

# IMPLEMENTATION TYPES OF STRATEGIES AND THE PERFORMANCE OF PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW\*

Strateji Uygulama Tarzlari ve Kamu Kurumlarında Performans: Sistematik Bir İnceleme

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## ABSTRACT

Strategic management is considered as one of the primary instruments for enhancing performance within both academic literature and the business and public sectors in service. The overwhelming majority of research draw attention on the strategic planning and formulation stages, while the related literature about strategy implementation phase is rather scarce. What's more, the studies on strategy implementation are highly divided and dispersed in generic management literature, on the other hand, the literature on strategy implementation is particularly limited in the public sector. Concentrating on strategy implementation, largely seen as the 'missing link' in the cycle of strategic management, could enable to broaden our understanding of the relationship between organizational performance and the entire strategy process. Therefore, to comprehend the nature of public service strategy implementation, a framework is suggested and conceptualized comprising strategy content and the organizational strategy process -formulation, and implementation-. The paper systematically reviews the empirical research for the relationships between two types of strategy implementation, namely rational and incremental implementation, and organizational performance. Theoretical implications will be addressed throughout the paper.

**Keywords:** Strategy Implementation, Rational Implementation Style, Incremental Implementation Style, Public Sector Performance, Systematic Review

## ÖZ

Stratejik yönetim hem akademik çevrelerde hem de faal özel sektör ve kamu sektörlerinde örgütsel etkinliğin artırılması için önemli bir araç olarak görülmektedir. Çalışmaların büyük çoğunluğu stratejik planlama ve formülasyon aşamalarına odaklanmakta, bununla birlikte, strateji uygulama aşaması hakkında literatürde daha az araştırma bulunmaktadır. Ayrıca, strateji uygulaması ile ilgili çalışmalar genel yönetim literatürü içinde büyük ölçüde dağınıkken, kamu sektöründeki strateji uygulama literatürü genele oranla daha da sınırlıdır. Stratejik yönetim araştırmalarında yaygın olarak 'kayıp halka' olarak kabul edilen strateji uygulamasına odaklanmak, genel strateji süreci ile kurumsal performans arasındaki bağlantı hakkındaki ilişkiyi anlamamıza yardımcı olabilir. Bu nedenle, kamuda stratejik yönetimin doğasını ve önemini kavramak için stratejinin içeriği ile örgütsel strateji sürecini -içerik, formülasyon ve uygulama- içeren bir çerçeve önerilmiş ve kavramsallaştırılmıştır. Makale, rasyonel ve artımlı uygulama olmak üzere iki farklı uygulama stiline, örgütsel performans ile olan ilişkisini *ampirik çalışmaları sistematik olarak gözden geçirerek inceleyecektir. Teorik çıkarımlara makale boyunca yer verilecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Strateji Uygulama, Performans, Rasyonel Uygulama Modeli, Kademeli Uygulama Modeli, Kamu Sektöründe Performans, Sistematik İnceleme

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## GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET (EXTENDED ABSTRACT)

**Çalışmanın Amacı:** Bu çalışma, rasyonel (*rational*) ve artımlı (*incremental*) uygulama tarzlarının örgütsel performansla olan ilişkisini sistematik olarak inceleyerek, mevcut literatürel durumu ortaya koymaktadır. Rasyonel strateji uygulama (*rational implementation*) tarzı açısından kurumsal stratejiler önceden belirlenmiş bir dizi hedefin başarılması sürecini ifade eder. Geleneksel rasyonel yönetim teorisi anlayışına göre, bir yol haritası dahilinde uygulanan kararlar, öncelikle ulaşılması gereken hedeflere giden yolda sorunun teşhisi, daha sonra ise ona yönelik oluşturulacak reçeteleri hazırlamayı ifade eder. Birçok araştırmacı rasyonel stratejik planlama ve uygulama süreçleri net bir biçimde tanımlanmış amaçların, hedeflenmesi ve denetlenmesiyle başarılı örgütsel performans sonuçlarına ulaşabileceğini ileri sürmüşlerdir. Öte yandan artımlı uygulama (*incremental implementation*) stili, rasyonel modelin aksine, stratejilerin planlanması ve uygulanması arasında keskin çizgiler koymamış, bunun sebebi olarak da politika yapıcılarının hazırladıkları planların uygulama sürecine katılmamalarının başarısız strateji uygulamalarına yol açacağını göstermiştir. Artımlı model başından sonuna strateji oluşturma sürecini bir bütün olarak gördüğü için, kurumsal bir öğrenme süreci yaratarak daha yavaş fakat daha sağlam kararlar üzerine inşa edilmiş bir strateji uygulama tarzı önermektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, özellikle milenyumla birlikte dünya genelinde artan etkileşimle, uzun soluklu planlanmış stratejilerin plan süreci dahilinde anlamını yitirebileceği, dolayısıyla kısa vadeli ve olası koşulları göz önüne alarak oluşturan stratejilerin daha iyi kurumsal performansa olanak sağlayacağı bu model tarafından iddia edilmektedir.

**Araştırma Soruları:** Rasyonel ve artımlı strateji uygulama çeşitlerinin daha iyi bir kamu kurum performansı elde etmeyle olan ilişkisi bu çalışmanın temel sorgulama alanını oluşturmaktadır.

**Literatür Taraması:** Kamu sektörüne uyarlanmış en popüler yöntemlerden biri olan stratejik yönetim, kamu yöneticilerinin değer üretmesi ve kuruluşlara yön vermesi itibarıyla günümüzde artık standart bir araç haline gelmiştir. Bununla birlikte, kamu sektörü stratejik yönetim anlayışının ne teori ne de pratikte tam olarak incelenemediği yaygın bir şekilde kabul görmekte (Ferlie ve Ongaro, 2015, s. 202), bunun sebebi olarak ise bu tür yönetim tekniklerinin farklı sektörlerin kendine özgü koşullarında anlaşılması ve uygulanması gerektiği fikri gösterilmektedir (Pollitt ve Bouckaert, 2011, s. 119). Bu doğrultuda kamu yönetiminde stratejik yönetime özgü bir kavramsal çerçeve oluşturabilmek için, Andrews ve diğerlerinin (2011) modeli baz alınmış; stratejinin içeriği (*content*), süreci (*process*) ve sonuçlarından

(*outcome*) oluşan bir çerçeve takip edilmiştir. Bu çalışmanın konusu olan strateji uygulama aşaması müstakil bir inceleme alanı değil, strateji yapım sürecinin bir parçası olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, bu çalışma stratejik içerik ve süreç -yani formülasyon ve uygulama- ve de sonuç -örgütsel performans- kısımlarını strateji oluşturmanın iç içe geçmiş yönleri olarak incelemektedir. Bu nedenle, strateji uygulaması ile örgütsel performans arasındaki ilişki, uygulama aşamasıyla örtüşmesi gereken stratejik bağlam ve onun tasarımı olmadan düşünülmemelidir. Strateji uygulaması, tüm strateji yapım sürecinin en zor aşaması olarak görülmektedir. Uygulama aşamasında stratejik yönetimin başarısız olacağına dair yaygın bir kanı hakimdir. Kimi araştırmacılarca formüle edilen stratejilerin %50'den azının fiilen uygulandığı da iddia edilmiştir (örneğin; Hambrick ve Cannella, 1989, s. 278; Mintzberg, 1994, s. 2; Nutt, 1999, s. 79; Miller, 2002, s. 360). Bu aşamayı sorunlu kılan en önemli nedenlerden biri, stratejilerin formüle edilmesi ve uygulanmasının genellikle tamamen farklı süreçler olarak görülmesidir. Literatürde “*uygulama boşluğu*” olarak adlandırılan bu sorun, mevcut durumu doğru analiz edip amaç ve hedef geliştirebilen, doğru stratejik planlar yapabilen, fakat bunların uygulanması konusunda başarısız kalan kamu kurumları için özellikle kullanılmaktadır (Noble, 1999: 59).

**Yöntem:** Araştırmada Web of Science (WOS) arama motoru kullanılarak sistematik bir literatür taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Makalelerin başlıkları, özetleri veya anahtar kelimelerine bakılarak performans, etkinlik, verimlilik, eşitlik, iyileştirme, sonuç, çıktı, kalite, memnuniyet, yenilik, strateji uygulama, strateji yürütme, uygulama stilleri, planlı uygulama, rasyonel uygulama stili ve artımlı uygulama stili gibi konuyla ilgili kavramlar üzerinden bir tarama yapılmıştır. Bu alandaki çalışmalar ağırlıklı olarak özel sektör kuruluşları üzerinde yoğunlaşmakla beraber, araştırma, kamu sektöründe rasyonel uygulama stili ile performans arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen beş, artımlı uygulama tarzı ve performansı inceleyen ise dört çalışmaya ulaşılmıştır.

**Sonuç:** Ulaşılan bulgular ışığında, rasyonel stratejik uygulamanın örgütsel performansla pozitif bir ilişkiye sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Öte yandan artımlı stilin örgütsel performansla ilişkili olduğu fakat bu ilişkinin rasyonel uygulamaların çok daha altında kaldığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Stratejinin kritik bir unsuru olarak görülen uygulama aşamasının performans üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğu görülmektedir. Ancak mevcut çalışmalar strateji yürütme ve örgütsel performans ilişkisinin örgütün farklı parametrelerine göre değişkenlik gösterebileceği yönünde kanıtlarda sunmaktadır. Örneğin, rasyonel bir uygulama tarzı edinmiş bir organi-

zasyonun kendi koşullarında iyi bir performans sürdürmesi beklenirken, örgütün kültürünün, bulunduğu ülkenin veya merkezi kamu yönetimi kurumlarının etkisinin ne denli bir süreç yaratacağı konusu literatürde bir araştırma konusu olarak yerini korumaktadır. Gelecek çalışmaların uygulama tarzı ve iyi performans ilişkilendirilmesinde hangi parametrelerin etkili olabileceği ampirik olarak incelemesi, yeni gelişmekte olan bu alandaki çalışmalara eklektik bir katkı sağlayacaktır.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector management has been experienced fundamental changes over the first two decades of the millennium. The substantial reason behind this transformation has been that governing the public sector and its organizations had become much more tough as cumbersome bureaucracies were forced to undertake on novel representations, roles as well as responsibilities which the upcoming 21th century was bringing in (Andrews et al., 2011, p. 645). To cope with rising complexities in the public services, strategic management has been chosen as a topical concept in the last decades, since academics and sector workers have started to implement private sector management models and techniques in the settings of the public administration. Joyce (1999) claims that these new methods have been embraced in the government sector, not only primarily to enhance standards and capacities, but also to provide good quality services and products to citizens.

Conventional public administration inclined to be characterized with myopia, substantially through the instrumentality of the hierarchical order of centralized power, that was operated by means of order and rules. Directing organizations in the public sector was regarded as simply carrying tasks and duties out without paying no attention to measurable standards and realistic targets (Pollitt et al., 2007, p. 33). Managing public sector, nonetheless, obliges to organizational capacity improvement for governing strategically, especially in an age of result-oriented perspectives. Hence, strategic management in the public sector is a required tool to consolidate the long-term insight along with better performance outcomes and would work greatly if it is supported by a well-designed organization structure and administrative capacity (Johnson and Scholes, 2001). In this respect, Hughes (1998) addresses a supportive claim by stating that the methods and techniques propounded into the public sector necessitate that governmental organizations have to be ready to envisage their own agendas and priorities rather than firmly performing operations requested from politicians or coming from above.

The concept has begun to change the public sector viewpoint throughout the 1980s (Berry, 1994, p. 328). When it comes to the 90s and 2000s, strategic management methods and techniques were prevalent in the public service organizations of various countries, particularly the US and in Europe. Very first attempts were seen to focus on the implementation of the federal level of US government. Thus, the intellectual background of the nature and scope of strategic management in the public administration was North American. Subsequently, many governments in Europe encouraged their local authorities and ministries to form the agendas

and decisions in accordance with strategic planning process. Furthermore, with the beginning of the mid-1990s, strategic management was spread to numerous countries all over the world and from then on “there has been a growing appreciation of the benefits of strategic capabilities at all levels of government” (Joyce and Drumaux, 2014, p.11).

Today, four decades after the first practices were implemented, strategic management has been considered as a standard instrument for public managers working in any part of the sector. However, it is commonly indicated by the researchers in the area that a solid strategic management model has designed neither theoretically nor in praxis in the public sector yet (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, p. 202). Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) also claim that there are significant divergences on the influence of strategic management models across different sectors and countries. Considering that implementation of the public sector strategies realizes in a political environment not a market one; that its primary resource is not principally based on financial power but also public will (Johnson and Scholes, 2001, p. 154), it could not be wrong to claim that the specific features of strategic management in the public sector have to be taken into consideration. Having said that the relevant literature on the strategy making process is examined and two fundamental types of strategy appear as incremental and rational. To elaborate what type of strategy implementation can be related to better organizational performance, a comprehensive systematic review is undertaken to reveal the relationship between strategy implementation types and performance, for first time in the literature with a specific reference to public management research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Conceptualizing Public Sector Organizational Strategy

The notion ‘strategy’ in the business management refers to a series of tactics planned and to carry out predominantly by higher level of managers to achieve the organizational targets in a competitive setting (Johnson and Scholes, 2001, p. 14). In the public management, nevertheless, the concept would be expounded more broadly as ways of fostering goods and services through public sector organizations (Boyne and Walker, 2004, p. 244). As an exhaustive concept, public sector strategy ought to be examined as a set of process, covering concomitant facets to theorize strategic management referring to the typical characteristics of the public sector organizations.

A tendency to assume the phases of strategy making individually without drawing attention to the likely relationship between them is commonplace in the public administration research (George et al., 2017, p. 2). However, it is quite vital to separate the process of strategic management into its fundamental segments to elucidate the area of research and enhance both academic literature and real-life practices (Andrews et al., 2011, p. 655). In the same direction, a great number of strategic management studies propose some conceptual typologies, including “content, process, context and outcome” elements (Bryson and Bromiley, 1993, p. 14321, Okumus, 2001, p. 331; Pettigrew, 1987, p. 666); the one offered by Skivington and Daft (1991) as “framework and process”; by Miller and Dess (1993) as “contextual, system and action”; by Dawson (1994) as “content, context and operation”; and by Andrews et al. (2011) as “content, processes and performance”. In the same line with Andrews et al.’s (2011) framework which describes the strategic management in the public sector, the current research conceptualizes a typology consisting of content, processes and outcomes. Therefore, content and process—two engaged components of strategy making process—are explored before scrutinizing strategy implementation styles—rational and incremental—along with the performance of public sector organizations in depth.

*Strategy content*, as the initial element, can be defined as “the patterns of service provision that are selected and implemented by organizations” (Walker and Andrews, 2015, p. 231). The outcome of this phase is strategy content on its own, that is a pattern of action in which an organization structures to achieve expected objectives (Boyne and Walker, 2004, p. 232). That is why, first possible direction of constructing a clear strategy content would be offering a fit between strategic action and stance. For example, creating a congruence between the risk-oriented strategic stance and the actions of the top level of managers enables to acquire innovation, which is the desired strategy content for this type of organization. Hence, content of strategy with its relevant factors is crucial as an initial element however, it is certainly not enough in itself to align the strategies with the good performance outcomes (Andrews et al., 2011, p. 643). Connecting the content with the rest of the strategy process is a prerequisite to comprehend the organizational strategies of the public sector.

The *process of strategy making* is principally characterized as a chain of clearly identified stages including agenda-setting, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the classic view. However, modern strategic management approach claims that policy making process is not occurred straightforwardly as it was initially contemplated, but can realize within a linear order, requiring the or-



ganizational operations from a strategic viewpoint on an on-going basis (Barzeley and Campbell, 2003, p. 45). Some of the prominent public management scholars interpret the strategy making process differently as such; Walker et al. (2010) consider the process as a clearly defined phases in a linear policy cycle; Poister et al. (2010) consider it to be continuous actions. Bryson et al. (2010) see the strategy process as both a whole of continuous actions and a determined process including planning, implementation, monitoring and appraisal phases. Considering that the various methods in the strategy-making process would be taken into account sequentially, complementary or as mutual, placing emphasis to one type over others may create confusion, and 'a one size fits for all' advice might not be the panacea. Hence, the options to adopt from different types mutually or separately ought to be decided to take into particular circumstances consideration that might have influence on the different perspectives of formulation and implementation phases.

*Strategy formulation* is a phase where strategic line of vision and objectives are designed. The process of formulation in the public sector is dominated heavily by the strategic planning activities. After a quick examination of the public sector research on strategy formulation, rational planning and incremental way of formulation can be figured out as the most commonly applied models (Mintzberg et al., 1998, p. 178). The incremental perspective in the governmental sector was propounded by Lindblom and his groundbreaking article (1959) on "the science of muddling through", offering that strategy should be designated and planned in a setting in which executives are ready to learn, innovate and this process eventually finalizes with the adoption of desired behaviors and outcomes in the course of time. On the other hand, rational perspective offers a definitive process of collecting information needed to get to know the overall picture and making use of it to form a long-term forecast that could be also transformed into particular goals and actions when required. The further empirical analyses show that a well-formulated strategy process means that no matter whether the formulation is based on rational planning or incrementalism, it has to be aligned with the rest of the strategy processes, to generate a successful process and strategy implementation is certainly the most critical one (Poister and Streib, 2005, p. 45).

As a crucial phase of strategy-making process in which numerous plans fail, *strategy implementation* is regarded as the most challenging one in the public policy making, comparing to other ones such as formulation – planning, agenda setting, decision-making or appraisal (Nutt, 1999, p. 65). The literature on implementation proposes different ways to perform strategies, nevertheless, the analyses and findings are quite dispersed and inconclusive. As mentioned in the previous classi-



fications including content and formulation, rational or incremental styles are appeared again here as the mostly used distinction to explore strategy implementation (Andrews et al., 2011, p. 667). Strategy implementation is not existing by itself but stands for a separate part of the strategy making process. Therefore, examining the relationship of strategy implementation with organizational performance should not be considered without content, process, formulation of strategies, which need to be consistent with implementation stage.

## 2.2. Strategy Implementation in the Public Sector Organizations

Implementation, as a widely discussed field within the public policy implementation, identifies a critical stage of the policy process that concentrates on the associations between “an expression of proposed intent and its realization” (O’Toole, 2000, p. 263). Traditional comprehension describes it as “the process by which strategies and policies are performed via the development of budgets, programs and procedures” (Wheelan and Hunger, 2002, p.16). Sabatier (2007) argues that implementation is rather difficult because it includes a series of determinants which associate to actors with different levels and settings, particularly central, local governments and citizens. Joyce (1999) draws attention to the requirements of implementation process which demands persistence and detailed examination of every single factor to be prepared for all possible scenarios. Jenkins et al. (2003) believe that an organizational strategy implementation should be treated as “fighting a long and bloody battle”.

In an age of the rising ambiguities and turbulent financial and political circumstances that characterize the today’s world conditions, these conventional thought of implementing strategies has been still relevant and even more important to tackle with these complexities (Ferlie and Ongaro, 2015, p. 202). Strategy implementation is commonly recognized as the toughest part of the entire strategy-making process and implementation failure is a buzzword in the strategic management literature. Supportively, it is revealed that more than 50% of strategies formulated unable to be practiced (Hambrick and Cannella, 1989, p. 278; Mintzberg, 1994, p. 2; Nutt, 1999, p. 79). The fundamental reason behind the failure is seen as the “implementation gap”, which means designing strategies as well as performing them are often classified as different processes (Noble, 1999, p. 59). Vast majority of the managerial teams are good enough to produce a list of strategic objectives and plans that investigate the existing picture of the organization to match these practices with positive strategic outcomes, however, actors who formulate strategic actions

predominantly are not effective during strategy implementation, the implementation gap causes a failure and hinders the attainment of thriving implementations.

Studies on emergent strategies conducted by Mintzberg (1994), Miller (1997) and Pettigrew (1988) emphasize that implementing organizational strategies is much more critical to the achievement or performance outcomes than the meaning and scope of those strategies and their initial formulation. Similarly, Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984) highlight it as a compelling set of actions, actualizes in a longer period of time than the rest of the process, has to allow to the participation of more actor with different layers of task and requires for simultaneous and consecutive thinking of the top executives who are in charge of implementation.

There is a solid literature on the strategy implementation failure and the prescriptions of the successful strategy implementation. However, there is no exclusive examination what type of implementation would lead to good performance results. Indeed, the research on the relationship between types of strategy implementation and performance in the private sector are available and analyzed (Noble and Mokwa, 1999, p. 59; White et al., 2003, p. 113), however a systematic empirical examination on this relationship in the public sector context has not been conducted yet (Van de Ven, 1980, p. 208; Andrews et al., 2011, p. 647). The upcoming part draws particular attention to the style of implementation and public service performance before specifically focusing on the related empirical analyses.

### 2.3. Strategy Implementation Styles and Public Service Performance

It is largely acknowledged that an implementation style needs to be consistent with the administrative routine of the organizations, that has been a primary motive to figure out the dynamics of strategy implementation (Hill and Jones, 2008, p. 11). It renders the taken-for-granted path of carrying strategies into action and could be defined as “the way we do things around here”. Researchers argue that style of strategy implementation inclines to become institutionalized and settled within a period of time. Nutt’s (1987) research claims that executives frequently improve a specific type of implementation and keep it as long as they can. On the other hand, some of the scholars believe that organizations in the public sector might carry more than one type of implementation out for exclusive targets; for instance, undertaking flexible methods to generate innovation to challenges in delivering service, while using a more stable perspective to implement an “efficiency-focused strategy” (Andrews et al., 2017, p.5).

Mintzberg (1994), one of the pioneers of the strategic management, asserts that even if an organizational strategy is rational (*deliberate*) or incremental (*emergent*), designed or undesigned, it would have small influence on performance until implemented. Which is why, the good strategy implementation depends upon the special implementation style which an organization is willing to embark, which in turn is expected to have positive feedbacks for performance of the organization. Researchers in the field have improved competing typologies for classifying different perspectives the implementation of strategies in the public services. An exploration of existing strategy implementation styles puts emphasize that there are a range of essential determinants; To what extent roles and responsibilities are centralized or decentralized, and whether formulation and implementation, as two side of a coin, are different sequential processes or intertwine and offer a differentiation between planned and unplanned types of strategy implementation (Cespedes and Piercy, 1996, p.143; Thompson, 2000, p. 68). Here, several approaches and types of public sector strategy implementation can be classified as follow; strategy implementation styles categorized by Bourgeois and Brodwin (1984) are “commander, change, collaborative, cultural and crecive”. Hart (1992), Hart and Bambury (1994) and White et al. (2003) present “command, symbolic, rational, transactive and generative” to classify implementation type. Bailey et al. (2000) present it with six different styles; “Command, planning, incremental, political, cultural and enforced”. Nutt (1987) identifies implementation types as “intervention, participation, persuasion and edict”. Thompson (2000) and Cespedes and Piercy (1996) also synthesize the styles to propound a spectrum that is command\rational at one side and generative\incremental at the other side. Eventually, Andrews et al. (2011) determine a couple of types at either end of the spectrum—incremental and rational implementation.

Considering the public sector strategy implementation styles, Andrews et al. (2011) classification—rational and incremental—are used to frame the research in that the styles concentrate directly on the choose of whatever style of the strategies is the most suitable one for the fulfillment of organizational targets (Hickson et al., 2003, p. 1804; Nutt, 1999, p. 79).

Theories on the decision-making of the strategies and the related empirical analyses predominantly focus on “a rational or planned style of implementation; and an incremental or ad-hoc style of implementation” to figure out what direction assists to lead to better performance (Andrews et al., 2017, p. 2). The research examining rational implementation indicate that the rational style includes forming strategic plan as well as action plans and it is performed by the means of top-down controlling in a hierarchical order. Consequently, this direction is believed to be ef-

fective in getting successful implementation outcomes (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984, p. 55). On the other side, a significant body of research has been established on the incremental implementation perspective, that has become apparent, especially with the adoption of management instruments into the public sector including knowledge creation, organizational learning, participation, personnel inclusion. In this direction, incremental implementation style is seen quite relevant to organizational performance (Stewart and Kringas, 2003, p. 678). Thus, it is essential to evaluate both styles to determine what style is associated to better performance and its components. In the subsequent part, the methodology of the study will be explained just before the existing literature rational and incremental implementation styles and performance together with its empirical evidence are systematically reviewed for the public sector organizations.

### 3. METHODS

This research applies a systematic review approach, which is a comprehensive overview of studies available on a specific research question. This way of analyses provides a detailed summary of high-quality evidence in academic literature. The primary aim to undertake systematic review method is to avoid conducting a conventional literature review, which generally investigates randomly selected research evidence and interprets them from the perspective of the reviewer (Gough, Oliver and Thomas, 2017, p. 17).

Systematic review method is originated in the clinical medicine, which needs to deal with a dispersed and inconsistent set of data. Nevertheless, the background of the approach is relatively new in social sciences; The first systematic review movement in social science dates back to the beginning of 2000s by the Campbell Collaboration, aiming to make standards for the systematic review (The Campbell Corporation). The method has become very popular among the scholars because it selects the appropriate studies and brings them together in a rigorous way to increase the reliability and validity of the research.

There is a procedure to follow in the production of a systematic review: Defining research scope and question, selection of evidence, appraisal, synthesis and analysis (Victor, 2008, p. 3). Methodological direction of this examination would be described by following the procedures. As the study aims to explore implementation styles and organizational performance, the research question is based on addressing what the relationship on different type of implementation and performance in the literature is. As of the selection of evidence, the study includes the analyses on the public sector literature and excludes the business sector research from the review. The relevant keywords have been chosen and entered for a search

on Web of Science, as the commonly used search engine for this type of research. All the empirical research has been chosen to synthesis and analyze them. Eventually, incremental and rational types as the two types of strategy implementation have been found and their empirical findings gather in two tables to make the further synthesis and analyses. The detailed application of the procedures is presented in the following sections.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Rational Style of Strategy Implementation and Organizational Performances

References to the first phases of rational implementation regarding to the public sector organizations could be traced in the conventional implementation literature, especially in the public policy. Initial theories and approaches were straightforward in the policy implementation; public personnel were expected to practice strategies, designed by politicians, under the command of top executives (Smith, 1973, p. 197; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983, p. 231; Sabatier, 1986, p.21). Rational perspective based upon the rational choice theory addresses that policy implementation guarantees what people are assigned to fulfill whilst upholding the control over the rest of the phases. The overall process is intended to carry out and place a control system that would diminish possible challenges and hinder deviation from the targets put by this early policy hypothesis. Nevertheless, it has been largely accepted that favourable implementation would require more than a chain of hierarchy and a build a capacity grounded on check and balance system (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984, p. 2).

The basic way of making strategies has been a standard tool giving the detailed steps of the planning process. The strategic planning is recognized as the most commonly applied instrument to the process of strategy making (Carr and Harris, 2004, p. 91), particularly for the public sector that there is a dominance of the rational way of planning over the last century in numerous environment and countries (Boyne et al., 2004, p. 230). A rational implementation gives precedence to let the staff of the organization know and chase specific route for directing strategies and the application of overall mechanism which can guarantee that all the system works in previously planned way (Parsa, 1999, p. 176). According to the work of Hrebiniak and Joyce (1984), public sector organizations maintaining strategy implementation in the rational direction are most likely to get benefit from taking the greater control that enabling exert over strategies.

From a rational comprehension, strategic management is a very intentional method which occurs in a chronological order resulting in the achievement of the goals identifies at the first stages of the strategy cycle (Andrews et al., 2017, p. 2). Therefore, strategies in this model are planned in certain purposes and practiced, just like the classic rational choice theory of “*diagnosis followed by prescription*”. Ansoff (1991) discusses that the rational perspective adopts analytical methods to preserve solid strategic directions against changes in the internal and external environment in the implementation period. A great number of researchers also argue that formal methodologies and instruments including activity reports, action plans, performance programs and ex-ante/midterm/ex-post evaluations, that enable planners to overcome the strategic goals and objectives in the short and long terms, are critical for pursuing a favorable implementation process (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1984, p. 52). Having rational implementation style, therefore, is quite possible to lead to better performance outcomes.

Despite of its conventional background, rational implementation has been still the most popular style, and there are a series of studies which verify the usefulness of this style, particularly in the business sector literature (e.g. Hart, 1992; Hart and Bambury, 1994; Parsa, 1999; Woodside et al., 1999). On the other hand, Poister and Van Slyke (2001) review the area critically claiming that in spite of the fact that there is substantial literature surveyed on public sector strategic management, empirical research is not well-developed to synthesize theoretical leaning into empirical analysis to flourish the field.

Accordingly, the empirical literature is analyzed systematically on the Web of Science search engine. The research investigates incremental and rational ways of implementing strategies together with related performance criteria in both public and business sector research. A web search is undertaken to look for related terms as such: performance, effectiveness, equity, improvement, outcome, efficiency, output, satisfaction, innovation, quality, strategy implementation, implementation styles, execution, planned implementation rational implementation style in the abstracts, key words, titles of the research. The greater part of the research focuses on business sector organizations (e.g. Parsa, 1999; Schaap, 2006; 2012; Thorpe and Morgan, 2007). While three analyses purely explore public sector (e.g. Andrews et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2017; Van de Ven, 1980), a couple of other research look over the organizations in both sectors (e.g. Hickson et al., 2003; Miller, 1997;). The result of this search is presented Table 1. The research uncovers 5 studies from public sector settings investigating the relationship between rational type of implementation and organizational performance.

Author(s)/ Year	Country	Research Method	Sample Size	Measure of Performance	Findings
<b>Van de Ven, 1980</b>	USA	Quantitative (Survey)	“14 childcare community”	Efficiency, Community acceptance	Practicing formal planning model has higher levels of efficiency.
<b>Miller, 1997</b>	UK	Case Study	“113 informants; 6 organizations; 4 private and 2 public organizations”	Managers’ perceptions of completion, achievement and acceptability of strategy	Specificity and accessibility were critical to success.
<b>Hickson et al., 2003</b>	UK	Quantitative (survey)	“55 decisions in 14 organizations, 6 manufacturing, 5 services and 3 public organizations (university, municipality and water services)”	Planned and Prioritized	Practicing planned and prioritized approaches work better. None of them least effective.
<b>Andrews et al., 2011</b>	UK	Quantitative (survey)	“90 local government services in 2002 62 local government services in 2003”	Managers’ perception of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, innovation, customer satisfaction, quality and quantity of outputs.	There is no consistent style of implementation that is likely to lead performance. Rational implementation is unrelated to performance.
<b>Andrews et al., 2017</b>	Turkey	Quantitative (survey)	“20 local government organizations 126 respondents”	Manager’ perception of effectiveness, efficiency, equity.	Rational implementation style is positively related to organizational performance.



## 4.2. Incremental Style of Strategy Implementation and Organizational Performance

The roots of the incremental implementation, as a main alternative approach to the rational model, have its origins in the seminal paper of Charles Lindblom's (1959) named "*The Science of Mudding Through*". He asserted that the restricted form of rationality and limited nature of human ability, along with time and resources as external drawbacks, do not let implementers to pursue a logical reasoning, especially when tackling with complex problems (Lindblom, 1959, p. 82). The learning school of thought, which is also relevant to Lindblom works, highlights the artifacts of incremental strategy process prioritizing a chain of piecemeal and unplanned moves occurring over the course of time (Quaye et al., 2015, p. 141). Contrary to the planning school, which puts great emphasis on designed and pre-planned strategies, the learning school deals with the notion of emergent strategies as "a pattern of action which improves over time in an organization in the absence of clear mission and goals; or sometimes despite mission and goals" (Griffin, 2013, p. 207). Nonetheless, it is also largely accepted that incrementalism does not necessarily mean as an entirely opposite approach to rational theory. It in fact represents sequential processes that allows strategies to be practiced in various methods (Quinn, 1978, p. 7).

The incremental perspective to the process of strategy making offers a bare distinction between the stages of formulation and implementation comparing to the rational perspective. Hambrick and Cannella (1989) and Mintzberg (1994) believe that the separating formulation phase from its execution is the primal issue for "implementation failure", as implementation is regarded as a solely administrative process, overlooking the possible useful inputs which might come from strategy decision makers. Nevertheless, incremental practices are formed as a process of learning, that counts formulation and implementation identical per se, hence diminishing the probability of failure in implementation (Hambrick and Cannella, 1989, p. 278). Handling these two phases together in organizations would trigger the inclusion of the assets in both strategy improvement as well as implementation (Andrews et al., 2011, p. 645) and creates more influential organizational process in learning, which results in rising responsiveness to external effects (Mintzberg, 2000, p. 4).

Incremental implementation style is more relevant in the increasingly fragile and ambiguous environment in which public sector organizations of this century need to survive. This is even much more pertinent subsequent to the emerging of

the idea of governance (Osborne, 2006, p. 380), that allows various interactions among countless actors in strategy formulation and service delivery. With its fluid nature, the incremental type of implementation is expected to be achieved by sharing, learning and diffusing knowledge instead of merely aiming to be outcome-oriented (Mintzberg, 1998, p.178) and this is especially true of the public sector organizations (Steward and Kringas, 2003, p. 677). Therefore, strategy implementation ought to shape a form of a process of learning drawing particular attention to sustainability to be adaptable to the upcoming and probable scenarios stemming from the externalities (Kearns, 2000, p.8).

As previously stated, a systematic review was undertaken on the Web of Science. A close examination is performed to search for relevant terms as follows: Performance, effectiveness, equity, efficiency, improvement, innovation, quality, satisfaction, output, outcome, strategy implementation, implementation styles, execution, emergent and incremental implementation style in the abstracts, key words, titles of the research. The overall literature on incremental type of implementation and performance is less comparing to rational style, however, examinations on the elements incremental implementation and performance are exist in some studies. There are three research exclusively focus on private sector setting (e.g. Bantel, 1997; Parsa, 1999; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993), whilst other three studies made examinations in the government sector setting (e.g. Andrews et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2017; Stewart and Kringas, 2003). Also, one research had analyses across both sector (e.g. Miller, 1997). Table 2 shows the results of the search and reveals four research from public sector investigating the themes. (e.g. Andrews et al., 2011; Andrews et al., 2017; Miller, 1997; Stewart and Kringas, 2003).

Author(s)/ Year	Country	Research Method	Sample Size	Measure of Performance	Findings
<b>Miller, 1997</b>	UK	Case study	“113 informants; 6 organizations; 4 private and 2 public”	Managers’ perceptions of completion, achievement, and acceptability of strategy	Flexibility was not critical to success,
<b>Stewart and Kringas, 2003</b>	Australia	Case study	“6 Australian public organizations”	Staff and manager perceptions	Negotiation and participation are related to performance

Author(s)/ Year	Country	Research Method	Sample Size	Measure of Performance	Findings
<b>Andrews et al., 2011</b>	UK	Quantitative (survey)	“90 local government services in 2002 62 local government services in 2003”	Manager perception of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, innovation, customer satisfaction, quality and quantity of outputs.	There is no consistent style of implementation that is likely to lead performance. Incremental implementation is negatively related to performance.
<b>Andrews et al., 2017</b>	Turkey	Quantitative (survey)	“20 local government organizations 126 respondents”	Manager’ perception of effectiveness, efficiency, equity.	Logical incremental implementation style is positively related to organizational performance.

**Table 2** The Empirical Research on the Link Between Incremental Strategy Implementation and Organizational Performance

## 5. DISCUSSION

Most of the evidence demonstrated that a rational strategy implementation style has a relationship with successful organizational performance. Miller (1997) conducted research in the UK context employing a case study method addressing six government and business sector organizations. The study reveals that strategic planning as the indication of rational implementation appeared to be a successful approach for desirable organizational outcomes. Van de Ven’s (1980) detailed analysis conducting longitudinal study on the US childcare organizations showed that implementing the strategic plan has a positive relationship with good performance. Moreover, Andrews et al.’s (2017) examination on 20 local government organizations in Turkey proved that rational implementation style was positively and strongly associated to a series of performance criteria.

A couple of research, on the other hand, found no clear evidence on rational implementation and performance. Hickson et al.’s (2003) research had the relationship between implementation and performance on the public and private servi-

ces. The research discovered the rational implementation model in 14 public and private sector organizations in the UK and found that there was no relationship on the variables. Andrews et al.'s (2011) investigation in a sample of Welsh local government organizations revealed that rational style of implementation has no relationship with performance. By and large, rational type of implementation seems relevant to organizational performance except some of the studies and this would prove that rational implementation, which grounds on a well-developed solid theory, maintains its place with the increasing evidence from the merits of public sector rational planning.

On the other hand, there are 4 empirical analyses exploring incremental type of implementation and organizational performance in the public sector. First of all, Stewart and Kringas (2003) use a case study design to investigate 6 public agencies in Australia and revealed that as staff inclusion increases within the process of implementation, outcomes of the activities gradually get better. The study eventually emphasizes that negotiation should result in incremental implementation and can be indirectly associated to better performance. Andrews et al. (2017) deal with 20 Turkish local government organizations, concentrating on the relationship between implementation types and effectiveness, efficiency, and equity as specific criteria of performance. The study evidence demonstrated that logical incremental approach has a positive relationship to organizational success in the public services.

Miller's (1997) research in the UK content on the perception of public and business managers shows that flexibility as an indication of incremental approach is not directly relevant to organizational performance. Andrews et al.'s (2011) comprehensive work on Welsh local government shows that incremental implementation is related to low performance. Consequently, the incremental model found pertinent to organizational effectiveness, nevertheless, evidence is weaker than the rational implementation style.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The paper has investigated the literature on the relationships between two types of strategy implementation and public service performance. Initially, the notion of strategic management with its relevance was examined for the public sector organizations, before evaluating the content and processes of strategies including formulation and implementation. Consequently, these different parts of the strategy making process - from strategy content, process to formulation and implementation - built a conceptual framework to give a straight and consis-

tent path leading to the associations between strategy implementation and performance, especially for the public sector organizations.

The empirical research presented above offer a crucial step in finding out the impacts of implementation styles on public service performance by systematically reviewing the possible links. Previous evidence focusing on the relationships between implementation styles in the public sector and performance is limited to business sector research and less data on the public sector research are available. As long as empirical research on the relationship is concerned, it can be stated that rational implementation style found to be relevant to performance. In the same line with the prior studies, incremental style of implementation also seems related to organizational performance, but the relationship is not as strong as rational implementation style. In order to expand the limited literature, future studies would focus on this relationship in the public sector to build stronger set of evidence.

Implementation, as a crucial part of organizational strategy, is commonly known to have a considerable effect on outcomes and the established literature proves that rational implementation and incremental implementation both can have positive and negative relationships with performance, depending on various other variables including organizational culture, middle manager role, leadership style etc. As the literature does not offer a persistent and straightforward answer to the subject, one recommendation of this paper would be that an elaborated scrutiny on the relationship between implementation, performance and one of the associated variables above could give a more lucid and extensive insight for the further studies.

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