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Territorial Governance and Performance of Local Government

Meriam Cherkaoui*
Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco
**Corresponding author: cherkaouimariem04@gmail.com*

Lamia EL MOUJAHID
Chouaib Doukkali university, El jadida, Morocco
elmoujahidlamia1@gmail.com

Abstract. *This study examines the links between governance and local government performance in Morocco. The methodology adopted allows for an in-depth analysis of the causal relationships between various aspects of governance, such as transparency, participation, convergence and partnership, and local government performance, assessed in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impactTop of form. The results of the study indicate that some specific dimensions of governance play a significant role in determining the performance of local governments in Morocco. For example, transparency and citizen participation could emerge as key factors positively influencing the quality of local public services. Structural equations make it possible to identify these relationships quantitatively, thus providing valuable information for decision-makers and practitioners engaged in improving local governance in Morocco.*

Keywords: Governance, performance, local government, territorial development, LISREL method.

Introduction

During these last two decades, the concept of governance has evolved significantly in intellectual debates as well as in the political, economic, and social spheres. Since the 1990s, a diversity of definitions, approaches, and sometimes divergences have emerged, creating a complex conceptual landscape. Smith and Lewis (2011) even point out that it is a contradictory phenomenon; some of these elements seem logical when isolated, while others appear irrational and absurd when juxtaposed. However, despite the lack of a clear consensus, it is nevertheless possible to identify the idea that highlights the importance of governance in the efficiency of public affairs management by the state. Governance has now become an essential element of territorial development policies.

Attention to governance is increasing significantly, involving a variety of development actors, such as researchers, politicians, civil society, and decision-makers. Despite the lack of unanimous agreement on its conceptual definition, establishing a culture of "good governance" has become a priority for achieving optimal performance in public policies and development programs.

Interestingly, various empirical works consistently confirm the positive and significant link between the quality of governance and overall performance (financial as well as sustainable). These studies reinforce the idea that effective governance is a key catalyst for progress and the success of development initiatives, thus highlighting its crucial role in building resilient and prosperous societies (Pallage and Robe, 2001; Marin and Barraqué, 2013; Subirats et al., 2007).

In this era of long-term globalization and global crises, Morocco has also engaged in initiatives to consolidate the principles and values of good governance. These initiatives have taken shape through:

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- A new constitution in 2011, which gives a prominent place to governance by emphasizing the imperative need to establish good governance mechanisms.
- High Royal Guidelines, aimed at establishing the foundations of exemplary governance and improving the quality of public services as essential prerequisites for improving the living conditions of citizens.
- The creation of a ministerial department dedicated to governance, demonstrating Morocco's formal commitment to promoting exemplary government practices and strengthening the effectiveness of public institutions. This approach underlines the strategic importance given to governance as a fundamental lever for territorial development and improving the well-being of the population.
- The implementation of a new development model in 2021, which includes the modernization of the administration and the strengthening of governance tools as a priority lever to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth.

This increased interest in governance has resulted in the adoption of a new development approach. This approach aims to strengthen decentralization and deconcentration, considered fundamental levers for improving governance and optimizing the performance of development projects. Thus, the emergence of governance in Morocco is the result of various socio-economic and political factors. These elements include, in particular, the impact of globalization, the inadequacies noted in the socio-economic reforms undertaken by the country after its independence, and especially the harmful consequences of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the 1980s and the drought period from 2019 to 2022, which significantly impacted the Moroccan economy.

Therefore, different territorial scales, such as municipalities, provinces, and regions, have acquired a status, skills, and attributions that position them as key actors in territorial development. However, despite the crucial role assigned to them, these entities face a significant shortage of financial and human resources. Consequently, as is the case for companies, issues related to governance are proving to be fundamental challenges, determining the success and performance of local authority development projects.

It is in this context that the object of our research is placed. Our approach aims to better understand the links between governance and the performance of local authorities in Morocco. More specifically, we seek to assess the extent to which the governance system, as conceptualized and implemented by local authorities, can influence the performance of these entities. We focus particularly on the case of the municipalities targeted by the National Initiative for Human Development (INDH) in the province of El Kelaa des Sraghna.

Literature review

1. Conceptual approach

1.1. Governance: Definition and measurement criteria

Governance refers to the way public affairs are organized, directed, and managed at the local level. It includes decision-making processes, institutional structures, and coordination mechanisms that govern interactions between local governments, community actors, and citizens. Definitions of governance typically emphasize aspects such as transparency, accountability, citizen participation, convergence, partnerships, and efficiency in managing local affairs.

Institutions such as the World Bank, UNDP, and the International Institute of Local Governance (IILG) provide similar definitions, emphasizing the importance of citizen participation, transparency, and efficiency in managing local resources. Local governance involves decision-making processes that foster citizen engagement and collaboration between local actors to achieve sustainable development goals and improve community well-being.

Governance is measured by specific indicators, including citizen participation, partnerships, transparency, and convergence, which reflect different aspects of decision-making, collaboration, and accountability in managing public affairs at the local level. These indicators help assess the quality of local governance and the effectiveness of policies implemented.

- **Citizen Participation**: It is essential for ensuring the democratic legitimacy of decisions made by local governments. It allows for better representation of the population's interests and fosters transparency, accountability, and innovation in public management. Strong citizen participation builds trust between those who govern and those governed and helps broaden the solutions to local challenges through diverse perspectives.
- **Partnerships**: Partnerships between various stakeholders are critical for the success of local policies. Effective collaboration strengthens public action, improves decision-making, and increases the impact of interventions on populations. These partnerships must be inclusive, transparent, and accountable to produce sustainable outcomes.
- **Transparency**: Access to information and clarity in decision-making processes are key elements of governance. Transparency enables citizens to understand how decisions are made, how public funds are allocated, and how government actions are monitored. It is crucial for building trust and accountability in public institutions.
- **Convergence**: Convergence refers to the ability of different stakeholders to work together despite their differences toward common goals. This can manifest as the convergence of interests, policies, resources, and outcomes, allowing for the optimization of collective efforts in local development.

*1.2. **Performance of Local Government: Definitions and Evaluation Criteria***

The performance of local government refers to the evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and impact of actions taken by local governments to improve citizens' well-being, manage resources optimally, and contribute to sustainable development. This includes the implementation of policies, programs, and projects designed to address the specific needs of local communities. The key criteria for evaluating this performance are:

- **Relevance**: Relevance refers to how well actions and policies at the local level address the real needs and priorities of the community. An action is relevant if it effectively addresses specific problems faced by the community and aligns with its goals and values.
- **Effectiveness**: Effectiveness refers to the ability of actions taken at the local level to achieve the set objectives. It measures how well the expected results are achieved. An action is considered effective if it reaches the intended results satisfactorily.
- **Efficiency**: Efficiency focuses on achieving results with the minimum resources required. It involves optimizing the use of available resources to minimize costs while maximizing results.
- **Impact**: Impact refers to the long-term effects and sustainable changes resulting from local actions. It measures the concrete and positive results on the community's socio-economic, environmental, or cultural development. Impact evaluates the real and significant changes brought about by local actions, considering long-term outcomes and sustainability.

These performance criteria are essential for determining the effectiveness of local actions in terms of concrete results and the long-term sustainability of the changes made in the community.

1.3. Governance and Performance: What Links?

Theories on governance and performance highlight the importance of institutions and resource management for the success of local public policies. Several theories, such as New Institutional Economics (NIE), Agency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Resource Dependency Theory, Public Choice Theory, Collaborative Governance Theory, and Participatory Governance Theory, explain how institutional arrangements, transparency, and collaboration among actors directly influence the performance of local governments.

- **New Institutional Economics (NIE)**: According to this approach, poverty in developing countries is attributed to institutional constraints that increase the costs of economic policies, thereby reducing the effectiveness of public actions. Governance plays a key role in reducing these costs and improving economic performance.
- **Agency Theory**: It focuses on managing contracts between agents and principals, aiming to minimize transaction costs and optimize organizational performance. This theory finds applications in the public sector for improving local government management.
- **Stakeholder Theory**: This theory emphasizes the importance of engaging all groups and individuals with divergent interests in the decision-making process. The goal is to reach compromises that improve the economic and social performance of local governments.
- **Resource Dependency Theory**: This theory posits that a successful organization is one that maintains positive relationships with its environment. In the public sector, failure to adhere to principles of good local governance becomes an obstacle to developing local public goods.
- **Public Choice Theory**: This theory examines public decision-making in terms of interactions between actors with different values and preferences. The success of public policies is based on the interactions among these actors.

These theories establish a strong link between governance and the performance of local governments, emphasizing that collaboration, transparency, resource management, and citizen participation are essential for improving the outcomes of local policies.

In summary, the relationship between governance and the performance of local governments depends on the interaction of several institutional, economic, and social factors. The hypotheses formulated in this context suggest that citizen participation, convergence of actors, transparency, and partnerships significantly influence the performance of local governments.

Methodology

1. Positioning and Method

The coherence between the paradigm, methodology, and the object of analysis determines the validity of scientific knowledge (Igalens and Neveu, 2005). To define our epistemological stance, we have chosen to adopt the positivist paradigm, which seeks to explain human and social reality through causal relationships. Our reasoning follows the hypothetico-deductive approach, which is based on formulating preliminary hypotheses grounded in a thorough understanding of the issue at hand, as demonstrated in the first part of this research. This methodology involves explicitly formulating hypotheses, which are then subjected to rigorous testing and validation through data analysis. The hypothetico-deductive approach offers a logical framework that structures our research process, enabling us to systematically assess the validity of our hypotheses in light of the results, thereby reinforcing the robustness of our scientific approach. Our methodological choice is firmly oriented toward a quantitative approach for investigating this study. By opting for this method, we aim to collect numerical data to quantify the observed phenomena and analyze the relationships between the studied variables in a structured and systematic manner.

2. *Progress of the Investigation and Data Analysis*

- **Defining the Construct Domain**:

As part of our research, we specify the domain of the construct using two distinct approaches. First, we have opted for an exploratory design to deeply and openly explore the essential dimensions of our construct. This approach enables us to gain an initial, holistic understanding of the subject matter.

Simultaneously, we have developed a taxonomic design that focuses on systematically classifying the components of our construct. This design allows us to structure and organize the elements into categories, facilitating a more precise and targeted analysis.By combining these two approaches, we aim to obtain a comprehensive view of the construct, blending in-depth exploration with structured classification for a thorough understanding of our research topic.

- **Operationalization of Variables**:

In line with our methodological approach, we have operationalized the variables, a crucial step to define the concepts under study in a precise and measurable manner. Following the guidelines established by the National Observatory of Human Development in 2015, we developed a detailed matrix of variables and sub-variables, presented as items. These items help define the various dimensions related to governance and performance.

This rigorously developed matrix is an essential methodological tool for structuring our evaluation approach and ensuring the appropriate representation of the studied elements. It will serve as a guide during the data collection process, facilitating the measurement and systematic analysis of the parameters associated with governance and performance in the specific context of our study (National Observatory of Human Development, 2015).

- **Development of the Questionnaire**:

The next step in our methodology involved developing the questionnaire, a meticulous task guided by the recommendations of Roussel and Wacheux (2005). By adhering strictly to these methodological guidelines, we designed a robust and coherent data collection instrument. To quantify participants' responses, we chose the 5-point Likert scale, providing a relevant gradation of the opinions expressed. For clarity and logical organization, the items were structured into seven distinct sections, following a carefully crafted introduction. This organization helps ensure that respondents understand the questionnaire, which in turn facilitates precise and targeted responses to each section, thereby improving the reliability of the data collected.

- **Pre-test of the Questionnaire**:

Before launching the questionnaire, we conducted a pre-test with five presidents of targeted associations. This process enabled us to adjust certain items based on their feedback. Additionally, to ensure linguistic appropriateness, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic to meet the specific needs of the potential participants.

- **Data Collection**:

For data collection, we opted for face-to-face interviews, which were deemed effective in terms of response rates. This approach was conducted with the support of the Social Actions Division in the province of El Kelaa des Sraghna, enhancing the efficiency and quality of our information collection process.

- **Sample Selection**:

For sample selection, we focused on 94 associations benefiting from INDH projects in municipalities targeted by this initiative. Our questionnaire was specifically directed at the presidents of these identified associations.

To ensure balanced representation, we employed the proportional method, stratifying associations according to the type of project. This approach allows for adequate representation of the diverse associative realities within the INDH initiative, thereby strengthening the validity and relevance of our sample.

- **Quantitative Data Analysis**:
  - **Exploratory Phase**:
    During the exploratory phase, we placed special emphasis on analyzing the structure of the measurement scales used. This in-depth analysis aimed to understand how the items are arranged within each scale, allowing for accurate contextual interpretation. Simultaneously, we assessed the reliability of these scales by examining the internal consistency of the items to ensure stable and reliable measurements.For these analyses, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 20, an advanced statistical tool that strengthened the rigor of our methodological approach.
  - **Confirmatory Phase**:
    In the confirmatory phase, we applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Linear Structural Relations (LISREL) approach. This advanced methodology enabled us to test and confirm the hypothesized relationships between our latent variables.We also performed covariance structure analysis to assess the interdependencies between our variables, further consolidating the validity of our theoretical framework.

Results and discussions

1. *Reliability of measuring instruments*

The table below gives the values of validity tests before and after deletion of the items, the results show that the indicators (KMO and alpha) were significantly improved after the deletion of the item "Evaluation of training" from the variable "Participation" having communalities lower than 0.3.

All the sub-variables of our model give values that exceed 0.50 (threshold accepted for KMO and alpha). With quite satisfactory values or even excellent for certain sub-variables. This result confirms the reliability of our measurement scales and ensures the representativeness of the items in the measurement of the variables and constructs studied in our work.

Table 1. Summary of validity analysis results of the measurement scale of the variables (before and after deletion of unreliable items)

Variables	Sous-variables	Qualité de représentativité avant suppression des items			Nombre d'items à supprimer	Qualité de représentativité après suppression des items			Nombre final des items
		Indice KMO*	Signification de Bartlett*	Alpha de Cronbach*		Indice KMO*	Signification de Bartlett*	Alpha de Cronbach*	
Gouvernance	*Participation*	*0,85*	*0,000*	*0,89*	*1 item*	*0,92*	*0,000*	*0,91*	*9 items*
	Convergence	0,70	0,000	0,80	0 item	0,70	0,000	0,80	3 items
	Partenariat	0,72	0,000	0,84	0 item	0,72	0,000	0,84	3 items
	Transparence	0,71	0,000	0,54	0 item	0,71	0,000	0,54	4 items
Performance	Pertinence	0,50	0,000	0,75	0 item	0,50	0,000	0,75	2 items
	Efficacité	0,72	0,000	0,83	0 item	0,72	0,000	0,83	3 items
	Efficience	0,67	0,000	0,77	0 item	0,67	0,000	0,77	3 items
	Impact	0,88	0,000	0,88	0 item	0,88	0,000	0,88	6 items

Source: Authors' own research.

2. *The dimensionality of measuring instruments*

Before starting the hypothesis testing, a preliminary step is to reduce the number of sub-variables by grouping them into factors that provide the maximum amount of information. To do this, we chose to use a principal component factor analysis (PCA). This methodology will allow us to condense the sub-variables of each variable in the model into factors that we will later use in the model test and hypothesis validation.

Table 2. Results of factor analyses of sub-variablesTop of form

Variables de mesure		Nombre des Items	Nombre de facteurs dégagés	Pourcentage d'information restituée par le facteur*
Gouvernance	Participation	9 Items	1 facteur	57,93%
	Convergence	3 Items	1 facteur	71,76 %
	Partenariat	3 Items	1 facteur	75,59%
	Transparence	4 Items	1 facteur	55,01%
Performance	Pertinence	2 Items	1 facteur	80,03%
	Efficacité	3 Items	1 facteur	75,54%
	Efficience	3 Items	1 facteur	68,63%
	Impact	6 Items	1 facteur	64,61%

Source: Authors' own research.

Factor analysis generated a significant KMO and Bartlett index for all subvariables, indicating adequate representation of these subvariables in the identified factors. Each factor accounted for a significant percentage of information, exceeding 50% of the total variance, and the total inertia exceeded 1 for all factors.

These results denote a reasonable satisfaction of the derived factors for each subvariable, highlighting an increased reliability of the components. Consequently, these factors can be credibly used as explanatory variables in our structural analysis of the conceptual model.

3. Adequacy and discriminant validity

The analysis gave quite satisfactory results in terms of measuring the index of measurement of the quality of representation of the model by the variables.

Table 3. representativeness of the model

Types d'indices	Exemples	Seuils d'acceptations empiriques*
Les indices absolus	Khi-deux	276,864
	Signification khi-deux	0,000
	GFI : Goodness of Fit Index	0,964
	AGFI : Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index	0,953
	RMR :Root-mean-square residual	0,039
	RMSEA : *Root-mean-square error of approximation*	0,036
Les indices incrémentaux	CFI : Comparative Fit Index	0,952
	NFI : Normal Fit Index	0,938
	RFI : Relative Fit Index	0,984
	IFI : Incremental fit Index	0,957
	TLI : Tucker-Lewis index	0,902
L'indice de parcimonie	Khi-deux normé (Khi-deux/ddl)	2,184

Source: Authors' own research.

- The value of the normalized chi-square statistic is below the accepted error threshold of 0.05, indicating that our model is statistically significant.
- Moreover, the RMSEA shows a value considerably lower than 0.05, suggesting no significant difference in the covariance matrix.
- The NFI also meets reliability standards, exceeding the 0.90 threshold.
- Similarly, the CFI provides a satisfactory model comparison result, with a value of 0.95.

All of these indicators confirm the quality of the representativeness of our model, highlighting that the explanatory variables manage to correctly estimate the dependent variable.Top of the form

4. Measure of relationship between variables

The analysis of the sub-variables measuring the dependent variable "performance" reveals that the latter was constructed from four main sub-variables, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact, as previously stated.

Table 4. Regression Weights

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
FAC1_Pertinence	<---	Performance	1,000				
FAC1_Efficacité	<---	Performance	1,048	,186	5,643	0,00	
FAC1_Efficience	<---	Performance	,977	,187	5,238	0,00	
FAC1_Impact	<---	Performance	1,125	,185	6,096	0 ,00	

Source: Authors' own research.

The table shows that these 4 sub-variables give a significance lower than the error threshold 0.05which showsthat they manage to formulate the performance variable exactly.

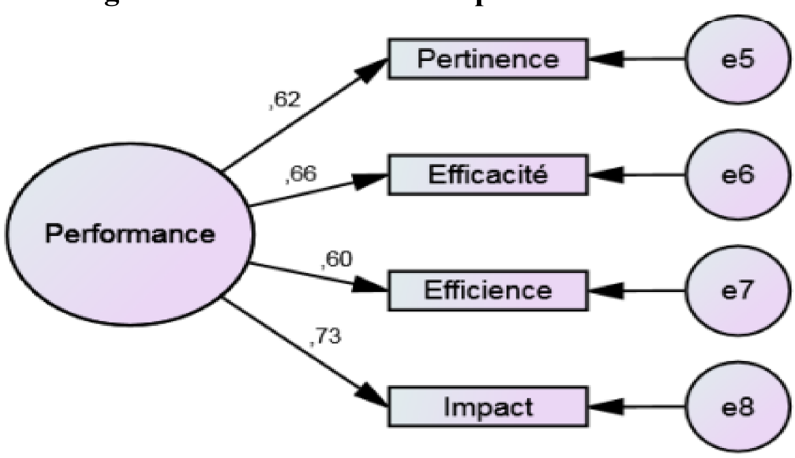
Table 5. Standardized Regression Weights

			Estimate
FAC1_Pertinence	<---	Performance	,619
FAC1_Efficacité	<---	Performance	,658
FAC1_Efficience	<---	Performance	,600
FAC1_Impact	<---	Performance	,728

Source: Authors' own research.

Referring to the table, it is notable that the four sub-variables play a significant role in the construction of the "performance" variable, as evidenced by their estimation coefficient exceeding 50%. These results can be presented schematically according to the following format:

Figure 1: Formulation of the performance variable



Source: Authors' own research.

▪ **Analysis of the variables influencing the dependent variable "performance"**

The table below presents the significance thresholds of the relationships between the variables, in our study we accept a relationship which does not exceed an error threshold P: of 0.05.

Table 6: Regression Weights (Group number1- Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Performance	<---	FAC1_Participation	,447	,061	7,267	0,00	
Performance	<---	FAC1_Covergence	*-,014*	*,032*	*-,447*	*,655*	
Performance	<---	FAC1_Partenariat	,074	,033	2,251	,024	
Performance	<---	FAC1_Transparence	,291	,047	6,225	0,00	

Source: Authors' own research.

According to the data in the table, the P-value is less than the threshold of 0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that three variables in our model, namely Participation, Partnership and Transparency, have a significant influence on the dependent variable (performance).Top of form

On the other hand, the convergence variable has a significance level higher than the accepted error threshold, thus indicating that this variable has no significant impact on the dependent variable.

Table 7. Standardized Regression Weights (Group number1- Default model)

			Estimate
Performance	<---	FAC1_Participation	,829
Performance	<---	FAC1_Covergence	-,027
Performance	<---	FAC1_Partenariat	,138
Performance	<---	FAC1_Transparence	,541

Source: Authors' own research.

The regression table above presents the percentage of influence of each variable on the dependent variable. It is observed that the variable "participation" exerts the greatest influence, representing 83%, while transparency contributes 54%, and partnership 14%.

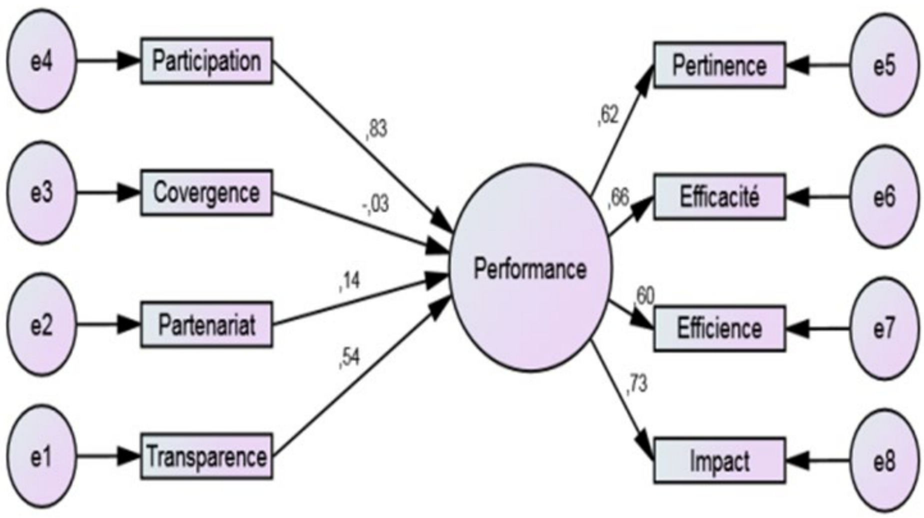


Figure 2. The Validated Research Model

Source: Authors' own research.

- A variation in the variable "Participation" leads to a variation in the dependent variable "Performance" of 83%.
- A variation in the “Partnership” variable induces a variation in the dependent variable “Performance” of 14%.
- A variation in the variable "Transparency" generates a variation in the dependent variable "Performance" of 54%.
- The "convergence" variable does not show any significant influence on the dependent variable.

Based on this result, it is clear that we can validate and accept the hypothesesH1, H3 and H4 but we could not verify H2.Welet's present the results in format of table:

Table 8. Summary of results of research hypothesis tests

Hypothèses de recherche	Résultat du test	Validation
• Hypothèse 1 : la participation exerce une influence significative sur la performance	Béta : 0,83 Sig : 0,000	Acceptée
• *Hypothèse 2 : la convergence exerce une influence significative sur la performance*	*Béta :-0,03 Sig : 0,655*	*Rejetée*
• Hypothèse 3 : le partenariat exerce une influence significative sur la performance	Béta : 0,14 Sig : 0,024	Acceptée
• Hypothèse 4 : la transparence exerce une influence significative sur la performance	Béta : 0,54 Sig : 0,000	Acceptée

Source: Authors' own research.

5. *Discussion*

The findings from applying the structural equation model to the evaluations of beneficiary associations provide valuable insights into the key factors influencing the performance of initiatives and projects at the local level. The following is a discussion based on these findings:

- **Importance of Participation**: The strong correlation (83%) between participation and performance underscores the essential role of stakeholder involvement at all stages of local projects. When community members are actively engaged in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects, several benefits arise. First, this involvement ensures that projects genuinely address local needs, as those directly affected have a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities in their area. Additionally, participation fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens, which can lead to greater support and long-term commitment to projects.
- **Role of Transparency**: The significant correlation (54%) between transparency and performance highlights the importance of open communication and the dissemination of clear and accessible information in local governance processes. When local authorities' decisions and actions are transparent, citizens are better informed and can participate more knowledgeably in discussions and debates on policies and projects. Moreover, transparency strengthens public trust in local institutions, which can help create an environment conducive to the success of initiatives.
- **Limitations of Partnership**: Despite the often emphasized importance of partnership in local governance, the limited correlation (14%) between partnership and performance suggests that its contribution to improving project outcomes may be less significant than expected. This could be due to various factors, such as misaligned expectations between partners, differing priorities and resources, or challenges in maintaining effective collaboration over time. These findings highlight the need to carefully select partners and implement strong coordination mechanisms to maximize the benefits of partnerships.

- **Challenges of Convergence**: The lack of a positive correlation (-3%) between convergence and performance underscores the challenges local governments face in effectively coordinating the efforts of different stakeholders. The convergence of actions can be hindered by obstacles such as institutional rivalries, divergent interests, and resource constraints. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to promote a culture of collaboration and partnership, as well as to establish effective coordination mechanisms to align the objectives and actions of various stakeholders.

Conclusion

The goal of our research was to explore the relationship between governance and the performance of local authorities. Our findings underscore the critical role of participation and transparency in local governance in enhancing project outcomes. At the same time, we also highlighted the significant challenges that local authorities face when managing partnerships and coordinating actions among various stakeholders.

These insights offer valuable guidance to local decision-makers, enabling them to design and implement more effective policies and projects that are better aligned with the specific needs of local communities. By focusing on improving governance practices, local authorities can foster stronger community engagement and more successful project outcomes.

The ongoing discourse surrounding governance is unlikely to diminish anytime soon, signaling the need for a reimagined approach. The paradox of governance continues to present a range of complex challenges in public management. Research in this field must be contextualized and analyzed from multiple perspectives, incorporating disciplines such as economics, sociology, and political science, to ensure that the proposed solutions are both practical and actionable. By approaching governance with an interdisciplinary mindset, we can better equip decision-makers with the tools necessary to address the evolving complexities of local governance and public management.

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