

DRIVERS OF CHANGES IN GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE: A LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract:

Understanding the variables, which drive the fluctuations in government expenditure is essential for public sector expenditure planning and productive budgeting. Many government targets are either not met or over-budgeted, which often stem from inability to trace and include all the factors that impact government expenditure in the periodic comprehensive planning process. Therefore, the objective of this article is to provide a review of the factors that drive changes in government expenditure. The methodology approach is conceptual review and development of framework. It first dwells on a critical review of the literature, which are subsequently sieved for key words that tangibly represent the factors that drive government expenditure. Subsequently, the article proceeded to develop a framework of factors, which affect government expenditure. The framework is organised in relational diagram that denotes cause and effect, where the factors are indicated as pointers of causation of changes in government expenditure. It also identifies public policy change as a notable factor to consider as a control variable, hence public policy is a standalone variable in the framework. The article, therefore, paves the way for further research application and expansion of the framework in theoretical and empirical research. It also provides important tool for public sector managers as reference point in planning periodic government expenditure.

Keywords: Public policy; government spending; public finance; public expenditure; budgeting.

1. Introduction

Because government spending has a direct impact on a nation's economic growth, public policy makers and administrators have been very concerned with the factors driving this growth. Academics contend that all government spending, with the exception of investment, has a detrimental effect on economic expansion. If there is a slow growth rate, this negative effect could be harmful to the economy, resulting in low levels of investment and unemployment (Maluleke, 2016). However, other research such as Kweka

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and Morrissey (2000) produced a contrary finding to this apparent general view as they found that government investment in Tanzania have not proven to be productive as claimed by other literatures.

The problem of this article hinges on the researcher's literature-based opinion that public administration and finance experts have not given the subject of government spending enough thought or thorough analysis. It is challenging for those who are interested in this topic to locate the resources they need to easily analyse publicly available spending statistics. The main focus of the economic examination of these developments has been how they might affect prices and employment levels. Overall, nevertheless, the analytical results have not always been adequate. Public finance specialists have generally focused on taxes, implying that economists may not have much more to offer in the way of recommendations for government expenditure. Studying these issues is difficult because of their complexity, especially because there are no trustworthy standards for judging their results (Larkey, et al. 1981).

The factors influencing government spending have been extensively studied in the literature, using a range of research methods and approaches. Nevertheless, prior work has mostly concentrated on national or local data, creating a vacuum in our knowledge of the idea at large.

The current work attempts to create a conceptual framework on the factors influencing changes in government spending as well as a broad overview of the literature. This innovative method will help scholars, future researchers, and public policy makers comprehend and create public expenditure policies.

The structure of the article is as follows: The next section presents a general survey of the literature and then moves on to the conceptual framework development. Recommendations based on the results are presented in the paper's conclusion.

2. Method

The researcher applies a critical review of the literature, which culminates in the construction of a conceptual framework for understanding the drivers of instabilities in public expenditure. Conceptual framework method is vital because it plays important role in connecting concepts, actual data, and pertinent theories, hence it advances and organizes knowledge ont linked concepts. Therefore, a conceptual framework for factors influencing shifts in public spending is presented in this research paper. This is significant because public expenditure has been the focus of numerous business and public policy studies, but there hasn't been a conceptual framework developed by the academic community to integrate the variables impacting swings in public expenditure. Researchers would find it easier to define concepts, map the conceptual scope of their research, organize linkages between concepts, and spot gaps in the body of knowledge regarding variations in public expenditures with the help of the framework this article established. Therefore, in formulating a framework of drivers in public expenditures, the author took the following three core steps; firstly, the author conducted a critical review of the

literature on public expenditures changes; secondly, the author picked out key variables of concern that drive public expenditures in a particular research location; finally, the author integrates all the variables in a flow chart that shows the variables as drivers and locating them as causative (independent variable) with a link to public expenditure variable.

3. Theoretical foundation

Government expenditure is key to developing state structures and business environments that are conducive to growing new business, which add to economic growth of the nation.

Therefore, the theories of government expenditure assist in public policy and economic development discussions as the theories explore the many reasons and impacts of how governments elect to allocate and spend communal funds. Theories of expenditure explore among others, how government spending affects economic growth and dimensions of growth, resources allocation, and societal trend of resilient well-being.

The most popular philosophical or theoretical approaches which scholars apply in the understanding of government expenditure include but not limited to Wagner's Law theory, which alludes that several government's economic development may lead to increases in government expenditure. Another closely related theory is the well-known Keynesian theory or hypothesis, which expatiates the nature and size of government expenditure as a strategic tool for the stimulation of economic activities of countries. The outstanding typologies of government expenditure may be summarised as follows:

The Wagner's theory: This Wagner's philosophy of government expenditure postulates that as an economy is positioned on a development trajectory, there tend to be a corresponding requirement or need for additional demands in government services with additional spending, mainly in areas such as around social services and social infrastructure, which also assumes an increasing trend.

The Keynesian Theory: the Keynesian theory postulates that government expenditure may be applied as a government fiscal policy strategy toward influencing the level of economic activity in a particular or over a given period of time. Therefore, it will follow that a gradual increments in the level of government expenditure may often promote related demand and associated economic growth

Public Choice Theory: the public choice theory focusses on relevant incentives and motivations of government officials responsible for implementation of expenditure, which includes political officers, the bureaucrats, and stakeholders of wide diversity (Njoku, 2024)

Lindahl Pricing: the Lindahl pricing theory stipulates that the determination of government expenditure should be inclined more to the public preferences and the extent to which the citizens are willing to pay for the outcome public goods and/or services (Self, 2021). The choice element in the theory draws from the fact that in a democratic state, it is the choice of citizens to express and commit to the usage of public

good or public service and be willing to provide required payment for the usage of such service or good. A forced usage of public good and forced payment would be tantamount to treatments or policies that characterised a despotic state.

Crowding Out: the crowding out theory makes inference in relation to likely negative implications of increasing government expenditure on privately held investment as well as the consumption. When government borrowing weighs heavily on the burden of financing government spending, the government may opt to increase the interest rates which thus makes it more expensive for private businesses to acquire capital through borrowing to make their investments (Onyiriuba, 2016). It thus implies that increasing the government expenditure through borrowing would have negative implications for the activities of the private sector as it has implication for reducing private sector investment and consumption. This may often happen since government borrowing causes rise in interest rates, which makes it much more exorbitant for individuals and private organisations to make investments through borrowed capital, which thus confirms the conclusions of (Onyiriuba, 2016). It is important to note that understanding government expenditure is very important not only for public managers but also for private business such as banks. Hence Onyiribuba (2016) highlights that:

“Understanding the pattern of government expenditure is pertinent to successful public sector banking. Doing so, bankers can devise appropriate banking strategies. For example, for certain reasons, government might decide to implement budget deficit in a particular year. In that case, it becomes critical for bank managements to know the size of the deficit, and how the government intends to finance it” (Onyiribuba, 2016, p. 205-221).

3.1 Views on government expenditure during unusual events

Budget reallocation during pandemic:

“Budget reallocation used for spending on COVID-19 disease control and social safety net spending affects improving the regional economy during the study period with p-values of 0.021 and 0.000. The government, through the Sub-National Budget, continues to refocus spending for economic recovery” (Akhmadi, Sumardjoko, & Sumantri, 2023, p.74)

Government spending during pandemic and non-oil economic growth:

“COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the structure of the relationship between Government expenditures and non-oil economic growth. Results show that 1 percent increase in capital and current expenditures of state budget increases the real non-oil GDP by 0.10 and 0.40 percentage points, respectively. Accordingly, both capital and current expenditures of the state budget have positive impact on the real non-oil GDP growth for both periods” (Abbasov, Gulaliyev, Ahmadov & Mammadov, 2021, p.185)

Government capital expenditure during pandemic central Java Province of Indonesia

“The study show that the variable of Local Revenue has a negative impact on Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Financing, Government Accountability System, while Local Revenue has positive impact on Budget Refocusing. Theoretically, this study offers a new

research model to explain effect Local Revenue to Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Financing, Accountability Performance and Refocusing, because the government of each region can manage PAD even though it is less than optimal so it tends to have low Capital Expenditure. By the decrease in Local Revenue, it has implications for Local Revenue contributed to Capital Expenditure, Infrastructure Financing, Accountability Performance and Budget Changes”(2022, p.1779)

Financial Crisis and Government Expenditure

“In 2008 and 2009, the economic and financial crisis had generated a decrease in government revenues and an increase in government expenditures in terms of GDP. This had resulted in substantially deteriorated deficits. In 2010, revenues and expenditures tended to stabilise in terms of GDP, with a slight improvement in the deficit. In 2010, total EU-27 general government expenditure stood at 50.3 % of GDP while total general government revenue fell to 44.0 % of GDP, which produced a deficit of 6.4 % of GDP” (Wahrig & Vallina, (2011, p.1).

“Intervention has taken different forms in different countries and periods of time. Moreover, recent episodes showed that in front of an imminent crisis, the promise of no interventions made by governments is barely credible. In this paper we address the problem of resolving banking crises from the government perspective, taking into account the fact that preventing banking crises is crucial for the government” García-Palacios, Hasman & Samartín, 2014, p.32)

“The effect is a function of the severity of the crisis. In particular, for severe crises, comparable to the most recent one in terms of output losses, banking crises are followed by a medium-term increase of about 37 percentage points in the government gross debt-to-GDP ratio. In addition, the debt ratio increased more in countries with a higher initial gross debt-to-GDP ratio, with a higher share of foreign debt, and with a lower quality of institutions. The increase in government debt is also a function of the size of the fiscal stimuli implemented to counter the economic downturns and varies with the type of banking intervention policy used” (Furceri & Zdzienicka, 2012, p.289).

“a significant negative relationship between political instability and economic growth in both the long-run and short-run. Contrarily, military expenditure has an insignificant impact on economic growth, especially in the long-run. These results are confirmed by the FMOLS estimator. Moreover, the estimated coefficient on the one-period lagged error correction term (ECT_{t-1}) indicates that deviations from the long-run equilibrium relationship are corrected within a year” (Maher & Zhao, 2022, p.956).

4. Literature Review

According to Kim and Hwan (2020), policy changes have an impact on government spending, so it's vital to take into account the variables that influence the substance of policies. This study is concerned with how government spending on research and development (R&D) affects economic growth and global competitiveness. Planning must

take into account external environmental changes that must be understood. The purpose of the study is to determine the variables that influence the substance of government R&D policies, with a focus on the July 2019 Japanese export regulation issue.

The analysis of news items and official documents during periods of policy disruption uses topic modelling of LDA. According to the analysis, the National Assembly's interests, the importance of the policy agenda, public opinion, technological independence, and industrialization are among the factors that affect changes in the government's R&D budget expenditure. Other determinants include the president's policy direction. By safeguarding source technologies and restructuring the industrial ecosystem in preparation for the fourth industrial revolution, this study seeks to address disruptions. The conclusions have significant ramifications for enhancing upcoming policy choices and budget allocation effectiveness.

In their analysis on the variables influencing social welfare spending, Jin and Lee (2015) concentrated particularly on urban governments. The research looked at 74 metropolitan governments using data collected during a five-year period between 2008 and 2012. The major goal was to comprehend how different determinants affected social welfare expenditures, and STATA was used to estimate a random-effects GLS regression.

The investigation by Jin and Lee (2015) produced numerous significant discoveries. First, in terms of political issues, it was discovered that social welfare spending went up in election years and the year after a vote. Spending on social welfare also tended to be higher when a progressive party held the majority in the basic local legislature. This might be explained by election promises made by politicians and self-government officials in the name of social welfare. Progressive majority parties, in contrast to conservatives, also demonstrated a greater interest in neighbourhood improvement and social transformation.

Second, they discovered that some socioeconomic and demographic factors significantly influenced the amount spent on social welfare. Particularly, it was shown that the percentage of those with disabilities was statistically significant. This shows that when it comes to providing specialized services for the disabled, local governments frequently take on more varied initiatives than the federal government. Further evidence that population size affects expenditure levels comes from the study's confirmation that social welfare spending grew with population growth.

Last but not least, the study looked at financial issues and discovered that social welfare expenditure was impacted by the percentage change in welfare expenditure based on incrementalism. This suggests that social welfare spending is frequently planned based on the budget from the previous year, without properly taking into account these expenditures' unique characteristics. The study also found a link between social welfare spending and per capita tax burden that was unfavourable. This implies that the decrease in welfare demand is greater than the rise in budgetary spending.

Finally, Jin and Lee's (2015) research provided insight into the variables affecting social welfare spending in urban governments. The results emphasized how political, social, demographic, and economical issues influence how people spend their money. These results by Jin and Lee (2015) provides assistance toward shaping public sector social welfare policies especially in metropolitan municipalities.

Soon (2012) performed a meta-analysis and categorised the literature on public expenditure during the previous ten years into various areas. In their research, three primary groups were examined Soon (2012): public service demand, public service expenses, and the total growth of public finance. In terms of the general growth of public finance, empirical research found that budgetary incrementalism, socioeconomic factors, and bureaucratic conduct were important factors influencing government spending. These findings mainly validated Wagner's Law. Research on the demand for public services looked into intergovernmental grants, the features of public services, and how needs were measured.

In Soon (2012), study, research on public service costs, which were divided into research on factor pricing, economies of scale, the Tiebout hypothesis, and environmental factors, were also included in the analysis. These studies emphasised the possible efficiency loss resulting from city-county consolidation while also highlighting the advantages of economies of scale. Nevertheless, factor pricing research is still in its infancy, and the homogeneity of Korean local government institutions limits the applicability of the Tiebout hypothesis. Finally, the study discovered that environmental factors, especially those related to population, significantly impacted government spending.

To sum up, the Soon (2012), meta-analysis study offers insightful information about the key developments in public expenditure research throughout a previous ten years. It emphasises how crucial elements like socioeconomic characteristics, bureaucratic behaviour, and budgetary incrementalism are in shaping government spending. It also highlights the need for more investigation into the effects of intergovernmental grants and the assessment of public service demand. The report also emphasises the advantages of economies of scale as well as any possible drawbacks to city-county consolidation. Lastly, it emphasises how environmental factors—especially demographic ones—have a big impact on government spending (Soon, 2012).

Other researchers have pointed to level of income and price levels in the economy as affecting the level of government expenditure. As an instance, Sanz and Velázquez (2002) use models of the median voter's demand that are frequently seen in public choice literature to investigate the factors that determine the functional distribution of government spending. Firstly, Sanz and Velázquez (2002) applied a review of the economic literature is done regarding the variables affecting each part of government spending. Next, an expenditure structure demand model is built, and the demand equations system is calculated for the sample of OECD nations from 1970 to 1997. Sanz and Velázquez (2002) results show that institutional variables, population density, and

age structure have a considerable impact on the composition of government expenditure in addition to income and prices.

Numerous studies have examined other variables, like trade openness, urbanization, and national income, to determine what influences shifts in government spending. For instance, Maluleke (2016) studied the factors influencing government spending in South Africa using yearly data from 1970 to 2014. In order to establish a long-term relationship between government spending and its drivers, the study presents an overview of South Africa's spending and applies the Johansen-Juselius co-integration test. An error correction model was used to further investigate the important factors. The results show that the quantity of government spending is highly influenced by the rate of urbanization, national income, decrease of poverty, trade openness, and wage rate, all of which delayed one period.

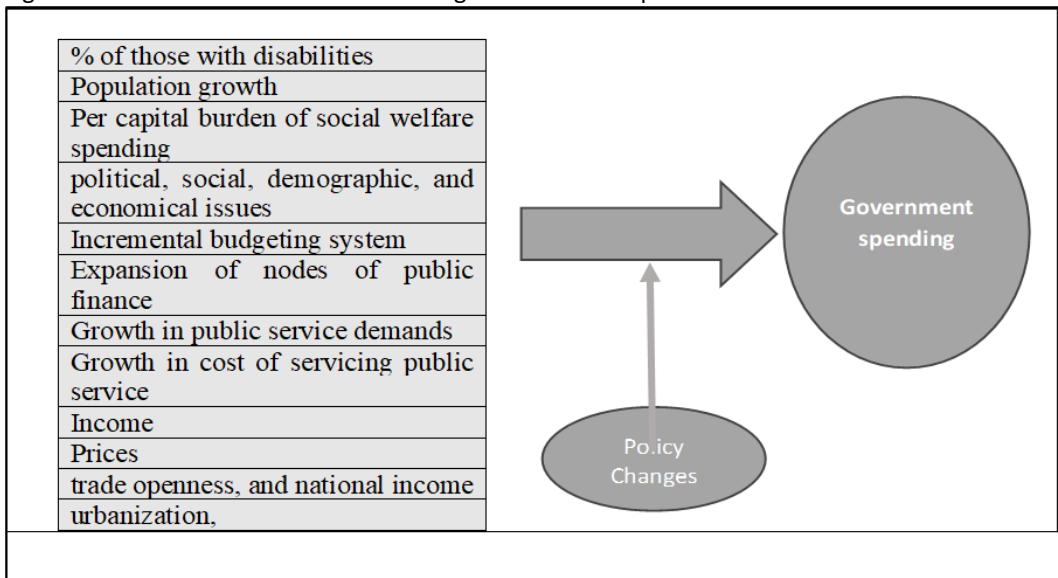
Albassam (2020) suggests a model to assess the efficiency of public governance spending by using data from 71 countries during for the period covering 1996–2017. The proposed model addresses the effectiveness of public expenditure allocations towards reach government's service objectives (such as, controlling national unemployment and enhancing national economic growth) in addition related factors that connect with the sustainable development goals. They therefore applied econometric and statistical analysis, which were meant to authenticate the proposed model for measuring its stability and accuracy. Therefore, using the proposed current model, they applied the statistical model to individual sample of countries to provide a better understanding of each country's public service spending system and to assist public service decision makers to efficiently implement their national strategic plans (Albassam 2020). Other researchers in the area of public service expenditure modelling includes the HANK model (Ferriere & Navarro, 2025); endogenous growth model (Barro, 1990); neoclassical modelling (Chandana, Adamu & Musa, 2024); economic growth model studies (Baccaro & Hadziabdic, 2024; Ait, Wilson, Howe, Clarke, Gartner, Wilson & Blakely, 2023; Nguyen & Bui, 2022). Other researchers has had mixed findings on government expenditure includes government debt and expenditure (Yusuf & Mohd, 2021); public spending and technical efficiency (Auci, Castellucci & Coromaldi, 2021); public expenditure and sustainable development (Liu, Yin, Putra & Sadiq, 2022); heterogeneous impacts of government expenditure (Ferriere & Navarro, 2025). Others focus on government expenditure multiplier and the direction of fiscal intervention (Barnichon, Debortoli & Matthes, 2022); fiscal multipliers and fluctuations and the development of a general theory of state-dependency on fiscal multipliers through the development of empirically related frictions (Ghassibe & Zanetti, 2022); understanding the size of government fiscal multipliers during economic recession via the regime switching modelling (Auerbach & Gorodnichenko, 2012). Sign of shock and government expenditure (Ben Zeev, Ramey & Zubairy, 2023). They analyse the possibility that government spending multipliers may differ according to the sign of the shock by applying aggregate US historical data and Ben Zeev's nonlinear diagnostic tests (Ben Zeev, Ramey & Zubairy, 2023).

In a follow-up on government expenditure multiplier studies Christiano, Eichenbaum and Rebelo (2011) inquires when government spending multiplier could be large. They conclude that government-spending multiplier could tend to be much larger than one in instances when the zero lower bound on the nominal interest rate binds. They also find that the larger the fractional bias of government spending which occurs while the related nominal government interest rate is on a zero level, the larger is the value of the associated multiplier (Christiano, Eichenbaum & Rebelo, 2011). Others have sought to analyse fiscal multipliers during military spending period. Researchers thus provides recent evidence about the impacts of government expenditure on economic output from a group of large panel data from advanced and developing economies. they find that government spending shocks exists through the application of variation in international military spending (Sheremirov & Spirovska, 2022).

4. Results: A Conceptual framework of drivers of changes in public expenditure

Relying on the foregoing literature review, the article develops a conceptual framework of drivers of government expenditure. The factors sieved from the literature cover among others, a wide spectrum of social, economic, demographic and environmental factors. The framework is presented in Figure 1, with the items on the left-hand side showing the independent variables, which have a joint compounded effect on the dependent variable being the government expenditure. Of note is that public policy might be kept as a control variable.

Figure 1: Framework of Factors Influencing Government Expenditure



Source: Author

5. Discussion and conclusion

Understanding the factors that influence fluctuations in government spending is vital for public sector tactical and strategic planning wherein public expenditure budgeting is key

(Duncombe et al, 1992). Many government targets are often not met or in some instances targets are over-budgeted; this stems from inability to trace and include all the variables that impact government expenditure well ahead of planning period to make the planning process comprehensive (Hendrick, 2000; Duncombe et al, 1992). Therefore, this article aimed to propose a framework of factors that drive changes in government expenditure.

To achieve the aim of the paper, the methodological approach was qualitative with the application of a critical review of the literature, which eventually culminated a conceptual framework developed in Figure 1.

Therefore, the article relied on empirical literature findings to develop a conceptual framework of drivers of government expenditure. The factors that appear prominent from the literature includes amongst others, social, economic, demographic and environmental factors. It also highlights the role of public policy variable, which is kept as a control variable for studying other factors that causes fluctuations in public expenditure. The framework provides an integrated insight for understanding the drivers of fluctuations in public sector expenditure. The conceptual framework will assist further research in connecting concepts, actual data, and pertinent theories. Hence, this paper's conceptual framework advances and organizes knowledge about linked variables to government expenditure.

The article recommends the application of this framework in future conceptual frameworks research and quantitative research to test the causal relationship between the variables as developed in the framework. In the same vein public policy managers will find the framework useful in their short and long term expenditure planning for efficient and effective delivery of services.

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