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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PARADOXES IN TURKISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EVALUATIONS ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE PARADOXES

Türk Kamu Yönetiminde Performans Yönetimi Çelişkileri: Akademik Performans Paradoksları Üzerinden Değerlendirmeler

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Abstract

This study investigates the application of performance management in public institutions, focusing specifically on universities and academic staff while identifying key challenges associated with these practices. Performance management aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of individuals and organizations. In public administration, its goals include fostering accountability, promoting transparency, improving service quality, and delivering economic benefits. However, the effectiveness of performance management process within universities can be constrained, and it poses various challenges over time. A significant issue is the "performance paradox," which arises when performance evaluation systems lose efficacy and paradoxically undermine academic activities. This study highlights the shortcomings of academic performance evaluation systems in Turkey and proposes suggestions for developing an optimal performance appraisal framework. This study also evaluates the academic incentives, appointment/promotion criteria and evaluation processes of research universities. In this way, it discusses the emergence of performance paradox and its negative effects in the academic world. The findings provide valuable recommendations for public policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, to improve the effectiveness of academic performance appraisal systems.

Keywords: Performance Paradox, Management, Academic Staff, Public Policy.

Öz

Bu çalışma, performans yönetiminin kamu kurumları, özellikle üniversiteler ve akademik personel üzerindeki uygulamalarını ve bu uygulamalardaki temel sorunları ele almaktadır. Performans yönetimi, bireylerin ve kurumların faaliyetlerini verimli ve etkili bir şekilde sürdürmelerine katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Kamu yönetimi bağlamında, performans yönetiminin hedefleri hesap verebilirlik, şeffaflık, hizmet kalitesinin artırılması ve ekonomik faydaların sağlanmasını içermektedir. Ancak, üniversitelerdeki performans yönetimi süreçlerinin etkinliği genellikle sınırlıdır ve zamanla çeşitli sorunlar ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Bu bağlamda en önemli sorunlardan biri, "performans paradoksu"dur; bu durum, performans değerlendirme sistemlerinin etkinliğini yitirmesi ve akademik faaliyetler üzerinde olumsuz etkiler yaratmasıyla tanımlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki akademik performans değerlendirme sistemlerinin eksikliklerini vurgulamakta ve ideal bir performans değerlendirme sisteminin nasıl olması gerektiğine dair öneriler geliştirmektedir. Bu çalışmada, akademik teşvikler, atama ve terfi kriterleri ile araştırma üniversitelerinin değerlendirme süreçleri bağlamında değerlendirmeler yapılmaktadır. Böylelikle, performans paradoksu ve bunun olumsuz etkileri akademik dünya ekseninde ele alınmaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular, akademik performans değerlendirme sistemlerinin iyileştirilmesi için kamu politikası yapıcılarına, uygulayıcılara ve akademisyenlere önemli öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Performans Paradoksu, Yönetim, Akademik Personel, Kamu Politikası.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, governments have increasingly focused on performance evaluation within public institutions, dedicating greater resources and time to this effort. With modernization processes underway, public administration systems in many countries are being managed using more objective criteria. At the core of this shift lies the New Public Management (NPM) approach, which emphasizes a result-oriented perspective (Hughes, 1998). Proponents of this approach prioritize measuring outcomes, placing performance management at the forefront of new public policies and administrative processes.

In Turkey, the growing emphasis on strategic management and performance management in public administration, as highlighted in development plans and medium-term programs (Eroğlu, 2016), serves as a clear manifestation of this trend. The demand for performance evaluation stems, in part, from findings in the academic literature. Numerous studies suggest that performance management processes contribute to institutional improvement and success (Brignall and Modell, 2000; French and Mollinger-Sahba, 2021; Moynihan, 2005). Effective performance measurement methods, in particular, enable the analysis of both individual and institutional performance, facilitating targeted interventions to promote development and success. Consequently, performance management can deliver multidimensional benefits.

However, an over-reliance on performance evaluation systems rooted in private sector practices (Kouzmin et al., 1999), without sufficient attention to the distinct characteristics of public institutions, may lead to various challenges. Unlike the private sector, which is primarily focused on goods production, public institutions are more concerned with service provision, placing greater emphasis on processes and public benefit than on outcomes alone. This divergence leads to difficulties in accurately measuring real performance within public institutions. Measurement challenges arise from the unique characteristics of public administration as well as from employee behaviors that influence the evaluation process. As a result, significant discrepancies may emerge between actual performance and measured performance, a phenomenon known as the "performance paradox."

The performance paradox refers, in its most general sense, to the gradual erosion of the efficacy of performance measurement systems (Meyer and Gupta, 1994; Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002). This occurs when the criteria used fail to effectively differentiate between successful and unsuccessful outcomes. Moreover, employee behaviors designed to manipulate the measurement process further obscures actual performance by rendering the performance evaluation system ineffective.

This study explores the concept of the performance paradox in the context of public institutions, with particular emphasis on the academic field. It examines the conditions under which performance evaluation processes in academia become paradoxical and discusses potential solutions to mitigate these challenges.

1. PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS

Organizational structures, which are constantly renewed and transformed to adapt through contemporary conditions, have led to radical changes in the role of labor- regarded as the fundamental element of production- and

the processes associated with it. The restructuring of what were once considered mere personnel affairs under the more comprehensive concept of human resources management is a clear indication of this change (Acar, 2019). As human resources management has evolved, the concept of performance has gained significant prominence in modern organizations.

With the view that human resources are the most fundamental and valuable asset of an organization (Karataş and Avci, 2017: 2322), it becomes imperative that human resources are prioritized in arrangements aligned with organizational goals (Gürcüoğlu and Öztaş, 2018: 537). Therefore, to effectively manage human resources and maintain oversight of their functions, processes must be designed in line with clearly defined goals. The sustainability of these functions is dependent on the concept of performance.

The term performance originates from English and is used in Turkish to refer to "execution," "accomplishment," or "achievement" (Akçakaya, 2012: 173). It can also be defined as the measure of goods or services produced within a specific period of time. In this context, performance is often equated with the efficiency and productivity outputs of an organization. It can pertain to production in manufacturing processes, public sector service delivery, or the output of private enterprises (Özer, 2010: 164).

In other words, performance reflects the outcomes of activities related to an employee's duties and is influenced by factors such as effort, skill, and role perception (Akyol, 2011: 75). Performance is associated with deliberate behaviors and can be evaluated on both individual and organizational levels (Van Dooren et al., 2015: 2). Improving performance management requires a focus on results rather than inputs or processes. This approach promotes autonomy and flexibility at decentralized levels and enhances control over work by evaluating outcomes directly (Mouritzen and Opstrup, 2020: 5).

Performance is a concept that describes the effort that employees exert to achieve the goals set within the scope of their responsibilities. Sometimes, the term is used to refer to the work itself, while at other times, it refers to the manner in which the work is performed or the results achieved. A common thread across these definitions is that performance indicates the execution of an action (Erdemir, 2013). In organizations, the extent to which employees meet the desired outputs constitutes their performance (Işığıçok, 2008: 2).

Performance management, is inherently a phenomena aimed at assessing the success of employees or the organization. Therefore, the concept of performance must be examined from two perspectives: individual and organizational (Erbaşı and Güzel, 2008: 83). An employee's performance is determined by how well they meet job-related expectations and achieve main objectives. Individual and organizational performance are interrelated, as the successful realization of organizational goals depends on individuals reaching their personal goals (Dikmen and Özpeynirci, 2010: 72). According to widely accepted definitions, performance refers to "the extent to which an individual, group, or organization reaches its pre-determined goals in terms of quality and quantity" (Baş and Artar, 1991: 13). In its broadest sense, performance represents the outputs generated from activities undertaken to achieve specific goals, evaluated in both quantitative and qualitative terms (Akal, 2002: 1).

To well estimate the performance, the outcomes of the activities must be analyzed. Evaluating these results is a fundamental purpose of performance management processes. The New Public Management (NPM) approach, central to contemporary management theories in the neoliberal world order, has made the performance control and management indispensable in public institutions, as it is in market institutions (Weikart, 2001: 362). In this context, aspects such as the reduction of the state's role, the acceleration of privatization processes, and the dominance of the market over the state in production and consumption have gained prominence (Bouckaert and Peters, 2002: 359). Furthermore, restricting public expenditures and reducing government spending for political purposes are also integral to this approach. In public administration, in addition to the principle of legality, factors such as accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to national and international market actors' demands have become increasingly important (Hood, 1991).

While NPM seeks to adopt private-sector management logic and operational mechanisms within the public sector, it encourages decentralized and flexible structures over centralized ones (Hughes, 1998: 73). The concept of competitiveness has also become an essential element of this transformation. Within this framework, new rules and criteria have emerged concerning resource utilization, expenditures, auditing, and reporting. And issues such as employment and compensation have been addressing based on performance evaluation criteria (Thompson and Miller, 2003). As a result, performance management driven by economic rationale, has been effectively applied in the public sector (Karataş, 2019: 1798).

Performance management is a process aimed at using resources efficiently to achieve the organization's primary goals. In this process, it is crucial to continuously monitor and measure progress against established objectives (Akçay and Bilgin, 2016: 156). Performance management clarifies employees' roles and responsibilities and helps identify areas for improvement to meet expectations (Armstrong and Baron, 2005: 12). This process enables employees to build more effective relationships with their supervisors, assess their current situation, and better understand the steps needed for future development (Helvacı, 2002: 157).

For managers, performance management provides a framework for clearly articulating expectations, enhancing feedback processes, and guiding employee development (Fletcher, 2004: 28). This fosters a more productive superior-subordinate relationship. Performance management also evaluates how well the organization's strategic plans are implemented, measures performance, and reports that. This process includes continuous cycles of development-oriented measures (Usta, 2010: 33). In an organization, it is essential for employees to contribute optimally to organizational goals, and therefore, policies for human resources should be aligned with this contribution. A performance-oriented approach is critical to achieving this goal (Griffith and Orgera, 1997).

Performance management guides an organization's activities efficiently, promotes better cooperation between employees and managers, and fosters a culture of responsibility. It also aids in establishing strong communication networks within the organization (Karasoy, 2014: 259). Ultimately, performance management oversees the process of achieving organizational goals, including the assessment of efforts against set criteria (Ateş and Çetin, 2004: 256).

Components of performance management include goal setting, task descriptions and division of labor. It also assists personnel selection and management, employee motivation and supervision, and resource utilization. Additionally, it involves accounting and budgeting, as well as auditing and reporting on institutional and personnel performance. (Kagioglou et al., 2001: 85).

Performance management can be seen as both a system and a process, serving as the foundation for organizational operations (Cadwell, 2002: 2). Institutions consist of various units working in coordination, necessitating a unified approach to ensure the institution's service or production objectives. Effective communication is an essential for this internal coordination (Bilgin, 2004: 14). To ensure continuous development, both employees and institutional processes must be monitored, audited, and evaluated though established criteria (Köseoğlu, 2007: 325).

Performance management must be evaluated not only within a single institution but also in the context of the broader environment where institution operates. External factors, relationships with other systems, and changing conditions are crucial elements in the evaluation of institutional performance (Bourne and Bourne, 2012: 3).

2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN TURKISH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Before delving into the specific practices of performance management and its legal or political foundations within Turkish public administration, it is essential to first evaluate the concept of performance management in the public sector from a broader perspective. The concept of performance management gained prominence in academic discourse alongside the advent of New Public Administration theory and since than it has become a significant aspect of performance-oriented initiatives in public institutions.

The public sector remains one of the most extensive and longstanding sectors globally. However, complaints about the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector operations have been steadily rising in many countries. Negative perceptions of both general and local administrations have become pervasive in public opinion, leading to a decline in trust in public institutions. While private sector organizations prioritize effectiveness, efficiency, and quality in their operations, these elements are often perceived as lacking in the public sector. In response to these challenges, there is a growing need for reform and improvement efforts in public administrations, which are crucial for enhancing the quality of public services (Yıldız, 1995: 77). Public performance management, therefore, aims to manage public services through principles such as effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance. This management approach emphasizes defining services, establishing strategic plans and goals, and evaluating outcomes through feedback mechanisms.

Performance in public administration can be defined as the alignment of authority, duties, and responsibilities with organizational goals, ensuring success in the delivery of goods and services (Bilgin, 2004: 20). In this context, public performance management is an instrumental tool in improving service quality and optimizing the use of public resources.

A review of the literature on performance management reveals that the concept had not been widely applied in the public sector until the 1970s (Armstrong and Baron, 2005). However, after this period, many public institutions began to adopt performance management as a tool to set and achieve specific standards or goals (Boland and Fowler,

2000). Despite the extensive focus on performance management in the field of business administration, its application in public administration has been more limited. The concept is generally associated with business performance and management processes. Nonetheless, performance management encompasses various dimensions relevant to public administration, such as accountability, transparency, service orientation and so forth (Talbot, 2007: 491-517). As such, performance management is applicable to public administration because it focuses on improving management processes within this domain.

This understanding of performance management stems from modern management approaches within public administration, particularly the "public management" perspective. This perspective posits that institutional and individual activities in the public sector should be performance-oriented (Maesschalck, 2004; Brewer, 2008). Since the 1980s, the growing emphasis on public management has led to the incorporation of private sector management techniques into the public sector. During this period, the concepts of effectiveness and efficiency gained prominence in public sector discourse, with performance being defined as an essential element for improving public organizations' functioning. Consequently, practices such as individual and institutional performance assessments, performance-based compensation, and performance-based budgeting, which were traditionally applied in the private sector, began to be integrated into the public sector. International organizations, including the OECD, IMF, and World Bank, supported these changes, promoting performance management as a global standard for public sector reform. The policies advocated by these international organizations were subsequently adopted by national governments, first appearing in policy texts and later implemented through practical measures (Köseoğlu and Şen, 2014: 115). Especially in the field of Turkish Public Administration, the structural reforms started in the 1980s and the regulatory reforms by 1990s can be considered to have led to such a change. However, along with this situation, globalist reforms have led to a dissolution in the traditional structure (Güler, 1996; 2009).

Public performance management practices in Turkey have echoed global developments. By the late 1980s, concepts such as performance management, performance evaluation, and performance-based compensation began to appear in various policy documents to measure the efficiency of public institutions and assess the public employees. In 1989, Turkey initiated a project with the publication of a guide titled Measurement of Output and Performance in the Central Government. However, this project was left incomplete, and the process of reform continued through subsequent reports, development plans, and other official documents (Köseoğlu and Şen, 2014: 128). In this context, Turkey's public performance management practices continue to evolve, aligning with international norms and standards.

2.1. Public Performance Management in Legislation

Despite the transformation of Turkish Public Administration following the introduction of New Public Management principles in the 1980s, the tradition of Administrative Law continues to hold strong influence. This adherence to a legalistic framework is particularly evident in the performance management of public personnel. When examining relevant legislation from the Constitution down through other laws and regulations, definitive references to

performance management remain elusive. However, an analysis of the relevant legal framework provides certain implications for the possibility of performance management within the public sector.

The first legislative document to consider is the Turkish Constitution. As article 128/2 of the 1982 Constitution states: “The qualifications, appointments, duties and authorities, rights and obligations, salaries and allowances, and other personnel matters of civil servants and other public officials are regulated by law.” (T.C. Anayasası, 1982: m. 128). While the Constitution does not explicitly mention performance management, it does suggest the possibility of performance-related criteria being introduced through legislation. The mention of "qualifications" and "appointments" can be interpreted as implying a performance-based element for promotions or appointments, potentially allowing for a performance management system to be introduced by law. Furthermore, the regulation of "salaries and allowances" opens the door for the introduction of performance-based remuneration for public officials. Thus, although the Constitution does not provide direct provisions on performance management, it creates a legal framework within which performance management could be introduced through secondary legislation.

The primary reference point for all public officials in Turkey is the Civil Servants Law No. 657 (DMK). However, this law, in its current form, lacks explicit provisions for performance measurement or rewards. Notably, the sections concerning rewards and performance evaluations were abolished with the adoption of Law No. 6111 in 2011 (DMK, 1965 m.123). Under the old system, performance evaluations were tied more closely to personal characteristics than objective performance criteria, which often led to subjective judgments by managers (Bilgin, 2004: 401). Furthermore, the scope of the previous record-keeping system was limited to civil servants under Article 1/1 of the DMK, leading to discrepancies in the evaluation processes across different categories of public employees.

Law No. 6111 introduced significant changes to the DMK by replacing the old “Certificate of Appreciation” provision with a new clause titled "Achievement, Superior Achievement Evaluation, and Reward" (Article 122). This amendment allowed public institutions to develop their own performance criteria based on their specific service areas, subject to approval from the State Personnel Presidency. This legal change marked a shift towards performance-based evaluations in public institutions, enabling the introduction of various performance management systems in practice. Different institutions, such as the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health, has begun to develop distinct performance evaluation systems tailored to their service requirements, allowing for more nuanced performance assessments across different sectors.

Another key legislative instrument in Turkey's performance management framework is the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018, adopted in 2003. This law introduced performance evaluation as a tool for ensuring the efficient and economic use of public resources. The law emphasizes principles of accountability, transparency, and cost-effectiveness, forming the foundation for performance-based evaluation systems in public administration (Özkal Sayan and Demirci, 2018: 679). In support of the law, the State Planning Organization (SPO) prepared the Strategic Planning Guide for Public Administrations, and the Ministry of Finance issued the Performance

Program Preparation Guide, both of which provide detailed guidelines for implementing performance management systems.

Law No. 5018 promotes a strategic planning and performance-based budgeting approach to public management, highlighting institutional performance evaluation as a crucial element. It is essential to note that the success of institutional performance depends largely on the individual performance of public employees. The law permits public administrations to develop their own performance evaluation systems based on their strategic plans, national development plans, and other relevant policy frameworks. Article 9 of the law explicitly allows for the incorporation of performance measurements into the strategic plans of public institutions, emphasizing the role of individual performance in achieving organizational goals.

Beyond these laws, performance management is also addressed through legislation governing specific groups of public employees. For instance, civil servants in the security forces are subject to Law No. 3021, while military personnel are governed by Law No. 926. Similarly, judicial personnel fall under Law No. 2802, and academic personnel are regulated by Law No. 2547 and Law No. 2914. Each of these laws contains distinct provisions for the evaluation of public employees, leading to varying approaches to performance management. For example, the Civil Servants Law and related regulations for state-owned enterprises exhibit significant differences in their approach to performance evaluations, reflecting the unique needs and structures of each institution.

Regarding academic personnel, Law No. 2547 allows for the introduction of performance criteria in the appointment and promotion of academic staff (Additional Article 38). It also incorporates performance-based considerations in the distribution of revolving funds (Article 58). Under this law, universities have the autonomy to develop their own performance-oriented criteria within their administrative and financial frameworks. Additionally, the Higher Education Personnel Law No. 2914 introduces an academic incentive system, rewarding academic staff financially based on their scientific achievements (Additional Article 4). While this system provides a direct reward for academic performance, it has been criticized for focusing exclusively on scientific research and excluding teaching activities from its scope. This limited approach to performance evaluation presents certain challenges and paradoxes in the assessment of academic staff, which will be explored in subsequent sections.

In conclusion, while Turkish legislation provides a legal basis for performance management, its application is often varied across different public sectors and institutions. The constitutional and legislative framework introduces the performance-based systems, but the absence of a unified approach has led to diverse practices and varying degrees of success in the implementation of public performance management across different administrative bodies.

2.2. Performance Management in Higher Policy Texts

The analysis of higher policy texts reveals a significant emphasis on the management and evaluation of performance within public institutions, including universities. These texts, which encompass Development Plans, Medium-Term Programs (MTPs), and Annual Programs, provide key policy frameworks that guide public sector reforms,

including performance management (Yeni Ekonomi Programı, 2021-2023; OVP, 2023-2025; On İkinci Kalkınma Planı, 2024-2028).

Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP), prepared by the Ministry of Development, serves as critical roadmap for evaluating public sector performance. These plans cover various aspects such as redefining the state's role, reforming public administration, and revising the personnel system to meet current needs. Among the most crucial issues highlighted in these plans are performance management and the performance-wage relationship, especially after the 6th Development Plan. While earlier plans, such as the 5th FYDP, stresses the necessity of improvement the public administration, there has been no explicit references to performance measurement in the public sector until the 1989 Program. This reflects a growing trend towards formalizing performance management within public institutions.

However, for the purpose of this study, the focus is placed on more recent policy documents that have a direct bearing on performance management in public universities. Specifically, the Twelfth Development Plan (2024-2028) sets forth explicit policies aimed at strengthening the performance management in higher education institutions. A key provision in the plan is the requirement to regularly monitor performance data from universities and compile performance evaluation reports (Article 682.1). This represents a clear and structured approach to performance measurement, which had been somewhat ambiguous in previous plans.

Additionally, the Twelfth Development Plan stipulates policies to enhance the quality of academic staff (Article 683), implicitly indicating that academic performance evaluation will be continuously conducted. This reflects a growing recognition of the importance of tracking both the current standing and potential for development of academic personnel. Further, by setting a centralized lower threshold for academic appointments and promotions, the plan indicates a shift towards a standardized performance evaluation system across universities. While universities will retain some autonomy in setting upper performance limits, the introduction of central criteria ensures consistency in performance-based appointments nationwide.

The Medium-Term Programs (MTPs) for (2023-2025), (2024-2026), and 2025-2027 further reinforce the importance of performance-based measurements across the public sector. The 2023-2025 MTP, for instance, calls for the development of strategies and programs tailored to the needs of the labor market, relying on data-driven analyses of human resources. The program emphasizes the structuring human resources processes—such as norm staffing, title standardization, career planning, and performance evaluation—around job analyses.

The subsequent MTPs (2024-2026 and 2025-2027) continues this policy trajectory by underlining the need for accountability in public institutions, with performance-based measurement methods that positioned as central tools for achieving this goal. These programs reiterate the intention to implement performance evaluations as a means of ensuring public sector transparency and efficiency.

Moreover, the New Economic Program (2021-2023) introduces the further clarity into performance management within public institutions by advocating for the establishment of a Public Human Resources Management System, which

integrates competency-based performance evaluation systems. This system is designed to reward successful personnel, thus creating a direct link between individual performance and rewards.

In summary, higher policy texts, including development plans, MTPs, and the New Economic Program, provide a comprehensive framework for performance management in public institutions. For universities, the focus on performance monitoring, evaluation, and standardization points to a systematic approach to enhancing academic personnel quality, ensuring that institutional performance is aligned with national strategic goals.

2.3. Examples of Performance Management/Evaluation Applications in the Universities

Significant steps have been taken in universities toward performance management in accordance with the foundational principles and objectives outlined in laws numbered 2547 and 2914, as well as the upper-level policy documents. In universities, academic staff performance is assessed both through appointment and promotion regulations, as well as distinct performance measurement systems. These evaluations encompass the academic staff's contributions not only to educational and scientific activities but also to their social contributions (social sensitivity projects etc.), beyond their academic publications alone. Consequently, the performance of staff is evaluated in a holistic manner, reflecting the broad spectrum of duties expected in the academic field.

In addition to the widespread use of appointment and promotion regulations across all universities in Turkey, a performance management system was applied in 15 universities, as evidenced by the information available on their respective websites. The implementation of this system offers some significant contributions, both by adhering to relevant legislation and by aiding the achievement of the objectives in higher-level policy documents. Furthermore, these regulations and performance evaluation systems foster competition among universities striving to achieve research university status.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential performance paradoxes that such systems may create. The excessive focus of academic staff on securing specific rewards, such as academic incentives, promotions, or research university status, may result in the undervaluation of their core responsibilities, both for themselves and for the academic community at large. Thus, universities are transformed into companies and academics into company employees. when it will be normalized, several concerns would be risen regarding universities' ability to fulfill their primary duties. Therefore, it is essential to consider not only the content of these practices but also the effects they may have on the creation of performance paradoxes within universities.

3. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN PUBLIC PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Performance management practices are generally implemented with the aim of increasing efficiency and utilizing resources effectively, both in the public and private sector. The concepts of efficiency and effective resource use are the cornerstones of performance management. It is observed that efforts to enhance efficiency and resource utilization in the public sector typically emerge during periods of economic difficulties, where efforts to improve quality are more concentrated (Berman, 1994).

The barriers to enhancing efficiency in the public sector can be categorized into three main types: environmental, organizational, and personnel-based. Environmental obstacles include a lack of market pressure, political factors, resistance to change, the desire to maintain the status quo, insufficient political will, the prioritization of other issues over efficiency, limitations inherent to public service, and counterproductive reward systems. Organizational obstacles involve bureaucratic socialization processes, inadequate accountability mechanisms, reverse reward systems, insufficient management focus on efficiency, barriers related to monetary incentive systems, resistance from labor unions, unclear objectives, lack of cost accounting systems, insufficient performance data, bureaucratic rigidity, and high initial costs associated with efficiency-enhancing activities. Personnel obstacles encompass issues such as inadequate control over working hours, conceptual confusion, risk aversion, and administrative excuses. These barriers collectively hinder the improvement of public sector efficiency (Ammons, 2004: 118-119).

Another challenge to the implementation of performance management in the public sector is the negative impact of performance measurement itself. Over time, performance measurements can become a game for employees, where staff focus solely on activities that lead to rewards while neglecting other essential tasks. Furthermore, performance management can contribute to increased bureaucracy within an organization, creating new administrative formalities for employees.

A further negative aspect of performance measurement is its potential to stifle innovation. Processes tend to be optimized around existing performance indicators, and while the focus remains on maximizing profit or public benefit, other areas of work may be ignored. This can indirectly hinder the performance management process, as it promotes repetitive production of activities that meet performance criteria rather than fostering innovation.

Additionally, there is a risk of penalizing high performers. For instance, if one of two identical units demonstrate high performance and low costs, it may be expected to deliver similarly high performance with an even lower budget the following year. Conversely, the underperforming unit may receive a higher or equal budget in subsequent years, encouraging increased performance (Öztürk, 2020: 282-283).

Another challenge unique to the public sector is the broader scope and wider range of stakeholders compared to the private sector. While the private sector typically caters to a limited target audience, the public sector is responsible for a diverse array of services and a much broader target population. As a result, improving performance may not always be a priority for the public sector's wide-ranging audience (Akçakaya, 2012: 192).

Moreover, there are persistent challenges related to perceptions of transparency and accountability, which are fundamental to performance management in the public sector (Öztürk, 2020: 284). One of the most significant barriers to performance management implementation in the public sector is the emphasis on profitability in the private sector. The public sector places greater importance on public benefit rather than profitability, which can lead to difficulties in the practical application of performance management systems (Akçakaya, 2012: 192-193).

Another challenge arising from the differences between the private and public sectors relates to the nature of production. While the private sector primarily focuses on the production of goods, the public sector is more concerned

with service delivery. Consequently, performance measurements related to service production may pose difficulties (West, 2011: 127).

Finally, the issue of competition, or the lack thereof, presents another challenge. Public sector institutions typically do not face competition in the way private sector organizations do. In the private sector, competition drives improvements in quality, but this dynamic is largely absent in the public sector (Ömürgönülşen, 2002: 120-122).

4. PERFORMANCE PARADOXES

The concept of paradox, which can also be characterized as a contradiction or impasse, holds significant importance within the realm of performance management. Based on the definition of paradox, the performance paradox can be understood as a contradictory situation concerning performance. Thus, it indicates a deterioration in the phenomenon of performance evaluation. This paradox arises from the inadequacy of the performance measurement system, which fails to effectively distinguish between good and poor performance. Evaluations concerning this paradox suggest that the performance information within public institutions is often vague and subjective; therefore, it rarely aligns with objective ideal performance standards and does not accurately reflect actual performance (Moynihan, 2006). In reality, the data utilized for performance evaluation are invariably selected by individuals aiming to further their own personal and institutional objectives, thus influencing the inputs to the system (Majone, 1989).

The performance paradox, in its broadest sense, signifies the weakening of the harmony or correlation between performance measurement and its associated indicator sets (Meyer and O'Shaughnessy, 1992; Meyer and Gupta, 1994). Consequently, the measured performance deviates from actual performance. This divergence stems from the criteria and indicators employed in performance measurement becoming commonplace over time, leading to a loss of their measurement adequacy. When this adequacy is compromised, individuals lose the ability to differentiate between good and poor performances. In other words, the meaningful distinction between high performance and low performance becomes obscured. As a result, there is no longer a correlation between the scores, evaluations, or grades derived from performance measurements and the true level of performance. This process unfolds in four stages (Meyer and Gupta, 1994: 330-342).

In the first stage, a positive learning process occurs. As the performance of all individuals involved in the performance measurement process improves, the sensitivity of the criteria used to distinguish good from bad performance significantly declines (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 271). This phenomenon typically arises when individuals learn the performance evaluation processes and begin to exhibit high performance according to the existing criteria. Consequently, all individuals may present very high performance based on these criteria, rendering the performance standards ineffective.

The second stage is defined as reverse learning. In this stage, individuals or institutions discern which aspects of performance are measured and which are not within the performance evaluation process. This understanding prompts them to manipulate the performance evaluation processes to their advantage. Individuals may prioritize tasks that fall

within the performance evaluation criteria, potentially neglecting other important responsibilities in pursuit of high scores. As a result, they may achieve elevated scores according to the performance evaluation system, thereby being perceived as high performers, even though genuine improvement in performance is lacking. Moreover, this manipulation can lead to a decline in both individual and institutional performance. This situation aligns with Smith's (1995) concept of "Tunnel Vision." According to this framework, often referred to as peripheral vision loss, individuals concentrate solely on tasks that yield the highest benefits within a narrow focus, disregarding other responsibilities.

In the third stage, a scenario emerges where both underperformers and high performers are perceived as equally successful. Due to variances in performance measurement, all individuals may be regarded as high performers based on the results (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 271).

In the fourth stage, distinctions in performance among individuals become irrelevant, rendering the performance evaluation process meaningless (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 271).

Public institutions are particularly susceptible to the dysfunctional use of performance evaluation, which heightens the potential for manipulation and systemic dysfunction (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002). The principal-agent relationship, along with multiple and ambiguous goals, may exacerbate discrepancies in the selection and interpretation of performance information, as well as biases in performance measurement (Choi and Park, 2023: 503). Agents may engage in opportunistic behaviors, such as gaming the system or cheating, to enhance their private interests or may exploit definitional ambiguities to minimize transaction costs. Indeed, defining the outcomes of a public institution's activities can be quite challenging; thus, it may not be functional to consider all dimensions of performance. Consequently, performance measurement may become limited to the measurable aspects of an organization's activities (Vakkuri and Meklin, 2006).

4.1. Types of Performance Paradox: Unintentional and Intentional

The unintentional performance paradox arises from individuals meeting only the minimum accountability requirements without any deliberate manipulation against performance management. Research on performance management generally supports this notion (Van Thiel, 2001). Employees often concentrate solely on a narrow segment of their performance requirements, leading to incomplete criteria in areas that lack emphasis (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 505). An analysis of annual reports on performance measurement reveals that output and input indicators are the most frequently utilized; however, productivity indicators, quality assessments, and cost metrics are often absent (Van Thiel, 2001). The scarcity of performance evaluation indicators complicates accurate performance measurement (Meyer and Gupta, 1994). Consequently, performance evaluation reports tend to prioritize procedures over actual performance, and there is a greater focus on the mere existence of performance indicators rather than their quality and substance (Leeuw, 2000). This results in a preference for quantity over quality in performance evaluations. While the performance system may appear robust in terms of quantity and form, it deteriorates in terms of quality.

A second critical factor contributing to unintentional performance paradoxes is the lack of clarity regarding the goals associated with political decisions and policy texts that influence public decision-making processes. Policies related to public administration often encompass multiple goals, which can sometimes contradict each other (Wilson, 1989: 32-33). The source of these goal discrepancies lies in the subjectivity of performance indicators. Performance criteria may embody inconsistencies and ambiguities among politicians and public administrators (McGuire, 2002). Such uncertainty complicates the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation, as it becomes challenging to discern which goals hold the most significance for whom. Consequently, performance indicators may inadvertently lead to dysfunctional outcomes.

The transformation of political decisions from abstract concepts to actionable forms by managers can also give rise to paradoxes. Indeed, the calculations of efficiency and effectiveness stemming from public policies can vary significantly based on political perspectives and perceptions of the public interest (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 272). A third fundamental reason for the unintentional performance paradox is that the policies advanced by political actors are frequently difficult to quantify. This is particularly evident in sectors such as health and security. For instance, does an increase in the number of suspects apprehended by police contribute to a greater sense of safety or increased feelings of insecurity within society? Similarly, does an increase in the number of surgical procedures performed in hospitals correlate with improved societal health? As illustrated in these examples, performance measurement can obscure direct connections with policy objectives, raising questions about the reliability and validity of performance management systems. The reliance on concrete, numerical data for performance evaluation can often create complex and uncertain situations. Furthermore, the lack of uniformity among policy implementation institutions complicates comparative performance assessments. Due to differing structures and operations across institutions, making comparisons and establishing common criteria becomes quite challenging. As a result, the absence of appropriate reference points and benchmarks for comparison limits the efficacy of performance management systems (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 273).

A fourth contributing factor to the emergence of the unintentional performance paradox is the frequent monitoring of performance indicators within institutions, coupled with continuous directives towards operational efficiency. The persistent emphasis on performance by managers may signal which performance criteria hold greater significance in their eyes. Consequently, employees may prioritize these criteria in their efforts to gain managerial approval. In such cases, the primary aim of performance management from the employees' perspective becomes securing managerial appreciation. Under these circumstances, neither the execution of policies nor the overall performance management system retains its importance; it suffices for them to merely appear efficient. Ultimately, an excessive focus on performance within public administrations—rooted in paradigms like New Public Management—may inadvertently foster a performance paradox (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 273-274).

Conversely, intentional performance paradoxes can also emerge within public institutions. This typically results from institutions perceiving auditing processes as manifestations of distrust or misunderstanding. In such instances,

various strategies may be employed to undermine the auditing processes. For example, institution employees might delay responses to the performance management system or fail to cooperate, leading to inaccurate performance measurements that do not accurately reflect reality. Although this situation may not impede policy effectiveness, it distorts the relationship between measured performance and actual performance, yielding misleading results.

Moreover, incorrect interpretations of performance indicators can serve as tools for concealing poor performance. Focusing exclusively on easily measurable indicators within performance management systems may result in the exclusion of significant performance criteria. This can lead to efforts to present institutional performance as "more successful" through indicators that do not truly reflect actual performance. For instance, some public institutions might prioritize services that are less costly yet yield high satisfaction, while neglecting low-cost and less visible services. Such an approach may cast the institutions in a more favorable light than warranted.

In particular, in healthcare settings, evaluating performance by excluding the treatment processes of chronic patients can yield misleading results. Measuring the performance of doctors according to the number of patients also creates a paradox. These situations may enhance the perceived success and effectiveness of the institution while obscuring genuine challenges and deficiencies.

In conclusion, unintentional and intentional performance paradoxes arise from different sources and are shaped by various conditions. However, intentional performance paradoxes may become exacerbated by the existing conditions associated with unintentional paradoxes. In other words, when an organization deliberately misrepresents its performance, such actions are more likely to occur in an environment already predisposed to unintentional performance paradoxes.

4.2. Methods for Determining and Preventing Performance Paradoxes

The emergence of performance paradoxes in public administration can often be attributed to its unique characteristics (Fountain, 2001). A key factor contributing to these paradoxes is the discrepancy between the objectives of policies, which serve as the foundation for public administration practices, and the actual targets set by public administrators (Smith, 1995). When public institutions and administrators interpret and operationalize the abstract political objectives outlined in public policies, divergences in targets can arise. Although the discretionary authority granted to public administrators can facilitate their work and meet the expectations of stakeholders (Torenvlied, 2012), it can also give rise to performance paradoxes (McGuire, 2002). This issue is compounded by the fact that public institutions do not face the same bankruptcy risks as private organizations, and the connection between costs and benefits in public services is often obscured by the notion of public interest (Le Grand, 1991).

The potential for public employees to manipulate performance management processes, combined with the absence of effective sanctions, creates a fertile ground for the development of performance paradoxes. Moreover, public institutions that implement public policies leverage both the authority provided by these policies and their own specialized knowledge regarding the policy implementation processes. This dynamic presents challenges for policy-making bodies (governments), as they may lack the information necessary to evaluate whether institutions or

individuals are manipulating performance processes or presenting misleading data. Given that many public institutions operate as monopolies, there is frequently no comparative data available for performance evaluation (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 275). While provincial units of central institutions or ministries may provide some opportunities for comparison, socio-economic variations among units can limit the feasibility of meaningful evaluations.

Identifying and addressing performance paradoxes is particularly challenging due to their multifaceted nature. Various factors—including the desires of political decision-makers, the nature of the policies to be implemented, the uncertainty or contradictory nature of policy goals, and the capabilities of the implementing institutions—complicate the detection and resolution of these paradoxes. Often, performance paradoxes go unnoticed until it is too late to intervene, as the initial appearances may suggest that everything is functioning well (Leeuw, 2000).

To monitor and prevent performance paradoxes, several recommendations have been proposed. First, it is essential to compare actual employee performance with the reported or measured performance outcomes from evaluation systems. However, the feasibility of this comparison may be hindered by a lack of reliable information. To address this gap, organizations can gather performance data from external stakeholders to enhance reliability. Additionally, new performance indicators can be developed based on existing criteria to bridge information deficiencies. A comprehensive analysis of the performance evaluation system can also be beneficial, allowing for the identification of discrepancies between measured and actual performance prior to their manifestation (Van Thiel and Leeuw, 2002: 276).

Successful approaches to addressing performance paradoxes emphasize the need for performance evaluation systems to exhibit certain characteristics. It is crucial that performance indicators align with job descriptions and remain adaptable to changing circumstances. The rigid indicators, limited to a specific group, can impede comprehensive institutional performance evaluations and exacerbate the performance paradox. Furthermore, the entities responsible for defining performance indicators play a pivotal role; when institutions establish their own criteria, the likelihood of manipulating or misrepresenting information increases. Therefore, implementing an objective and externally auditable structure for performance evaluation is a critical step toward preventing performance paradoxes.

Effective analysis of performance evaluation systems can utilize various methods, including reviewing historical performance reports, conducting inter-organizational comparisons where possible, interviewing relevant executive agencies and government officials, and soliciting insights from experts (e.g., consultants or auditors). This analysis can reveal conditions that trigger performance paradoxes.

Meyer and Gupta (1994) advocate for organizations to adopt a performance evaluation model characterized by a diverse set of unrelated yet comparable indicators. Such an approach can mitigate performance paradoxes and promote a holistic evaluation process. They also emphasize the importance of conducting comparisons across different organizations or within various units of the same organization over time. This comparative analysis enables a more equitable assessment of performance.

For a paradoxical performance evaluation model to be effective, several essential elements must be considered. First, it is vital to find a balance between expanding the range of performance measures and managing the pressures these measures impose. An excessive focus on performance indicators or an overly minimalist approach can contribute to performance paradoxes. Second, it is necessary to identify the most appropriate measures that minimize dysfunctional effects while maximizing functional ones (Bouckaert and Balk, 1991). A public sector performance evaluation system must be equipped to handle paradoxes and ambiguities effectively.

Lastly, the model should accommodate multiple interpretations of policy objectives, acknowledging the varying interests of funders, recipients, suppliers, and consumers in policy implementation. Performance evaluation in the public sector must reflect the distinctive nature of public services (McGuire, 2002). Given that service recipients often play an active role in service delivery (Fountain, 2001: 58)—affecting the outputs and outcomes of services—performance indicators should encompass not only tangible attributes but also qualitative aspects such as reliability and satisfaction (McGuire, 2002: 8). Public services transcend mere efficiency and effectiveness metrics, also encompassing values like justice, equity, and accountability. Fountain (2001) cautions against applying private sector performance measures and techniques, as they may overlook or obscure the democratic and political implications inherent in public services. Consequently, emulating private sector performance management practices, particularly those aligned with New Public Management, may inadvertently foster performance paradoxes in public institutions.

5. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE PARADOXES

This study examines the impact of academic performance evaluation systems in Turkey on the emergence of performance paradoxes, alongside their implications for academic ethics and the quality of scientific research. The performance paradox is explored through four primary dimensions:

Academic Incentive System: The academic incentive system in Turkey, designed to provide performance-based financial rewards, aims to motivate academics by recognizing their scholarly achievements. However, this system often encourages short-term thinking, where individuals prioritize quick results over substantial contributions to knowledge. As a consequence, the focus on immediate, quantitative outcomes can undermine the depth and quality of scientific research. Financial rewards tend to favor quantitative metrics, leading to the marginalization of quality research efforts. This emphasis on performance enhancement can inadvertently threaten the integrity of academic standards and ethical practices.

Appointment and Promotion Criteria: The criteria governing the attainment of academic titles can also contribute to the performance paradox. In many cases, the personal rights of academics and the standards for promotion are heavily reliant on quantitative indicators, such as the number of publications and citation rates. This quantitative emphasis may overshadow essential values such as academic integrity and the pursuit of high-quality research. Consequently, research efforts may become overly fixated on numerical achievements, neglecting the importance of original and in-depth scientific inquiry.

Research University Evaluation Processes: While still in development, the theoretical performance evaluation processes among research universities in Turkey can exacerbate the academic performance paradox. The structure of these evaluations can hinder meaningful comparisons between institutions, complicating the assessment of actual performance and fostering an uneven competitive landscape among universities. This lack of comparability may lead to misrepresentations of institutional efficacy and quality.

WOS (Web of Science) Publication Expectations: The expectation for academics to publish in journals indexed by Web of Science (WoS) plays a significant role in shaping academic performance evaluations. Being included in the WoS index is regarded as a mark of prestige within the academic community. However, this pressure often prioritizes quantitative outcomes, promoting the publication of quicker, less rigorous studies at the expense of in-depth, original research. Over time, these practices contribute to the development of the "academic performance paradox," which not only results in diminished scholarly performance but is also linked to compromised quality and ethical standards (Haslam and Laham, 2010).

Collectively, these elements highlight how efforts to enhance academic performance can paradoxically lead to lower overall quality and ethical breaches within the academic community. The predominance of quantitative measures can obstruct initiatives aimed at fostering high-quality research and maintaining ethical integrity. Addressing these paradoxes is crucial for preserving the standards and values that underpin academic research in Turkey, ensuring that the pursuit of excellence does not come at the expense of quality or ethics.

5.1. The Effect of the Academic Incentive System

The academic incentive system was implemented following a regulation published on December 18, 2015, and serves as an additional payment framework based on the scientific performance of academics. In this system, academics accumulate points through various activities, including patents, scientific publications, awards, projects, research, papers, and citations. These points determine their eligibility for incentive payments according to their academic ranks. Although the primary objective of this system is to enhance academic performance, its shortcomings have contributed to the emergence of performance paradoxes over time. This section concentrates on the direct consequences of this paradox on performance, rather than its impact on academic ethical violations (Vurucu, 2019: 282-285).

A fundamental issue within the academic incentive system is its failure to encompass the full range of academic activities performed by academics. Beyond scientific research, academics also engage in teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, providing academic consultancy, and serving as referees in journals (Yokuş et al., 2018: 146). However, the incentive system primarily measures performance through scores assigned solely for scientific research. This narrow focus may compel academics to prioritize their performance metrics based on research outputs, neglecting other essential activities. Consequently, the system becomes a significant novel contributor to the performance paradox, as academics may reduce their engagement in important functions such as education and consultancy in favor

of activities that yield higher incentive points. This shift can detrimentally affect the quality and integrity of the academic field.

While criticisms of the academic incentive system have often centered on the calculation methods for incentives, wage rates, and disparities in points and payments across different ranks, discussions regarding its ethical implications and effects on broader academic practices remain relatively superficial (Kılıç, 2015). Over time, an increase in the criteria associated with the incentive system and the introduction of various updates have partially mitigated the performance paradox. Initially designed to differentiate between successful and unsuccessful academics, these updates have lost their efficacy in practice. For instance, while it was once straightforward to earn incentive points for mere abstracts, revisions have since reduced the scoring for presentations, capping it at a maximum of 20 points. This change has hindered the potential for positive developments concerning the performance paradox.

Furthermore, there is an expectation that the academic incentive system will enhance the quality of scientific research. The variance in scoring based on journal indexing encourages academics to publish in prestigious indexed journals such as SCI-E, SSCI, and AHCI to accumulate points. Academics are therefore expected to both receive incentives and contribute substantively to the academic landscape. However, contrary to these expectations, there has been a notable surge in the number of questionable journals that allow academics to publish with minimal effort within short timeframes (Göksu and Bolat, 2017: 2). This trend undermines the goal of fostering quality publications, as some academics may resort to publishing in these journals solely for point accumulation. Consequently, the quality of scientific research suffers, and the proliferation of subpar studies within the academic community becomes a pressing concern. This scenario exemplifies a reverse learning process regarding the performance paradox.

To establish a healthier and more sustainable framework for the academic incentive system, it is imperative to focus not only on the scoring system but also on the quality of publications. The implementation of the incentive program has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of national articles and presentations at international conferences in Turkey. According to Demir (2018), the incentive program has led to a rise in potentially predatory journals of dubious scientific quality, indexed in certain international databases but not included in the Web of Science (WoS), alongside an increase in Turkish publications presented at international conferences. However, a significant decline in the number of Turkish publications indexed by WoS has been observed since 2017. Additionally, the rise in ethical issues that have either emerged or become more pronounced due to the incentive system warrants attention. Although Turkey has adopted a model akin to countries where incentive practices have been successfully implemented, these practices have led to both quantitative and qualitative declines in WoS-indexed publications (Demir, 2018). This situation underscores the urgent need for reevaluation and effective restructuring of the incentive system.

Evaluation of the academic incentive program reveals that a substantial proportion of academics believe this system diminishes the quality of research and fosters ethical dilemmas. Specific ethical concerns include the increased prevalence of special issues published by journals, the internationalization of national conferences solely for incentive purposes, and the practice of individuals earning points through mutual citations. Such trends signal a potential

escalation in ethical problems. Additional negative outcomes include the generation of multiple publications from the same dataset, the proliferation of low-quality research, and studies conducted outside of academics' areas of expertise. Moreover, there are growing apprehensions that these trends may diminish the originality of scientific publications. Consequently, a thorough analysis of the incentive system's effects and the formulation of solutions to these issues have paramount importance (Okumuş and Yurdakal, 2017: 153).

Another critical problem arising from the academic incentive system is the increase in publications attributed to multiple authors, including those who have not genuinely contributed. In this context, academics may include each other's names in joint studies to enhance their incentive performance scores, resulting in numerous publications without meaningful contributions. This practice not only constitutes an ethical breach but also undermines the validity of performance assessments. Similarly, the practice of mutual citation within scientific research presents ethical challenges and facilitates the acquisition of undeserved performance scores. In both instances, the performance paradox materializes: the performance evaluation system relies on manipulated results rather than accurately reflecting individual contributions. Furthermore, dynamics such as professor-student relationships that compel students to participate in multiple studies without genuine contributions exacerbate ethical concerns, leading to a systematic exploitation that transcends mere performance paradoxes. These practices significantly undermine the reliability of the academic field and the quality of research (Vurucu, 2019: 282).

The current criteria of the academic incentive system prioritize output (scientific research), resulting in a common misperception that an increase in quantity equates to improved academic performance (Yokuş et al., 2018: 146). However, the system's failure to distinguish between quantity and quality highlights its shortcomings. While WoS indexes could potentially serve as a benchmark for quality differentiation, the existence of SSCI-indexed journals that demand substantial publication fees and produce numerous articles in each issue undermines any quality-enhancing effects. This situation reveals a troubling trend where academics find themselves in a state of modern servitude, as they are expected to produce a high volume of publications while incurring financial burdens to do so. The cost of publishing in WoS journals can be equivalent to approximately two months' salary for an average academic in Turkey, necessitating that they sacrifice a portion of their income to maintain their academic standing.

In conclusion, while the foundational intent behind the academic incentive system and its early contributions appear positive, the reality is that academics find themselves caught between scientific imperatives and financial pressures (Okumuş and Yurdakal, 2017: 294; Vurucu, 2019: 285), leading to performance paradoxes. The system's inherent vulnerabilities have made it susceptible to manipulation, resulting in significant quantitative gains that are divorced from actual academic performance. Additionally, the exclusion of educational and training processes from the incentive framework complicates the accurate assessment of true academic performance. Collectively, these elements foster a detrimental and potentially toxic atmosphere that outweighs the advantages the system may have initially offered to the academic community.

5.2. Impact of Academic Appointment-Promotion Criteria

The criteria for appointment and promotion within universities can significantly influence the phenomenon known as the performance paradox in academic performance evaluation. These criteria can be classified into two fundamental categories: the central criteria for obtaining the title of Associate Professor, and the specific appointment and reappointment criteria for the ranks of Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor, which are determined by individual universities in accordance with their autonomy.

5.2.1. Criteria and Paradoxes for the Title of Associate Professor

The process of achieving the title of Associate Professor is governed by a centralized evaluation system managed by the Inter-University Board (ÜAK), which applies uniformly across all universities. During this process, candidates' scientific work is thoroughly scrutinized by a jury tasked with evaluating their academic performance. However, the effectiveness of this evaluation can be compromised by the qualifications and backgrounds of the jury members. For instance, if jury members are tasked with assessing publications from journals in specific indexes without having prior experience publishing in those same journals, this could hinder the ability to accurately gauge academic performance. Such discrepancies can impede fair evaluations and compromise the integrity of the appointment process.

5.2.2. University Appointment and Promotion Criteria

While the criteria established by universities for appointment and promotion aim to enhance the performance of academic staff, they often contain inherent structural issues that can give rise to a performance paradox. Key among these criteria are quantitative metrics, such as the number of publications, citation rates, and project participation. However, since these indicators only capture limited facets of academic quality, many academics may resort to superficial or short-term research strategies under pressure to achieve higher publication outputs. Consequently, while the volume of scientific output may increase, the depth and originality of research are often compromised.

This emphasis on publication quantity fosters a "publish or perish" culture (Van Dalen and Henkens, 2012), which discourages academics from engaging in long-term, innovative projects. As a result, academic performance is reduced to mere numerical achievements, undermining the value placed on scientific originality and comprehensive research.

Moreover, the appointment and promotion criteria fail to adequately consider the varying workloads and scientific production capabilities across different academic disciplines. Fields like natural sciences and engineering may allow for higher rates of article production, while qualitative research in social sciences and humanities typically demands more time and resources. This discrepancy can create an uneven playing field, disadvantaging academics in disciplines that prioritize depth over volume.

Additionally, these criteria often generate conflicts between academic responsibilities, such as teaching, mentoring students, and contributing to community service, and research obligations. When academics are compelled to prioritize publication and research projects, their essential duties related to education and societal contribution may be overlooked. This imbalance may lead universities to neglect their educational mission and societal responsibilities.

In conclusion, the criteria employed in the appointment and promotion processes of universities contribute to the emergence of a performance paradox for academic staff, complicating the balance between scientific productivity, research quality, and professional obligations. To enable a more holistic evaluation of academic performance, it is essential that these criteria evolve beyond mere quantitative measures and incorporate dimensions such as research quality, societal contribution, interdisciplinary considerations, and educational responsibilities.

5.3. The Impact of Research University Performance Processes

The emergence of the research university concept in Turkey began in 2015, when five institutions—Bilkent University, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul Technical University, Koç University, and Sabancı University—came together to form the Turkish Research University Alliance (TAÜG). This initiative aimed to enhance the effectiveness of Turkish universities within the European Research Area. Following this development, official announcements regarding the selection of research universities were made in 2016, and substantive steps in this direction commenced in 2017. As part of the evaluation process for designating research universities, these institutions prepared self-assessment reports based on criteria such as research performance, research grants, internationalization strategies, education and graduate programs, and university-industry collaboration. The reports aimed to highlight universities' scientific productivity, their national and international impact, and their societal contributions. This initiative was regarded as part of an overarching goal to elevate the quality standards of Turkey's higher education system and to foster a research-oriented culture within universities. Research universities are envisioned as institutions that seek increased visibility and promote academic freedom and innovative research, particularly on the international stage (Gülbak, 2020: 126).

Institutional performance evaluations in the context of research universities are conducted based on three primary dimensions: 1) Research Capacity, 2) Research Quality, and 3) Interaction and Collaboration (Aydın, 2017). Some of the evaluation criteria within these dimensions may inadvertently lead to paradoxical outcomes.

5.3.1. Research Capacity

Scientific Research and Citation Counts: Although these metrics are significant for assessing academic performance, they can induce a performance paradox. The drive to enhance scientific research output and citation counts may prompt academics to prioritize quantity over quality. This focus can result in a surge of publications that lack rigor, while citation counts may be artificially inflated through networks that emphasize quantity rather than meaningful impact.

Number of Patent Applications: While the volume of patent applications is considered a component of research capacity, the quality of these patents is often overlooked. Consequently, universities may file numerous low-quality patent applications solely to boost their metrics. This emphasis on quantity, rather than the quality of innovation, can lead to inefficient processes and a failure to accurately reflect genuine performance.

5.3.2. Research Quality

The InCites journal impact value, derived from citation metrics from Web of Science (WOS), is often used as an indicator of research quality. However, this criterion is vulnerable to manipulation, and the impact values assigned to journals may not accurately reflect their true scientific contributions. Instances of journals artificially inflating citation counts raise concerns about the reliability of this metric in assessing scientific quality.

Open access publication enhances the accessibility of scientific studies, but it often involves article processing charges (APC), which can create financial barriers. This reliance on fees means that only those who can afford to pay can access these publications, potentially hindering equitable access to scientific knowledge. Universities, in their efforts to meet open access requirements, may bear the financial burden of these fees, leading to potential waste of resources.

The number of accredited programs is often used as an indicator of institutional quality. However, accreditation processes tend to focus on superficial evaluations of program functioning, measuring compliance with procedural requirements rather than assessing the true success and effectiveness of academic programs. Universities may incur substantial fees for accreditation agencies, leading to inefficient resource allocation in the pursuit of accreditation.

The number of doctoral students and graduates is another key metric, reflecting the research focus of universities. However, an emphasis on quantity over quality can result in increased enrollment without adequate attention to the rigor of doctoral training. While institutions like Harvard and MIT manage to balance high graduate student enrollment with quality (Salmi, 2009), this balance is often lacking in Turkish research universities. This imbalance can place undue pressure on academics, affecting both teaching and research responsibilities.

In summary, while these metrics are used to assess the performance of research universities, they often fail to accurately capture true academic and research quality. The manipulation of citation counts, financial barriers to open access, superficial accreditation processes, and an overemphasis on doctoral enrollment can all contribute to a performance paradox, undermining the integrity of university assessments and the overall academic landscape.

5.3.3. Interaction and Collaboration

The collaboration between universities and the business sector aims to address real-world challenges through research. However, in an effort to meet performance benchmarks, universities may misrepresent publications produced by academics in university-affiliated technoparks as collaborative ventures with the business community. Such practices raise concerns about the authenticity and quality of these partnerships, potentially leading to a performance paradox, where perceived collaboration does not equate to genuine engagement or impactful research.

Similarly, the international student ratio is often used as a performance metric, yet it does not necessarily reflect the scientific quality of a university. Many international students choose universities based on geographical location—favoring large cities or coastal areas—rather than the institution's academic reputation or research output. Universities without programs offered in foreign languages may struggle to attract international students, resulting in pressure to alter language policies to improve performance metrics.

In Turkey, the performance evaluation criteria for research universities emphasizes quantity over true scientific advancement. This focus can lead institutions to manipulate indicators to enhance performance, without fostering meaningful academic development. Metrics such as the number of patent applications, citation counts, and the ratio of international students may not accurately represent the academic landscape, contributing to a performance paradox in the evaluation process.

To address these issues, it is essential to reconsider the criteria for university performance evaluation and adopt more qualitative assessment methods that genuinely reflect the contributions of research universities to science, society, and education. This approach would encourage a more authentic pursuit of academic excellence, rather than merely focusing on numerical targets.

In summary, while the performance evaluation processes and criteria in Turkey aim to improve the quality and visibility of academic institutions, they also have the potential to produce paradoxical outcomes that could ultimately undermine the integrity of scientific progress and education.

5.4. The Impact of Demands on Web of Science Journals

The Web of Science (WoS) database occupies a significant position in contemporary academia, housing an extensive array of journals and publications. While it shares functionalities with other esteemed databases like SCOPUS and PubMed, WoS stands out as prominent due to its broader journal selection, offering substantial advantages for researchers engaged in bibliometric studies and meta-analyses. Furthermore, WoS includes books from certain publishers and conference proceedings from prestigious scientific gatherings, which greatly facilitate access to academic knowledge.

However, the advantages provided by WoS are not solely aligned with the pursuit of scientific advancement or societal benefit. Journals seeking inclusion in this prestigious database are required to pay specific fees. If a journal fails to meet these financial obligations, readers must bear the costs of accessing the related research. This dynamic illustrates the encroachment of a capitalist economic framework into academia, transforming access to scientific knowledge into a process that necessitates both intellectual engagement and financial resources.

Although the significance of the Web of Science in the academic discourse surrounding performance evaluation is not the central focus of this study, it is important to note that the reliance on WoS as the primary benchmark for scientific progress is a major point of contention. Its prominence in university rankings and the assessment of leading scholars compels institutions to strive for visibility within this database. Additionally, the emphasis placed on WoS-indexed journals for academic appointments, incentive awards, and other evaluative measures has rendered this platform critical for achieving academic success.

The substantial weight attributed to WoS indexes, such as SCI, SSCI, AHCI, and ESCI, fosters a reliance on these metrics to evaluate the performance of both academic staff and institutions. This reliance can lead to a competitive landscape where achieving high performance in academia hinges upon inclusion in the WoS database, creating various

paradoxes. Scholars and institutions seeking academic excellence may find themselves trapped in a system that incentivizes conformity to WoS criteria, consequently constraining the diversity and originality of research outputs.

The overemphasis on performance metrics associated with databases like WoS has resulted in the exploitation of systemic loopholes. Particularly, a journal's inclusion in these databases often depends on its citation counts, prompting the emergence of new journals that dilute disciplinary boundaries to meet citation requirements. For instance, some journals, such as Heliyon, publish articles across disparate fields, merging medicine, physics, economics, and sociology within the same issues.

Moreover, significant editorial oversights have been observed in articles indexed by WoS. An illustrative example includes an article (2015) published in BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making, where both English and Turkish were employed in the conclusions section. This oversight suggests a failure to adequately translate the manuscript, coupled with insufficient editorial review and inadequate peer evaluation. The inclusion of such an article in the WoS database—ranking even in the Q2 category—underscores the serious quality concerns plaguing scientific research. Such instances highlight how a performance-driven academic culture can exploit weaknesses in the system, thereby undermining the reliability of scientific publications.

The trend of journals demanding high publication fees and ensuring rapid article acceptance has become a pivotal component of the performance paradox. Prominent platforms like MDPI, BMC, and Frontiers feature numerous journals that charge significant fees for expedited publication. The recognition of these journals within the academic community raises concerns about the integrity of the academic performance evaluation framework. Notably, journals like Sustainability, which publishes approximately 1,000 articles biweekly, totaling over 20,000 articles annually, charge around 2,400 Swiss Francs per article. The sheer volume of publications in such short timeframes calls into question the rigor of their editorial processes. Additionally, instances where only articles from editors assigned to special issues are published cast doubt on the transparency and scientific integrity of these journals.

These practices contribute to the development of performance indicators that prioritize exploitation of systemic weaknesses over genuine academic quality. Many academics engage with these systems to enhance their prospects in appointment and promotion processes, resulting in a modern academic landscape characterized by exploitative cycles.

In conclusion, while the contributions of the WoS database to the scientific community are undeniable, it is equally evident that the performance paradox stemming from the exploitation of its systemic gaps poses significant challenges to scientific advancement. In a system where relationships with editors and the capacity to pay fees overshadow publication quality, an unethical and unscientific approach to performance evaluation emerges. The publication processes are increasingly aligned with the short-term interests of academics and institutions rather than fostering genuine scientific progress. To address these issues, it is imperative to reassess performance evaluation systems and adopt a quality-oriented approach within academic publication processes.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The performance evaluation process is vital for maintaining standards and quality in the educational practices and service provision of academics within higher education. Historically, the traditional structure of the academy regarded academic performance as self-evident, necessitating no further scrutiny post-evaluation. However, contemporary pressures such as internationalization and the establishment of quality benchmarks in higher education have rendered it as an essential mechanism for institutions to engage in both internal and external evaluations of academic performance (Çetinsaya, 2014).

A review of the academic performance evaluation systems in Turkey reveals a predominant reliance on quantitative data, which inadequately captures the essence of quality. Specifically, it has been noted that the numerical scores attributed to academics fail to reflect genuine academic quality and performance. Furthermore, the evaluation processes tend to consider low-quality and contentious publications, leading to the widespread acceptance of lower standard articles, which adversely affects the quality of academic promotions.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that academic performance evaluation system can foster quality in certain areas. Particularly, criteria for academic promotion and appointment can incentivize higher-quality research endeavors. However, these systems are often criticized for emphasizing quantitative metrics at the expense of qualitative contributions and their societal and scientific impacts. An evaluation framework that focuses solely on visible and measurable activities cannot adequately represent the true quality of academic performance.

The lack of clarity and transparency in performance evaluation criteria leads to inconsistencies across institutions and individuals, negatively impacting the meritocratic nature of academic culture. Consequently, these evaluation system tends to prioritize publication quantity over quality, prompting academics to publish excessively and undermines the merit-based system.

To address the academic performance paradox, a range of measures and strategies should be adopted:

1.Correct Interpretation of Academic Performance: Academic performance should not be equated with productivity metrics typical of the private sector. Evaluations should encompass various academic activities, including research, education, consultancy, and peer review. Solely focusing on outputs may lead to paradoxical outcomes.

2.Development of Institutional and Individual Awareness in Performance Evaluation: Institutions should cultivate a culture of performance evaluation that targets both individual and institutional success. All members should recognize that performance evaluation is, but one aspect of a broader strategy aimed at institutional advancement.

3.Determination of Objective, Reliable, and Measurable Criteria: The criteria used for performance evaluation must be dependable, valid, and measurable. It is crucial to eliminate ambiguity in interpretation criteria to ensure objective evaluations.

4.Revising Unnecessary Criteria: Outdated or irrelevant criteria in performance evaluations should be reassessed and revised. For instance, national reports that lack relevance should not influence performance evaluations, especially when numerous subpar studies are associated with online conferences.

5.Closing Gaps in Performance Systems: Ensuring the integrity of evaluation processes is essential. For example, there must be strict oversight of publication processes in scientific journals to prevent the inclusion of financially motivated and non-quality studies in academic performance evaluations.

6.Maintaining Balance Between Academic Activities: Performance evaluations should account for various academic responsibilities, including teaching and administrative duties. A narrow focus on research could lead to neglect of other essential academic roles, disrupting the balance within the academic ecosystem.

7.Acting with the Principle of Continuous Improvement: Performance evaluation, accreditation, and related processes should not merely fulfill legal obligations but should be continuously refined and enhanced following the principle of "kaizen."

8.Harmonization of Institutional and Individual Performance Targets: Systems should be established where individual performance goals align with institutional objectives. Achieving a balance between institutional priorities and individual interests is crucial, ensuring that academic promotion criteria are congruent with institutional performance targets.

9.Determination of Performance Targets with SWOT Analyses: Institutions should utilize SWOT analyses to set realistic and achievable performance targets, aligning strategic goals with internal capabilities and external opportunities.

10.Conducting Performance Evaluation Processes with the Principle of Transparency: The evaluation process should be transparent, with active participation from all stakeholders in the measurement and evaluation of outcomes, inviting feedback for continual improvement.

These strategies present actionable measures to mitigate the academic performance paradox and enhance the fairness, transparency, and quality of academic performance evaluation process. By adopting these recommendations, institutions can able to foster a more balanced and effective approach in evaluating academic contributions, ultimately benefiting the academic community and society at large.

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