

**Z. Torebekova** Syracuse University, USA  
e-mail: [tzulfiya@syr.edu](mailto:tzulfiya@syr.edu)

## SOCIAL STATUS OF A CIVIL SERVANT: MEASUREMENT CRITERIA AND DETERMINANTS

In the public administration system, a special role is played by civil servants' activities in making effective decisions and forming a human-centric model of the state apparatus. The effectiveness of these activities is directly related to the social status of public service employees. This study considers legal, socioeconomic, cultural, and political aspects of the social position of public servants. The purpose is to identify criteria and factors related to the determination of the social status of public servants within the system of public relations. Based on the literature review, the criteria affecting the formation of the social status of this category of employees are systematized, and a consistent conceptual framework is generalized. According to this study, economic, legal, and professional factors constitute the ground for distinguishing the social position (or status) of public service employees. The public assessment, respect, and trust for public service employees are among those factors affecting the image and prestige of the public service system. The results of this research can be used for reforming the public service system, including the improvement of mechanisms for the social protection of public servants in Kazakhstan. The article may attract the interest of politicians, public service employees, and civil society representatives participating in modernizing the contemporary state apparatus.

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**Key words:** social position and status, public service employees, economic factors, the prestige of the public service system, Kazakhstan.

З. Торебекова

Сиракуз университеті, АҚШ  
e-mail: [tzulfiya@syr.edu](mailto:tzulfiya@syr.edu)

### Мемлекеттік қызметшінің әлеуметтік мәртебесі: өлшеу критерийлері мен детерминанттары

Мемлекеттік басқару жүйесінде тиімді шешімдер қабылдауда және мемлекеттік аппараттың адамға бағытталған моделін қалыптастыруда мемлекеттік қызметшілердің іс-әрекеті ерекше рөлге ие. Осы іс-әрекеттің тиімділігі мемлекеттік қызметкерлердің әлеуметтік жағдайына тікелей байланысты. Бұл зерттеу мемлекеттік қызметшілердің әлеуметтік мәртебесіне қатысты құқықтық, әлеуметтік-экономикалық, мәдени және саяси аспектілерді қарастырады. Негізгі мақсат – қоғамдық қатынастар жүйесіндегі мемлекеттік қызметшілердің әлеуметтік мәртебесін анықтауға байланысты өлшемдер мен факторларды анықтау. Әдебиеттерге шолу жасау негізінде азаматтардың осы категориясының әлеуметтік мәртебесінің қалыптасуына әсер ететін өлшемдер жүйеленеді, аталмыш ұғымның концептуалды аппараты жалпыланады. Осы зерттеуге сәйкес экономикалық, құқықтық және кәсіби факторлар мемлекеттік қызметшілердің әлеуметтік позициясын (немесе мәртебесін) айқындаудың негізі болып табылады. Мемлекеттік қызмет саласының имиджі мен беделіне әсер ететін факторлардың қатарына мемлекеттік қызметшілерге қоғамның бағасы, құрметі және сенімі кіреді. Зерттеу нәтижелерін мемлекеттік қызметті реформалауда, оның ішінде Қазақстандағы мемлекеттік қызметшілерді әлеуметтік қорғау тетіктерін жетілдіру барысында пайдалануға болады. Бұл жұмыс заманауи мемлекеттік аппаратты жаңғыртуға атсалысып жүрген саясаткерлерді, мемлекеттік қызметшілерді және азаматтық қоғам өкілдерін қызықтыруы мүмкін.

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**Түйін сөздер:** әлеуметтік позиция мен мәртебе, мемлекеттік қызметшілер, экономикалық факторлар, мемлекеттік қызмет жүйесінің беделі, Қазақстан.

### З. Торебекова

Сиракузский университет, США, г. Сиракьюс  
e-mail: tzulfiya@syr.edu

#### **Социальный статус государственного служащего: критерии измерения и детерминанты**

В системе государственного управления особую роль занимает деятельность государственных служащих по принятию эффективных решений и формированию человекоцентричной модели государственного аппарата. Эффективная деятельность непосредственно связана с социальным положением государственных служащих. В данном исследовании рассматриваются правовые, социально-экономические, культурно-политические аспекты, связанные с социальным положением государственного служащего. Основной целью данной работы является выявление критериев и факторов, связанных с определением социального статуса государственных служащих в системе общественных отношений. На основе обзора литературы систематизированы критерии, влияющие на формирование социального статуса данной категории граждан, обобщен понятийный аппарат данного концепта. Согласно данному исследованию, экономические, правовые и профессиональные факторы составляют основу для выделения социального положения (или статуса) работников государственной службы. Общественная оценка, уважение и доверие к государственным служащим относятся к числу факторов, влияющих на имидж и престиж сектора государственной службы. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы для реформирования государственной службы, в том числе, для совершенствования механизмов социальной защиты государственных служащих в Казахстане. Статья представляет интерес для политиков, государственных служащих, представителей гражданского общества, которые участвуют в модернизации современного государственного аппарата.

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**Ключевые слова:** социальное положение и статус, государственные служащие, экономические факторы, престижность системы государственной службы, Казахстан.

#### **Introduction**

Public service employees have been accepted as a key part of the public administration system. Their primary task is to ensure the smooth operation of the state apparatus and the provision of national legislation. Thus, public service employees protect the interests of the entire nation and state and secure the rights, freedoms, and interests of citizens. The specifics of the tasks performed by the public servants, their duties, and the nature of the political powers determine the peculiarities of the public servants' status established by the national legislature.

The importance of the public service system requires the formation of a highly competent and effective pool of public service employees capable of implementing strategic state functions. One of the tools for realizing this objective is the provision of the distinct social status of public servants. The general assumption is that if public employees are incompetent, immoral, and demotivated due to poor working conditions and low wages, the results of their activities will be ineffective and of poor quality. Conversely, if the public service employees are

highly professional and responsible, the outcome of their work will be equally beneficial for the public service system and citizens.

Meanwhile, the national legislation creates the base for legal guarantees of non-interference in the activities of public servants and their legal status. This status also ensures the expertise of individuals performing state functions. Yet, the logical continuation of the legal status of public service employees should be their social status. It is generally assumed that social status may contribute to the formation of public prestige of public service employees, which emphasizes their ability to overcome the new challenges of public administration and long-term planning.

In this sense, this article aims to identify the main criteria and measures for determining this special condition. It is recognized that social protection measures are among the critical indicators affecting the effectiveness of the public service system and state agencies.

Thus, this work examines the theoretical concepts related to the research subject and explores diverse factors associated with the social position, status, and prestige of public employees.

## Methodology

This article uses a literature review as a method of scientific inquiry. The literature review is an estimation of the existing works on a selected issue or topic. It involves several steps, such as researching, reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly knowledge to understand the current state of research in the field. The overall purpose is to collect relevant research knowledge and to identify areas where further work is required. The results of this work can be a report or article as well as part of a dissertation, thesis, or research proposal. It can similarly reveal various stages of the scientific process, such as distinguishing a research question, identifying research tools, and analyzing study results. So thus, the literature review is an ongoing process that can be updated and revisited depending on new works published in the field.

Scholars emphasize the importance of the literature review due to the cumulative character of knowledge production. It constitutes a base for original research and theory development (Webster, 2009; Pare, 2015). Yet, conducting a literature review can be challenging since it requires accuracy in identifying research gaps and developing hypotheses and research questions. There are some guidelines for conducting literature reviews, including various reviews, such as systematic reviews, narrative reviews, and meta-analyses. Systematic reviews refer to synthesizing research in a structured, clear, and consistent manner (Davis, 2014). A narrative review is used for topics that have been studied within diverse disciplines and underline the progress of research over time and across research fields (Wong, 2013). A meta-analysis combines results from various studies to identify patterns, disagreements, or relationships in the context of multiple studies on the same topic (Tranfield, 2003). Regardless of what type of review, it must follow four steps: 1) designing the review, 2) conducting the review, 3) analyzing the review, and 4) writing up the review (Liberati, 2009; Snyder, 2019).

## Theoretical Basis

Concepts related to social status

Status is one of the substantial concepts in public administration and is explained as the position of individuals in a social structure (Whyte, 1943). It refers to the social and legal differentiation between

individuals and the degree of their power, rights, and duties (Kahn-Freund O, 1967).

Status is a legal condition possessing the following attributes: 1) the condition has a significant degree of public interest; 2) the condition is legally framed; and 3) the condition is granted or revoked through state intervention (Craveson, 1953).

This concept is elaborated through the social-economic characteristics of individuals, where those with high-status are perceived more positively than those with low (Blau, 1964; Oakes & Rossi, 2003). Two aspects of social-economic status are highlighted: 1) actual resources and 2) status based on privileges or ranks (Krieger et al., 1997). Actual resources indicate those possessed by a person, including education, material well-being, and social support. The status-based resources imply potential resources available to use. Accordingly, the higher the status, the wider the access to available resources, and the high status is obtained through a high income and education (Fujishiro et al., 2010).

Status in a society can be attained through either dominance or prestige-based pathways (Henrich, 2010). If the dominance-based status is characterized by either social dominance (i.e., control over resources or outcomes) or the use of fear to attain status, produced through intimidation, manipulation, and coercion (Maner, 2016); prestige-based status is attained through skill, knowledge, respect, and success (Cheng, 2010).

When examining the social status of public employees, a summative judgment of Subjective Social Status is also used, which defines public service employees' socioeconomic position across educational attainment, occupational status, income, and health status (Adler et al., 2008). According to Adler et al. (2008), the power of occupation and social position plays a critical role for public service employees working in large and hierarchically organized systems, especially among white men. The evaluation of education, occupation, and income by public service employees is associated with the context of their lives.

The literature generally emphasizes a variety of interpretations of social status, including social role, social position, and social power referring to a particular set of norms in a social structure (Bates, 1956; Farkas, 2022). The concept of "social privileges, prestige, and reputation" is also used as a determinant of the non-contractual/intangible benefits of public service (Ketelaar et al., 2007).

## Determinants and Criteria of Social Status

The literature highlights various determinants and criteria concerning social protection measures and conditions of public service employees.

### 1) Legally framed status and condition

Scholars emphasize the importance of establishing the legally framed status and position of public service employees who can work on a contractual basis (Demmke, 2012). There is an understanding that the high status of public service employees strengthens the legitimacy of government administration and corresponding measures (Whitton, 2001).

The legal status of public employees aims to ensure sufficient legal guarantees against any interference in their activities. It underlines the rights, duties, and restrictions of public employees, including measures of stimulation in the public service system (Groza, 2018).

Remuneration and social benefits of public service employees

Public service provides opportunities to receive various rewards and benefits (Cardona, 2002). Typical compensations include salary, promotion, job security, status, the performance of meaningful public service, and social assistance (Bozeman, 2015).

The remuneration aims to increase the competitiveness of the public sector and the productivity of public employees (Hammerschmid, 2016). The low level of remuneration, along with the reduction of opportunities for training and promotion, can lead to difficulties in attracting highly skilled professionals to the public sector (Demmke, 2012).

Scholars highlight the positive impact of monetary incentives on the performance of public service employees (Dustan et al., 2023). The effect of monetary incentives has been essentially silent among enforcement services and front-line service providers (Gilligan, 2022). Non-financial rewards also have a promising effect on the performance of public servants, including in-kind prizes and social recognition (Glewwe et al., 2010). Such incentives are popular among Indian police workers, Chinese teachers, and Pakistani property tax inspectors (Banerjee, 2021; Karachiwalla, 2017; Dal Bo, 2018; Khan, 2019).

### Effectiveness of public service employees

The efficiency of the public service system is linked to the professional knowledge, competence, motivation, values, and work ethic of its employees (Christensen, 2008). It is affected by the culture of

public administration reflecting the legislation on public service, which also constitutes the ground for evaluating the performance of public service employees (Staroňová, 2017). The literature emphasizes the positive correlation between the social status of public service employees and the effectiveness of the state apparatus.

### Power, position, and prestige of public service

Social status is extended by power, prestige, and position in society and by affiliation with the hierarchical structure of public service (Cardona, 2002). These factors constitute the intangible-non-monetary benefits of the public service system. Affiliation with the public service system and power perceived through the position may increase the possibility of influencing political decisions and realizing specific objectives and social contributions (Creta, 2009).

Professional prestige is a criterion of power, which implies certain privileges and the possibility of access to resources and control over them (Treiman, 1976; Ibarra, 1993). A prestigious job can increase the self-esteem and satisfaction of a person holding such a position (Judge, 2001). The prestigious position also enjoys respect and positive public assessment due to the protection of public interests (Goyder, 2009). Thus, the high prestige of public service, along with its power and position, retains the best-qualified employees and ensures the smooth operation of the public organization (White, 1932).

### Organizational mission and working conditions

While making personnel preferences, job candidates sort into mission-driven and profit-driven careers (Akerlof, 2005; Finan, 2017). Mission-driven preferences often align with delivering public services, while profit-driven choices correlate with better material gain (Hanna, 2013; Ashraf, 2014).

The most effective agencies are those that develop among public servants a sense of mission (Wilson, 1989). Binding to a mission is an important intangible element of the public service system (Thompson, 2006).

The physical environment and working conditions positively affect public servants' performance and social status (Yuliantini et al., 2019). Improper job conditions may encourage public servants to satisfy them at the expense of citizens (Khojiev, 2022).

### Expertise of public employees and their career advancement

A public service system is distinguished by its strict regulatory framework, which includes the selection procedure through competitive

assessments, seniority-based advancement rules, a fixed retirement phase, and others. The application of objective and proper selection criteria aims to ensure the attraction of the most competent candidates to the public service system (Prendergast, 1999; Van der Meer, 2015; Xu, 2018).

Career incentives with the possibility of career growth and development affect successful job performance. Career policies based on senior-based promotion rules often serve as a demotivating constraint of the public service system (Bertrand et al., 2020).

Studies underline the importance of the development of management of skills in the public service system. The development of better skills helps public servants serve the government more effectively and implement state priorities (Guerin et al., 2021).

#### Leadership style

Public servants' efficiency relates to leadership behavior and style (Ciobanu, 2015). The interpersonal abilities of managers to shape relations based on trust with their subordinates, to assign and delegate critical tasks, and to encourage development and learning among public servants (Fernandez et al., 2010; Vandenabeele, 2014).

Job satisfaction among public employees also depends on task variation (Yang & Wang, 2013). Scholars emphasize the positive correlation between public servants' performance and clearly defined objectives and tasks (Wright et al., 2007).

#### Military background

Military service has become an increasing factor affecting entry into the public service system. The military status and privileges open a path to public service due to the state compensation for military participation (Johnson, 2019). Studies suggest that military background may increase the patriotism and efficiency of public servants (Levi, 1997). The share of jobs staffed by veterans appears to have increased in recent years (Lewis, 2013).

## Discussion

It was revealed that various criteria are used to determine the social status of public servants, including education, professional position, income level, social benefits, social interaction, political connections, etc. In addition, social status likely implies the prestige, rank, and social position of public employees. Yet, positions may vary depending on the hierarchical structure, professional prestige, and power dynamics of the public service system.

Meanwhile, social status is predominantly dynamic as it relates to the level of public assessment of public servants. This assessment primarily depends on the efficiency of the state functions that consequently affect the prestige and attractiveness of the public service system for highly qualified specialists.

Also, the social status of public employees depends on national legislation and the overall economic development of the country. However, social status does not necessarily correlate with the efficiency of the public service system. Most often, great attention is given to decent wages, employment strategies, and working conditions. Yet, the lack of social privileges and benefits for public servants may discourage the best candidates from joining the public service system, which in the long run may adversely impact the public service and administration system. Thus, when determining the social status of public servants, attention is paid to such criteria as labor efficiency, length of service, level of education, set of skills, and qualifications acquired in previous positions. Additional emphasis is given to the military past and the political affiliation of public employees.

Based on the literature review, the criteria for determining the social status of public employees can be presented as follows.

**Table 1** – The criteria for determining the social status of public employees

№	Criteria	Description
1.	Efficiency	the efficiency of the work of the public servants, and the ability to demonstrate initiative and results.
2.	Education and competencies from previous positions	current education, specialized training, and retraining, as well as a set of skills and awards acquired in previous positions
3.	Work experience	work experience is necessary to determine a public employee's position in the hierarchy of the public service system.

<b>№</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
4.	Salary and other remuneration	the level of wages and other financial compensation is important for attracting highly skilled professionals to the public service system.
5.	Military background	military service and awards received during this service.
6.	Political affiliation	the obtained political connections, political activities, and views.
7.	Respect, prestige, and position in society	the social benefits due to the efforts on protecting public interests
8.	Social interaction and influence	social engagement and networking based on professional position
9.	Social benefits	Medical insurance, housing, etc.
Note: Compiled by the authors based on the source of the literature on the social status of public employees		

It is crucial correctly set measures to define the overall influence of each criterion for the formation of social status and position of the public service employees. Statistical measures may include both continuous variables (for example, the highest years of schooling or public service) and categorical variables (certain scales indicating the highest degree of education or position). The highest level of education is likely to link with the higher economic or social position of public service employees.

### Conclusion

In general, many factors affect the social status of public service employees, and they are not universal. Moreover, new approaches to public service, based on strategies for hiring highly skilled professionals, improving working conditions, and establishing higher wages for public sector workers, are gaining significance nowadays. Yet, the social protection measures as well as establishing special social condition for public employees remains a crucial factor in ensuring high-quality and effective public service.

In this sense, the purpose of this work was to explore the criteria and approaches for determining the social status of public employees. The results of conducted work revealed the existence of various measures for distinguishing the social status of

public employees. The most popular of them are efficiency and effectiveness of public employees, work experience and level of education, a set of skills and competencies from previous positions, military background, political affiliation, and many others. Thus, the social protection measures and establishing a special social condition for public employees should impact the overall effectiveness of the public service system, as well as increase the attractiveness of public services for highly skilled professionals. The high quality of public services and the positive attitude of public employees toward the recipients of public services, in the long run, will raise the public trust and respect for the public service system and its employees in society.

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