

Perception of the Citizen of the Peruvian Amazon, About the Management of the Regional Government, in the Framework of Covid-19

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Abstract

Covid-19 caused a global pandemic; Given this, governments implemented strategies to deal with it, therefore, the Peruvian State transferred economic resources to regional governments to support the population. In this context, the research that served as the basis for this article aimed to identify the perception of the citizen of the Peruvian Amazon, about the management of the regional government, within the framework of Covid-19. The research was descriptive, non-experimental design with a quantitative approach; The technique used for data collection was the survey and the questionnaire as an instrument, applying a stratified probabilistic sampling in the capitals of the provinces of the Amazon region. The results indicate that the level of knowledge of the Amazonian citizen about the functions and obligations of the Regional Government of Amazonas is low with 48.5% and with respect to deficiencies and attributes it reached a medium level with 67.5%. It is concluded that the perception of the citizen regarding the management of the Regional Government of Amazonas

in the framework of Covid-19 is disapproving, in addition, a low participation of the population in public management issues carried out by the authorities in favor of the population is shown.

Keywords: Perception, Citizen, Management, Covid 19.

Introduction

On March 12, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared pandemic status for the infectious disease caused by the Sars-cov-2 virus (Alvarez and Cabeza, 2020). The covid-19 pandemic has burst into society with health, economic and political repercussions. Therefore, governments needed to come up with strategies to communicate appropriate biosecurity measures and to monitor compliance (Castillo, Fernandez and Puentes, 2020). According to the Analytical Note report mentions that:

Public health management became a crucial indicator to measure the governance capabilities of urban and regional administrative levels, which were forced to suddenly change their governance plans to adapt to this challenge.(Analytical Note 2020:1).

The objectives were to control the spread of the virus, prevent the collapse of the economic system, and ensure public safety (United Nations, 2021). Globally, governments had to push for short-term responses to control the effects of the pandemic in relation to employment, income, poverty and gender-based violence (United Nations, 2021). The Governing Council of the European Central Bank on March 18 announced a new emergency purchase program in response to the pandemic with an envelope of 750 billion euros until the end of the year, in addition to the 120 billion euros (European Commission, 2022).

In Latin America, they sought solutions through three perspectives: the constitutional mechanisms that gave extraordinary power to the State to deal with the health emergency, the actions of governments to address administrative or political issues and the effects of a quarantine on human freedoms (Spigno and Ruz, 2021). Governments in this part of the region have implemented different measures and actions; they have promoted short-term responses and the most severe effects in relation to employment, income, poverty and gender violence (Economic Commission for Latin America, 2021).

It is clear that health constraints have affected the economy globally. In 2020, GDP registered a 3.3% drop and 86% of countries had a decline in economic activity (Central Reserve Bank, 2021). In that same year, within the Peruvian economy, public investment decreased by 13.3% and private investment by 13.4%. Certainly, in the last quarter of 2020, a significant recovery was shown with the lifting of some restrictions; but the execution levels of regional governments are very varied, reaching a national average execution of 65.3% (ComexPerú, 2021).

Since March 2020, the Peruvian Government has enacted various measures throughout the scope of its state apparatus: the National Civil Service Authority-SERVIR, the Ministry of Health-MINSA, the Ministry of Labor and Employment Promotion-MINTRA, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers-PCM, ESSALUD and other entities and non-governmental organizations, who joined the effort to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic (Elera 2020). Supreme Decree No. 010-2020-SA includes the list of goods and services needed to respond to the health emergency in the country (Guzmán, 2020).

One measure adopted in Peru was the deployment of a series of subsidies on a national scale aimed at temporary relief for vulnerable families; these were given through universal bonds and the temporary suspension of taxes reaching a total of almost 24 billion, representing 3.2% of GDP (Ministry of Economy and Finance [MEF], 2021). In addition, the Central Reserve Bank and the executive launched the Reactiva Peru program that sought to kick-start the national economy through micro-credits totaling 60 billion, representing 8% of GDP. At the end of the day, the Peruvian government used 127 billion soles, which corresponds to 17% of GDP, and also enacted the voluntary withdrawal of Pension Fund Administrators (AFP) and greater tax relief measures (Jaramillo and López, 2021).

Peru was the country that has implemented the largest economic plan in Latin America in response to the pandemic, based on the objective of reducing the impact of the pandemic on the health of the population and providing support to households and businesses in the country. These measures adopted by the Government totaled 142,272.00 million soles with a public expenditure of 35.7 billion for the year 2020 (MEF 2021); but "during the health emergency, problems in the management system became evident" (Shack, 2021:11). In this sense, "regional governments have taken measures to protect citizens and stop the transmission of Covid-19 following the sanitary measures established by the World Health Organization" (Rojas and Sanchez, 2021:3); however, "governments must carry out an effective and efficient management that legitimizes them in the eyes of citizens" (Nieto, 2022:5).

These governments, being closer to the citizens, adopted several initiatives aimed mainly at controlling the contagion process of covid-19 (Martínez, 2021); but the lack of strategies, the slow and deficient decision making and the poor management of the emergency have meant that broad sectors of the population have not been attended (Nieto, 2022; Vargas et al., 2020). Regional and local governments did not have the means and specialized technical teams, a shortage of financial resources at the local and regional level and the absence of coordination with other levels of government are some of the main challenges faced by governments in managing the health crisis (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and European Committee of the Regions, 2020).

Given this situation and with support from the central government, the regional government of Amazonas implemented the plan for strengthening health services and containment of covid-19 in the Amazonas region - 2020 with the objective of establishing provisions to strengthen and organize health services in the Amazonas region to contain and mitigate the impact of the covid-19 outbreak and strengthen effective citizen participation in the regional territory. The referred plan expressed the needs of equipment, medicines and supplies for the period of the sanitary emergency, programmed by the national government for a period of three months, as well as the human resources necessary for the strengthening of the health services prioritized for the attention and containment of the covid-19 cases, which had a total amount of S/. 10,137,577.22 (Regional Executive Resolution, 2020).

In addition, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) transferred resources to the Regional Government of Amazonas, which amounted to a modified institutional budget of S/. 58,105,226 for 2020 and S/. 74,626,581 for 2021 (MEF, 2021). This budget will be transferred to carry out the management and support of the most vulnerable community and the improvement of the health system. Each regional government, with the budget designated to face the health emergency, implemented management strategies to strengthen the health system, also in the socioeconomic issue; but many of these efforts were involved in corruption issues; therefore, the population was the most affected; from this, the research aims to identify

the perception of the citizen of the Peruvian Amazon on the management of the regional government in the framework of covid-19.

Methodology

This research article reflects the result of a non-experimental, cross-sectional, descriptive research with a quantitative approach. The non-experimental design with descriptive scope seeks to analyze and describe the characteristics of the variables (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2014). For the development of this article, the following steps were followed:

First, a population made up of residents in the capitals of the provinces of the Amazon region in an age range of 18 to 64 years was selected. Second, a stratified probability sampling was carried out as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. *Distribution of the Research Sample*

Capitales de Provincias de la región Amazonas	Población	Muestra
Chachapoyas	32589	73
Bagua	27102	73
Jumbilla	1337	69
Santa María de Nieva	18626	73
Lámud	3959	72
San Nicolas	6016	72
Bagua grande	50841	73

Source: *National Institute of Statistics and Informatics - National Census 2017.*

Stratified probability sampling was applied, which refers to the study of small groups of a certain population; which was carried out in the capitals of the provinces that make up the Amazonas region; to determine the sample, the following formula was applied:

$$n = \frac{N \times Z^2 pq}{d^2 \times (N - 1) + Z^2 pq}$$

N = Total population

Z= 1.96 squared (if 95% certainty)

p = Expected proportion (in this case 5% = 0.05)

q = 1 - p (in this case 1-0.05 = 0.95)

d = precision (5%)

This research methodology was taken as a reference from the authors Casiano and Cueva, 2020), who conducted a study to determine the level of perception and trust of the population with respect to municipal management.

As a third step, the survey technique was used; as a data collection instrument, the questionnaire was validated through expert judgment with a reliability whose Cronbach's

Alpha coefficient is 0.798, demonstrating a high reliability of the instrument. The fourth step corresponds to the application of the survey to the study sample in a physical way; Diaz (2018) argued that such mode of data collection the surveyor administers such questionnaire in front of the respondents in a period of time, with the purpose of collecting information about the research problem. As a fifth step, was the analysis of the collected data, such data were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics according to the variables and objectives of the research. SPSS software was used to facilitate data analysis.

Throughout the research process, the fundamental ethical principles proposed by Espinoza and Alger (2020), respect for people, beneficence and justice were considered; complying with the three principles, since, in the development of the research, all participants were treated with respect and justice, no participant was discriminated against and the principle of beneficence by means of which no physical or mental harm was done to the participants and the covid-19 biosafety standards were respected. In addition, the principle of privacy, confidentiality and the right to anonymity of the participants was considered.

Results Y Discussion

In the study scenario, the level of perception of the Amazonian citizen of the Amazonas regional government's management within the framework of covid-19 is described, considering aspects and indicators of budget management of regional authorities. Local and regional governments are obliged to be accountable and to allow, except in exceptional situations of national security or natural disasters, citizens (either individually or organized) to participate in the formulation, development and scrutiny of policies (Arellano and Blanco, 2013, as cited in Díaz, 2017).

On the other hand, citizen participation is a process of interaction between citizens and the state in a public space (Montecinos and Contreras, 2019). Such interactions become a citizen perception which involves the experiences they perceive, but they also get an idea that is built by the information of situations that directly or indirectly affect them (Said et al., 2012).

Public management is considered a duty of the State and supporting territorial entities; it is a responsibility that includes effectiveness and efficiency to meet the needs of the population under its area of influence (Blas et al., 2022). Among the objectives are the development of strategies for the design and application of public policies that transform complex social contexts with specific practices, processes and methodologies from their administrative processes (Gamboa, Hernández and Ramírez, 2021); that is, to ensure that the government reaches the entire territory to lead it towards economic prosperity by implementing strategies and actions to address serious situations such as the pandemic. It is required that the authorities manage human talent in management or executive positions, so that they strengthen their managerial skills to provide a better service to the population, as these positions are key to the functioning of an institution (Sánchez et al., 2022).

It is the responsibility of the authorities to inform the population about the strategies within their management and it is the duty of the population to be informed and have knowledge about the functions of the authorities. For this, in Table 2, the level of knowledge of the citizen about the functions and obligations was identified, where it is observed that with respect to the management of the Regional Government of Amazonas (GOREA) is low with 48.5% followed by a medium level with 45.0% and only 6.7%, at high level. This demonstrates the lack of knowledge of the population about the actions carried out by the GOREA.

Table 2. *Citizens' Level of Knowledge of the Functions and Obligations of the Regional Government of Amazonas*

Provincia	Nivel			Total
	Bajo	Medio	Alto	
Chachapoyas	7.9%	5.9%	0.6%	14.4%
Luya	7.9%	5.5%	0.8%	14.2%
Utcubamba	6.3%	6.7%	1.4%	14.4%
Rodríguez de Mendoza	6.7%	6.7%	0.8%	14.2%
Bagua	4.5%	8.7%	1.6%	14.8%
Bongará	7.9%	5.1%	0.6%	13.6%
Condorcanqui	7.3%	6.1%	1.0%	14.4%
Total	48.5%	45.0%	6.7%	100.0%

Source: *Data taken from the research questionnaire.*

From which it can be seen that the province of Bagua presents higher indexes of knowledge about the efforts made by the authorities to control the pandemic in the region. In the whole region, almost half of the population does not know about these efforts such as the distribution of the budget. In addition, the lack of knowledge was evidenced with the pandemic, but the lack of knowledge is due to the lack of concern of the population to get involved in the issues and to be vigilant of the authorities' efforts.

These results are similar to those reported by Guaigua (2019) who stated that 76.0% of the population is unaware of the provincial administration. This is due to the low participation of citizens in management issues by the government; a result that does not agree with Solís (2019), which states that citizen participation in management is at a medium level with 57.1%; similarly, it is similar to that presented by Cutimbo (2016), who stated that 84% of citizen participation is at a low level.

The establishments of Peru's regions, "have initiated a decentralization to make the most of their potential and generate their own economic and social growth" (Arbe and Angeles, 2019:11). The regions, as relatively young administrative bodies, have the political and legal framework, as well as the economic support for their development (Camacho, Martínez-Jiménez and Moreno 2022). From this, it is necessary to establish systems of citizen participation, which is defined as "a set of instances, relationships, tools and mechanisms of participation that interact in an articulated manner to guarantee the exercise of the rights of citizen participation, social control, accountability, transparency and the fight against corruption" (Salas, 2020:168).

Citizen participation helps in the reconstruction of scenarios, but for this, the population must be informed of the efforts and obligations of the local, regional and national authorities (Quispe, Ayaviri and Maldonado, 2019; Salas, 2020). Therefore, the participation of the population is very important, such participation is understood in activities carried out by the citizen in the decisions of the authorities that affect the affairs of the whole collectivity as is the case of the pandemic, being the most hit the society as a whole.

Perception is a subjective aspect, which, many times, are valuations according to the degree of knowledge; on the other hand, objective perception is when it is clear about the facts (Tejeda and Guadalupe, 2021). If the population keeps in touch and is aware of the efforts of the authorities, the result is that they demand that those in power attend to the social or

economic context as the case may be (Rodriguez and Reich, 2021). For this reason, Table 3 shows the population's perception of the GOREA's deficiencies and attributes.

Table 3. *Regional Amazonas Citizen's Perception of the Amazonas Regional Government's Deficiencies and Attributes*

Provincia	Nivel			Total
	Bajo	Medio	Alto	
Chachapoyas	5.3%	9.1%	0.0%	14.4%
Luya	4.6%	9.5%	0.2%	14.3%
Utcubamba	3.6%	9.9%	1.0%	14.5%
Rodríguez de Mendoza	4.8%	9.1%	0.4%	14.3%
Bagua	3.8%	9.5%	1.2%	14.5%
Bongará	3.2%	10.3%	0.2%	13.7%
Condorcanqui	3.0%	10.1%	1.2%	14.3%
Total	28.3%	67.5%	4.2%	100.0%

Source: *Data taken from the research questionnaire.*

The level of perception regarding the deficiencies and attributes of the GOREA showed a medium level with 67.5%, demonstrating that the population is aware of, but not entirely aware of, the management limitations of the regional authorities. These deficiencies were exposed with the pandemic, showing management problems of the authorities and the most vulnerable population affected. For a good management of the regional authority, there has to be a good communication with all the authorities of all its sectors, even more in times of pandemic, being the health sector the most damaged and hit in what was and still is the Covid-19 pandemic. In any scenario, governments must build effective and adaptive ways for which it has to establish strategies, this need was emphasized, in times of pandemic, in the face of this new reality the management of the authorities to adopt new forms of changes towards the population (Guevara et al., 2021).

Therefore, the population was asked about the degree of perception they have regarding the regional authorities and the management they carried out during the pandemic; Table 4 shows the degree of disapproval of the entire management by the population.

Table 4. *Citizen's Perception of Regional Authorities' Management Indicators*

Gestión de las Autoridades	Nivel		
	Bajo	Medio	Alto
Evaluación de la gestión de la Dirección Regional de Salud Amazonas frente a la pandemia.	71.1%	27.3%	1.6%
Capacidad de respuesta del Gobierno Regional de Amazonas frente a las dificultades de la pandemia Covid-19.	67.0%	29.9%	3.2%
Calificación de la gestión del Gobierno Regional de Amazonas frente a la pandemia Covid-19.	57.4%	40.2%	2.4%

Source: *Data taken from the questionnaire applied to managers.*

Regarding the management indicators of the regional authorities, the perception of the population indicated a low level with more than 50%, demonstrating that the citizens of the Amazonas region disapprove of the management carried out by the regional authorities during

the covid-19 pandemic. This perception responds to the fact that, in the whole process of the pandemic, high officials have been involved in acts of corruption, as well as irregular purchases that have been made in the acquisition of goods and services related to covid-19. This was also stated by Ramirez (2017), who agreed that corruption in local government has increased considerably the last few years. Being a big problem that makes a perception of the population towards the institutions of very low, also with 80% have the perception that corruption is in all public institutions with respect to Latin America (El Peruano, 2018). To control corruption in public institutions, it is necessary:

A proper monitoring and planning of the budgets managed by the State, together with citizens could prevent the entry of corruption in them, especially in developing countries, where power groups seek to take some advantage or benefit from the laws or social programs promoted. (Huárac, Díaz and Cuba, 2022:286).

The information management process of public institutions during covid-19 was a significant challenge for the authorities due to deficient systems; therefore, strategies must be articulated to implement new management measures (Escobar et al., 2021). In order to achieve a good perception of all the services provided to the population, they should be more involved to know more about the management of each State institution, especially in local governments, where the population is more closely involved in monitoring the management. The levels of perception that the population has about the management of the authorities are measured through the knowledge and experience about the reality within each province, being a subjective evaluation of the population towards the management implemented by the regional authority. Table 5 shows the level of perception of the regional population, the evaluation was taken for each province that makes up the Amazon region.

Table 5. *Citizen's Perception of the Amazonas Regional Government Management*

Provincia	Nivel			Total
	Bajo	Medio	Alto	
Chachapoyas	5.3%	8.7%	0.4%	14.4%
Luya	3.6%	10.3%	0.4%	14.3%
Utcubamba	2.6%	11.3%	0.6%	14.5%
Rodríguez de Mendoza	1.6%	11.7%	1.0%	14.3%
Bagua	3.2%	10.3%	1.0%	14.5%
Bongará	3.2%	9.7%	0.6%	13.5%
Condorcanqui	2.0%	10.5%	2.0%	14.5%
Total	21.5%	72.5%	6.0%	100.0%

Source: *Data taken from the questionnaire applied to managers.*

The level of citizen perception of the management carried out by the GOREA is medium with 72.5% and 6% at a high level; it was shown that, in the perception of the Amazonian citizens, the regional authorities must improve their management capacities to implement strategies for the benefit of the population.

In recent decades, public perception and citizen participation in political evaluations of local governments has had a greater presence, with increasing participation of the population (Núñez, Rodríguez and Cáceres, 2010). Precisely, an institution is positively evaluated if it adequately fulfills its functions; however, despite having improved in its processes and the

fulfillment of objectives, this has not been congruent with an increase in trust levels, bringing us closer to the idea of an established range of trust that escapes the effectiveness and efforts of the institution (Cosíos and Centeno, 2018).

The level of citizen perception, with respect to the management of GOREA within the framework of Covid-19, is moderate or medium with 72.5%. Said result is similar to that raised by Abanto (2020) which mentions that 74.6% of the population perceive a moderate level in local government management. On the other hand, what was published by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (2018) in the technical report "citizen perception on governance, democracy and trust in institutions" specified that, at the departmental level, the valuation towards regional government management is very low, as less than a quarter of the population 21.6% rate it as good or moderate.

This result was in significant contrast with Castillo (2021), who stated that 30.4% of citizens consider their government's performance to be fair or average. Likewise, the results that are similar to what was found by De la Cadena (2019) specified that the population qualifies municipal management as a regular level for both zones for those in the rural (57%) and urban (60%) areas; In addition, it agrees with Del Valle (2018) which pointed out that administrative management and service quality is in an acceptable degree of satisfaction with a medium level, according to the citizen's perception.

As agreed with the results obtained by Casiano and Cueva (2020) who found that the level of citizen perception regarding local management is at a medium level with 50.6%; in the same way, Hernandez and Perez (2013) expressed that 54.0% of the population have a positive image to the management of the administration. But the lack of knowledge on the part of the population in many cases is due to a lack of communication between institutions with society, i.e. between authority and population.

Canel (2018) stated that within the public administration of a democratic society, communication between these actors becomes complex, requiring perhaps educated, tolerant and willing to interlocution societies. He agrees with Villa and Guaiga (2019) when stating that the level of knowledge about municipal functions and services, turned out to have a high degree of ignorance on the part of citizens either by age, gender, place, degree of education regarding the management performed by local governments with respect to their functions.

Conclusions

The level of citizen perception of the Amazonas regional government's management within the framework of covid-19 presents a medium level with 72.5% followed by a low level with 21.5%, demonstrating that the majority of the population disapproves of the management carried out by the regional government during the sanitary emergency. From the point of view of the Amazonian citizen, the management has not had the initiative to make efficient and timely decisions, so the regional management is shown as disapproving for the majority of citizens, considered as an inefficient institution for not being transparent with the allocated resources and for not having implemented strategies to face the pandemic; also, characterized for being a bureaucratic institution, for not taking into account the opinion of the civil society. These arguments are based on the lack of participation of the population in public management issues that the authorities have been carrying out in favor of the population.

The management carried out by the key management to face the pandemic has been considered by the citizens of the seven provinces as inefficient for not attending their priority

needs at the time, causing deaths, lack of ICU beds, collapsed hospitals and without the necessary equipment to face the pandemic. The highest level of disapproval was given to the Regional Health Directorate of Amazonas with 71.1% of the population considering that its management was at a low level.

The level of knowledge that the citizens have in relation to the functions and obligations of the Regional Government of Amazonas is low; likewise, the Amazonian citizen has a lower level of perception regarding the efforts made by the Regional Health Directorate of Amazonas to confront covid-19.

Declaration of Conflicts Of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in the publication of the research.

Authors' Contribution Statement and Acknowledgements

The information is available in the database.

Ethics Committee Approval Statement

The authors declare that the research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the responsible institution, insofar as it involved human subjects.

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