

Public Service Efficiency: An Innovative Method for Assessing Public Sector Reputation

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ABSTRACT

This article considers how efficiency assessments of public bodies can also be used to assess the reputation of the public sector. Using cases of national innovative practices in public sector efficiency evaluation and sociological survey data, this article examines the importance of methods for measuring the reputation of the state apparatus. The state apparatus of the Republic of Kazakhstan currently aims at social inclusion and needs to be improved not only for local stakeholder groups, but also to comply with norms and standards shared by the international community. In this context, the measurement and management of organizational reputation is important in order to improve Kazakhstan's position in the international ratings of public sector trust and performance. The need for a high level of trust is also a requirement of international organizations, which state that "Kazakhstan has achieved exceptional success in almost all spheres. Nevertheless, certain problems in public administration continue to hamper sustainable economic growth in the long term, including excessive centralization of government, politicized decision-making processes, limited powers of regional authorities, lack of transparency and corruption. A legacy of Soviet administrative practices is clearly visible in the public administration system of Kazakhstan, in particular the slow and highly formalized bureaucratic procedures" (OECD, 2017). The results of the study show that measuring the efficiency of public bodies is a useful innovation to address the issues for efficient strategy development as well as monitoring and improving the state apparatus.

Key words: public administration, reputation management, image, measuring reputation, Republic of Kazakhstan.

Introduction

Efficient management of public bodies is becoming increasingly important in improving the interaction of citizens with the state, enhancing the efficiency of strategic planning, the quality of civil service staff, the efficiency of the quasi-public sector, and optimizing the ability of the state apparatus to transition to a proactive format of public service delivery (Concept of Public Administration Development, 2021).

In this regard, assessing the efficiency of state bodies is becoming increasingly important in Kazakhstan. The main focus of this article concerns the measures taken to ensure public satisfaction and the assessment of the quality of services provided. They indicate that the public sector has become more aware of the value of a favourable reputation and has given strategic importance to reputation management (Waeraas and Maor, 2014).

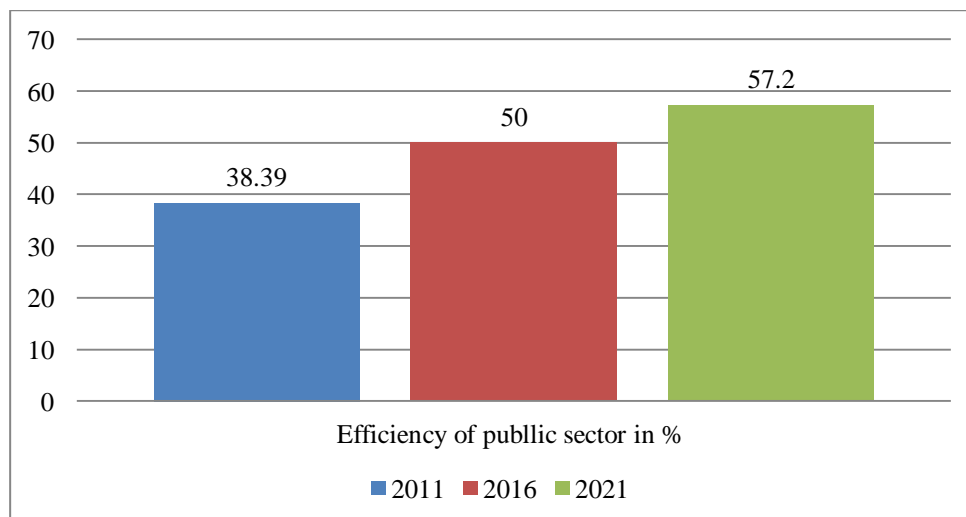
The study considers the public sector to be comprised of both traditional state administration and all related public corporations (OECD, 1997). Innovation in the public sector is the driving force behind new or significantly improved processes, practices, or

services that are undertaken to improve the organization's performance and outcomes (OECD, 2016). Herein, "An innovation is [taken to mean] a new or improved product or process (or combination thereof) that differs significantly from the unit's previous products or processes and that has been made available to potential users (product) or brought into use by the unit (process)." While this statement appears in Glor, 2021, it originates in the *Oslo Manual* (Glor, 2021; OECD/Eurostat, 2018).

This study considers public sector efficiency assessments in Kazakhstan as tools of reputation management. The innovative approach of assessment and management of organizational efficiency addresses the issue of reputation management. It includes: provided services, innovations, workplace governance, interaction with stakeholders, and the of civil servants' image and performance. Using these tools helps to intensify the processes of forming an Accountable state, implementing the Open Government and improving the performance of public authorities.

In Kazakhstan, since 2011, an Annual Efficiency Assessment of the central state and local executive bodies of the regions, cities of republican significance, and the capital (About the System, 2010) is carried out. In public administration in Kazakhstan, assessment of the efficiency of state bodies is an important operational tool in achieving goals, ensuring the interaction of the state body with individuals and legal entities, and the organizational development of the state body (About the System, 2010). The methodology is regularly updated due to the ongoing reform of the civil service in Kazakhstan. It takes into account the modern requirements necessary for the formation of an efficient state apparatus.

Figure 1: Efficiency of public service in The Republic of Kazakhstan



Source: World Bank, 2021.

There has been a noteworthy slowdown in efficiency gains over the last five year. This is supported by the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicator. It shows that the efficiency of state agencies increased by only 7.2% (from 50% to 57.2%) in Kazakhstan from 2016 to 2021. Whereas from 2011 to 2016 it increased from 38.39% to 50% (World Bank, 2021), (Figure 1).

The analysis shows that the state apparatus attaches importance to evaluating the efficiency of the state apparatus, but that its approach is not seen as a fundamental factor in

governance. In fact, there is a need in Kazakhstan to measure the efficiency of the public sector to create perceptions of its competence and value (Bokaev et. al., 2022). Thus, we consider some aspects of the existing assessment of the efficiency of the state apparatus in order to assess its reputation.

Research Question

The main research questions of this paper are:

- 1) What is the relationship between efficiency and reputation assessment in the public sector?
- 2) What factors influence public sector reputation?

Literature Review

Over the last decade, public efficiency management has been examined from several perspectives. For example, much of the literature concerns the effect of efficiency assessment on public sector reputation. Proposals for new tools to measure reputation of public sector are emerging. Reputation is becoming an increasingly popular topic, and there is an active debate among scholars about the content and definition of reputation in various branches of academic inquiry (Overman, Busuioc and Wood, 2019).

Despite the growing popularity of research into the image of civil servants, it is very difficult to determine which factors shape an organization's reputation. The biggest problem in studying organizational reputation has been the fragmented nature of the theoretical framework, the lack of conceptual clarity in operationally defining reputation, and the resulting view that reputation is immeasurable. Instead, the concept of reputation has often been replaced by management and marketing terms that confuse the concepts of “image” with “reputation.”

Figure 2: Comparison of the concepts of image and reputation

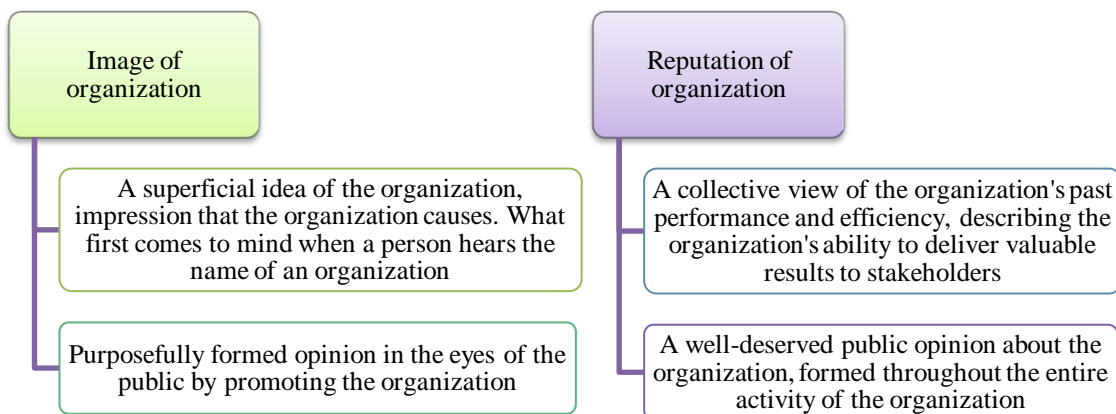


Image identifies "what comes to mind when one hears the name or sees the logo" of a particular organization. Image can therefore be purposefully formed by promoting the organization" (Gray and Balmer, 1998) (Figure 2). An image is an instrumental management tool that seeks to enhance reputation, but is not reputation itself. An image is a common but superficial and widely perceived impression that exists about a person or organization. It can be created, shaped, or changed through advertising and communication campaigns.

Reputation, however, is somewhat different. It is a more enduring though still intangible asset that is based upon aggregate public opinion. It is largely the result of consistent behaviour over time, (Figure 2). According to Fombrun, reputation is a "collective representation of an organization's past actions and results that indicate a firm's ability to produce valued outcomes to many stakeholders," (Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever 2000), (Figure 2). While working to build and maintain an image is an integral part of building and enhancing an organization's reputation, there is a qualitative difference between the two concepts.

The role and importance of reputation first began to be addressed in the corporate sector in the early 1990s, some years before the term appeared in the public management literature. It focused mainly on the financial performance of the corporate sector (Ryan, 2007). Based on a review of research, Roberts and Dowlings (2002) noted that corporate reputation management can lead to various benefits such as increased profitability or reduced company costs.

According to Bustos, the foundations of reputation theory in the public sector were only laid in 2001 with Daniel Carpenter's book *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (Bustos, 2021). In this seminal study, Carpenter found that the good reputation of some American services enabled them to remain independent despite the pressures of the political sphere. Since then, a theoretical framework has been formed through systematic theoretical and empirical research in public sector studies (Bustos, 2021).

According to a scholarly review of research on reputation, Walker (2010) found that Fombrun's 1996 definition of reputation given above was more frequently cited than other definitions (Walker, 2010). Fombrun's definition of reputation is (1) based on perceptions; (2) includes the aggregate perceptions of all stakeholders; and (3) uses comparison. Walker (2010) adds two normative dimensions: reputation (4) positive or negative, and (5) stable and enduring (Walker, 2010).

Organizational reputation management helps to build and maintain a favourable reputation; it works to protect organizations from harm, to achieve superior efficiency, and to increase trust in administrative institutions and actors (Christensen and Laergreid, 2020). It follows that organizational reputation management implies the management of those components that shape an organization's reputation (Elsbach, 2013). Advocates of social construction view reputation as a set of different types of employee perceptions of the organization (Rindova and Martins, 2012). In addition, organizational reputation is an intangible asset that has a great impact on several aspects of the organization (Keshta et. al., 2020). Thus, another definition—organizational reputation of the public sector—has been formulated: a lens through which public sector organizations are studied (Overman, Busuioc and Wood, 2019).

In a review of the academic literature, it is shown that it is beneficial to have a strong reputation as opposed to mere cross-sectional assessments of organizational efficiency. A strong reputation enables public bodies to attract and retain highly qualified staff, to provide high quality services, and hence to increase efficiency and trust in the organization (Keshta et. al., 2020).

The value of public sector reputation is plainly significant, yet there is a gap in research concerning the public sector, both in terms of stakeholder roles and perceptions of

organizational reputation (Brewer and Zhao, 2010). If an organization has a reputation for its high level of efficiency, the perception among audiences is that promises will be fulfilled and that solutions and deliverables will be of high quality (Padanyi and Gainer, 2003).

Innovations in the field of organizational reputation theory are of interest in Kazakhstan as measures of organizational history and mission management that are embedded in a network of multiple audiences; that is to say, reputation as "the overall valuation held by a company by its constituent parts" (Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever, 2000). When an organization's reputation is widely spread as a mental and abstract perception of the organization, it becomes an invaluable "intangible asset." Conversely, a widespread reputation for inefficiency, unreliability, and poor products and services can be disastrous. Many authors emphasize the need to monitor an organization's reputation (Elsbach, 2013).

Thus, innovations in the understanding of organizational reputation through the assessment of organizational efficiency, allow for its increasing importance in society as a valuable characteristic of the social interaction mechanisms of organizations with the public.

In public administration, such qualities as ethics, openness, fairness, and responsibility, which together form the concept of organizational reputation, help determine the efficiency of the organization. Thus, the organizational reputation of the state apparatus is a direct indicator of public sector efficiency. An integral component of organizational reputation is awareness of the organization by its stakeholders. Reputation can only be measured in relation to a group of stakeholders who have sufficient awareness and can provide reliable information (Brewer and Zhao, 2010).

Speaking about the reputation of an organization, the Kazakh scientific literature is full of research on the image of both private and public sector organizations. Researches relating directly to reputation are far less common, though there is evidence of welcome improvement. Kazakh researchers Baurzhan Bokayev and associates, for instance, have recently analyzed the role of social networks and the media in the formation of the reputations of political civil servants in Kazakhstan (Bokayev et. al., 2022).

Methodology

To analyze the state policy regarding the efficiency of the activities of state bodies and its adaptation to the assessment of the reputation of the public sector in Kazakhstan, this study uses the method of collecting and analyzing primary data research in accordance with the RepTrak methodology of reputation assessment.

The first reputation measurement tool developed by the American Reputation Institute was the Reputation Quotient (RQ), which consisted of a six-factor scale based on 20 attribute values (Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever, 2000). In 2005, the authors removed four factors from the six-factor scale and used them to form a separate instrument for measuring reputation—RepTrak Pulse. Ponzi et. al. (Ponzi, Fombrun and Gardberg, 2011) demonstrated the reliability and validity of the RepTrak Pulse scale as a measure of reputation and it has been widely used since 2005 (Sarstedt, Wilczynski and Melewar, 2013).

The full-fledged RepTrak system was created in 2005-2006 to provide managers with an analytical tool that could be used not only to assess an organization's reputation by

stakeholders, but also to understand better the underlying information factors of reputation. The system is based on measuring a company's overall reputation using RepTrak® Pulse and decomposing it into a basic set of factors and attributes (Fombrun, Ponzi and Newburry, 2015).

A comprehensive assessment of an organization's reputation has been chosen to measure public sector reputation, which includes seven factors, each consisting of several questions (Table 1).

Table 1: RepTrak Model for Measuring Organizational Reputation

Factors	Attributes
RepTrak	
Products and services	1. Offers high quality products and services
	2. Offers goods and services that have good value for money
	3. Stands for its products and services
	4. Meets customer needs
Innovations	5. This is an innovative company
	6. As a rule, the company is the first to enter the market of new goods and services
	7. Quickly adapts to change
Workplace	8. Rewards its employees fairly
	9. Demonstrates concern for the health and well-being of its employees
	10. Offers equal opportunities in the workplace
Governance	11. Open and transparent about how the company works
	12. Ethical behavior
	13. Fair in its activities
Citizenship	14. Acts responsibly to protect the environment.
	15. Supports good intentions
	16. Positively affects society
Leadership	17. Has a strong and attractive leader
	18. Has a clear vision of its future
	19. This is a well-organized company
	20. Has great managers Performance
Performance	21. This is a profitable company
	22. Gives better financial results than expected
	23. Shows high prospects for future growth

Source: Fombrun, Ponzi and Newburry, 2015.

All attributes of the basic structure of the RepTrak model have been adapted for the public sector, which has some different specific characteristics when compared to the commercial organizations for which the model was created. The attributes were formulated based on the analysis of factors affecting the organizational reputation of the state apparatus. In addition, all of these factors are also part of the assessment of Kazakhstan's public sector efficiency (About the System, 2010).

The assessment of the reputation of state agencies in Kazakhstan was conducted by expert survey of civil servants of the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service

Affairs (ACSA). The advantage of the chosen strategy is to conduct research with the opportunity to comprehensively analyze the data obtained from internal stakeholders.

In order to characterize the organizational reputation of the state apparatus, based on the methodology proposed above, an expert survey was carried out in October 2022 among employees of the central office of the ACSA. The survey was conducted by means of electronic program Google Forms to characterize the components of the organizational reputation of Kazakhstan's civil service through the eyes of internal experts. As part of this research, an anonymous electronic survey was created. Respondents were informed in advance on the condition of anonymity when using the survey results. Internal experts were selected from the staff of the ACSA, as the Agency is a specialized body in the field of formation of a positive image of the civil service. It was expected that their existing work experience would help them to form an objective opinion about the reputation of the state apparatus from within. In order to obtain objective and independent answers, respondents were given the opportunity to fully express and comment on their opinions. Seventy-five employees of the central apparatus of the ACSA with at least three years of experience in public service took part in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to analyze the perception of the reputation of the state apparatus and assessment of the factors of reputation formation by the employees of the ACSA.

Results

In the context of this analysis of public sector reputation, the data is organized according to seven criteria of RepTrak model, which are included in the Annual evaluation of the efficiency of the central state and local executive bodies of regions, cities of republican significance, the capital (About the System, 2010):

- Services provided by public sector organizations.
- Innovations in public sector.
- Public service as a workplace.
- Governance in public sector organizations.
- Interaction public service organizations with stakeholders.
- Generalized image of civil servants.
- Performance of public sector organizations.

Services provided

Providing excellent public services by meeting customer needs and expectations and providing innovative public services is important for the success of organizations (Al Eisawi, Sekhon and Tanna, 2012). The quality of services can have a significant impact on the organizational reputation of public bodies. This is a very significant area with which stakeholders probably interact more frequently. If an organization's products and services do not meet stakeholder expectations, organizational reputation will be low. It is to be expected that all stakeholders, and more so service users, would form a perception of the organization based on the quality of services provided and the orientation of the public administration towards meeting their needs.

Thus, assessing the compliance of the quality of services provided by the state bodies to the expectations and needs of the service recipients on a 10-point scale, most experts (28%) estimated this factor as eight points. In general, 81.3% of respondents indicated that the quality of services provided by public authorities meets expectations and needs of service recipients above the mark of five, which is, in our opinion, a good indicator. Only 18.7% of respondents have estimated the quality of services below five (Table 2). The given data allow the conclusion to be drawn that the quality of public services corresponds rather well to expectations and needs of the service recipients in Kazakhstan.

In assessing the quality of decisions made by the state authorities, 41.4% of the experts gave a score of seven and eight. Only 25.3% of the respondents gave a score of five or lower for the quality of decisions made by the public authorities. Twenty percent of the experts assessed the quality of decisions as nine and ten (Table 2).

Table 2: Services Provided by the Public Sector

Factors	Assessment of Public Sector Services and Decisions (1=lowest, 10=highest)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Assessment of compliance of quality of public services with expectations and needs of service recipients	0%	1.3%	1.1%	1.3%	14%	8%	17%	28%	8%	20%
Assessment of the quality of decisions made by public authorities	0%	0%	5.3%	4%	16%	13.3%	18.7%	22.7%	9.3%	10.7%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

Increasingly, public sector organizations are examining customer perceptions of services provided and many public sector organizations regularly carry out extensive research in this area. The increasingly important need to assess not only clients' perceptions of existing service provision, but also their expectations of service provision is evident (Wisniewski, 1996).

Innovations

Measuring innovation in the public sector is also a component for assessing the reputation of an organization. The dimension of 'innovation' is assessed as the perception of an organization as innovative and adaptive. Public sector organizations that adapt quickly to ongoing technological changes, launch new services, and develop new ideas are more likely to be respected and sought after (Fombrun, Ponzi and Newburry, 2015). This factor demonstrates whether government organizations have the technical capacity and skills to do their job; in other words, a public body with a high technical reputation is respected for its solutions and sets an example for other public administrations (Overman, Busuioc and Wood, 2019).

This section assesses existing public sector measures to improve the technical capacity of the public sector, the creation of e-government, the digitalization of public services, and the skills of the public sector to adapt to change and innovation.

Citizens are expecting increasingly better and faster service from the public sector. Changes of traditional procedures in public administration inevitably entail transformations. Thus, many countries are focused not only on adopting innovative strategies, but also on reanalyzing the philosophy of information technologies and digitalization programs (Bokayev et. al., 2021).

Assessing the technical capacity of public bodies on a ten-point scale, experts distributed their scores as follows: Most experts (37.4%) rated them as five and six, 24% rated them as above average and gave a score of seven and eight, 20% gave an excellent score, only 18.7% gave a score of 1 to 4 to the technical capacity of the public sector in Kazakhstan (Table 3). From the above, it can be concluded that public sector bodies should pay due attention to and develop their technical capacity.

The adaptation of public bodies to innovation and change in public service delivery is also an important component of reputation building. In this regard, respondents were asked to rate how quickly public bodies adapt to change and innovation. The vast majority of respondents (24%) gave this factor an 8, while a slightly lower number of respondents (18.7%) gave it a five. 17.3% of respondents indicated a high level (scores of nine and ten) of adaptation to innovation and change by Kazakh government agencies. Only 11.9% of respondents gave a score below five (Table 3).

Table 3: Innovations in public sector

Factors	Assessment of Innovations in Public Sector (1=low, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Technical capacity of public bodies	2.7%	2.7%	5.3%	8%	22.7%	14.7%	12%	12%	6.7%	13.3%
Adaptation to innovation and change in public service delivery	0%	1.3%	5.3%	5.3%	19%	16%	12%	24%	5.3%	12%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

Today in Kazakhstan there is a clear trend of digital inequality, a lack of technical means for rural districts and remote areas, which can have a negative impact on the perception of this component of the reputation.

Researchers approved, that the state digitalization programs were aimed primarily at automating the government’s business processes and creating state information systems and databases, processes that did not directly impact the day-to-day needs of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As a result, while the government’s business processes were automated, the number of documents required for many functions was reduced, and the timeframe for the provision of public services to the population was shortened, the concept of digitalization optimization itself was not fully implemented (Jussupova, Bokayev and Dauletbay, 2019).

Workplace

A significant factor in shaping the organizational reputation of the public sector is the attractiveness of the public sector as a place to work. Public service salaries, social benefits, career opportunities, and conditions for developing competences are all relevant to perceptions of the public sector's reputation as a place to work.

Staff who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to take on responsibility for longer-term and more demanding projects and to make every effort not to let their employer down. A measure of how fairly an organization treats its employees will certainly engender trust and respect among a larger number of stakeholders and will, as a result, contribute to building a positive reputation for the organization. The workplace factor assesses the extent to which an organization takes care of employees and treats them fairly (Fombrun, Ponzi and Newburry, 2015).

In response to the question about the extent to which public bodies are focused on the well-being and health of their employees on a ten-point scale, most civil servants (28.7%) ticked options five and six, 28% of experts gave a mark below average and 24% of respondents rated this factor above average. A rating of excellent (nine and ten) was given by 10.6% and 8% of respondents indicated a low level of employee satisfaction with their employers' well-being and health orientation (Table 4).

Providing equal opportunities to all employees of a public organization plays an important role in building a positive reputation for the state apparatus. In response to the question of whether Kazakhstan's public authorities provide equal opportunities to all employees in the workplace, the over one-third of civil servants surveyed (34.6%) indicated an average rating of five and six. The same number of respondents gave an above average rating (seven and eight) to the application of this factor in practice. An excellent rating was given by 20% of respondents while 10.6% rated this factor as low (Table 4).

Table 4: Public sector as a workplace

Factors	Assessment of Public Sector as a Workplace (1=low, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on the well-being and health of employees	5.3%	2.7%	12%	16%	10.7%	18,7%	12%	12%	5.3%	5.3%
Equal opportunities for all employees	1.3%	1.3%	4%	4%	17.3%	17,3%	21.3%	13.3%	9.3%	10.7%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

Assessing, managing, and improving performance in this factor will help to attract the most motivated and well-trained personnel into the civil service. Also, paying due attention to this sector of the organizational reputation of the public service will help to avoid an exodus of qualified personnel from the public service. The consequence of this work would be increased efficiency in the public sector.

Governance

Governance is built on an organization's ethical behaviour, openness, transparency, and fairness. The more an employer is perceived to be ethical and transparent, the more likely it is to be admired and trusted by its stakeholders—and hence to build a good reputation.

When assessing the openness and transparency of government agencies, over one-third of respondents (37.3%) indicated an above average (seven and eight) while 22.7% indicated an average level, 16% indicated lower than average. Only 5.4% indicated a low level of openness (grades one and two) and 18.6% of civil servants consider state authorities to be very open (Table 5).

Respondents were also asked to rate the ethics of employees in state agencies. The vast majority of experts (41.4%) gave this factor a score of nine and ten (excellent), with 32% of respondents giving an above average rating. An average score was given by 18.6% and a below average score by 8% (Table 5).

Table 5: Governance in public sector organizations

Factors	Assessment of Governance in Public Sector Organizations (1=low, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Openness and transparency of public authorities	2.7%	2.7%	9.3%	6.7%	14.7%	8%	24%	13.3%	9.3%	9.3%
Ethical behavior of public officials	0%	0%	4%	4%	13.3%	5.3%	13.3%	18.7%	26.7%	14.7%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

The main provisions on Governance are outlined in the Code of Ethics for Civil Servants of the Republic of Kazakhstan: "Public service is an expression of special trust on the part of society and the state and places high demands on the morality and moral and ethical character of civil servants" (On Measures for Further Improvement of Ethical Norms and Rules of Conduct of Civil Servants of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Decree 2015). Through this Code, it is possible to communicate its principles and obligations to stakeholders, to create confidence that the internal operations of the organization are trustworthy, and thereby to enhance its reputation.

Despite the notable transformation of public bodies in the Republic of Kazakhstan in recent years in this area, they still have a long way to go. Public bodies need to be strong in this area in order to command the respect of internal and external stakeholders.

Interaction with stakeholders

In 2010, Ministers at the OECD Ministerial Meeting on Innovative and Transparent Government recognized the importance of public sector interaction with society to create a more efficient and innovative public sector that delivers better public services (OECD, 2011).

This factor is related to whether the public sector organization is responsive to the needs of the public and whether it acts in ways that protect their interests (Carpenter and Krause, 2012). Participation, stakeholder-orientation, and building dialogue with the public, are also integral to this factor.

When respondents were asked to assess the extent to which public authorities protect the interests of society. 37.3% assessed this factor as above average (seven and eight), 25.3% noted an average level of orientation of state authorities towards protecting public interests, and 22.7% assessed the protection of public interests by state authorities as excellent (nine and ten). A low and below average level of orientation of state authorities towards the protection of the public interest was expressed by 14.6% of respondents (Table 6).

In assessing the extent to which the state apparatus is oriented towards meeting the needs of the beneficiaries, respondents distributed their scores as follows: the largest number

(24%) estimated the focus of the state apparatus to satisfaction of the service receivers as eight, with a significant number of experts (18.7%) giving a score of five (Table 6) which, in our opinion, is not a high enough assessment and indicates some problems in orientation of the state apparatus to satisfaction of the service receivers.

Table 6: Interaction of public service organizations with stakeholders

Factors	Assessment of Interaction of Public Service Organizations with Stakeholders (1=poor, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Protection of public interests by state authorities	1.3%	1.3%	5.3%	6.7%	16%	9.3%	21.3%	16%	10.7%	12%
Focus of public sector on stakeholder needs	0%	1.3%	5.3%	6.7%	18.7%	4%	13.3%	24%	10.7%	16%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

The last decade has seen public sector organizations come to realize that they must not only look after the interests of their stakeholders, but also use the opportunity to know their needs, both in terms of client expectations and their perceptions of the services provided.

Generalized image of public servants

It is the civil servants who are the main social link in the state machinery and who directly implement in practice the will of the country's top leadership and the regulatory requirements of government, which must be based on the interests and needs of the general public. This factor is designed to evaluate the generalized image of executives and employees in the public sector.

Summarizing the image of the managers of state bodies in Kazakhstan, an equal number of respondents (18.7% each) gave it a score of five and eight, while 14.7% of respondents rated the image of heads of state agencies as excellent and 13.3% of respondents rated their image as a three and a seven. At the same time, the image of the leaders was rated above five by 64% of respondents (Table 7). This indicates a more positive perception of the image of heads of state authorities in Kazakhstan.

As part of the study, respondents were asked to rate the generalized image of civil servants. The largest proportion of respondents (34.7%) rated the image of civil servants as above average (by seven and eight), while 28% of respondents gave an average rating (five and six) to the image of civil servants, and 25.4% assessed the generalized image of civil servants as excellent (nine and ten). Only 12.3% of respondents gave a low (one and two) or below average (three and four) rating to the image of civil servants (Table 7). These data indicate a high generalized image of civil servants in Kazakhstan.

Table 7: Generalized image of public sector employees and its managers

Factor	Assessment of Generalized Image of Public Sector Employees and its Managers (1=poor, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Generalized image of managers	1.3%	1.3%	13.3%	1.3%	18.7%	8%	13.3%	18.7%	9.3%	14.7%
Generalized image of civil servants	0%	1.3%	8%	3%	15%	13%	22.7%	12%	14.7%	10.7%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

Modern society places special demands on the image of public service employees. In this regard, their image should consist of a set of characteristics that emphasize the efficiency and professionalism of their work, increasing the credibility of the organization and, thereby, enhancing the organizational reputation. At the same time, as a study by Kazakh scholars Bokayev et. al. shows, the media and social media, and hence the image of civil servants in them have become a driving force to influence the political career of civil servants (Bokayev et. al., 2022).

While there is a tendency in Kazakhstan to promote the image of both the heads of public structures and the public organizations themselves, it must be remembered that the image has to be oriented towards the objectives of the public sector bodies as a whole.

Performance

Public sector performance is probably one of the most important aspects of public sector reputation assessment. Reputation management helps build and maintain a favourable reputation; it works to protect organizations from harm and helps them achieve superior performance.

When evaluating the public sector's focus on performance and efficiency in its activities, 24% of the experts gave it a score of five out of ten. An above average level of seven was noted by 17.3% of respondents, and eight by 18.7%. The state apparatus' performance and efficiency orientation as excellent (nine and ten) was indicated by 6.7% and 17.3% respectively. Below average and low scores were given by 12% of respondents (Table 8).

When respondents assessed the prospects for the future growth and development of Kazakhstan's state apparatus, the largest number (42.7%) rated this factor as excellent, at nine (18.7%) and ten (24%). A large number of respondents (30.6%) also rated the prospects for the development of the state apparatus above average (seven and eight). At the average level, 14.7% of experts assessed prospects for development and 11.9% of experts assessed future development prospects as low or below average (Table 8). These data indicate high prospects for future growth and development of the state bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the experts' opinion.

Table 8: Performance of public sector

Factors	Assessment of Public Sector Performance (1=poor, 10=excellent)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Focus on performance and efficiency	0%	2.7%	5.3%	4%	24%	4%	17.3%	18.7%	6.7%	17.3%
Prospects for the future growth and development	1.3%	1.3%	4%	5.3%	10.7%	3.4%	17.3%	13.3%	18.7%	24%

Source: Data from the sociological survey. Table created by the authors

Public administration that is not result-oriented can lead to risks or missed opportunities for the public sector. The reputation of the public service is a criterion for society's assessment of the efficiency and efficiency of governance, which has important functional and status implications.

It should be noted that the World Bank approved a loan to the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2021 to ensure sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The loan program also supports Kazakhstan's initiatives to improve the efficiency of public institutions and public confidence in them (World Bank, 2021).

Discussion

The ongoing analysis of the factors and attributes of the reputation of state agencies shows its peculiar shaping in overcoming the totalitarian legacy of the communist past in a transformative environment. The strategic measures taken by the state apparatus to de-bureaucratize, digitalize, and reorient its activities on a human-centered and client-oriented basis shows that initiatives toward reputation management and away from image building is taking shape.

At the same time, the analysis has exposed the problem of insufficient consideration of the needs of different audiences and the inadequacy of behavioural strategies in the communication interaction between the state apparatus and the population despite the innovations introduced.

Thus, reputation building directly depends on the ability of the state apparatus to adapt to the new realities of Kazakhstan's new economic policy. As the analysis shows, Kazakhstan is currently paying serious attention to improving the performance of state bodies. In the meantime, the successful establishment of a good reputation is due to the fact that the organization establishes sustainable links with the social and political environment. The findings agree with the conclusions that the reputation of public bodies is not just a measure of statistical performance, but a distribution of cognitive representations that participants collectively hold about a goal; reputation refers to perceptions held by various stakeholders which are evaluations that are both evaluative and meaningful (Wry, Deephouse and McNamara, 2006).

An organization's reputation can be seen as an intangible asset for public authorities that can be created through efficient interaction between them and their stakeholders, and characterized by the organization's desire to meet the expectations of its stakeholders. Kazakhstan's public authorities are beginning to pay attention to the importance of organizational reputation, realizing that it has the benefits necessary to operate efficiently. Considering a good reputation of an organization among its stakeholders as a form of capital, 'reputation capital' influences lower transaction costs, greater legitimacy of the organization, greater loyalty among employees and easier recruitment (Deephouse and Carter, 2005).

As the results of the study show, managing the efficiency of public authorities with innovative tools, affects consistent and dynamic processes of ongoing reforms in Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

Managing and assessing the reputation of the public administration is a critical prerequisite for efficiency. A positive reputation is evidence that an organization has unique qualities and capabilities that enable it to operate successfully in the relevant service delivery market.

As can be seen from the results, traditional performance appraisal systems used by public bodies is linear, assessed through single-slice assessments. This approach does not allow management to be viewed as a time-consuming activity in which the services provided are of high quality and the performance of civil servants is responsible.

The survey results also show that experts perceive reputation management in the public sector to be increasingly important in its various sectors: attracting the best qualified candidates for the civil service, creating quality services for the public and increasing loyalty and trust in the public service etc.

The analysis of the data leads to the following conclusions:

- The reputation of public authorities is an important tool for measuring the trust index among target audiences, analysing and identifying the influencing factors on performance;
- A comprehensive assessment of the reputation factors of public authorities makes it possible to measure the level of awareness of public administration among different stakeholder groups and to take into account the quality requirements of the public services provided to the target groups;
- The measurement of the organizational reputation of the state apparatus serves as an important institution for building, maintaining, and protecting the organizational reputation of the state apparatus;
- The reputation of public bodies is an important channel for establishing interaction between the state apparatus and stakeholders and for embedding intellectual, political or cultural principles in society.

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