support for H3. Similar to political participation variable, political efficacy showed a significant and

positive relationship with public sector performance variable in Model 4 ($\beta=0.72$, $p<0.01$).

Simple slope analysis has been applied to see the exact moderating effect of political participation variable on the relationship between political view and perception of public sector performance. As indicated in Figure 2, public sector performance variable has lower values for individuals who are opposed to government. This negative relationship is stronger when the respondent's political participation is at a high level. Although regression coefficient indicates a negative moderating effect of political participation, it can decrease public sector performance level in opponent respondents when it has a value above the moderate level. Consequently, H2 can get partial support with simple slope analysis results.

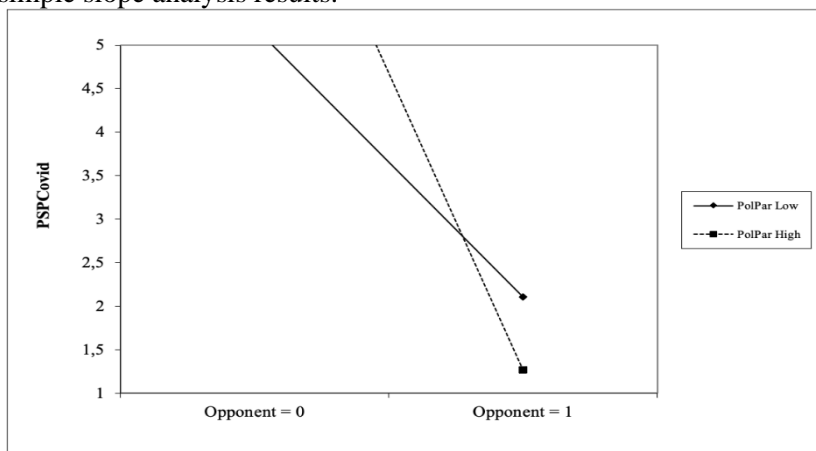


Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Political Participation on the Relationship Between Political View and Public Sector Performance Perception of Respondents

Discussion

Covid-19 outbreak has drastically changed many things in people's lives such as their relationships with the governments for two years. Additionally, current and historical crisis management tools of governments were re-evaluated by people globally (Boin et. al., 2020). This study provides an opportunity to reflect the evaluation of citizens attitudes towards public institutions during Covid-19 outbreak and how politics play a role. Performance assessment of public organizations is related with trust in government which received considerable scholarly attention in public administration field (Mizrahi et. al., 2010; Mizrahi et. al., 2021a). Although trust in government is accepted as a preliminary condition that forms political behavior of citizens in general (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), it could have a reciprocal relationship with political efficacy and political participation. Relatedly, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the embedded relations in public administration field such as the effect of partisanship on trust in government (Robinson et. al., 2021). Since the pandemic spread quickly among individuals with high death rates, hard governmental measures were also applied and spread quickly around the world

(Bel et. al., 2021). Within this context, this study conducted original field research by collecting data from citizens in Turkey about their perception about public sector performance during pandemic and other political issues.

To explain the relationships among the factors in the study, crisis management, public administration and voice orientation rationales have been used. The framework is inclusive to indicate how Covid-19 crisis played an important role in revelation of governments' effectiveness in crises and understanding of democratic outcomes. The findings of the study have revealed that partisanship has a significant impact on performance evaluation of citizens towards public institutions. Opponents to government perceived public sector performance lower than other groups in Turkey. This finding is consistent with the findings of Robinson et. al. (2021) in the context of the United States. However, the general evaluation related to Covid-19 performance in public sector among citizens reveals a moderate level of satisfaction. This implies the deep separation within Turkish society for their political attitudes and relationship with the government. Turkey has had a polarized society for more than a decade which makes it similar to Trump's USA during Covid-19 (Somer, 2019). Future research should focus on other outcomes in public administration field related to political separation within other societies and countries. This topic would be a promising venue for scholars since political polarization and far-right parties are rising in many democratic countries in recent years (Golder, 2016).

This study has also provided interesting findings about the relationship between voice orientation and public sector performance perception. Both political participation and political efficacy levels of citizens have shown a positive impact on perception related with public sector performance. Although previous research demonstrates that satisfaction with public sector performance would decrease the political participation level of citizens in normal times (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), this negative relationship can show a different nature in crises like the Covid-19 pandemic. This may imply that Turkish citizens with a higher level of involvement on public policies would evaluate public sector more positively. The separation between society segments could cause this relationship in Turkey context. The supporting group of individuals may drive lobbies for their interests in public sector and perceive its performance better than other citizen groups. Future research should shed light on the mediating effect of partisanship on the relation between political participation and public sector performance evaluation in Turkey and similar contexts. Contrary to proposed expectations, political participation partially increased the negative and significant relationship between political view and public sector performance perception. Considering the nature of political separation in the society and politicization level of individuals in the sample, this finding is quite complex. This may arise because of the nature of the variables in the research model. While satisfaction with public sector is related with short-term considerations of citizens, political participation and political efficacy are connected from long-term considerations. Consequently, short-term negative considerations of citizens for public institutions' performance would have a

stronger influence than long-term considerations (Mizrahi et. al., 2021b). In addition, political efficacy as a reflection of political involvement level of citizens and voice behavior has a positive impact on perception for public sector performance. This finding may provide a fruitful area of research since previous studies are limited concerning political efficacy and public sector performance perception (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007, p. 301-302). Although organizational politics have been a main determinant in citizens' satisfaction with public sector performance (Vigoda, 2000), political involvement of citizens have been disregarded so far. It would also be a significant contribution to investigate the perceptions of citizens from countries with populist governments. Countries with less economic power and resources during the pandemic would provide interesting research settings for future investigations. It is a mystery as to how populist governments can manage their underperformance in crisis management. However, political involvement and voice behavior factors may explain this mystery.

Although, public institutions have shown a moderate level of performance during the pandemic, citizens with a lower level of trust in the governing party in the long term still underestimate this performance. In this manner, governments and public officials should re-consider the digitalization speed of public institutions with the unexpected help of the Covid-19 outbreak. Increasing the productivity and response speed to crises in public administration can be accomplished by high level of digitalization as in the private sector during the pandemic. Using e-government tools may increase the transparency among citizens as a whole, despite their political reservations.

Despite its significant contributions to the public administration and crisis management literature, this study has some pitfalls. The study's findings are limited to the Diyarbakır population in Turkey. Although, the city has a significant population and extra characteristics that provide a fruitful base for voice behavior and partisanship effect on public sector performance perception, this attribution would also cause a skewed attitude for the relationship between the government and the citizens. Future studies employed in different regions of the country may remove this limitation. Second, the hidden effect of society's solidarity in times of crisis was not investigated in this study. Turkey has a collectivist culture. As a result, this culture may decrease the negative considerations of citizens towards the government since they can satisfy the needs of their closer network even if the government cannot. Cross-cultural samples can eliminate this problem in future research. Finally, the independent variable of the study is a dummy coded variable which restricts the partisanship level of respondents. Future research could use more fine-grained measurements to reflect the political positions of citizens accurately. Future studies should also consider the politicization of public administration and organizations to explain the partisanship attitude of citizens for public sector performance.

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