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Article

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Article

Perspective of Critical Factors toward Successful Public–Private Partnerships for Emerging Economies

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Abstract: In the last decades, Albania has started the implementation of a new practice which is partnership with the private sector, named public–private partnership (PPP), due to the inabilities of the public sector to fulfill all its public needs. This represents a crucial ratio related to economic development and the struggle for a fair and transparent implementation process. Critical success factors (CSF) are the significant elements in the partnership which, if properly identified, provide success in implementation. For this reason, the purpose of this study is to highlight the factors which increase the chances of a successful implementation of PPPs in Albania and the items which contribute to each factor. The data used for the analysis were gained through 175 surveys conducted with people working in private and public institutions engaged in PPP. Of the main CSFs, the identification of the right project is ranked most critical to the success of PPP followed by financial capacity, trust, openness and fairness between parties, negotiation and defined revenue stream. The study findings further suggest that the accountability mechanism should be enforced in order for the public sector to act in accordance with the public interest. It is concluded that the findings of the study will guide the PPP stakeholders on the CSFs of PPPs in Albania.

Keywords: public–private partnership; critical success factors; sustainability management; Albania; factor analysis



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1. Introduction

Albania is a developing country which has joined the market-based economy since 1992, with the fall of the communist system. Nowadays, Albania is struggling to be a more democratic and developed country but it is still in the transitional phase. Those problems are considered by international authorities as criteria to be fulfilled for the accession to the European Union (EU) as well. Such criteria include enforcement of the rule of law, the strengthening of fundamental rights and governance, judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organized crime, along with reform in public administration (Ahmeti and Kruja 2020; Asllani et al. 2014; Bitzenis and Nito 2005; Feruni and Hysa 2020; Kruja 2020a, 2020b; Kruja and Berisha 2021; Hysa and Mansi 2021; Rinkel et al. 2016; Plaku and Hysa 2019; Xheneti and Smallbone 2008; Khan et al. 2021).

One of the most discussed issues by the public and media is the practice of public–private partnership (PPP). The government of developed and developing countries are increasingly using PPPs to deliver services that public entities are unable to provide for the general public (Dobrowolski 2021; Manta et al. 2022).

Since Albania is a country in transition, identification of the factors which can provide the success of the PPPs in Albania is crucial for effective practice, considering that there is no documented evidence on the success level of PPP in Albania.

The implementation of such a type of partnership helps the country to progress in areas where the public sector is unable to provide without the financial or technical support of the private sector (Dobrowolski et al. 2015). This means that through the partnership,

more access is provided to resources such as technical, human, financial resources, etc. Furthermore, it provides more mechanisms to enable each sector to achieve common goals in a more effective and legitimate way. In the other hand, it requires a strong relation among the sectors, based on transparency, openness and trust for the interest of the general public (Maione et al. 2021; Manta et al. 2021; Hysa et al. 2020). The parties involved in the partnership must be considered to work towards the same objectives, and their priorities should be in balance with each other.

This study aims to investigate what factors are critical to the successful implementation of PPP in the economy of Albania. Based in the existing literature, there are very few studies which have elaborated this topic, so the identified checklist of CSFs for PPPs can be adopted for further studies by providing the context of a developing country. The highlight of this paper is that it contributes not only to the Albanian literature of PPPs which is scarce and would effectively help the PPPs stakeholders, but also helps other countries as well. Albania is in an accession negotiation process with the European Union (EU), so the findings can be helpful in enhancing future implementations for countries which aspire to be part of the EU, so this is an important aspect of the differentiation with the existing literature.

Given this, the objectives of this study are:

- What are the critical success factors of PPP in Albania?
- What is the relation between the factors and the success of PPP?

The reminder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the studies conducted in this topic while making a comparison of different countries, including the reason an Albanian version would add value to the current literature. Section 3 describes the research methodology and the model of collected data. Section 4 is a detailed discussion and analysis of results, followed by the conclusion at the end.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Public–Private Partnership

There are a wide range of PPPs which have diverse features and include a variety of activities. However, there is no common definition, and this concept sometimes creates a confusion in regard with what this partnership involves. Generally, PPPs are based on a mutual commitment to working towards shared objectives through sharing the risks and the responsibilities between public and private entities (Hoon et al. 2009). However, in another definition, the partnership involves at least one private for-profit organization working with at least one not-for-profit organization (NGO) aiming particularly to help a disadvantaged population (Reich 2000). In other words, resources are shared between the entities with the purpose of helping the population or the target market and a contract is signed between them. Moreover, the arrangement between the two entities can be shaped in many forms and can incorporate the following features:

The public entity transfers some facilities controlled by it such as land and property to private sector (with or without payment in return).

The private entity usually builds, extends or renovates a facility.

The private sector provides the service by using the facility for a defined period of time (Grimsey and Lewis 2007).

From the various definitions of PPPs, it can be concluded that the partnership between the public and private entities is very beneficial to provide services to the general population and/or the target market. However, this partnership can have positive and negative impacts as well.

Some of the advantages in the execution of PPP strategy identified by Parvu and Voicu-Olteanu (2009) include (1) transfer of the risk; (2) greater efficiency of the government budget; and (3) quicker execution of the project.

However, there are also some drawbacks which can be considered as risks, such as: (1) PPP has many political exposures; (2) increased cost of transaction; and (3) corruption/private profit (Parvu and Voicu-Olteanu 2009).

Generally, it can be argued that PPPs are a very important feature for development, considering that this method is practiced in many countries.

2.2. Critical Success Factors of Public-Private Partnership

Building a successful PPP depends on the microeconomic and macroeconomic conditions of the state. Based on the macroeconomic perspective, the political situation is a very significant element since without a favorable political climate for profitable activities, the partnerships cannot be created. The economic indicator is considered as very influential as well (Tomja 2016). Furthermore, there are some other factors which affect the relationship, if they are well implemented, that can be considered as the critical success factors of the partnership. The concept of CSF is firstly introduced by Rockart (1982, p. 85) as “the limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful competitive performance for the organisation”. Critical success elements are very important for the firms/organizations because they enable identification of the key factors that should be focused on, in order to be successful (Rowlinson 1999).

There are two types of literatures in regard with the CSFs of PPP: (1) studies focused on the CSF of PPP in general; and (2) studies examining the CSF of a specific PPP project. Despite the unique characteristics of individual projects, there are some critical points which every partnership should have to succeed such as: the existence of potential for synergy between partners; the need for the representatives of the partners in the partnership to have sufficient delegated decision-making powers; ensuring partners’ procedures, systems and equipment are compatible; sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital; financial capacity; stable political leadership; inter-departmental cooperation, etc.

It should be emphasized that the factors determining the success of the partnership depend on the type of the partners involved. In the case that the partnership is between a business entity and a political institution such as municipality, then the factors are mainly political, and the general perspective is based on politics as well. In case the partners are the civil society and the business, then the prevailing factor is the social one (Minnie 2011).

Generally, the National Council for Public–Private Partnership considers seven important factors as the key to success for a PPP, including: (1) public sector champion; (2) statutory environment (including rules and regulations for structuring and leading the partnership); (3) the public sector’s organized structure; (4) a business plan; (5) defined revenue stream; (6) stakeholder support; and (7) choosing the partner carefully (NCPPP 2017). Other authors, such as Tiong and Alum (1997), have identified some crucial factors as well, which tend to focus mostly on the CSF needed to win a PPP contract. More concretely, ‘the identification of the right project’, ‘the consortium’s strength’, ‘the differentiation of financial package, for example a stronger financial commitment by the government,’ and ‘the support to community’ are considered as the main elements which should be implemented/respected for a successful PPP.

However, the evaluation of the success factors depends on the sector in which the partnership is conducted which may include: the infrastructure, the energy, the economy, etc. In respect of specific case studies, different authors have researched certain issues. In Australia, a stadiums are built using the BOOT (build, own, operate, transfer) type of PPP where the private organization conducts a big project’s implementation under the contract of a public sector agency. The authors Jefferies et al. (2002) have identified some CSF as the key point of the progress of the partnership, including: compatibility skills among the key parties, technical innovation in overcoming project complexity, environmental impact, legal/economic framework, political stability, selecting the right project, existing strategic alliances, good resource management, trust, community support, feasibility study, transfer of technology, financial capability and consortium structure (Jefferies et al. 2002).

In the case of Sydney Super Dome PPP, the author Jefferies (2006) identified the same CSF examined at Jefferies et al. (2002), by adding new factors too, as the project is in a different type and sector. Some of the other CSFs include negotiation, bid feature, business viability, competition, credit rating investor, existing infrastructure, delivery of asset, project

identification, etc. In the case of Sydney, the issue of bidding is considered as the most important factor, managed successfully by the government as well as the negotiation process which is significant for the good maintenance of the relationship (Jefferies 2006).

The CSFs in the PPP of construction sector are evaluated in the case of Kuwait by specifying the following key factors as the most important ones: the procurement should be effective, with a government guarantee, economic conditions should be favorable, an available financial market should exist and the implementation of project should be efficient (Helmy 2011). Based on the findings of a case study, some of the CSFs for a successful PPP include trust, openness and fairness (Jamali 2004). There are authors who are focused in finding the most important CSFs by dividing them in sub-items which constitute a certain factor. Hardcastle et al. (2005) has identified five CSFs which are: effective procurement, project implementability, government guarantee, favorable economic conditions and available financial market.

A summary of studies conducted in different countries of CSF of PPP and their findings is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Literature Review Summary.

Author/s	Country	Sample Surveyed	Type of PPP	Methodology	Critical Success Factors of PPP
Tiong and Alum (1997)	Asia-Pacific region	BOT practitioners	Concession BOT contract	→ Use of surveys; → Quantitative study. Analysis: Descriptive analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The identification of the right project; - The consortium's strength; - The differentiation of financial package; - The support to community.
Jefferies et al. (2002)	Australia	NA	Concession BOOT contract	→ Use of interviews and literature; → Qualitative study. Analysis: single case study method.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compatibility skills among the key parties; - Technical innovation in overcoming project complexity; - Environmental impact, legal /economic framework; - Political stability; - Selecting the right project; - Existing strategic alliances; - Good resource management and trust; - Community support; - Transfer of technology; - Financial capability and consortium structure.
Jamali (2004)	Lebanon	NA	Concession BOT contract	→ Use of documentation, archival records, interviews and quantitative assessment; → Quantitative and qualitative study. Analysis: quantitative comparative assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust; - Openness; - Fairness.
Hardcastle et al. (2005)	UK	Directors and managers working in public and private sector's organizations	General PPPs No specification	→ Use of surveys; → Quantitative study. Analysis: Descriptive analysis, reliability tests using Cronbach's alpha, One-Way Analysis of Variance and Factor Analysis.	Effective procurement; Project implementability; Government guarantee; Favorable economic conditions Available financial market.

Table 1. Cont.

Author/s	Country	Sample Surveyed	Type of PPP	Methodology	Critical Success Factors of PPP
Minnie (2011)	South Africa	Public service entities and private service entities	Concessions	<p>→ Use of interviews, the analysis of case studies, surveys and the use of informants; → Quantitative and qualitative study.</p> <p>Analysis: Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean, and standard deviation. - Independent sample <i>t</i>-test.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The existence of potential for synergy between partners; - The representatives of the partners in the partnership have sufficient delegated decision-making powers; - Partners' procedures, systems and equipment are compatible; - Sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital; - Financial capacity; - Stable political leadership; - Inter-departmental cooperation, etc.
Helmy (2011)	Kuwait	Kuwaiti middle and low-income citizens who would be eligible for the welfare housing units from the government.	Concession BOT contract	<p>→ Use of interviews and questionnaires; → Qualitative and quantitative study.</p> <p>Analysis: Factor analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective procurement; - Government guarantee; - Favorable economic conditions; - Available financial market; - Project implementability.
Ismail and Ajija (2013)	Malaysia	Participants of the national seminar on Malaysian PPP framework	General PPPs No specification	<p>→ Use of surveys; → Quantitative study.</p> <p>Analysis: independent sample <i>t</i>-test and mean score (by SPSS).</p>	<p>Good governance; Commitment and responsibility of public and private sectors; Favorable legal framework; Sound economic policy; Available financial market; Strong and good private consortium; Stable macro-economic condition; Project technical feasibility; Transparency of procurement process; Appropriate risk allocation and risk sharing; Thorough and realistic assessment of the cost and benefits; Well-organized and committed public agency Multi-benefit objectives; Competitive procurement process Social support; Shared authority between public and private sectors; Government involvement by providing guarantee; Political support.</p>

Table 1. Cont.

Author/s	Country	Sample Surveyed	Type of PPP	Methodology	Critical Success Factors of PPP
Sanni (2016)	Nigeria	Survey: Participants who have played key roles in the implementation of PPP projects from public and private sectors. Interviews: experts on PPP projects	General PPPs No specification	→ Use of questionnaires and interviews; → Quantitative and qualitative study. Analysis: Cronbach's alpha, exploratory factor analysis, Bartlett's test of sphericity, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO), Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) and factor extraction.	Stable macro-economic conditions; Commitment and responsibility of public/private sectors; Available financial market; Strong private consortium; Repayment of the debt; Sound financial package; Strong political support; Delivering publicly needed service; Short construction period; Economic viability of the project; Innovation in the financial methods of consortium; Favorable legal framework.

The above-mentioned countries differ from each other, however as it can be noticed almost all of them have used a mix of quantitative and qualitative study while most of the focus has been to the general type of PPP and in some cases to the concessions and BOOT type of PPP.

If we compare the identified CSFs of PPP for each country, there are many differences in the ranking process. For example, the UK is a developed country, which is why, according to the authors, the political support as CSF lies outside this group and is more relevant for the developing countries. This element is noticed in Nigeria and South Africa where the political support is crucial for the success of PPPs, considering their current political and financial position.

In the case of Australia, the study shows that both government and private industry are strongly attempting to meet Australia's need for infrastructure in the new millennium; that is why the first factor for a successful partnership and tangible results is considered to be the compatibility of skills between public and private entities. This means that the focus of Australia including the general working culture, where the private sector works jointly with the public entities to achieve the common objectives, is different from the other countries.

In the other hand, in Malaysian PPP projects, the authors have identified the problem of trust and coordination deficit in the governmental level. For this reason, the success of the PPP projects relies on good governance, where the performance of both public and private sector is an essential factor. In general terms, the identified factors in each state depend on their current phase of development and the focused sector in that period of time.

In the case of Albania, Spahiu (2020) in his study considers PPP with respect to the legislation aspect. As such, the Albanian legislation considers PPP as a form of long-term cooperation, regulated by a bilateral contract, between the contracting authority and one or more economic operators, where the private partner assumes the obligation to provide public services within the scope of the public partner's competencies, undertaking different levels and extent of risks, while having the right to be rewarded, in accordance with the contract (Spahiu 2020). As a follow-up of the established legal framework in 2006, Albania has seen an increased number of PPP projects, mainly in the field of energy and transport (Keçi 2020). Studies have revealed a high mortality rate of PPPs in the Western Balkans, especially during preparation phases (WBIF and EPEC 2018). Furthermore, the study of Keçi (2020) presents a SWOT analysis of the PPP developments in the Western Balkans, and especially in Albania. According to this study, it was found that decisions to use PPP deliveries are mainly based on national strategies. In addition, neither documentary

evidence assessing the sustainability of a specific project delivered through PPP, nor a specific regulation was found. Another study in this regard is found for the energy sector, and the use of PPPs, for which PPPs have been widely used (Nasto and Sulillari 2021).

Even though there are several studies that have examined the CSFs of PPP projects, there is a gap regarding studies on Albania that identify the factors which contribute to the successful implementation of PPPs. This study highlights the specific items contributing to each factor. To our knowledge, this is the first study in the literature offering information on such context for a country such as Albania. In addition to the theoretical implications, this study also brings out some practical implications for policymakers, private enterprises and researchers.

3. Methodology

This study is based on the quantitative data taken from the results of the conducted survey. In order to match the aims and objectives of this research with the sample of respondents, purposive sampling is applied. Amongst the respondents were people working in the public and private sector and/or who has previously worked in the PPPs contracts. The selection of the companies in the private sector and entities in the public sector has been done based on the importance and the impact they have had in the public and the social media, as the most discussed ones. Data from 175 people working in the private sector (companies) and public sector (municipalities and ministries) all over Albania were collected during March–June 2018. It should be emphasized that the number of people working in the public sector is smaller than in the private one because the people working in the public sector in a certain institution, such as a ministry, are responsible for all the concessions occurring within that. Consequently, the number of people working in the concessionaire contracts in the private sector is bigger as there are different projects linked with just one institution.

The survey that is used is based on the structure of Zhang's (2005) survey, but the questions are formulated by the researchers, taking in account the objectives that are aimed to be achieved for the case of Albania.

The survey is divided into two parts in which the first part consists of nine standardized demographic questions of the surveyed people such as where they work, the position they hold, how many years do they have working in a PPP project and the general information in regard of what they think for the CSFs and mistakes conducted in the implementation of PPPs.

The second part of the questionnaire is a table with all the CSFs discovered in the literature based on the study of Zhang, 2005 (Critical Success Factors for Public–Private Partnerships in Infrastructure Development), in which the surveyed people are required to evaluate them based on the importance that each factor has, according to their opinion, on a Likert Scale from 1—Not important at all to 5—Absolutely essential. Exploratory factor analysis technique is implemented for the data collected to identify and evaluate the factors which are critical in the success of PPPs implementation in Albania.

The definition of items are found in other studies of the literature and are recapitulated at Table 2, with the respective definition of each item, adding to Zhang's (2005) study.

Table 2. Study Survey Items.

Item	Definition	Author (Year)
Negotiation	Through the right negotiation in the procurement process it is possible, under the new public procurement directive, to ensure that the private party will be responsible for the funding, design, completion, implementation, service and maintenance, providing the incentive to build to reduce the life-time cost of service and maintenance.	(Jefferies 2006)
Trust, openness and fairness between parties	“Partnering should be mutually viewed as representing an opportunity rather than a threat and loss of control. In this context, while recognizing the immense complexities in working across sectors with different strategic and operational realities, the focus should be on identifying common goals, delineating responsibilities, negotiating expectations, and building bridges including common working practices and specific reporting and record keeping requirements”.	(Jamali 2004)
Sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital	“Sufficient social capital to accommodate the social capital requirements of the partnership and/or sufficient time to build social capital”.	(Minnie 2011)
Financial capacity	“Financial capacities to ensure strong financial base and reliable partner, and municipal attitudes”.	(Minnie 2011)
Stable political leadership	“The simplest definition of a stable political system is one that survives through crises without internal warfare”.	(Minnie 2011)
Statutory environment	“Statutory authority and regulations—Necessary for enforcement of the contract”.	(NCPPP 2017)
Public sector’s organized structure	Need for good governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assure an open and fair procurement process; • Consolidate staff = easier to monitor; • Independent authority (domestic/internal or international). 	(NCPPP 2017)
Stakeholder support	“All impacted parties End Users Competing Interests”.	(NCPPP 2017)
Environmental impact, legal /economic framework	A PPP legal framework is identified in laws and regulations, but also in policy documents, guidance notes and in the design of PPP contracts. The exact nature of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to a particular PPP transaction, also depends on the financing mechanisms contemplated and the scope of responsibilities transferred to the PPP company.	(Jefferies et al. 2002)
Existing strategic alliances	This experience or network is viewed favorably. A local partner in an international BOOT contributes greatly towards success. Experience viewed in terms of country (previous host).	(Jefferies et al. 2002)
Community support	Social groups of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage.	(Tiong and Alum 1997)
Existing infrastructure	Contracts for the procurement of services or management of existing infrastructure can be divided into two categories. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “At-risk” long-term management or service contracts that can be regarded as PPPs (these are service PPPs, not DBFOM contracts); • Contracts that are regarded as conventional O&M or service contracts. 	(Jefferies 2006)
Defined revenue stream	“Funds to Cover the Long-Term Financing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolls/Fees (real or shadow) • TIF or other form of a Tax District; • Long-Term Maintenance Contracts; • Availability Payments; • Concession Model (limited application)”. 	(NCPPP 2017)

Table 2. Cont.

Item	Definition	Author (Year)
Feasibility Study	“Not all projects are suited to BOOT. Public and private agreement over the advantages the concept has to offer needs to be found. Project feasibility must show evidence of viability”.	(Jefferies et al. 2002)
The identification of the right project	PPP project identification will be undertaken by the contracting authority, or the line ministry concerned. Project identification should include input from stakeholders as follows: Contracting Agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line ministries; • Provincial, municipal and local governments; • Input from stakeholders including users, the general public, NGOs and the private sector; • Multi and bi-lateral agencies. 	(Tiong and Alum 1997)
The existence of potential for synergy between partners	It does seem as if the potential for synergy must exist before one could say that a partnership will be a good idea and would therefore be a possible reason for partnering. A second assumption is that a partnership involves both development and delivery of a strategy or a set of projects or operations, although each actor may not be equally involved in all stages.	(Minnie 2011)
Good resource management and trust	It is crucial to have good governance because inefficiency in governance has led to the failure in the implementation of PPP in many countries.	(Jefferies et al. 2002)
Inter-departmental cooperation	Public sector inter-departmental cooperation is the in support of partnership.	(Minnie 2011)
Compatibility skills among the key parties	Parties exercise their own skill and care with respect to its use, and seek independent advice, if necessary, based on cooperation with each other.	(Jefferies et al. 2002)

In the case of Albania, each item is perceived almost identically, given the circumstances in which they are used.

- Negotiation is an important process as it is also mentioned in the above definition; it is the right of negotiation in the procurement process to negotiate the terms/conditions of the supplier. Even in the Albanian case, this process includes the elements to what extent the contracts can be negotiated, the limitations and the responsibilities.
- Trust, openness and fairness between the parties is an important item which is identified by the survey's answers as a crucial element for the PPPs' success. The context is the same where partnering should be mutually viewed as an opportunity for reaching an objective and achieving good results based on transparency and openness between the private and private sector.
- Sufficient social capital, defined revenue stream and financial capacity go hand in hand in the case of Albania, as the country is in a developing phase where the opportunity to ensure a good private partner relies on its capacity to provide the needed resources. In the Albanian case there are difficulties considering the limited resources.
- The identification of the right project and the feasibility study are very significant considering that there are many projects under the concession's practice which raises many questions as to their importance and the financial capacity of the government to handle such model. This is linked with other factors: community and stakeholders' support, as the general public is sometimes skeptical on certain concessions, i.e., as to whether they should be implemented by private entities. A successful practice of PPP should be based on the support of the general community; however, in Albania this is still a topic of discussion. For example, the battle for the Vjosa river gained a new dimension in 2017, with the arrival of 30 European scientists, who explored the central course of the river: the segment where the construction of the dams was designed. While the initial results confirmed the existence of extraordinary biological diversity, the Albanian government approved a dam project, precisely at the time

when scientific research was ongoing. In 2018, Vjosa gained further international attention. The Bern Convention (International Treaty for the Conservation of Nature) recommended that Albania suspend dam projects on this river. At the same time, the European Parliament recommended a review of the renewable energy strategy, in order to reduce the dependence of energy production on hydropower plants. This is related with the Statutory Environment and Environmental impact, which clearly defines the legal framework but also considers the financial and/or environmental impact, as in the case of Vjosa river.

- Lastly, as for the other items: the compatibility of skills among the parties, the potential synergy with each other, and inter-departmental cooperation. The public sector's organized structure is the same in that it includes the importance of collaboration between the entities to achieve the results and the importance of a well-organized internal structure for a better flow of delegated tasks.

4. Results Analysis

4.1. General Characteristics of the Respondents

In this study's survey 175 people working in the private and public sectors responsible for the implementation of PPP took part. 71 (40.6%) of the surveyed respondents work in the public sector and 104 (59.4%) work in the private sector. The division is not in proportion since the number of people working in the private sector is bigger than in the public one, taking in account the fact that one public entity such as a ministry or municipality can be engaged in different PPPs, consequently contracting different private partners.

Based on the results, most people working in the public sectors are administration employees (26 people), while in the private sector most of the respondents are managers (28 people). In the second rank at public sector are the executive directors (11 people) while in the private sector there are 16 people working as the representative of the investors. The chain in the public sector continues via lawyer's assistants (7 people), heads of departments and finance directors (5 people each), former administration's employees and lawyers (4 people each), human resource managers (3 people) and former directors (2 people). The chain in the private sectors is as follow: 14 finance directors, 8 human resources managers and 8 lawyer's assistants, 7 head of departments, 6 lawyers and 6 coordinators, 4 former directors, 3 executive directors and others.

Experience is very important for the good implementation of PPPs. Most of the respondents in the public sector (16.5%) have worked on five to seven projects, 12% worked on more than eight projects, 6.2% on three to five projects and 5.7% have worked on one to three projects. In the private sector, 24% of the total respondents have worked on three to five projects, 14.2% on five to seven projects, 13.7% of them have worked on more than eight projects and 7% have worked on one to three projects.

In the other perspective, the experience is measured also by the years that the employees have worked on the PPPs projects. Based on the results, many respondents in the public sector (18.6%) and private sector (21.1%) have three to six working years, which is same for both sectors. In the public sector, 9.7% have six to nine years working in the PPPs projects, 7.4% have an experience of one to three years and only 8% of them have more than eight working years. In the private sector, most of the respondents have few working years, where 18.2% has one to three years' experience, 14.8% have six to nine years' and 5.1% have more than eight years' working on PPPs projects.

Guidelines are very important for the good implementation of projects based on formal rules and laws. Most surveyed people in public (34.8%) and private sector (52%) answered that they have an in-house guideline for the implementation of PPPs. A small rate of respondents (5% in the public and 7% in the private sector) answered that they don't have a guideline to be based for the PPPs projects.

4.2. CSF of PPP Implementation

To answer the study's first research question on the critical factors which provide the success of PPP implementation, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with principal component extraction and varimax rotation method with kaiser normalization as shown in Table 3, was applied to the sample ($n = 175$). EFA analysis resulted in a CSF model composed of six factors resulting with eigenvalues (a measure of how much of the variance of the observed variables a factor explains) higher than one where each of them had internal consistency as well as having achieved the reliability as recommended by Nunnally (1978), by explaining 71% of the variance in success of PPPs' implementation.

Table 3. Exploratory factor analysis results.

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a					
	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Stakeholders' support	0.873					
Public sector's organized structure	0.790					
Existing infrastructure	0.716					
Feasibility study	0.550					
Inter-departmental cooperation		0.690				
Statutory environment		0.609				
Sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital		0.533				
Technical innovation in overcoming project complexity			0.805			
Defined revenue stream			0.767			
Existing strategic alliances			0.675			
Compatibility skills among the key parties				0.436		
The existence of potential for synergy between partners				0.772		
Good resource management and trust				0.638		
Community support				0.503		
Financial capacity					0.742	
Trust, openness and fairness between parties					0.682	
Negotiation					0.622	
Environmental impact, legal/economic framework						0.465
The identification of the right project						0.733
Stable political leadership						0.719

Extraction Method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization. ^a Rotation converged in 25 iterations.

Figure 1 illustrates the model of this study. To recapitulate the findings, there are 25 items found in the literature, in which five of them (1, Choosing the partner carefully; 2, competition; 3, business plan; 4, partners' procedures, systems and equipment are compatible; and 5, the representatives of the partners in the partnership have sufficient delegated decision-making powers) are taken out of the study since these variables' individual MSA (measure of sampling adequacy) was unacceptable. Meanwhile, the remaining 20 items are grouped in six factors as shown in the figure below.

The research model of the study is based on Zhang's 2005 survey where the author identified various CSFs that are further analyzed, distilled, coded and finally classed into main CSFs. He provided an information background on the identified items such as:

Reliable concessionaire consortium: significant realignment of risks between project participants is a crucial feature of the PPP scheme, where the concessionaire undertakes more commitments and deeper risks than a mere contractor. So, selection of the right concessionaire is critical to the success of the project. This can be realized through a competitive tendering process.

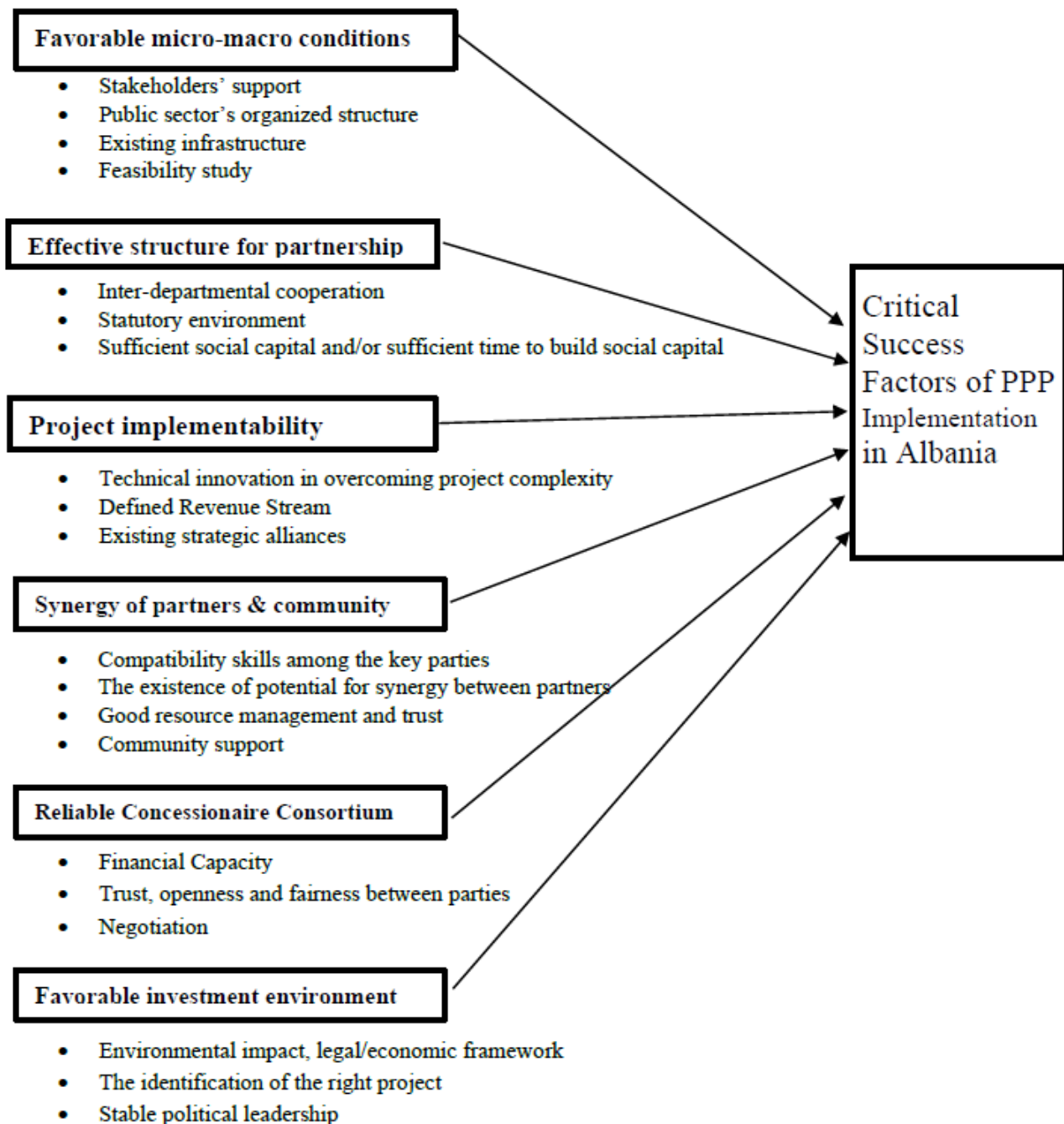


Figure 1. Research model of the study.

Favorable investment environment: the willingness of private sector investors and lenders to develop public infrastructure projects depends greatly on the environment where these projects operate. For example, they are hesitant to pursue projects in an environment where local authorities are viewed as having poor credit quality and contracts are not easily enforceable. For PPP schemes to work, there should be favorable political, legal, economic and commercial environments for private sector participation.

For projects that are not financially viable but of significant economic value and fulfils political and environmental objectives, the government should provide necessary flexible project-specific support and/or guarantees to make them financially viable. The scope of long-term service charges must be within public budget constraints. If users pay for a service, appropriate toll/tariff levels should be established, taking into account the users'

affordability. This emphasizes the importance of favorable micro-macro conditions for an effective implementability of the project.

In addition to skills for formulating advantageous financial and technical packages, the concessionaire should also have strong managerial capabilities, including workable project organization structure, a good relationship with host government authorities, partnering skills, multidisciplinary participants and a strong project team. This means that the synergy between the entities is crucial for a successful PPP implementation.

5. Discussion

5.1. Favorable Micro–Macro Conditions

The first CSF, favorable micro–macro conditions, is composed of four items: (1) the stakeholder support, (2) public sector's organized structure, (3) existing infrastructure and (4) a feasibility study. The factor consists of four items which are correlated together for the factor to be considered critical in the successful implementation of PPPs in Albania. It means that the micro–macro conditions of the environment are a critical factor for the success of PPPs implementation in Albania and the support from affected parties from the project, the existing infrastructure which needs to be improved or repaired and a good-formed structure of public sector are very affective in the factor. Public–private partnership (PPP) is considered as a mean of providing public services. The private sector brings their capital and skills, as well providing timely projects and their budget, while the public sector is responsible for providing the public services that bring benefits and economic development and improve the quality of life of citizens (Preci 2016). In other words, there is a circle in which all the affected parties are around each other for the project, starting from all the entities/institutions of public and private sectors and the citizens who are affected by the PPPs.

The micro and macro conditions of the environment in which the project is intended to be implemented should be linked together. However, even though the macro-level business environment has a clear contribution, the stability of the contract can benefit if there is an available remuneration scheme and well-developed governmental PPP support (Soecipto and Verhoest 2018). This is also the case in Albania as the items are linked together, and the feasibility study is one of the items which should be taken into account for the project to succeed. In this aspect, transparency as well as stakeholder support is very important.

5.2. Effective Structure for Partnership

The second CSF, effective structure for partnership, is composed of three items: (1) inter-departmental cooperation, (2) statutory environment, and (3) sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital. For a successful partnership, the structure should be effective and well-organized. In the language of the projects management, the rate of success is measured by the cooperation of the team with each other (American Management Association 2018). This is applicable in the case of Albania where good cooperation can reflect better outcomes and more ideas for progress. Effective cooperation of the departments can be reflected in well-prepared statutory regulations, because every professional in the field should be involved, in order to understand the specifications of the contract, technically and legally.

5.3. Reliable Concessionaire Consortium

The third CSF, project implementability, is composed of three items: (1) technical innovation in overcoming project complexity, (2) defined revenue stream and (3) existing strategic alliances. A reliable concessionaire consortium is considered a crucial element for good PPP performance. One of the basic elements of consortiums is a solid financial background in order to arrange the funds needed to finance the project (Ndonye et al. 2014). So, as in the case of Kenya, Albania's focus is on the financial aspect while building a reliable concessionaire consortium. It is very important to have the financial resources needed to implement a certain project, in which many actors are involved. One of the most

secure guarantees in order for the partner to undertake the implementation of a certain project, is the provision to them of the needed financial capacity. Moreover, the financial capacity is reported in official documents which need to be reliable and trusted by the signing actors. This is related to the second item which is trust, openness and fairness between parties.

5.4. Project Implementability

The fourth CSF, the synergy of partners and community, is composed of four items: (1) existence of the potential for synergy between partners, (2) good resource management and trust, (3) compatibility of skills among the key parties, and (4) community support. A sound revenue stream of the project is the basis of project finance, according to [Zhang \(2005\)](#) as the investors have recourse to no funds other than this revenue stream. As mentioned above, the revenue stream is a guarantee for the partners that they will not fail, at least in the financial aspect. In the other hand, for the PPP to be well-implemented, the partners should have some available technical innovations in order to overcome any project complexity, and this is mostly the responsibility of the private sector, because there are certain contracts in which the public institution delegates all the authority to the private companies to overcome any such problem which the project might face with regards to the technical aspect. The public entities are responsible for the provision of the necessary financial resources for the project. In Albania, most of the projects are implemented by the private sector by consequently transferring the risk to them. However, this is built on a good alliance in which both partners work in the partnership based on a mutual recognition, both understanding that the success of the projects depends on a mutual contribution. Generally, the PPP should not be considered only as a transfer and/or share of risk method because in any case, the consequences will fall on the general population.

5.5. Favorable Investment Environment

The fifth CSF, reliable concessionaire consortium, is composed of three items: (1) financial capacity and trust, (2) openness and fairness between parties and (3) negotiation. For a good implementation of PPP, the environment should be favorable by having no obstacle in regard with the legal aspect or economy. This is a crucial element in the case of Albania because many debates are raised with regard to the claim that the PPP is damaging the environment. According to the manual published by the Concession Treatment Agency, sharing information through negotiation stages is an important tool used to create final partnerships in PPP projects ([Beqiraj et al. 2016](#)). An efficient concession/PPP project depends on the negotiations and a mutually beneficial relationship between the parties. Relationships between the parties affect the obligations and the contract of the project, so negotiating a PPP contract should result in achieving a common goal, and avoiding opposing interests between the parties ([Beqiraj et al. 2016](#)), particularly in Albania, as a developing country where both sectors must finance and negotiate for a common goal. So, the negotiation is the key to the success.

5.6. Synergy of Partners and Community

The sixth CSF, favorable investment environment, is composed of three items: (1) identification of the right project, (2) stable political leadership and (3) environmental impact, legal/economic framework. The idea of partnership is to have a strategic alliance with each other based on trust, in order to manage carefully resources for the benefit of the country. For this reason, beside the fact that the partners should work in a line with each other, the most important element is the support that they have from the community. If the community is satisfied, then a major objective is accomplished. One of the basic criteria is the community to have a free say on the issues that concern them, while the state should support their grievances in accordance with the law and if they are reasonable. The best international practices suggest prior consultation with the public, primarily to inform them of the work or service that they will benefit, if these jobs or services are affordable

by them. It may happen that for certain projects there may be refusal or objection that may result in violent acts that may affect not only the implementation of the project but may also have financial consequences for which the government should respond. The risk of unauthorized access to project areas where concessions/PPPs are provided is always taken by the government and as such, if they occur, the financial costs that may come as a result will be borne by the government. To avoid concretizing this risk, the government should consult with the public in advance. According to international experiences, public non-disclosure has even led to the total failure of the projects, causing a significant amount of money to be paid by the state.

6. Conclusions

The main aim of this study was to find the CSFs for the implementation of PPPs in Albania, based on the items which are found in the literature. As the items are grouped in six factors, by factor analysis, five items are not included because they are considered as inappropriate in the case of Albania.

PPPs in Albania are a new tactic to meet the needs of the general public, due to the inability of the public sector to do so. In theory, the main target of the PPP would be the interests of the civil society however, throughout this research, other findings have been exposed.

Appendix A compares the top five items of different countries in a study conducted by [Cheung et al. \(2012\)](#) by including Albania as a way of comparing the identified CSFs. Generally, the results show many differences in the rankings of the CSFs for PPP implementation, as perceived by the respondents in different countries but it is noticed that in developed countries all the factors are almost the same. In Albania, there are different results which demonstrate the difference that a developing Western Balkan country has compared with other states.

The first factor is the identification of the right project which shows the necessity of the country for a transparent and fair process of project implementability. Based on the results, as is mentioned above, there is no focus on the immediate needs of the country which might be identified through a needs assessment. In Albania, the number of needs assessment is relatively limited while the quality is relatively low.

According to public data, the number of concession companies is expected to increase, as in the next 15 years (2019–2032), the government is engaged in PPP projects and will have to pay a total of EUR 2 billion, from the money collected from taxpayers. In the other hand, there is a lack of a cost–benefit analysis and risk sharing to better understand if the choice of giving many services by concession is the best alternative for our state ([MONITOR 2019](#)). This is also one of the reasons why the identification of the right project for PPPs is considered to be the first factor when considering the public concern regarding the high number of services given with concession to the private sector by the government.

The second item is the financial capacity considering that Albania is a developing country and lacks financial resources. In the other states, irrespective of geographical location, the focus of the items is more concentrated in the transfer of risk and risk allocation, commitment of public–private sector responsibilities, and strong and effective private consortiums. These countries do not have such a tendency for mistrust with regards to the partnership. However, other differences can be noticed. Countries such as Australia and the UK have an established stable macro-economic environment, so the market is more predictable, while China is more unstable and still adjusting to changes from the British handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, so this is a significant reason why these three countries have differences among them.

In the other hand, a developing country such as Albania associates the success of the partnership with financial capability, as a high financial risk would cost more to the Albanian citizens. For example, if the concession payments exceed the limit of five per cent of the actual tax revenue of the previous year, then the government would have to take

measures to correct the revenue, and an alternative that would bring money to the budget faster is a tax increase, burdening the citizens.

It means that Albania is in a critical situation regarding the high number of concession contracts given by the government and its financial capability to successfully implement such practice. An important element is the analysis of the projects and how many of them are really a priority and appropriate for funding under the PPP modality which is also one of the main concerns found in this study. For this reason, it is very important to ensure that the public interest is protected. PPP arrangements should not only be for the sake of undertaking a PPP project. The degree of private involvement should be carefully analyzed and accountability should be enforced; therefore an alternative might be the creation of independent association acting as ‘watchdogs’.

The other following factors, trust, openness and fairness, negotiation and a defined revenue stream are closely linked with the fact that the partnership between the private and public entities is perceived with skepticism by the general public and mostly considered as based on corruption.

In general, the findings obtained in this study can provide an overview of CSFs for projects with PPP schemes in the future for developing countries such as Albania and help stakeholders increase the likelihood of PPP project success.

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Appendix A. Comparison between Countries Concerning the Top Five Items for PPP Implementation

No.	Top Five Items for Albania	Top Five Items for Different Countries (Cheung et al. 2012)		
		China (Hong Kong)	Australia	UK
1	The identification of the right project	Favorable legal framework	Commitment and responsibility of public and private sectors	Strong and good private consortium
2	Financial capacity	Commitment and responsibility of public and private sectors	Appropriate risk allocation and risk sharing	Appropriate risk allocation and risk sharing
3	Trust, openness and fairness between parties	Strong and good private consortium	Strong and good private consortium	Available financial market
4	Negotiation	Stable macro-economic condition	Good governance	Commitment and responsibility of public and private sectors
5	Defined revenue stream	Appropriate risk allocation and risk sharing	Project technical feasibility	Thorough and realistic assessment of the costs and benefits

Appendix B. Questionnaire

1. Please specify in which sector do you currently work?

- (a) Public Sector (b) Private Sector

2. What position do you hold in the institution?

- (a) Executive director
(b) Head of department
(c) Representative of investors
(d) Manager
(e) Other (please specify) _____

3. How do you perceive the necessity of Albanian economy for partnership with private sector?

- (a) Not at all important
(b) Low importance
(c) Neutral
(d) Moderately Important
(e) Extremely important

4. How many years do you have working in a PPP project?

- (a) 1–3 years
(b) 3–6 years
(c) 6–9 years
(d) +10 years

5. In how many PPP project did you work?

- (a) 1–3 projects
(b) 3–5 projects
(c) 5–7 projects
(d) +8 projects

6. Which type of PPP project did you work?

- (a) Service contract
(b) Managerial contract
(c) Lease
(d) Concession
(e) Other (please specify) _____

7. How do you consider the influence of the public opinion in the PPP?

- (a) No affect
(b) Minor affect
(c) Neutral
(d) Moderate affect
(e) Major affect

8. Does your institution have an in-house guidance for PPP?

- (a) Yes (b) No

9. In your opinion, which are some of the critical factors for a successful PPP?

10. In your opinion, which are the most frequent mistakes in the PPP projects?

Appendix C. Critical Success Factors for PPP Project

Please rate each item by placing a cross (X) in the relevant box based on a Likert scale from 1–5, where: 1—Not important at all; 2—Of little importance; 3—Of average importance; 4—Very important; 5—Absolutely essential; and select “N/A” if you are uncertain in rating a particular statement.

CSF/s	1—Not Important at All	2—Of Little Importance	3—Of Average Importance	4—Very Important	5—Absolutely Important
Stakeholders' support					
Public sector's organized structure					
Existing infrastructure					
Feasibility study					
Inter-departmental cooperation					
Statutory environment					
Sufficient social capital and/or sufficient time to build social capital					
Technical innovation in overcoming project complexity					
Defined revenue stream					
Existing strategic alliance					
Compatibility skills among the key parties					
The existence of potential for synergy between partners					
Good resource management and trust					
Community support					
Financial Capacity					
Trust, openness and fairness between parties					
Negotiation					
Environmental impact, legal/economic framework					
The identification of the right project					
Stable political leadership					

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