



Citizens' Perceptions of Public Administration Ethics, Public Service Quality and Politicization of Public Organizations: A Study in Diyarbakır

Vatandaşların Kamu Yönetimi Etiği, Kamu Hizmet Kalitesi ve Kamu Kurumlarının Siyasallaşmasına Yönelik Algısı: Diyarbakır'da Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

Citizens' satisfaction with public sector has been a focus of interest especially in new public management literature for almost four decades. For this reason, investigating perceptions and evaluations of citizens for public service quality has become more vital for both scholars and practitioners. Field studies in different contexts can provide evidence for new public management scholars to expand theory and for governments to improve current policies and operations in the bureaucracy. Based on these arguments, this study aims to reveal how politicization in public organizations is harmful for ethics in public administration and public service quality and the importance of ethical public administration to increase the quality of public services. Results from a field survey study in Diyarbakır has provided support for the proposed arguments of the study. Citizens' perceptions about the increased politicization in public organizations have shown negative relationships with ethical public administration and public service quality. Also, support is found for the positive relationship with ethical public administration and public service quality. Theoretical contributions and practical implications of these findings are also discussed with the limitations of field study in the last section.

Keywords

Public Administration Ethics, Politicization, Service Quality, Diyarbakır

Öz

Vatandaşların kamu yönetiminden duyduğu memnuniyet ile ilgili çalışmalar yeni kamu işletmeciliği yazınında neredeyse kırk yıldır incelenen bir konu olmuştur. Vatandaşların kamu hizmet kalitesine dair algı ve değerlendirmelerini araştırmak hem akademisyenler hem de uygulayıcılar için önemli bir durum haline gelmiştir. Konuyla ilgili farklı bağlamlarda gerçekleştirilecek saha çalışmaları yeni kamu işletmeciliği konusunda araştırma yapan akademisyenlere mevcut kuramı genişletme imkanı verirken hükümetlerin de hali hazırdaki politikalarını ve bürokrasideki uygulamalarını geliştirme imkanı sağlayacaktır. Bu önermelerle bağlantılı olarak mevcut çalışma, kamu kurumlarının siyasallaşmasının kamu yönetimi etiği ve kamu hizmet kalitesine nasıl zarar verdiğini ve kamu hizmet kalitesinin artmasında kamu yönetimi etiğinin önemini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Diyarbakır'da anket yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilen bir saha araştırmasından elde edilen bulgular bu önermeleri desteklemiştir. Vatandaşların kamu kurumlarının siyasallaşmasının artmasına yönelik algısı ile kamu yönetimi etiği ve kamu hizmet kalitesi algısı arasında olumsuz ilişkiler tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca kamu yönetimi etiği ile kamu hizmet kalitesi arasında olumlu yönde bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Çalışmanın teorik katkıları ve uygulamaya yansımaları ile ilgili bulgular saha araştırmasının kısıtları ile birlikte son bölümde tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Kamu Yönetimi Etiği, Siyasallaşma, Hizmet Kalitesi, Diyarbakır

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Introduction

As a sub-theme of applied ethics, public administration ethics is a more recent research field in general ethics literature since 1950s. It has been strengthened with depoliticization of public administration in 1980s and 1990s which has found significant reflections in minor democratic countries like Turkey within the same period (Eryılmaz, 2012). Due to the destructive impact of politicization in public institutions, expanding ethical values and norms is seen mandatory by both scholars and policy-makers in the field. While new public management has tried to empower public managers and increase decision making authorities of them via depoliticization and increased autonomy, it has not applied with the same expansion level in every country and context (Cooper, 2021, p. 564). Besides, the emphasis of new public management on accountability of the state in every domain has made public administration ethics more significant. Although American Society of Public Administration has approved code of ethics for public servants since 1994, every country has its specific public administration structure and need its code of conduct for public officers. Relatedly, Republic of Turkey has announced “Ethical Behavioral Guidelines for Public Servants” in 2005 which contains eighteen items and expected from public personnel to behave in accordance with these rules. However, there has been limited knowledge about the reflections of these legislations for citizens and their evaluations of the general public administration in Turkey.

Both ethics and politicization in public administration would have direct effects on public service quality. Since the expectations of citizens from public administration for more qualified public services have increased in every day, policy makers and governments should be more action oriented than only approving legislations. Pursuing the impacts of policies related to ethical and impartial public administration can be observed more accurately in quality of public services and perceptions of citizens about them. It is also significant to improve public service quality since private organizations have already set up a standard high quality in their services for general people which would increase the expectations of citizens. The request for high quality in services is so reasonable for citizens since they source public administration with their taxes in democratic states. On the other hand, some of the public services are monopolies naturally and it is harder to satisfy the expectations of citizens and define a standard of quality level in them. For this reason, public service quality in citizens’ thoughts would be highly related with how public personnel and institutions act in ethical and political domains. As mentioned before, there has been a variation for establishing ethical standards and depoliticization in public administration among different democratic settings, it is significant to evaluate each country within its context for the interdependencies between public administration ethics, politicization of public institutions and service quality of them. Consequently, this study is aimed to find out how politicization in public administration would hinder ethical public administration and public service quality and the importance of ethics to improve public service quality.

The following parts of this article is organized into five parts. In the first section, the general literature review about public administration ethics, quality of public services, and politicization in public institutions are summarized. The second part includes the expected relations among these concepts as hypotheses development. The methodology

of the study is mentioned in the third part with a piece of detailed information about the sampling and variables. In the fourth section, the findings of diverse statistical analyses are interpreted. As the last section of the article, the discussion part involves both the evaluations, implications and limitations of the findings.

Literature Review

Public Administration Ethics

Ethics can be defined as system or code of conduct based on universal moral duties and obligations which indicate how one should behave; it deals with the ability to distinguish good from evil, right from wrong and propriety from impropriety” (Josephson, 1989 , p. 2). Ethics is also entitled as moral philosophy and it can be defined as considering moral, moral problems and moral judgments (Frankena, 1988, p. 5). As can be seen in various definitions, ethics is generally defined with a focus on morality. Morality is the wholesome of rules and principles that people involved. At this point, there can be a professional morality, a political morality or even a marriage morality in people’s lives. Professional morality is the all rules and principles that determine a person’s vocational behavior and interactions with other parties in their jobs. However, ethics is different from than morality concept and is a philosophical discipline that explains these behaviors by investigating them within the compass of philosophy and trying to resolve them (Arslan, 2009, p. 132). While morality indicates the opinion of people, ethics implies rules and principles. Whilst the life of people is the subject of ethics concept, morality bases the function of understanding the human behavior. Though ethical evaluations are unbiased and objective, moral ones are biased and subjective (Harper, 2009, p. 1066). In short, ethics is the bigger picture and a more widespread concept that involves the whole landscape and morality only includes some of the details that are sprinkled in this picture.

Although ethics is an expanded philosophical field, it can be classified as ‘normative ethics’, ‘meta ethics’ and ‘applied ethics’ (Kılavuz, 2002, p. 257). While normative ethics define the norms about what is wrong and right and type of actions under specific conditions for people (Cevizci, 2002, p. 7), meta ethics is based on the view that the main purpose of ethics is not defining norms but basing ethical propositions and analyzing them (Kuçuradi, 2004, p. 5). Lastly, applied ethics is the area of ethics that investigates ethics in the context of daily life and actions rather than philosophical examination. The basic consideration of applied ethics is related with the practical nature of ethics instead of theory (Prasad, 2010, p. 14). Related with its label, it puts on the agenda the practical moral problems that are actually discussed by the society. In other words, applied ethics aims to put concrete knowledge through intangible concepts. Nowadays, the areas of applied ethics are diverse and multiple. The sub themes of applied ethics can be summarized as public administration ethics, political ethics, environmental ethics, bio-ethics, media ethics, law ethics, medical ethics, engineering ethics, etc.

When defining public administration ethics, there has been emphasize on some ethical values. Also, public administration ethics determines the rules and principles for public officers when they do their duty and make decisions about administrative processes (Öktem and Ömürgönülşen 2005, p. 232). For instance, OECD has defined main public

administration ethical values as objectivity, legitimacy, integrity, transparency, efficiency-effectiveness, equality, responsibility and justice (OECD, 2000, p. 32). Besides, The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) has determined ethical values in public administration as prioritizing public interest, supremacy of constitution and law, support of democratic involvement, empowering social equity, full information, individual integrity, incentives for ethical organizations and excellence in public service (Svara et al, 2015, p. 4). Relatedly, Cooper (2004, p. 396) whom has contributed public administration literature significantly has specified public administration values as regime values, constitutional theory and founding thought, citizenship theory, social equity, virtue-personality and public interest. In short, public administration ethics can be defined as “a set of principles and values like neutrality, integrity, civility, justice, transparency, accountability, protecting public interest, duty commitment, merit, productivity, efficiency and quality that public officials and managers have to obey when they make decisions and carry out public services” (Eryılmaz and Biricikoğlu 2011, p. 35).

The significance of public administration ethics has been proved by many research in the literature. For instance, a multi-country study has shown that citizens’ positive evaluations of governments’ fairness, avoidance of favoritism and corruption in public administration increases their trust level for public servants (Van Ryzin, 2011). Moreover, establishing ethics in public institutions via ethical training would foster ethical culture in public institutions by affecting public servants’ behavior positively (Beeri et al, 2013). Another study in USA context has shown that public servants’ ethical behaviors like integrity, openness, loyalty, ethical competence, and service consistency increases public trust for public institutions (Feldheim and Wang, 2004, p.73). Menzel’s (2015) review article about public administration ethics also indicated that improving public administration ethics can increase organizational performance in public administration. Accordingly, public administration ethics have diverse outcomes which directly influence the well-being of citizens and their attitudes in general. For this reason, analyzing public administration ethics through citizens’ perceptions would provide new insights for the literature in different country contexts.

Quality of Public Services

Service quality is defined as the difference between the expectation of customers about the service and perceived service by them (Wisniewski, 2001, p. 381). It is related with the comparison of expectations and the perception about actual performance (Parasuraman, 1988, p. 15). If expectations of customers are above the actual performance, the level of perceived service quality probably will not be satisfactory (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990, p. 12). It is also characterized as the general perception of a customer for a specified product or service about its excellence and superiority (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 3).

As can be realized, the definitions of service quality generally include the themes of customer, satisfaction and consumer. These themes are also closely related with new public management approach which embraces a comprehensive change process in public institutions. Both service quality and customer satisfaction have been accepted as strategic and crucial obligations in re-invention of public sector since 1990s (Rhee and Rha, 2009, p. 1491). Since new public management approach is based on customer satisfaction and

quality, public service quality would have a pivotal role in this research stream (Sezer, 2008, p. 150). Public service quality can be defined as increasing the content of public services as much as private sector and even exceeding its quality level. Moreover, public service quality includes the overall experience of citizens about public organizations' services. In this respect, public service quality should be evaluated through both decision making and applying the decisions and the perceptions of citizens related with these decisions and their applications. In other words, the restoration efforts in quality of public institutions' services are not sufficient to define public service quality. The perceptions and thoughts of citizens whom experience public services in general are also equally significant to determine public service quality. As Walsh (1991, p. 504) summarized as determining whether the level of service quality is high or sufficient is difficult without asking citizens. Citizens' evaluations would always be significant in analyzing public services' quality.

Another description of public service quality considers not only fulfilling service requirements but also paying attention to changing structure of social values (Walsh, 1991, pp. 513-514). Nowadays, the accelerated change in production and information technologies have also increased the expectations for quality in both markets and people's minds. Quality is not perceived only as expensive and luxury but also become a mindset, work and life style. In this vein, the mentality that organizations can sell all the products they produce has evolved into an approach which produces the products it can sold or compatible with customer desires. Similarly, public institutions had to have transformed their service quality into a more citizen oriented and satisfactory level (Peker, 1996, p. 43). Furthermore, the expectations of citizens for public service quality have also become a forcing element for governments to raise their standards in public organizations. However, there are some constraints in comparing public service quality level with private sector services. First of all, public organizations do not have to compete with rival organizations to fulfill customer needs instead of private organizations. Market competition is not an issue for public institutions since they have been a monopoly in many areas of services. For this reason, both managers and officials would not show additional effort to increase the quality of services or products that are produced by public institutions (Gowan, et al., 2001). Additionally, private sector organizations can specialize in a service or product to target a specific customer group but public organizations have limitations to focus on specific services due to the nature of public services. Public services should be open to all citizens and society and the main purpose of them is to satisfy the common needs of citizens rather than making profit. Consequently, these constraints can decrease the quality of public services. On the other hand, the success of governments in democratic countries can be equal to the quality of public services for citizens. In that respect, governments whom want to be re-elected and do not want to lose their power can develop policies that would increase public service quality. This shows that perception of citizens about public service quality can change and vary over time due to new conditions. In this context, investigating and measuring the perception of citizens about public service quality is crucial for both researchers and practitioners.

Empirical evidence shows that public service quality directly effects customer satisfaction. This effect is also driven by the relationship quality which implies the behaviors

of public servants in the eyes of citizens (Rha, 2012, p.1896). Similarly, a study in USA context has shown that quality of public services has an impact on citizen satisfaction with public services (Collins et al, 2019). In accord with public administration ethics literature, government impartiality is significantly related with perceived public service quality especially for citizens with a vulnerable background (Suzuki and Demircioğlu, 2021). Another study provides evidence that public service quality improves public trust and increases positive evaluations of citizens about government performance in USA context (Van Ryzin, 2015). Since public service quality has direct and indirect causal relationships with citizens' evaluations about public administration ethics and satisfaction with public administration, there is still need for research especially in contexts with citizens from vulnerable backgrounds and different democratization levels.

Politicization of Public Organizations

Politicization of public organizations have been defined as “substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service” (Peters and Pierre, 2004, p. 2) and intervention of politics and political tools into public administration by scholars (Cooper, 2021, p. 565). Public services are carried out by both public administrators and personnel and politicians with mutual interaction. It has been discussed for many years in the public administration literature which side of this mutual relationship would determine the public policies and decisions (Svara, 2001, p. 176). The core discussion in this theme is the question that is stated as ‘how an effective and efficient public administration should be?’. Many scholars in public administration like Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson and Frank Goodnow have opposed to politicization of public institutions since the beginning of 20th century to empower the efficiency of public administration and to prevent the misuse of public sources (Dahlström and Niklasson, 2013, p. 891).

Politicization has many types in public administration. While direct politicization means assigning partisans as public officers in public organizations by the governing political party/parties, professional politicization indicates the professional behavior of public officials in fulfilling the public duties despite their politicization. Redundant politicization is establishing new units in public administration to control public policies and public personnel by the new governing party. Anticipatory politicization involves abdication of public officials who think that their effectiveness will diminish in the new ruling party era before the change in government. Dual politicization indicates the dual role of legislative and executive authorities in political appointments and dismissals. Lastly, social politicization is the intervention ability of social actors whom are effective in governing processes for appointing public officers and their career structures (Peters, 2013, pp. 17-19).

The main reason of politicization of public organizations is the wish of the ruling party to dominate bureaucratic hierarchy for executing its own policies efficiently and effectively since public officers and public administration are the executive tools of governments. This causes a continuity of political impact on bureaucracy and the problem of politicization of public administration (Çevikbaş, 2006, p. 276). In fact, public institutions are administrative units that are public oriented services should be executed

rationally. The main role of bureaucracy is producing public service rationally despite the ongoing changes in ruling parties. The basic expectation from public personnel during public service production is that carrying out their roles without the impact of governing party and objectivity. Consequently, the divergence of public personnel from rationality and operationalization of public institutions like a political party unit would cause politicization in public organizations (Dinçer, 1997, p. 1112).

There are also numerous conclusions for politicization of public institutions. According to traditional normative approach, politicization of public organizations would cause a disaster and destruction in democratic politics (Peters, 2013, p. 20). The hegemony of partisanship in public services rather than competence-based criteria would erode the trust of citizens for public organizations and cause queries about the justice of public institutions (Peters and Pierre, 2004, p. 8). The excessive politicization of administration would damage its neutrality and the frequent changes of upper-level managers would spoil consistency, stability and efficiency of the administration (Kim et al., 2022, p. 2). These actions would also hinder the effective and efficient execution of public bureaucracy and corrupt the bureaucratic system (Yılmaz and Kılavuz, 2002, p. 20). Moreover, the accountability of public administration would be affected negatively and the auditing function in public organizations would be limited because of politicization of public organizations. As politicization expanded and effective in public institutions, the labor peace in public administration would be destroyed, the organizational memory would be lost and the daily routines would be upside down (Ståhlberg, 1987, p. 377).

Recent study reveals that politicization in public institutions decreases senior executives' job satisfaction and organizational commitment across Europe (Kim et al, 2022). Relatedly, another study in five post-soviet countries has shown that increased politicization would cause more corruption according to public officials (Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen, 2016). Similarly, a survey study with municipal managers in Chile provided evidence that politicization of public institutions negatively affect organizational performance via damaging recruitment and selection processes, training and performance evolutions in public agencies (Fuenzalida and Riccucci, 2019, p. 561). Although there has been considerable research about the evaluations of public officials and managers for the politicization of public organizations, the side of the citizens and their thoughts about this concept need new research. Connecting politicization of public organizations, public service quality and public administration ethics would merge different streams of research lines in public administration literature. For this reason, we will develop a research framework which considers perceptions of citizens about public administration ethics, public service quality and politicization of public institutions.

Hypotheses Development

The politicization of public organizations should be understood in the context of values that are related with professional public services. Professional public officials are expected to hold off the apprehensions of political parties and leaders to provide services equally for different political views. Indeed, politicization concept is used to describe the erosion of this distance between public officials and political parties (Mulgan, 2007, p. 570). Furthermore, relevant literature for the relationship between public organizations'

performance and politicization of public administration mentions that politicization causes negative consequences for effectiveness, productivity, quality and legitimacy of public administration (Rouban, 2005; Lewis, 2008; Peters and Pierre, 2004). Another stream of research has provided evidence that countries where political loyalty is more important than competence in recruitments of public organizations would have lower economic growth and welfare and higher bribery and corruption levels (Rothstein, et al, 2012; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Dahlström et al, 2012; Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen, 2016).

Although political parties and characters are temporary due to election results, public officers are permanent in democratic systems. In this regard, the neutrality of public officers is considered as a significant value and source of legitimacy in most democratic structures (Peters, 2013). Neutrality in public administration means that public officials treat citizens objectively and act and make decisions without the impact of any political party or figure (Aucoin, 2012). The basic expectation of citizens from public organizations or institutions is getting public services regularly without discrimination. Politicization includes the threat for overshadowing of neutrality. If competence-based recruitment replaces with partisanship recruitment, public services would also be exhibited with partisanship attitude. Providing public services with neutrality, quality and justice forms the basic ethical values in public administration. Thus, public officers should act upon legality, justice, equity and integrity principles in all of their transactions and behavior and they should not discriminate any person according to their language, religion, belief system, political view, nationality, gender and similar characteristics when fulfilling their jobs and providing public services. As a result, politicization of public administration would be one of the significant burdens in applying these ethical values and principles.

Additionally, politicization of public organizations would cause negative impacts on job motivation and satisfaction of public officers (Kim, et al., 2022). Accordingly, public officers with lower job satisfaction and motivation cannot provide public services with a sufficient and qualified level. Since public services are provided with a source of tax income from citizens, it would not be professional when they hinder or are offered sufficiently. Politicization would also damage workplace harmony and peace (Ståhlberg, 1987). Therefore, politicization would be evaluated as an ethical problem that damages professionalization. Consequently, these problems that are related to inner structure of public organizations could also reflected to citizens whom got public services.

Politicization of public organizations is also related with their performance and productivity. Public organizations that are governed by professional managers rather than politically recruited ones have shown better performance results (Gilmour and Lewis, 2006; Lewis, 2008; Hollibaugh, 2015). On the other hand, politically recruited managers have to continue their partisanship and ideological commitment to keep their positions in public organizations. However, this situation will harm their decision-making process, neutrality and rationality (Moynihan and Roberts, 2010). The main reason of existence for public organizations and public officers is serving to public. Public duties should be fulfilled with consciousness of public service and services should be more qualified, beneficial, accessible and accountable. As a result of these, politicization would harm this consciousness. Politicization would replace serving for public with serving

for the political party or ideology. This process will decrease the performance of public organizations which will also affect their efficiency, productivity and quality of public services negatively. Furthermore, serving to political party or ideology with political apprehensions would also be an unethical attitude.

Since these problems would be perceived by citizens and politicization would cause ethical problems and decrease service quality, investigating perceived politicization of public organizations is relevant for public administration literature. In this manner, two hypotheses that considers the relationships between perceived politicization and ethical public administration and politicization and public service quality are proposed for Turkey context:

H1: Perceived politicization of public organizations affects negatively the perceptions of citizens for ethical public administration.

H2: Perceived politicization of public organizations affects negatively the perceptions of citizens for public service quality.

Ethical public administration is not only related with how the constitutional structure of the state should be or the quality of public service that public officers should provide for fulfilling their legal obligations. Certainly, it considers the components of institutional structures for making decisions about quality of public organizations and acceptability of the standards. However, ethical public administration investigates the quality of the government and public administration in general (Yüksel, 2006). The ethical values in public administration have been determined by many scholars in the field so far (Bailey, 1964; Brown, 1986; Goss, 1996). These values belong to a wide range and can be summarized as: impartiality- neutrality, legality, integrity, transparency, efficiency, equality, responsibility and justice (OECD, 2000, p. 32). Also, kindness, respect and caring the citizens can be added into these ethical values.

Neutrality in public services increases both the public service quality perception of citizens whom benefit from these services and public officers whom provide them (Suzuki and Demircioglu, 2021). Providing public services with justice is significant since it will also shape the trust in government and support of citizens for public institutions (Marien and Werner, 2019). There are four issues in citizens' justice perceptions. Firstly, citizens consider just treatments as an ethical right. Secondly, the fair attitude of public officers would increase the citizens' trust towards them. Another issue is that fair processes and procedures would make understand the citizens that they are respected by the public institutions. Lastly, positive perceptions about procedures in public institutions would decrease the uncertainty in the outputs of them (Linde, 2012). In addition to this, treating citizens fairly, obeying rules and laws and respecting to citizens would cause positive attitudes in evaluation of public organizations' performance (Van Ryzin, 2015).

Responsibility of public administration is also a significant ethical value. Responsibility is associated with public officials' performing of public services by fulfilling necessary conditions (Plant, 2018). If responsibility in public services is established properly, it will contribute to public institutions' performance positively (Kakabadse, et al., 2003). Accordingly, integrity is a basic public administration ethical value. It is related with behaviors that violate ethical norms and values of public administration. There has

been a wide stream of research that puts forward different types of unethical behavior and violations of integrity (Rothstein, 2011; Lewis and Gilman, 2012; De Graaf, et al., 2018). The violations of integrity include actions like corruption, bribery, favoritism, conflict of interest, fraud, theft of public resources, waste and misuse of public resources, disregarding the rules and misuse of legal power, improper treatment and threatening, discrimination and not to pay attention to working hours (Huberts, 2018). Transparency as another ethical value which can be used to prevent actions that threatens the integrity value (Meyer, 2018). The quality of public services would be perceived as more qualified when public administrations act upon these ethical values. Thus, the positive perception of citizens about the public administration ethics would contribute the positive perception of citizens in regards to public service quality. The relevant hypothesis that tests this relationship is below:

H3: The perception of citizens about ethical public administration affects positively the perceptions of them in regards to public service quality.

All of the proposed hypotheses are visualized in Figure 1.

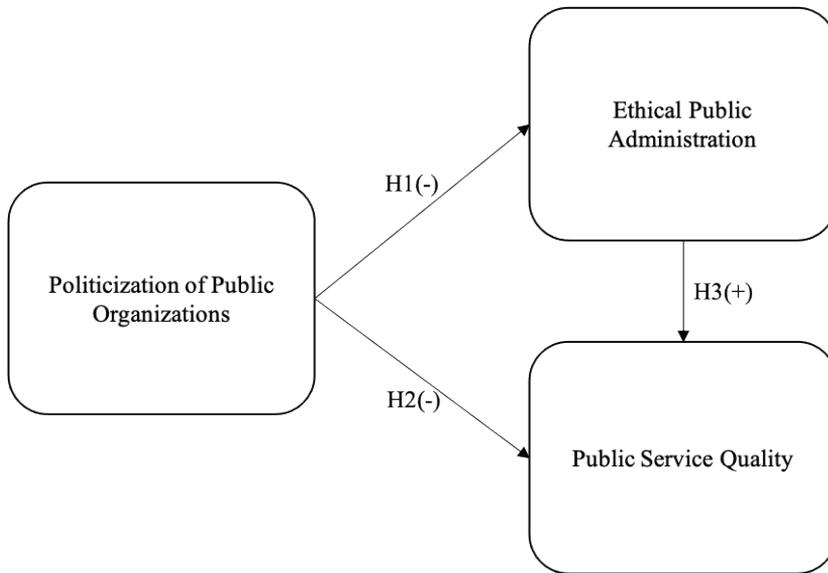


Figure 1. Proposed research model.

Method

Sample

The sample of the study involves 543 Turkish citizens in Diyarbakır city. The survey data was collected by face-to-face meetings with respondents from city center in July-August 2021. The related permissions for conducting survey study were got from Dicle University Humanities and Social Sciences Ethical Committee in 14.06.2021 with the approval number of 86433. Convenient sampling method was adopted since we have

tried to understand perceptions and attitudes of citizens from various backgrounds and characteristics. The respondents were also assured that their answers will be anonymous. The researcher whom was collected the data encouraged the participants to answers all of the questions in the survey to guarantee the involvement level and increase the sample size. According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), Diyarbakır's overall population is 1,517,297 for the year of 2020 (TÜİK, 2020). The researcher collected 592 surveys at the initial step. Due to missing responses in the data, the final sample includes 543 respondents whom are older than 18 years. This threshold age level is adopted to limit the study sample due to suffrage age rules in Republic of Turkey and the pre-acceptance that citizens would be more experienced with public services and institutions after this age. According to Gürbüz and Şahin (2018), the minimum sample size of a 10,000,000 population should be 384. As a result, the final sample size of the study is adequate for further statistical analyses.

Firstly, demographic findings of respondents were analyzed. The mean age of sample is 39.3 (SD=13.26) and the mean value of monthly income of respondents is 3247.47 Turkish Liras (SD=2532.20). The mean income level of respondents corresponds with the minimum wage level in Turkey. Whereas 47.5% of the sample is women respondents, 52.5% is male respondents. The respondents in the sample mainly have primary (27.1%), secondary (25.2%) and high school (20.8%) degrees. According to statistics of TÜİK for the year of 2020, 28% of the population has primary school degree. Moreover, 20% of the population is graduated from secondary school and 25% of the population has a high school degree. These statistics are consistent with our sample distribution. While 62.6% of individuals are married, 30.9% are single and 6.4% are divorced/widowed in the sample. These findings are also similar to general population results in Turkey. In the year of 2020, 58% of the population is married, 37% is single and 5% is divorced or widowed in Turkey (TÜİK, 2021). Consequently, the sample characteristics mainly represent the general population of both the country and the city.

Variables

This study is adopted the survey methodology that consists of both demographic and Likert type questions. Demographic questions were used to ask for gender, age, education level, income level, marital status and political positions of the respondents. Likert type questions were used to measure independent and dependent variables of the research. Measures of these variables are previously used by other studies and have valid reliability values (Mizrahi et. al., 2021b; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). All the Likert type measures are checked out for construct validity through exploratory factor analyses and reliability analyses.

Politicization of Public Organizations

Perceived politicization of public organizations variable is measured by a 5-point Likert type scale that ranges between 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). Three items are constructed the original scale which is developed by Vigoda-Gadot (2007). This study is translated and adopted original three items in the Turkish survey. Exploratory factor analysis indicated that all three items have satisfactory factor loadings which are (1) "The actions of the public administration serve the purposes of only a few

individuals, not the public system or the public interest” (0.92), (2) “Favoritism rather than professionalism determines the decisions made in public administration” (0.93) and (3) “Generally speaking, the public administration operates appropriately and is not affected by political pressure (reversed item)” (0.90). The KMO value of the items is 0.75 and Barlett’s significance test is significant. The mean value of all three items is used to measure politicization in public organizations in further analyses. The variable also has a high reliability value ($\alpha=0.91$). This value should be higher than 0.70 (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2018).

Ethical Public Administration

This variable is used to measure perceptions of citizens in regards to the integrity and ethics level of public employees and also derived from Vigoda-Gadot (2007). Three questions are employed as 5-point Likert scale. These items are as followed: (1) “In Turkey, most of the civil servants are impartial and honest”, (2) “In Turkey, citizens receive equal and fair treatment from public servants”, (3) “In Turkey, deviations from moral/ethical norms in public institutions are common (reversed item)”. Similarly, both KMO and Barlett’s significance test has got satisfactory values for exploratory factor analysis. The items have factor loadings that range from 0.89 to 0.93 which are even higher than the original study of Vigoda-Gadot (2007) and have loaded into a single dimension. The mean value of three items were used to measure the perceived ethical level of public personnel according to respondents. The reliability of the scale is 0.90 which is quite high.

Public Service Quality

Public service quality variable is measured through 12 items that are also Likert type. Respondents were asked to indicate the level of service quality in public organizations that ranges from 1 (Very Low) to 5 (Very High). A list of public organizations that are mainly known at the national level. These are (1) public hospitals and local clinics, (2) public schools, (3) security forces (police, gendarme, watchmen, etc.), (4) courts, (5) Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), (6) Social Security Institution (SGK), (7) social services, (8) transportation and infrastructure, (9) treasury and finance offices, (10) environment and urban development, (11) agriculture and forestry, and (12) governorship. All 12 items are also loaded to a single variable that explains 62.2% of variance. The minimum and maximum factor loadings of the items are 0.69 and 0.87 respectively which are satisfactory levels in factor analysis. This variable is also highly reliable ($\alpha=0.94$). All of the variables have been validated in Turkish context according to preliminary analyses.

Statistical Analyses

IBM SPSS 25 statistical package is used for all statistical analyses of the study. Control variables (age, monthly income, political position) are used with independent and dependent variables in both correlation and regression analyses due to their high relevance in citizen attitude studies (Mizrahi et. al., 2021a; Mizrahi et. al., 2021b; Vigoda-Gadot, 2007). All of the variables are also tested for their Skewness and Kurtosis values to understand if they are normally distributed. These values are between -1 and +1 and it indicates that normally distributed items and variables are used in further analyses.

Firstly, Pearson's Correlation tests were used to observe the proposed relationships in the research model. Hypotheses are tested through hierarchical multiple regression. All of these analyses are conducted at the 95% confidence interval level.

Findings

Findings related with descriptive statistics and correlations among variables are summarized in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, respondents of the survey have a low level of perception regarding the ethics and integrity level of public personnel (Mean = 2.38, S.D = 1.06). Contrarily, participants have a moderate level of perception in regards to public service quality (Mean = 2.71, S.D = 0.91). Respondents of the study have indicated that Turkish public administration has a high level of politicization which is also expected (Mean = 3.62, S.D = 1.08). The inter-correlations among variables have shown expected directions as mentioned in the research hypotheses. There is a negative and significant relationship between perceived politicization of public organizations and ethical public administration variable (-0.76**). Also, the relationship between politicization of public organizations and public service quality is negatively and significantly related (-0.77**). Lastly, ethical public administration and public service quality has shown a significant and positive relationship with each other (0.78**). Although the correlations among independent and dependent variables are quite high and may cause multicollinearity problems, the VIF values in Table 2 and Table 3 are below 10 which is a threshold level for multicollinearity.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations

Variable	Mean (S.D)	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ethical Public Administration	2.38 (1.06)	1	0.78**	-0.76**	0.24**	0.02	-0.63**
2. Public Service Quality	2.71 (0.91)	0.78**	1	-0.77**	0.31**	0.03	-0.68**
3. Perceived politicization of Public Organizations	3.62 (1.08)	-0.76**	-0.77**	1	-0.28**	-0.02	0.62**
4. Age	39.30 (13.26)	0.24**	0.31**	-0.28**	1	0.27**	-0.29**
5. Monthly Income	3247.47 (2532.20)	0.02	0.03	-0.02	0.27**	1	-0.06
6. Political Position (1=Opponent, 0=Other)	-	-0.63**	-0.68**	0.62**	-0.29**	-0.06	1

N=543, ** p < 0.01

Hierarchical regression analyses results are summarized in Table 2 and Table 3. Model 1 has tested the impact of control variables on perceived ethical public administration. According to Model 1 results, only respondents' age ($\beta=0.00$, $p<0.01$) and political position ($\beta=-1.31$, $p<0.01$) have a significant effect on perceptions of respondents about ethical public administration. As the age of citizens increases, their perception in regards to ethical public administration also increases. On the other hand, respondents whom are politically opposed to the government perceive public administration less ethical. Model 2 has tested hypothesis 1 which proposes that perceived politicization of public organizations would have a negative effect on perceptions of citizens regarding ethical

public administration. The significant and positive coefficient of politicization of public organizations variable ($\beta=-0.60$, $p<0.01$) in Model 2 has supported hypothesis 1. This finding indicates that as citizens perceive public organizations more political, they think that public officers have less integrity and ethics.

Table 2
Regression Analyses of Ethical Public Administration as Dependent Variable

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		
	B	SE	VIF	B	SE	VIF
Constant	2.84**	0.13		4.86**	0.15	
Age	0.00*	0.00	1.17	-0.00	0.00	1.20
Monthly Income	-1.370E	0.00	1.08	-9.008E	0.00	1.08
Political Position	-1.31**	0.07	1.09	-0.55**	0.07	1.66
Politicization of Public Organizations				-0.60**	0.03	1.66
R ²	0.40			0.62		
Adjusted R ²	0.40			0.62		
F	123.88**			228.15**		

N=543; ** p < 0.01, *p<0.05

While Model 3 has tested the relationship between control variables and public service quality, Model 4 and Model 5 has tested the relationships of perceived politicization of public organizations and ethical public administration with the same dependent variable. Both age ($\beta=0.01$, $p<0.01$) and political positions of respondents ($\beta=-1.17$, $p<0.01$) have significant relationships with public service quality. As proposed in hypothesis 2, perceived politicization of public organizations has a negative and significant ($\beta=-0.47$, $p<0.01$) effect on perceived public service quality in Model 4. Thus, hypothesis 2 is also supported. Lastly, hypothesis 3 is tested through Model 5. The positive and significant coefficient of ethical public administration in Model 5 has supported hypothesis 3. Consequently, all of the proposed hypotheses are supported.

Table 3
Regression Analyses of Public Service Quality as Dependent Variable

Variable	Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	B	SE	VIF	B	SE	VIF	B	SE	VIF
Constant	2.97**	0.10		4.56**	0.12		1.55**	0.00	
Age	0.01*	0.00	1.17	0.00*	0.00	1.20	0.00**	0.00	1.18
Monthly Income	-1.526E	0.00	1.08	-5.142E	0.00	1.08	-8.467E	0.00	1.08
Political Position	-1.17**	0.05	1.09	-0.57**	0.05	1.66	-0.52**	0.05	1.73
Politicization of Public Organizations				-0.47**	0.02	1.66			
Ethical Public Administration							0.49**	0.02	1.69
R ²	0.48			0.67			0.68		
Adjusted R ²	0.47			0.66			0.67		
F	166.55**			273.88**			287.00**		

N=543; ** p < 0.01, *p<0.05

Discussion and Conclusion

The main component of public services is fulfilling them according to ethical values and norms. Public services with an ethical orientation would also satisfy citizens'

expectations and demands. This fulfillment can both increase the power of governments and governance mechanism in public administration. In democratic countries, the success and operations of public administration are closely linked with elected and governing bodies which also has a side-effect as politicization of people in these organizations. On the other hand, public services that are impartial and ethical would be perceived as more qualified and satisfactory by the citizens. Politicization of public organizations would cause legitimacy, quality and productivity problems (Rouban, 2005; Lewis, 2008; Peters and Pierre, 2004). Moreover, trust of citizens for public organizations would be hindered if politicization increases (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Politicization of public administration can cause individual and national negative consequences for every country like lower economic growth and welfare (Rothstein et al., 2012; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Dahlström et al, 2012; Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen, 2016). Relatedly, this study aims to find out how citizens' perceptions related with ethics in public administration, politicization of public institutions and quality of public services would affect each other in the context of Turkey as a young democratic country.

Similar to Vigoda-Gadot's (2007) study, this study considers the perceptions of citizens as a reflection of new public management's orientation that consider citizens as customers. By this way, this paper can contribute to both public administration and public policy literatures. According to the findings of survey study in Diyarbakır city of Turkey, citizens perceive public institutions and public personnel less ethical as their perception about politicization increases. This finding supports the previous literature that politicization has a harmful effect on citizens' trust for public administration (Peters and Pierre, 2004). Besides, this finding is consistent with the results of Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen (2016) and Fuenzalida and Riccucci (2019)'s studies. These studies provide evidence that politicization causes more corruption and non-merit human resources management applications in public organizations. Our study is also original since it examines the perceptions of citizens which is not emphasized much in recent literature. Most of the research about politicization of public institutions has used public officials or managers as their study context (Kim et al, 2022; Meyer-Sahling and Mikkelsen, 2016; Fuenzalida and Riccucci, 2019). Another finding of the study has provided evidence that perceived politicization of public organizations would decrease the perceived level of public service quality. This finding overlaps with the propositions of Kim et al. (2022, p. 2) whose study highlights the harmful effects of over politicization on upper-level manager appointments, stability and consistency of public institutions. This finding indicates that politicization of public institutions has a cumulative deteriorating impact which would end with a decreased public service quality. The last finding of the study has supported the significant role of integrity and ethics of public administration in citizens' thoughts for perceived public service quality. It also provides evidence for the findings of Suzuki and Demircioğlu (2021) that emphasize the vulnerable citizens and their thoughts for ethical public administration and its relationship with public service quality. Our study also shows that older citizens still have positive evaluations about public administration ethics and public service quality in our sample. These results are not surprising due to ongoing debate about generational differences in political opinions and perceptions of citizens for government's performance. The split between older generations and younger ones have been analyzed by journalists and political analysts in many press outlets so far.

These findings have offered the importance of ethical values and norms for public administration and its whole components in citizens' evaluations as new public management philosophy proposes. Since citizens are seen as clients or customers in this new philosophy, their perceptions and satisfactions should be investigated more in future research to expand theoretical side of new public management literature. Moreover, studies that consider the citizens' evaluations about the operations of public institutions are scarce. This study can start new discussions about the role of citizens in shaping public policy and public administration's operations. Although, governing bodies can measure the results of their policies in public administration with election results, this would be very limited for the future projections of public policies for citizens and their evaluations. It is also valid for public service quality evaluations of citizens in practice. Since competence-based service quality in private organizations increases with an upward trajectory, public organizations should also reply the demands of citizens whom are accustomed to this quality level. Fulfilling the demands of citizens also corresponds with the philosophy of new public management.

Although politicization of public administration has both ups and downs in the related literature, this study demonstrated that street level bureaucrats should keep their objectivity, integrity and unpolitical status while carrying out their public service duties. As politicization disperses among street level bureaucracy, both trust of citizens and quality of services are damaged. When merit-based work placement replaced with politically oriented one, the most effected personnel would be street-level bureaucrats. This would cause a vicious cycle that feed partisanship and serving for the political party instead of citizens. Ideological attitudes of public personnel could cause unethical behaviors and politicization can also breeds this. Politicization may damage the quality of public services through stimulating disharmony among public personnel. Moreover, it can also trigger dissonance among different public institutions which should collaborate during crises or emergency situations. Though politicians think that controlling bureaucracy would benefit them in the short run, increased discontent and reactions of citizens can hinder their political power and status in the long term.

In spite of significant contributions for practice and theory, this study has some limitations. Firstly, this study can suffer from common-method bias since all the data is collected from the respondents with multiple scales at the same time. In future research, scholars can use multiple constructs and measure them with multiple methods to prevent this. Also, future studies should consider the perceptions of public personnel for the same constructs to understand the other side of the coin to prevent common source bias. The sample of the study is limited with one city which can limit the findings. A nation-wide study can give more accurate and inspiring findings in future research. Moreover, political positions of citizens may cause biased perceptions of citizens about public administration which may be a limitation in citizen attitude studies. In-depth interviews with a diverse group of citizens may reveal unconsidered factors that are significant for perceived public service quality and ethical public administration.

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