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WHAT FACTORS MATTER FOR THE EVALUATION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION AND POLITICIZATION IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN POLAND*

Summary: The main purpose of the paper is to identify factors that can matter for the relationship between perceptions of corruption and politicization by the public service officials at the local administration level in Poland. Four groups of factors are considered: 1) the structure of administration, 2) citizen voice as an “external” (to public sector) factor, 3) agency characteristics, and 4) individual characteristics. The research is based on a questionnaire survey of 858 public officials working in 100 commune councils in Poland in 2009. The findings based on the correlation analysis show that the location of a commune council and a type of a commune councils strongly influence the relationship between politicization and corruption.

Keywords: politicization, corruption, local administration.

1. Introduction

A lot of interest has been devoted to corruption. Economic debate has focused on its causes and its mechanisms, as well as on means of reducing it. The paper addresses a problem of the relationship between corruption and politicization in the public administration in Poland. The research purpose is to investigate what factors matter for the strength and causality of this relationship.

Section 2 of the paper is a presentation of the corruption determinants discussed in the literature. Section 3 describes the methodology. Empirical findings are presented in Sections 4 and 5, and finally, conclusions in the last section.

2. Determinants of corruption

Two theories are the basis for the debate on corruption: the model of crime and punishment [Becker, 1968] and the principal-agent-theory [Becker and Stigler, 1974; Rose-Ackerman, 1975; Tirole, 1986; Mookherjee and Png, 1992, 1995]. The model

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of crime and punishment assumes that individuals are open to corruption if the expected payoffs from illegal activity are higher than the expected payoffs from the legal activity. The principal-agent-theory suggests that incomplete information is conducive to corruption. The higher-level manager (“principal”) cannot monitor the public official (“agent”) in full and he/she is able to hide his/her corrupt activities. Tirole [1986, 1992] suggests to create the additional level of control to solve this problem.

Many scholars have looked for other explanations and sub-theories. Some researchers point out too low officials’ wages as a determinant of corruption, and recommend to raise them [Becker and Stigler 1974; Klitgaard, 1989; Ul Haque and Sahay, 1996]. A raise of officials’ wages, as a way to fight against corruption, has inspired long lasting debates concerning such problems as misallocation of talents between private and public sector [Acemoglu and Verdier, 1998] and high costs of such a policy tool, and the danger that raising wages can attract only the dishonest [Besley and McLaren, 1993; Dabla-Norris, 2000; Wane, 2000].

The role of control mechanisms has been one of the topics in the debate on corruption. Walter [2000] as well as Shleifer and Vishny [1993] show that weak hierarchical control mechanisms exacerbate the harm of corruption in public administration, while Gray-Molina et al. [1999] find that in Bolivia formal control and supervision mechanisms have no significant impact on corruption.

The hierarchical system of administrative control should be accompanied by accountability mechanisms based on citizen voice which can be defined as the capacity of citizens to express their views to the administration officials [Besley and Case, 1995; Porto and Porto, 2000; Gordon and Wilson, 2001]. Kaufmann et al. [2002] argue that in case of Bolivia citizen voice has been more important in explaining corruption and the public service performance than traditional determinants, e.g. wages and internal enforcement of rules.

Many researchers point out the structure of the private market as one of corruption determinants. Lack of competition is usually associated with more corruption [Acemoglu and Verdier, 2000].

Economists analyzing the corruption determinants have paid a lot of attention to the degree of decentralization in public administration. Local corruption depends on diverse factors, like heterogeneity within a district, electoral system, and the size of the country. There is no common opinion on the impact of decentralization on corruption. On the one hand, decentralization should reduce corruption because citizens can better control local officials and local administration agencies should compete with each other [Seabright, 1996]. On the other hand, closer contacts between officials and customers, which take place at the local stage, may increase corruption [Tanzi, 1993]. Empirical literature offers diverse findings. Some authors find lower corruption at the local level [Fisman and Gatti, 2000], while others show higher corruption in countries with more tiers of public administration.

Finally, politicization is pointed out as the major determinant of corruption. If decisions on personnel management in public administration are based on political connections, officials' careers depend on how much officials are useful for politicians rather than on meritocracy [Evans and Rauch, 2000]. Moreover, if administrative decisions on budget and service management are based on political connections, they lead to economic distortion and waste of public money [Menes, 1999]. Kaufmann et al. [2002], using a set of micro-data, find the strong effect of politicization on corruption in the Bolivian government administration. The use of micro-data by Kaufmann et al. [2002] was an inspiration for this paper.

3. Methodology

The Source of Data

The research presented in this paper is based on a questionnaire survey of 858 public officials working in 100 commune councils in Poland in 2009. A commune council is a primary institution of local administration in Poland. There are 2543 commune councils in total. They are divided into four types: 1586 rural commune councils, 586 urban-rural commune councils, 306 urban commune councils and 65 commune councils in big cities. Since the percentage of rural commune councils is rather high (62%), and the percentage of commune councils in big cities is low (2%), the construction of officials' sample is not easy. If the selection of the commune councils had been representative, the rural councils would have been dominating. But such a selection would not have corresponded with the aim of the research. The results of the research are to help identify the differences in perceiving various aspects of public service performance and governance by officials of those four types of commune councils. The number of officials from all types of councils should be similar. The polling agency carrying out the survey has chosen councils at random so that the number of them conforms with their density in every province (there are 16 provinces in Poland). Therefore in rural provinces more rural councils have been chosen, and in urbanized provinces – more urban councils. The more communes are in a province, the more councils have been chosen. The second principle of the construction of the sample involves the number of officials selected in each council. Generally these numbers are similar, though bigger in big cities, because more officials are employed in large urban councils. Finally, in each rural, urban-rural and urban commune council 7-9 officials have been chosen, while in large urban councils – 8-12. The third principle concerns the selection of officials in each council. Within each institution, a stratified random sample has been selected from each of the following decision-making ranks: top management, middle management, and ordinary officials.

Finally, the sample of the 858 public officials working in 100 commune councils covers:

- 226 officials from 26 rural commune councils,
- 227 officials from 28 urban-rural commune councils,

- 203 officials from 24 urban commune councils,
- 202 officials from 22 commune councils in big cities.

The officials have been asked to evaluate: quality and accessibility of public services, enforcement of rules in personnel/budget/service management, politicization, transparency of decisions on personnel/budget/service management, meritocracy, citizen voice, wage satisfaction, resources of the agency, personal honesty, corruption.

Corruption relates to the abuse of power for private gains and is measured by three corruption indicators: jobs purchased, budget diverted illegally and public services purchased. Politicization is expressed by decisions on personnel management, budget management and service management, decisions which are based on political connections.

Typically, more than one question is used to describe each governance index and each institutional factor. In the survey all answers about individual perceptions are scaled from 1 to 5 (1 = very bad; 2 = bad; 3 = medium; 4 = good; 5 = very good). "1" always means that in the official's opinion the situation is very bad, in other words, there is a very low level of service performance, enforcement of rules, transparency, meritocracy, wage satisfaction, agency resources, and personal honesty. The impact of citizen complaint is also very weak, however, the level of corruption and politicization is very high. "5" always means that the situation reflected in a given question is very good, for example, the level of corruption and politicization is evaluated as very low.

The survey was carried out by the professional polling agency in July 2009. The officials were asked to express their opinions directly in the course of face-to-face interviews.

Research Objectives

The main purpose of the paper is to investigate what factors matter for the strength and causality of the relationship between perceptions of the corruption and politicization by the public officials at the local level of administration in Poland. Four groups of factors are considered: 1) the structure of administration, 2) citizen voice as an "external" (to public sector) factor; 3) agency characteristics, and 4) individual characteristics.

It is tested whether the type of a commune council and its location (16 provinces are included in the research) are relevant for the officials' perceptions. Citizen voice represents an "external" factor. It is measured by the perception of the impact of citizen complaint on decisions regarding service delivery and performance of daily task. Moreover, the importance of two agency characteristics is considered: making-decision rank and wage satisfaction, as well as the relevance of five individual characteristics: working experience, educational attainment, age, sex, and personal honesty.

Methods

For the research purpose the whole sample is divided into several sub-samples. There are sub-samples that cover the officials: 1) in different types of commune councils, and 2) working in different provinces. With regard to citizen voice one sub-sample covers commune councils where officials assert that the impact of citizen complaint is strong and very strong. On the contrary, the second sub-sample includes commune councils where the impact of citizen voice is described as weak and very weak. Another division of the whole sample is based on three decision-making ranks. According to wage satisfaction two sub-samples are created: officials who are satisfied and officials who complain. Working experience, educational attainment, age, and sex are another criteria of divisions. The last one is based on the perception of personal honesty. The officials were asked to evaluate whether their colleagues would return the money obtained due to an administrative error, even if there was 100% chance of not getting caught [see Kaufmann et al., 2002, Table 1].

For the whole sample as well as for each sub-sample the correlation analysis (Pearson product-moment correlations) is carried out. The results should reveal the differences in the relationships between officials' perceptions of the politicization and corruption that can appear in the sub-samples.

There appears a doubt whether the Pearson product-moment correlation is a proper tool of an analysis. The use of an ordinary correlation would give misleading results if a research task was to find all factors that determined corruption in Polish administration. The high multicollinearity between various variables describing governance and public service management could appear and distort the findings. In such a case the econometric model of simultaneous equations would be a proper tool of an analysis [see Kaufmann et al., 2002]. However, when for the whole sample the correlation between politicization and corruption is strong and statistically significant, it seems that this tool should be useful to identify factors that can influence the relationship between the perceptions of politicization and corruption.

4. Perceptions of the officials of politicization and corruption in the commune councils in Poland – the whole sample

Table 1 presents the whole-sample distribution of the officials perceptions of particular measures of politicization and corruption as well as the mean scores for these measures. In both cases, politicization and corruption, personnel management received the lowest mean score. More than 13% of officials assess that in their institution decisions on personnel management are visibly influenced by political connections. Regarding corruption, 12% of officials are of the opinion that jobs are "purchased" in their commune councils. The officials link the lowest levels of both politicization and corruption with services. Almost 75% of them think that the political impact on service management is rather weak and almost 78% officials consider that purchasing public services occur rather rarely in their institutions.

Table 1. The distribution of the officials' perception of politicization and corruption, local administration of commune councils in Poland, 2009 – the whole sample

Measures	Perception scaled from 1 to 5						Mean score (perception scaled from 1 to 5)
	1 = very bad (very high level of politicization /corruption)	2 = bad	3 = medium	4 = good	5 = very good (very low level of politicization /corruption)	No answer	
	Percentage distribution of responses						
Politicization or decisions based on political connections, regarding:							
personnel management	2.8	10.5	26.0	19.8	38.7	2.2	3.74
budget management	2.6	5.0	18.4	22.7	47.2	4.1	3.95
service management	1.9	5.8	14.9	21.6	52.9	2.9	4.09
Corruption							
Purchase of jobs	3.7	7.3	17.0	21.0	47.3	3.6	3.90
Budget diverted illegally	2.8	5.4	12.4	17.9	57.1	4.4	4.08
Purchase of public services	1.6	3.8	11.0	16.6	61.3	5.7	4.15

Source: The questionnaire survey of 858 public officials working in 100 commune councils in Poland in 2009, a number of observations $N = 858$.

The questionnaire survey covers 29 questions that describe several aspects of the governance, management and service performance. The correlation matrix between all 29 questions shows that the highest values of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients appear between politicization and corruption¹. There are strong correlations between the majority of measures describing politicization and corruption (see Table 2). All correlations are statistically significant. The high values of correlations mean that the officials firmly connect both the occurrence of corruption and politicization, and the lack of these two phenomena. If officials do not feel political pressure, they do not mention the occurrence of the corruption in their institutions. But if political connections have some importance for the decision-

¹ The Pearson product-moment correlation matrix between all 29 questions included in the questionnaire survey can be presented on request.

Table 2. The baseline Pearson product-moment correlations between the politicization measures and the corruption measures – the whole sample

Item	Decisions on personnel management based on political connections	Decisions on budget management based on political connections	Decisions on service management based on political connections
Jobs purchased	0.662230 (0.0000)	0.651796 (0.0000)	0.663049 (0.0000)
Budget diverted illegally	0.583711 (0.0000)	0.628028 (0.0000)	0.626885 (0.0000)
Public services purchased	0.490765 (0.0000)	0.569763 (0.0000)	0.642779 (0.0000)

Source: author's calculations based on the questionnaire survey of 858 public officials working in 100 commune councils in Poland in 2009; 731 included observations, probability in parentheses.

making in councils, the officials think the corruption takes place there. One should emphasize that a correlation indicates only the strength of a linear relationship between two variables.

5. Differences in the relationships between officials' perceptions of politicization and corruption – the sub-samples

The whole sample is divided into several sub-samples to find out whether different factors, like the location of a commune council, the type of a commune, agency and individual characteristics matter for the relationship between perception of politicization and corruption. In each sub-sample a correlation analysis is carried out². The correlation analysis should allow to identify factors responsible for the differences in the strength of the relationship between perceptions of the politicization and corruption. Table 3 presents the summaries of the findings.

For each sub-sample Table 3 shows the sums of deviations calculated as follows: the maximum percentage deviation of the sub-sample correlations above the whole-sample correlations plus the maximum percentage deviation of the sub-sample correlations below the whole-sample correlations. These sums are calculated for each pair of politicization-corruption measures. The last column in Table 3 shows the sum of percentage deviations for each sub-sample. The value of the deviation sum suggests how much a given factor influences the strength of the relationships between officials' perceptions of the politicization and corruption.

The most important factor that changes the strength of the relationship between the perceptions of the officials of politicization and corruption occurs to be the location of a commune council (compare the figures in the last column in Table 3). There are provinces in which correlations between politicization and corruption are

² The results of a correlation analysis for each sub-sample are available on the request.

Table 3. Deviations of sub-sample correlations from the whole-sample correlations

Sub-sample	Sum = max percentage deviations of sub-correlations above the whole-sample correlations + max percentage deviations of sub-correlations below the whole-sample correlations												
	Correlation between "decisions on personnel management based on political connections" and:				Correlation between "decisions on budget management based on political connections" and:				Correlation between "decisions on service management based on political connections" and:				
	jobs purchased	budget diverted illegally	public services purchased	Total	jobs purchased	budget diverted illegally	public services purchased	Total	jobs purchased	budget diverted illegally	public services purchased	Total	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)
Province	60	100	90	251	125	111	93	329	83	90	66	239	818
Type of commune	21	32	14	66	36	32	24	92	16	19	38	74	231
Citizen voice	12	5	26	43	11	1	17	29	9	11	11	31	102
Wage satisfaction	5	6	34	45	9	2	16	28	10	22	7	39	111
Decision-making rank	14	48	25	87	10	20	12	42	12	5	12	29	159
Working experience	24	9	27	60	25	42	27	94	12	18	26	55	210
Age	17	20	37	74	11	14	16	41	21	16	7	44	158
Educational attainment	21	15	8	45	20	15	12	47	6	5	9	20	112
Sex	16	12	7	35	12	17	8	36	3	16	7	25	96
Personal honesty	23	23	39	84	12	22	35	69	30	44	15	89	243
Sum of deviations for a pair of measures	213	269	307		270	276	259		203	245	198		

Source: author's calculations based on the correlation analysis. The detailed results of the correlation analysis is available on request.

almost negligible (and, of course, statistically insignificant), while in some provinces the correlations amount to more than 0.7.

The personal honesty takes the second position (compare the figures in the last column in Table 3). In a group of commune councils, where the officials assessed that there was a high probability that their colleagues would return the money obtained due to an administrative error, all correlations between politicization and corruption were above the whole-sample correlations, contrary to the second group of the officials.

According to the type of a commune council (the third position comparing the figures in the last column in Table 3), there are different linkages between politicization and corruption. Only in communes in big cities the politicization of personnel decisions is highly correlated with job corruption (0.74) and budget corruption (0.69), while only in rural communes the politicization of budget and service management is closely linked with service corruption – the correlation coefficients are 0.64 and 0.79, respectively.

Working experience is another factor that influences the officials' perceptions. In general, the officials working 4-9 years perceive much closer relationship between politicization and corruption than the officials working both less than 3 years and more than 10 years. It seems that the officials working less than 3 years are less experienced, while the officials with more than 10-year working experience probably worked in public administration under the communist regime. In this period public officials were under control of politicians. It might make them more prone to accept political pressure. They perceive the impact of politicization on corruption (all correlations are statistically significant) but they evaluate this influence as less visible than their colleagues who started their careers in the 90s.

Similar conclusions are suggested by correlations in the age sample. Young (less than 30 years) and older (more than 50 years) officials evaluate the relationship between politicization and corruption as less visible.

What is interesting in the correlations for decision-making ranks is that top managers perceive the strength of relationships between politicization of personnel management and jobs purchased as well as budget corruption at visibly lower levels (the correlation coefficients are 0.354 and 0.392, respectively, and both are statistically significant). It suggests that top managers preferred to be careful with their responses to the interview questions which were connected with aspects that they were personally responsible for.

Educational attainment, wage satisfaction and citizen voice as well as sex seem to be the factors that have much less impact on the officials' perceptions. However, it is worth stressing that there is a regular (regarding all pairs of measures) difference in the perceptions between the officials with university degree and the officials who graduated from secondary schools. For the first group all correlations are above the whole-sample correlations, contrary to the second group.

Another information can be found in columns 5, 9 and 13 in Table 3. The figures in these columns show which factors are responsible for the largest differences in the

strength of the relationships between the perceptions of: 1) politicization of personnel management and corruption (see column 5); 2) politicization of budget management and corruption (see column 9); and 3) politicization of service management and corruption (see column 13). Citizen voice (the impact of users' complaints on decisions on service delivery/performance of daily tasks), wage satisfaction and the decision-making rank influence mainly the strength of the relationship between the perceptions of politicization of personnel management and corruption. The location of a commune council (a province) and the type of a commune council as well as working experience induce the largest differences in the strength of the relationship between the politicization of budget management and corruption.

The figures in the last row of Table 3 show the sums of percentage deviations of sub-sample correlations for each kind of politicization. In general, if all the deviations in sub-samples are taken into account, it can be stated that officials were the most concordant in the estimation of the strength of the relationship between the politicization of service management and corruption.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to identify the factors that matter for the relationship between perceptions of the officials of politicization and corruption on the basis of the micro-data from the Public Officials Survey in Poland. The factors were divided into four groups. The structure of local administration (it means the location of a commune council and the type of a commune) is the most important factor in accounting for the differences in the officials' perceptions. The relevance of other groups turned out to be similar. The individual characteristics (personal honesty, working experience, age, educational attainment, sex) have only a little larger influence on the officials' perceptions, on the average, than the agency characteristics (decision-making ranks, wage satisfaction) and citizen voice.

The findings show that the location of a commune council has a visible impact on the officials' perceptions. The relationship between politicization and corruption is influenced strongly by the political environment in a given province. In 7 out of 16 provinces the decisions based on political connections matter for corruption at the local level of administration. The political environment in a given province turns out to be a factor considerably superior to all agency characteristics and individual characteristics. It suggests that on the whole territory of Poland politicization is the factor explaining the perceived level of corruption. Low political pressure is connected with the low level of corruption and strong politicization is linked with the high level of corruption.

The type of a commune was the second factor included into the set named "the structure of local administration". This factor diversifies the strength of the relationship between the perceptions of politicization and corruption.

In the set of individual characteristics, the effect of personal honesty is superior to the effects of other factors in diversifying the officials' perceptions. Working experience also generates the differences in the officials' opinions about the strength of the politicization-corruption relationship. Other factors, like age, educational attainment and sex, have considerable less impact on the strength of the relationship

All findings refer to the local administration in Poland and they would not necessarily hold in other countries.

Furthermore, the data based on a questionnaire survey imply a margin of error due to the subjective nature of its questions. In spite of this drawback, such a set of data allows to carry out the new type of research that can be useful to investigate the importance of various determinants of governance at the micro-level.

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JAKIE CZYNNIKI MAJĄ ZNACZENIE DLA OCENY ZWIĄZKU MIĘDZY KORUPCJĄ A NACISKAMI POLITYCZNYMI W ADMINISTRACJI LOKALNEJ W POLSCE

Streszczenie: Głównym celem artykułu jest ustalenie czynników, które mogą mieć znaczenie dla postrzegania przez urzędników urzędów gminnych w Polsce związku między korupcją a naciskami politycznymi. Rozważane są cztery grupy czynników: 1) struktura administracji, 2) opinie obywateli, jako czynnik zewnętrzny w odniesieniu do sektora publicznego, 3) charakterystyki urzędu, 4) indywidualne cechy urzędników. Badanie jest oparte na wynikach badania ankietowego przeprowadzonego wśród 858 urzędników pracujących w 100 urzędach gminnych w Polsce w 2009 roku. Wyniki oparte na analizie korelacyjnej sugerują, że lokalizacja geograficzna oraz typ gminy mają istotne znaczenie dla postrzegania związku między korupcją a naciskami politycznymi.