

Public Administration and Socio-Economic Preferences at the Local Level. Case Study: Korça Region

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Abstract

The labor market mostly refers to a public or private space where the relationship between employer and employee is built. The focus of this study is the measurement of socio-economic in one of the sectors of the labor market which is public administration. The socio-economic preferences will be specifically measured in the Korça regional administration.

The purpose of this research paper is to identify the main elements of public administration in the Republic of Albania, in particular local administration in the region of Korça, to analyze the conceptualization of socio-economic preferences and to present the findings of this research paper. The methodology used in this paper is a mixture of qualitative and analytical approach.

The qualitative approach will be used in the analysis and identification of key theories of socio-economic preferences and key elements of public administration. Whereas the method of analysis will be used in the findings of the survey results conducted in the employees of the administration in the Region of Korça.

The findings of the questionnaire show a high tendency of preferences that employees value in their workplace such as: incentives in the workplace, compensation for overtime work, praise in the workplace, mutual and transparent communication, security from workplace accidents, autonomy for task planning, staff training and promotion.

Keywords: Albania; employees; local administration; social; trend.

1. Introduction

This paper will analyze the socio-economic preferences of public administration employees. The main concepts to be analyzed are two: public administration and socio-economic preferences. These two concepts have been chosen since public administration is part of a country's labor market. The identification of socio-economic preferences has a very important value in this work paper it directly measures what employees expect from their workplace. Public administration is the part of the public space where services are provided to citizens. However, these services are provided by public administration employees who, in addition to the services they provide, also have expectations for their job position. A case study will be presented to identify the expectations that employees have in their workplace.

The case study presents the expectations or in other words the socio-economic preferences that local government employees have in the Korça region¹.

Public administration in the Republic of Albania is divided into two levels: central administration and local administration. The focus of this paper is the local administration, specifically the employees of the local administration in the Korça region. Socio-economic preferences of administration employees can be workplace incentives, overtime compensation, promotion, praise, job security, transparency in appraisal, higher pay, career promotion, open communication, incentives, compensation for overtime work, better working environment conditions, prior notice for leaving the workplace or insurance against accidents at work. All these preferences will be measured to a target group of public administration employees in the Korça region. As mentioned above, the issues addressed in this paper are:

- local administration in the Republic of Albania: introduction;
- socio-economic preferences;
- case study findings.

2. Local administration in the Republic of Albania: Introduction

Public administration is a concept which is related first of all to administration and then to public. Definitions about the concept of public administration are numerous. Public administration is the implementation of government policies. Today public administration is often regarded as including also some responsibility for determining the policies and programs of governments. Specifically, it is the planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling of government operations. (Encyclopedia Britannica Online).

According to Simon et al (1971) “By Public Administration is meant, in common usage, the activities of the executive branches of national, state and local governments, government corporations and certain other agencies of a specialized character”. According to Nigro (1970): “Public Administration:

- is a cooperative group effort in a public setting;
- covers all the three branches – executive, legislative and judicial, and their inter-relationship;
- has an important role in the formulation of public policy and is thus part of the political process;
- is different in significant ways from private administration
- closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals in providing services to the community.”

To sum it up, public administration is the exercise of state functions in a public space through the implementation of a governing program by public administration officials providing services to citizens.

¹ Korca is the eighth most populous city of the Republic of Albania. It is coextensive with the municipality of Korca. The total population is 75,994 (2011 census), in a total area of 806 km² (311 sq mi). It stands on a plateau some 850 m (2,789 ft) above sea level, surrounded by the Morava Mountains.

Public administration in the Republic of Albania is divided into two levels: central level and local level. The organization and functioning of the public administration is organized according to the laws in force. Respectively, the central administration acts on law no. 90/2012 “on the organization and functioning of the state administration”, while the local administration functioned on the basis of law no. 139/2015 “on local self-government”. The Law on Local Self-Government defines all the principles of organization and functioning of local self-government units, identifying the competencies, rights and duties that each of these local institutions has.

Article 5, Chapter 2 of the Law on Local Self-Government defines the units that make up local government. In the case of the Republic of Albania and based on the law, the units of local self-government are:

- a) Municipality - which is the basic unit for local self-government.
- b) County - which is a unit of the second level of local self-government.

The municipality represents an administrative-territorial unity and community of inhabitants or in other words the municipality is equal to a city center. On the other hand, the county is a unit that represents an administrative-territorial unit consisting of several city centers that are geographically close to each other, are on borders, have economic, social ties and common interests.

3. Socio-economic preferences

Socio-economic preferences of public administration employees are influenced by a number of factors. These factors can be external factors or internal factors. Cognitive evaluation theory (Gagné and Deci, 2005, pp.332) suggests that external factors such as tangible rewards, deadlines, supervision, and evaluations tend to reduce feelings associated with autonomy by prompting changes in preferences perceptions. In other words, according to this statement, it is clear that external factors became determinants of employee behavior and motivation.

External factors on the other hand result in causal relationship with internal motivation. Some external factors such as the choice of aspects of task engagement tend to improve feelings of autonomy, promoting the shift of causal linkage from external to internal factors by increasing employee motivation (ibidem). Cognitive evaluation theory further suggested that feelings of competence as well as feelings of autonomy are important for intrinsic motivation. Consequently when employees had positive feedback they offered a broader sense of responsibility in the workplace. The opposite happens when employees have negative feedback. In this case the sense of responsibility decreases which comes as a result of decreased intrinsic motivation. As a result people who have negative feedback turn into unmotivated employees to perform their duties. At the core of this theory lies the fact that employees need to feel independent (autonomous) as well as have a sense of competence (choosing how to engage in duty) in order for social and economic factors to influence the increase of internal motivation of tire. When employees do not feel autonomous or competent for the tasks or job position this brings low internal motivation and consequently produces demotivated employees.

In their studies, researchers of socio-economic preferences (Deci et al. 1999) note that when rewards were offered outside of specific tasks (as may be the case with a salary) or when

rewards were not foreseen but given at an unforeseen moment (as may be the case with bonuses) they empowered intrinsic motivation.

The theory of self-esteem (Gagné and Deci 2005, pp.333) is essential to distinguish between autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. By autonomy we mean those cases when the actions of an individual are carried out in conditions of complete independence. Intrinsic motivation is an example of autonomous motivation. Conversely controlled motivation appears in those cases when the actions of an individual are realized under conditions of constant pressure.

The authors (ivi, pp. 342) state that the means to increase intrinsic motivation are those when the individual designs the work in such a way that:

- provide a variety of functions and have an impact on the lives of others;
- allow freedom and decision-making (what theorists refer to as attitudes about decisions).
- provide meaningful performance feedback.

Self-assessment theory agrees that the above characteristics tend to promote autonomy, research, and sustainability. Consequently, a job must guarantee the individual to perform the tasks and functions of the job position uninfluenced by external factors, the job must offer the opportunity for research and deepening as well as provide stability, security and positive feedback to performance of the individual.

Socio-economic preferences are indicators for assessing the selection or not of a job. Vallerand and Blais (1992) point out that in some cases employees like a job that suits them better than a well-paid job that does not respect the elements of motivation. This statement fits the objective that an employee has to feel comfortable in his workplace.

Moos and Billings (1991) define the conditions of the work environment as socio-psychological characteristics of the environment. According to Yair (2010) if people work in a clean and friendly environment they will find it easier to get to work. In this case it is the collaborative relationships that increase a person's desire and motivation to be part of a work environment.

Continuous incentives are elements that affect the growth, development and motivation of employees. Acceptance or not of incentives affects in-depth actions or not of employees. Consequently stimuli increase or decrease intrinsic motivation. Bolduc (2001) emphasizes that the more stimulated, the higher the employee motivation. In other words, employee motivation is directly affected by whether or not they receive incentives in the workplace. In this case Bolduc talks not only about monetary incentives but also about other incentives such as ongoing valuations.

Improved compensations are mainly related to compensations that come from work performed outside the functions of a certain position or are related to work performed outside of official hours. According to Ugoo et al (2004, pp. 342) "compensation is the monetary return paid by the organization for work done by an employee". This job can be a physical or mental job, so the stimulus should be a kind of compensation to justify the commitment and dedication of an individual within an organization.

Setlzer (2010) described an employee who seeks growth and advancement within the organization as "a man of skill who conscientiously performs his duties and can ensure the

attainment of a more responsible position". Employee promotion is related to staff development. Staff development means the training and promotion of employees. In the first case, the training can be conducted through seminars, knowledge refresher courses, employee certification, etc. Growth in office means advancing a higher position of the employee by orienting him/ her towards improvement, evaluation and better treatment. Promotion is the process of elevating an individual from a low position with less responsibilities and lower salary to a higher position with more responsibilities and higher salary.

Deci (1999) emphasizes that motivation at work is influenced by communication and the influence that the manager has on his subordinates. It is therefore suggested that communication in an organization be open. This type of communication clearly defines the tasks, orients individuals in fulfilling their goals and mission and guarantees transparency in the evaluation of employees.

Praise is another psychological aspect in the work environment which affects emotional support and professional support. According to Lindorff (2005) this support provides understanding and acceptance of the individual, which results in reduced emotional strain. For this reason a very important element in employee motivation is emotional support especially in a work environment which is psychologically charged or which brings pronounced physical or psychological fatigue.

Occupational safety refers to the organization's priority for worker protection (Dollard and Bakker, 2010). The feeling of security is a perception of personal security but remains one of the most important factors in relation to the psychological health of an employee, his productivity in the workplace, honest work performance as well as his overall commitment to well-being working in an organization. Employees feel safer in a workplace when they are insured against accidents at their workplace or are inclined to accept advance notice of leaving the workplace.

Wanous and Lawler (1973) state that job satisfaction is related not only to results but also to the individual's determination of what he or she will have to achieve in the workplace, in other words to what he or she considers desirable and not desirable. More simply this can be defined as the relationship between what the individual expects and what he actually receives from the workplace.

According to Taylor (1998) high motivation of employees is mainly related to the interest they had for salary. The assumption was such that employees were more motivated when they managed to get a higher salary by spending less of their energies. Mayo (1975) determines that employee motivation was based on building social relationships and behavior. Under this approach work would make no sense if the social relationships created by work environments were lacking. Due to Mayo's field observations he noted that an employee is easily influenced by the conditions when his social needs are met and met.

All of the above elements included in the socio-economic preferences of employees such as: incentives in the workplace, overtime compensation, promotion, praise, job security, transparency in appraisal, higher salary, career promotion, communication open, incentives, compensation for overtime work, better working environment conditions, advance notice for leaving the workplace and insurance against accidents in the workplace not only guarantee a more stable working environment but when realized increase level of job satisfaction and motivation.

4. Study case: findings

140 public administration professionals in the Korça Region were randomly selected to conduct the survey. Since the survey was random, the employees of the administration represent all its levels. The survey was conducted in the period 10-23 May 2021. The surveys are closed and the answers were requested to be given only through the alternatives set in the answer options. Response options are designed based on the Likert scale in order to understand the interviewer's position on the approval or disapproval measure for each of the statements presented in the questionnaire.

From the data of the survey participant it results that:

- In terms of gender 60.7% of respondents are female while 39.3% of them are male.
- In terms of age, 7% are in the age group up to 25 years, 43% are in the age group 25-30 years, 35.7% in the age group 30-40 years and 14.3% in the age group over 40 years.
- Regarding the highest level of education, 26.4% hold a bachelor's degree, 73.6% of respondents hold a Master's degree.
- Regarding the local public institution, 40% are employed by the Municipality of Korça and 20% are employed by the Korça Regional Council, 18.5% are employed by the Municipality of Pogradec, 14.3% are employed by the Municipality of Devoll and 7.2% are employed by Municipality of Maliq.

From the survey data on socio-economic preferences in public administration employees in the Korça region, it results that according to:

Table 1. Responses to the survey of public administration employees in the Korça region

Statement	Likert scale				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
S (1)	5%	12%	15%	32%	36%
S (2)	-	-	12%	16%	72%
S (3)	-	-	-	14%	86%
S (4)	-	-	8%	24%	68%
S (5)	8%	10%	44%	20%	17%
S (6)	-	12%	15%	34%	39%
S (7)	8%	8%	57%	15%	12%
S (8)	12%	10%	52%	10%	16%
S (9)	5%	12%	14%	42%	27%
S (10)	18%	32%	20%	16%	14%

- To statement (1) “the institution where I work has very good physical conditions of the working environment”, 5% of employees answer that they strongly disagree”, 12% of employees answer that they do not agree, 15% are neutral, 32% employees agree and 36% of employees respond that they strongly agree.
- To statement (2) “I value incentives in the workplace”, 12% of employees are neutral, 16% of employees agree and 6% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (3) “I appreciate the compensation for overtime work”, 14% of employees agree and 86% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (4) “I value praise in the workplace”, 8% are neutral, 24% of employees agree and 68% of employees respond that they strongly agree.
- To statement (5) “in the institution where I work there is mutual, open and transparent communication between employees”, 8% of employees answer that they strongly disagree, 10% of employees answer that they do not agree, 44% are neutral, 20 % of employees agree and 17% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (6) “in the institution where I work there is complete safety from accidents at work”, 12% of employees answer that they disagree, 15% are neutral, 34% of employees agree and 39% of employees respond that they strongly agree.
- To statement (7) “in the institution where I work, attention is paid to the beliefs and values that employees have for their job”, 8% of employees answer that they strongly disagree, 8% of employees answer that they disagree, 57 % are neutral, 15% of employees agree and 12% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (8) “in the institution where I work, employees have autonomy to plan their own work”, 12% of employees answer that they strongly disagree, 10% of employees answer that they do not agree, 52% are neutral, 10 % of employees agree and 16% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (9) “in the institution where I work is given importance to staff training”, 5% of employees answer that they strongly disagree, 12% of employees answer that they do not agree, 14% are neutral, 42% of employees are agree and 27% of employees answer that they strongly agree.
- To statement (10) “in the institution where I work the managers promote their employees”, 18% of the employees answer that they strongly disagree, 32% of the employees answer that they do not agree, 20% are neutral, 16% of the employees agree and 14% of employees respond that they strongly agree.

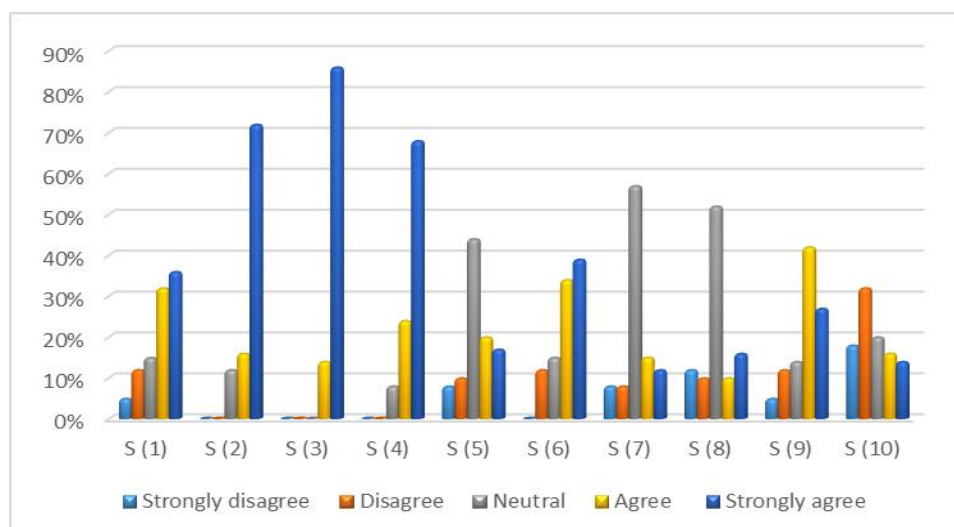


Figure 1. Graphic presentation of the responses of public administration employees in the Korça region

5. Conclusion

Two main concepts were analyzed in this research paper: local public administration in the Republic of Albania and socio-economic preferences. The definitions of the two concepts were carried out in function of the study conducted in the institutions of local administration in the region of Korça. The purpose of the study was to measure the socio-economic preferences of local administration employees. Based on theoretical analyzes as well as measurements performed in the local administration of the Korça region, the conclusions of perceptions related to the socio-economic preferences of public administration employees are as follows:

- Most public administration employees responded that in the public institution where they work there are good conditions of the physical environment, evaluating this aspect positively.
- In terms of workplace incentives, most employees agreed that they value them. The same conclusion was reached in the case of compensation for overtime work and praise in the workplace.
- Most employees were neutral when it came to mutual, open and transparent communication in the workplace.
- Most of the administration employees agreed that the public institution where they work guarantees complete safety from accidents.
- Most administration employees were neutral or did not agree with the fact that the institution where they worked did not care about the beliefs and values they had about the workplace. The same conclusion resulted in the autonomy they had for planning their work.
- In terms of staff training most of the employees agreed.
- Most employees disagreed with the claim that managers promoted their employees.

From the results data it can be concluded that:

Employees highly value the conditions of the physical environment, incentives in the workplace, compensation for overtime work, praise, staff training and safety from accidents at work.

It is important that in the local public institutions where this study was conducted to evaluate some preferences for which employees were neutral or did not agree that they were applied in the institution where they worked such as: mutual communication and transparency, beliefs and values that employees had for the workplace, autonomy for planning their work as well as with their career promotion.

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