

The Evaluation of the District Legislators' Performance Affects Citizens' Satisfaction with Democracy: The Hungarian Example

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journals.sagepub.com/home/psrev**Zsófia Papp** 

Abstract

Prior research reveals a relationship between various political system outputs and the citizens' satisfaction with democracy (SWD). The current study contributes to this line of inquiry and demonstrates that the perception of the district legislators' overall performance positively correlates with the citizens' democratic satisfaction. The multivariate analysis of Hungarian panel data from 2018 reveals that the effect is most salient in the case of the winners of the election, and less so for the losers. Results are robust to a variety of changes in the model. The findings indicate that the focus on individual politicians and their work has the potential to increase democratic satisfaction even if representative political institutions such as parties, governments and parliaments are not able to win the citizens' trust.

Keywords

satisfaction with democracy, legislators' performance, Hungary

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Introduction

This study looks at the relationship between how citizens evaluate their district legislators' performance and their overall satisfaction with how democracy works in the country. Prior research sheds light on factors that affect citizens' SWD. Various indicators of government and party performance are demonstrably relevant indicating that political system output promotes democratic stability and legitimacy in the long run. This analysis contributes to the literature by showing that citizens take another system output into account, namely the performance of the individual legislators. Looking at legislator performance is especially relevant, as trust in political parties and other political institutions has been in worldwide

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decline (Algan et al., 2017; Ceka, 2013; Citrin and Stoker, 2018; Torcal, 2014). The focus on individual politicians and their work has the potential to increase democratic satisfaction even if representative political institutions such as parties, governments and parliaments are not able to win the citizens' trust.

Although various aspects of government performance – as part of system output – are among the usual suspects in the scholarship, as of yet, there has been limited effort to investigate how the individual legislators' performance is connected to democratic satisfaction. This is a curious gap in the literature: while the responsible party model (APSA, 1950) has long dominated the discussion on representative democracy, recent scholarly development highlights the role of legislators' in the process of representation. Research shows that parties and voters alike monitor legislator action, and their evaluation of performance affects the legislators' re-selection and re-election chances (see Ansolabehere and Jones, 2010; Papp and Russo, 2018). Since the legislators' performance clearly matters at electoral decisions, there is good reason to believe that it also plays a part in the assessment of democratic quality. Still, research tends to look at the effect of citizen-level characteristics or the performance of political institutions on democratic satisfaction. And while these political institutions are composed of individual politicians, at times citizens evaluate their performances separately (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995). This grants relevance to the investigation of the connection between the legislators' performance as system output and SWD.

Using panel survey data, this study tests if the perception of the district legislators' performance affects the citizens' satisfaction with democracy. Hungary provides an interesting case for the analysis. Although almost half of the legislators are elected in single-member districts, partly due to current trends of presidentialization, Hungarian politics remains overwhelmingly party-centred with little room for individual legislators to stealing the limelight. Thus, the Hungarian case offers a strong test for the hypothesis. The study finds that there is a positive relationship between the district legislators' perceived performance and evaluations of democracy. The effect is most salient in the case of the winners of the election, and less so for the losers. Results are robust to a variety of changes in the model.

The Legislators' Performance and Satisfaction with Democracy

The scholarship made a great effort in identifying the causes of SWD. Among many, winning the elections (Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; Blais et al., 2017; Curini et al., 2012), the margin of victory (Howell and Justwan, 2013), government effectiveness (Dahlberg and Holmberg, 2014), the rule of law and corruption (Wagner et al., 2009), scandal elections (Kumlin and Esaiasson, 2012), the quality of social protection (Lühiste, 2014), citizen evaluation of the public administration (Ariely, 2013), how governments solve collective action problems (Halla et al., 2013), income inequality (Kang, 2015) as well as economic performance and procedural fairness (Magalhães, 2016) are all shown to affect how citizens evaluate democracy. Many of these causes relate to the output and performance of political institutions. However, not only representative political institutions such as parliaments, governments and parties may have outputs relevant in the study of SWD. Individual representatives are in direct contact with the citizens, and their performance in, for instance, local interest representation can also affect citizen attitudes towards the political regime. In fact, individual legislators bridge the gap

between citizens and representative institutions, and therefore, it is tempting to assume (while a certain degree of simultaneity is also prevalent) that the performance of the former affects satisfaction with the latter.

The Relevance of Legislator Performance

Since about the 1950s, the primary way to look at representation and accountability is within the framework of the responsible party model (APSA, 1950; Schattschneider, 1942). The model stipulates that different parties compete at the elections with different programmes, and winners accept the responsibility for government performance. In this view, individual legislators are solely members of their respective parties and do not bear direct responsibility for their parties' actions. It also assumes that parties are unified entities, with only a small leeway for legislators to act individually. However, since then, it has been acknowledged that while party representation ensures the selection of the most relevant issues, and helps setting public policy goals, personal representation can guarantee the good quality of representation by appointing reliable individuals who are responsive to citizen demand (Colomer, 2011).

Indeed, research suggests that both parties and voters care about how legislators perform individually. Recent literature shows that performance matters for the legislators' re-selection as candidates. Parties reportedly take into account the activities of the Members of the Parliament (MPs) in the party-centred Portugal (Borghetto and Lisi, 2018) and Turkey (Yildirim et al., 2019), under flexible-list proportional representation in Sweden and the Czech Republic (Däubler et al., 2018), in the rather weak National Assembly in France (Francois and Navarro, 2017), in Italian regions with a personalized style of representation (Marangoni and Russo, 2018) and in Hungary in the case of legislators elected on party lists (Papp, 2019a). In the European Parliament (EP), the volume of activities and committee work increases re-selection chances (Frech, 2016; Navarro, 2010).

Empirical evidence tell us that parliamentary activities matter to the voters as well. Better performance helps re-election in France (François and Navarro, 2019), Canada (Loewen et al., 2014), the United Kingdom (Bowler, 2010; Kellermann, 2013), Belgium (Däubler et al., 2016) and constituent approval in the United States (Sulkin et al., 2015). Voters positively react to policy responsiveness in roll call (Ansolabehere and Jones, 2010; Bussing et al., 2022; Nyhan et al., 2012), and punish legislators aligning too much with their parties (Bovitz and Carson, 2006; Canes-Wrone et al., 2002; Carson et al., 2010; Gherghina, 2016). There is also evidence that the American (Alvarez and Saving, 1997; Levitt and Snyder, 1997) and Brazilian (Pereira and Renno, 2003) legislators' pork barrel tactics pays off at the next elections. In the EP, Wilson et al. (2016) show that policy leadership helps Members of the European Parliament getting re-elected in countries with open party lists. The above list of relevant activities reveals that (1) voters evaluate their representatives' work across various activities and that (2) they base their vote on these evaluations. Not surprisingly, voters in general want hardworking, competent legislators who are able to make decisions on their own and, at the same time, are responsive to district needs.

Legislator Performance and Satisfaction with Democracy

As of yet, there is limited research tackling the effect of the legislators' performance on SWD. However, we can tell that the performance of parties, governments and the electoral process affect how citizens evaluate democracy. Reportedly, policy congruence

between the citizens and the political elites has an important role in influencing democratic satisfaction (Ferland, 2020; Kim, 2009; Reher, 2015; van Egmond et al., 2020). Besides congruence in policy and ideology, André and Depauw (2017) demonstrate the effect of congruence in how citizens and legislators view the representation process. Furthermore, Farrell and McAllister (2006) and Norris (2000) argue that a closer citizen-legislator linkage is associated with higher levels of satisfaction. Analysing data from 24 surveys, Papp (2021b) finds that the legislators' constituency orientation significantly increases the citizens' SWD. Based on this, it is to assume that if citizens think that their representatives do their jobs well they not only vote for them at the next elections, but are also more satisfied with how the whole political system works. Inversely, if citizens feel that legislators do not perform well, they may feel abandoned, and without proper representation. Research on other fields show that such evaluations or feelings of betrayal may quickly escalate from being dissatisfied with the individual to dissatisfaction with the whole system (Tamaian et al., 2017). Based on the above, the article proposes the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis. The evaluation of the district legislators' overall performance has a positive effect on citizens' satisfaction with democracy.

Because the hypothesis tests the effect of attitudes (perception of performance) on attitudes (satisfaction with democracy), the problem of reverse causality arises. The simultaneous nature of the relationship is undeniable. However, for that 'democracies are hierarchical' (Mitchell, 2000: 337), and in the chain of delegation and accountability the first link connects voters and representatives (Mitchell, 2000; Strøm, 2000), I argue that it is a plausible assumption that the evaluation of the legislators' performance affects satisfaction with the whole political system.

Research on the relationship between legislator activities and re-election chances presented above demonstrates that citizens are to some extent aware of MP behaviour. Even if voters do not constantly follow the legislators' work, legislator activity becomes a factor in the voters' decisions through two mechanisms: credit claiming and increasing name recognition (Cain et al., 1987; Däubler et al., 2016; Grimmer et al., 2012; Steenbergen and Lodge, 2003). Citizens follow legislators on social media, read their local outlets, visit their websites or subscribe to newsletters (Bimber and Davis, 2003; Fisher et al., 2019). As these are the platforms on which legislators advertise their achievements and constituency related efforts, voters are likely to get a picture of how much a legislator has done for the constituency (Jackson, 2008; Jackson and Lilleker, 2011). Overall, voters have a more direct experience with the work of their legislators than with democratic institutions.¹ They are, therefore, more likely to use this experience to evaluate democracy to which they have mostly indirect connections, than the other way around.

The Hungarian Case

To test the hypothesis, the article makes use of Hungary as a case. Hungary has a two-tier mixed-member majority electoral system. Voters elect legislators in 106 single-member districts and from national party lists. Despite the unpopularity of political parties, Hungarian politics is predominantly party-centred (Enyedi and Tóka, 2007). Albeit Hungarian voters have a receptiveness to personalisation, this manifests more in following leaders (Tóka, 2006) than paying attention to ordinary legislators. Voters are

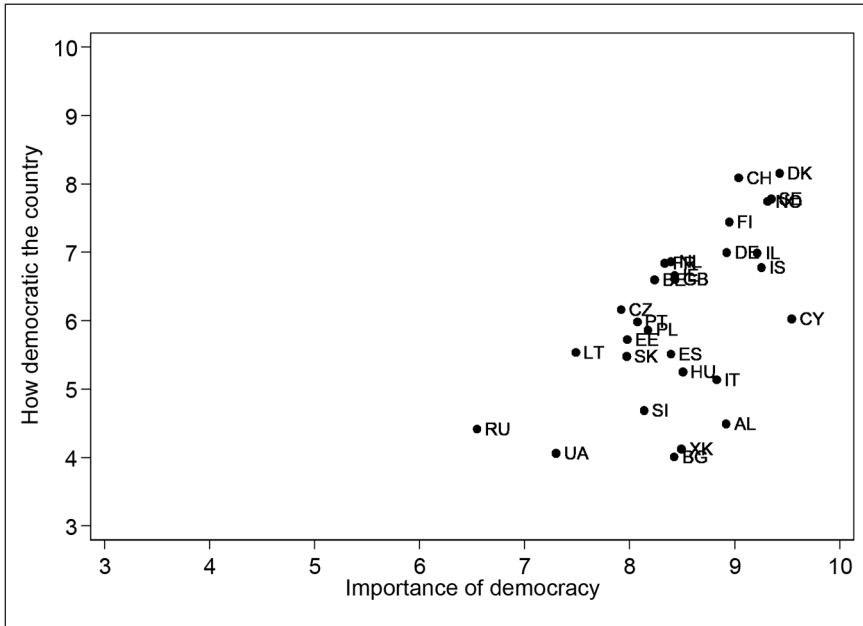


Figure 1. The Importance of Democracy and Its Evaluation in Europe.
Data source: European Social Survey Round 6 Data, 2012

also more likely to form an opinion with regard to public policy if party cues are present (Brader and Tucker, 2012). Although district candidates lead personalized campaigns, this is by no means a sign of individualization: personalized campaigns are part of the central party strategy (Papp and Zorigt, 2016). Thus, the personalization of campaigns does not necessarily increase candidate recall and the perceived importance of the candidate within the political system. At the same time, there is evidence that Hungarian voters take into account legislator activities when they pick a candidate to support (Papp, 2021a, 2019b).

The case of Hungary is also interesting because of recent developments in its drift from the ideals of liberal democracy. Since the start of the second Orbán-government in 2010, several studies highlighted the various aspects of the so-called illiberal democracy or hybrid regime that set Hungary on an uncertain path in terms of democratic consolidation (Bogaards, 2018; Buzogány and Varga, 2018; Körösényi et al., 2020; Pap, 2017). Although, democratic decline is not a unique development in post-socialist Europe, the changes in Hungary likely turn out to be more than mere ‘swerves’ (Bustikova and Guasti, 2017). Interestingly, although, according to Round 6 of the European Social Survey (European Social Survey Round 6 Data, 2012) (Figure 1), Hungarian citizens in 2012 are not at all indifferent towards what kind of democracy they live in. Among respondents living in post-socialist countries, Hungarians averaged the highest (8.5) on a scale of 0 to 10 measuring ‘how important it is for [them] to live in a country that is governed democratically’. At the same time, they were also quite sceptical with the quality of democracy in their country: the average response to the question ‘how democratic Hungary is’ is 5.2, among the lowest in the sample. The data speak for an interesting duality. On the one hand, democracy is very important for Hungarians, and on the other hand, people feel that the

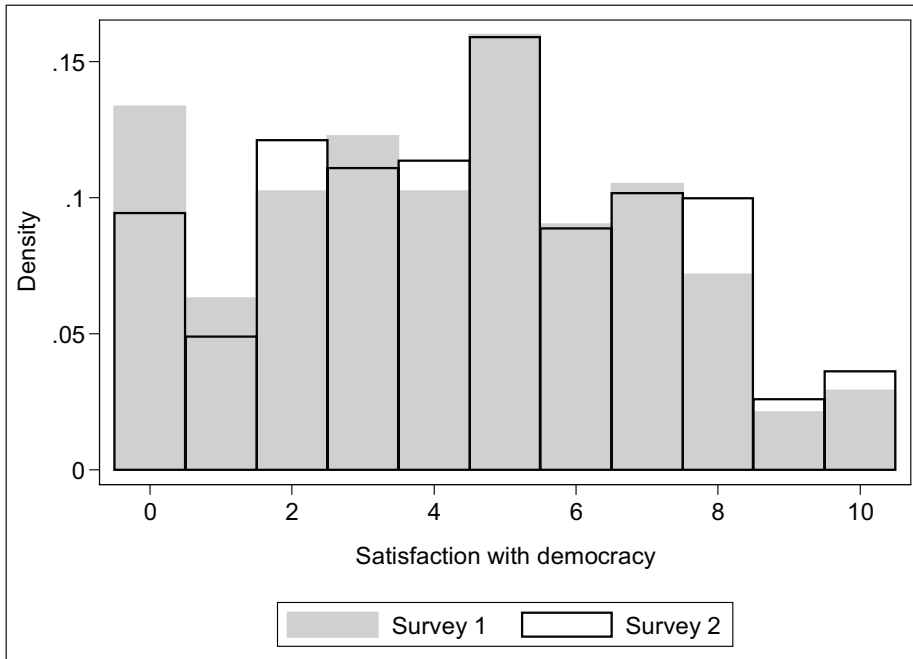


Figure 2. Satisfaction with Democracy in the Two Samples.

country falls far from the democratic ideals. Can positive perceptions of the legislators' performance overwrite this inherent pessimism?

Data and Variables

The analysis relies on two waves of survey data collected before (March–April) and after (May) the 2018 general elections. The two cross-sectional samples overlap in which about 700 individuals participated in both rounds. The data, therefore, constitute an unbalanced panel.

Satisfaction with Democracy

The dependent variable (DV) of the analysis is citizens' satisfaction with democracy. Although sometimes used in the study of support for incumbent authorities, government performance and the political system (Canache et al., 2001), satisfaction with democracy is most widely considered an indicator of evaluating democratic performance (Norris, 1999). Regime performance, as arguably only one aspect of system support, evaluates the discrepancy between democratic norms and the outputs of the political system (Curini et al., 2012). As Klingemann (1999) points out, satisfaction with democracy is more suitable for measuring performance than principles, especially as, citizens have different conceptions of how democracy is supposed to work (Bengtsson and Christensen, 2016).

In the survey, respondents indicated SWD on a 0–10 scale, where larger values represent greater satisfaction (see Figure 2). Descriptive figures reveal that respondents in the second sample are a little bit more satisfied with democracy than those in the first sample.²

Perceived Legislator Performance

Instead of the legislators' objectively measured performance, this analysis uses its *perception* by the citizens as an independent variable (*Performance*). Respondents were asked to rate the performance of their district MPs during the 2014–2018 electoral term in both samples. Importantly, in the second sample, the survey did not ask respondents about the performance of the district MP elected in 2018, because fieldwork took place shortly after the elections, and respondents could not relevantly evaluate the newly elected incumbents. On the scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is 'very bad' and 4 is 'very good', participants score 2.55 on average (standard deviation (SD)=0.76) in the first, and 2.61 (SD=0.76) in the second sample.

This approach has a number of advantages. First, using actual legislator performance would only reveal an indirect effect on satisfaction at best: the performance of the MPs is filtered through, for instance, the legislators' campaign, media coverage as well as the voters' openness and capacity to accommodate information. The perception of performance, however, already takes into account these intermediaries and, thus, can directly explain democratic satisfaction. Second, measures of legislators' performance often suffer from incompleteness. As taking into account all aspects of legislator behaviour is close to impossible, scholars must decide which activities to observe. However, on the one hand, the measured activities may not be those taken into account by citizens, and on the other hand, different citizens surely weigh the role of the various legislator activities differently. Perceived legislator performance already factors in voter preferences and expectations of MP behaviour.

The downside of this measure is though that while the respondents take into account their basket of preferred legislator activities when they rate legislator performance, the researcher is left in the dark about the contents of that basket. As a consequence, a positive effect of perceived legislator performance on democratic satisfaction means that the legislators' behaviour – as perceived by the citizens – matters, but what it is *specifically* that matters in the legislators' behaviour we will have no information about.³

Another disadvantage of using the citizens' evaluations of the legislators' performance as an independent variable is the problem of confounding: the correlation between *Performance* and SWD may not be the product of causation but we may merely observe the workings of a third unmeasured variable. If citizens are in a state of general satisfaction (political or otherwise), they systematically score higher in both measures without creating a causal relationship between the legislators' performance and democratic satisfaction. In other words, there is a possibility that *Performance* and SWD are proxies of the 'same thing'. To sort out the underlying common component in the two variables, I performed an exploratory factor analysis (FA) using the variables measuring *Performance*, satisfaction with democracy, satisfaction with the government's performance, satisfaction with the economy and satisfaction with 'how things are' in the country. All satisfaction variables are measured on a scale of 0 to 10. Table 1 shows the results.

The first factor explains 98% and 94% of the total variance, respectively. All variables positively correlate with the first factor with the satisfaction variables taking the upper hand. Albeit the first factor definitely reveals an underlying connection between *Performance* and the satisfaction variables, the four factors leave 67%–72% of the variance of *Performance* unexplained. These results suggest that the two types of evaluations (i.e. *Performance* and satisfaction) are differently motivated, and therefore only partly proxy the same underlying concept. The correlation matrix included into the

Table 1. Factor Loadings (Unrotated) from the Exploratory Factor Analysis.

	Survey 1				Survey 2					
	F1	F2	F3	F4	Uniqueness	F1	F2	F3	F4	Uniqueness
Satisfaction with democracy	0.90	-0.12	0.04	-0.01	0.17	0.83	-0.14	0.07	0.07	0.27
Satisfaction with the economy	0.91	0.10	-0.01	0.02	0.15	0.91	-0.02	-0.16	0.01	0.14
Satisfaction with the government	0.94	-0.08	-0.08	0.01	0.10	0.95	-0.11	0.02	-0.06	0.07
Satisfaction with how things are	0.90	0.09	-0.03	-0.03	0.18	0.66	0.16	0.16	-0.01	0.51
Performance	0.52	0.01	0.13	0.01	0.72	0.50	0.27	-0.06	0.01	0.67

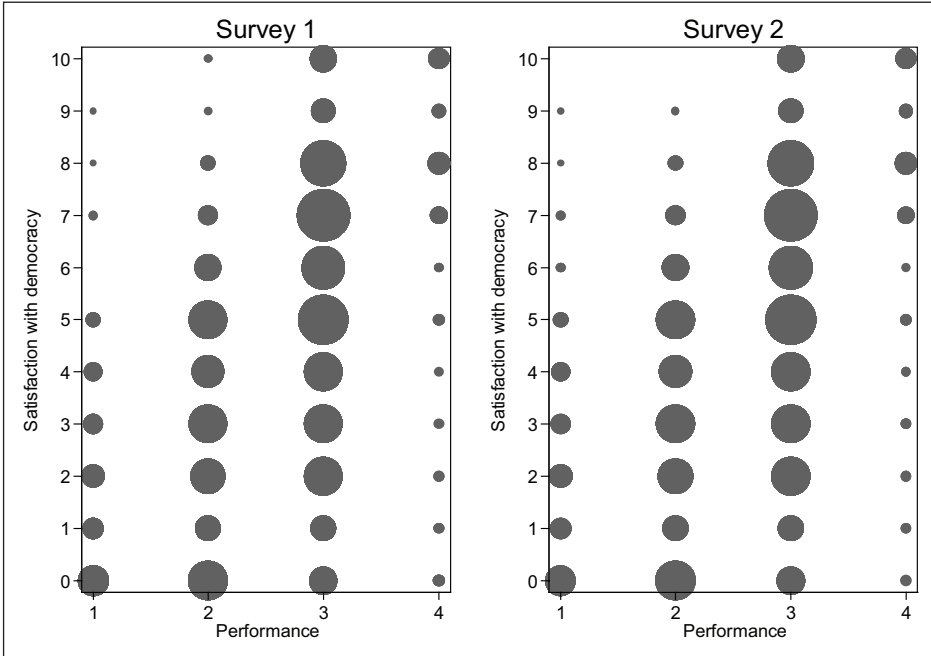


Figure 3. The Joint Distribution of Satisfaction with Democracy and the Evaluation of Legislators’ Performance.

Online Appendix as well as Cronbach’s alphas also support this finding. The analysis treats the potential problem of confounding with controlling for *General Satisfaction* (i.e. satisfaction with ‘how things are’) to purge the satisfaction component from the *Performance* measure.

The analysis treats both SWD and *Performance* as interval variables. Figure 3 displays their joint distribution. Larger circles indicate a greater number of respondents in the respective cells. The descriptive data reveal that there is a positive relationship between the evaluation of the legislators’ performance and democratic satisfaction.

Control Variables

Empirically, the citizens’ party preference is one of the strongest factors affecting democratic satisfaction (Bernauer and Vatter, 2012; Blais et al., 2017; Curini et al., 2012). Voting for the government inflates, while supporting the opposition deflates the level of satisfaction creating a gap between winners and losers. The variable *Government Voter* takes 1 if the respondent voted for Fidesz-KDNP at the preceding election,⁴ and 0 otherwise. Due to the lack of theoretical expectations, non-voters are excluded from the sample.⁵

When investigating the effect of the linkage between citizens and legislators on SWD, one has to also keep in mind that another type of linkage may be equally important to the voters: the representation function of the legislature (Aarts and Thomassen, 2008). To reveal how voters evaluate elections to fulfil the representative function, the survey asked the following question: ‘Thinking about how

elections in Hungary work in practice, how well do you think they ensure that the views of MPs accurately reflect the views of voters?’ Responses range from 1 (‘Not well at all’) to 4 (‘Very well’). In addition, as already hinted at in the previous section, *General Satisfaction* measures the respondent’s satisfaction with ‘how things are in the country’ on a scale of 0 to 10.

The analysis further controls for the basic socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. There is plenty of evidence that economic prosperity generates satisfaction with the political system (Christmann, 2018; Kestilä-Kekkonen and Söderlund, 2017; Quaranta and Martini, 2017). However, because single-country cross-section studies do not allow for controlling for economic indicators, the analysis uses the respondents’ own account of their financial situation: *Coping* quantifies how well the respondents think they can live off their current income (1–6). *University Degree* distinguishes between respondents with (1) and without (0) a university degree. *Employment* measures the respondents’ employment status (0 – Not employed, 1 – Employed). *Settlement* differentiates between citizens living in (1) Budapest, (2) towns or (3) villages. Finally, the analysis takes into account the *Age* and *Gender* of the respondents.

Analysis

As the data constitute an unbalanced panel, the analysis utilizes a random-effects generalized least squares (GLS) estimator to test the hypothesis.⁶ The random effects are respondent-specific intercepts. The model in Table 2 reveals a positive relationship between the legislators’ performance and democratic satisfaction. One unit increase in the MP’s perceived performance increases satisfaction with democracy by 0.38 units. On average, a respondent who is not at all satisfied with the performance of their district MP scores 4.11 on the democratic satisfaction scale. In comparison, high quality performance swings SWD to 5.24. This value is higher than the average democratic satisfaction of 4.31 with everything else fixed at their means.

To support the findings, I perform robustness checks. First, I test whether the effect of *Performance* is relevant in both survey waves. This is important as the questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate MP work between 2014 and 2018, even after the 2018 elections. Logically, in the second wave of the survey (i.e. after the elections), the legislator’s performance in the previous electoral term is less relevant, and thus its effect is supposedly smaller than in the first wave. The interaction of *Performance* and *Wave* is negative, which confirms that performance in the previous electoral term is significantly less important for the current levels of SWD even if the MP defended their seat. The changing effect of *Performance* across survey waves also calls the attention to the possible influence of the political context. While data at hand are not eligible to shed light on the mechanism, it is possible that the proximity of the elections plays a role in how legislator performance and SWD are associated.

Second, as the literature demonstrates, the party affiliation of citizens largely influences how they evaluate democratic performance. Indeed, in the model, government voters score 1.29 points higher on the dependent variable than voters of the opposition. An interaction term of *Performance* and party affiliation tests if the effect of performance holds in the cases of both government and opposition supporters. Figure 4 (right panel) shows a considerable difference between the effect of performance across the two groups.

Table 2. Random-Effects GLS Model Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy.

	Coef. (S.E.)
Performance	0.378* (0.083)
Government voter	1.293* (0.140)
Elections representative	0.292* (0.080)
General satisfaction	0.511* (0.027)
University degree	-0.459* (0.163)
Employment	0.331* (0.146)
Coping	0.258* (0.064)
Settlement: town	-0.048 (0.149)
Settlement: village	-0.147 (0.172)
Age	0.001 (0.004)
Gender: female	-0.265* (0.114)
Intercept	-0.638 (0.444)
N	1211
Wald Chi2	1585.07*
sigma_u	0.967
sigma_e	1.545
Rho	0.281

Entries are random effects GLS estimates. Robust standard errors in parentheses. GLS: generalised least squares.

* $p < 0.05$.

While legislator performance and democratic satisfaction positively correlate for all respondents, and thus the effect seems overall robust, this correlation is stronger in the case of government voters. One unit increase in the value of *Performance* increases satisfaction with democracy by 0.65 points for voters of the government, and by 0.15 points for opposition sympathizers.⁷

Regarding the control variables, as expected, more representative elections are associated with higher levels of satisfaction. Similarly, respondents who are more satisfied with 'how things are in the country' report higher democratic satisfaction. Concerning socio-demographics, women are less satisfied with democracy on average. Having a university degree decreases satisfaction, while employment has the opposite effect. As expected, the better respondents are able to cope on their income the more satisfied they become. Finally, in this sample, I find no meaningful effect for the place of residence and the age of the respondent.

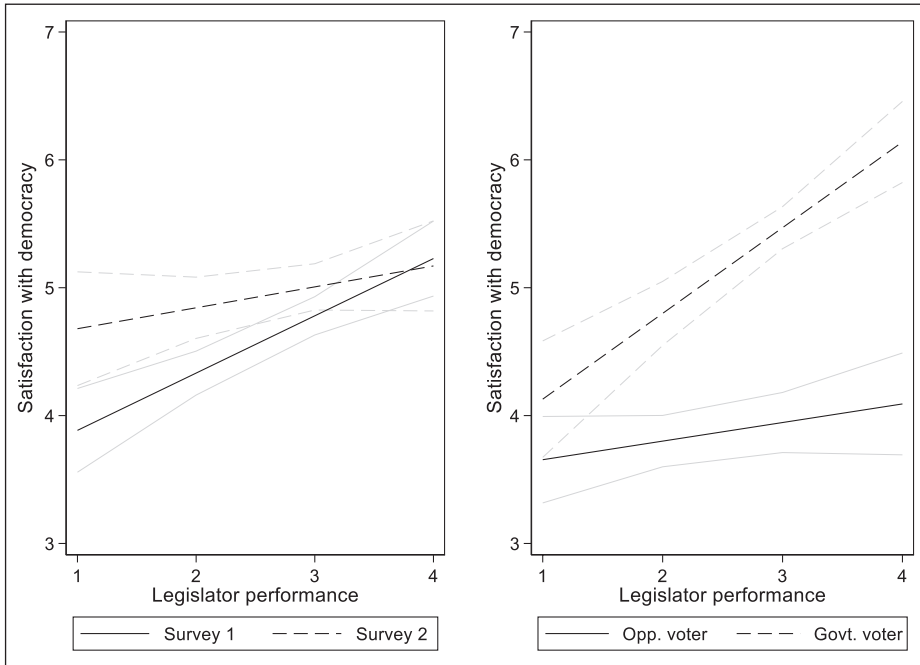


Figure 4. The Expected Value of Satisfaction with Democracy at the Different Levels of Legislator Performance and Over Survey Waves and Party Affiliation.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article investigated if the district legislators' performance as perceived by the citizens affects how satisfied people are with democracy. The analysis of Hungarian panel data from 2018 revealed that the evaluation of the district legislators' performance positively correlates with democratic satisfaction. This relationship is robust to both winners and losers of the election. However, results indicate that winners give more weight to the role of legislator performance when evaluating democratic quality than losers. Even the highest rating of legislator performance is not able to balance dissatisfaction that arises from losing the elections. Hence, yet another study confirms the winner–loser gap in satisfaction with democracy, and improving system output cannot bridge this gap. This is no surprise in such a divided society as Hungary. The winner–loser gap is larger than in other European countries, and has been increasing in the past couple of years (Susánszky et al., 2021).

How well does this result travel to the contexts of other countries? There are a number of things to consider. First, the extent of legislator-level personalization determines how important the individual legislators' performance is for the quality of the representative link. In candidate-centred electoral systems, the performance of legislators may be more visible and thus play a larger role in generating satisfaction. Nevertheless, previous studies show that sometimes party-centred electoral rules do not trump personalized politics (Borghetto et al., 2020; Russo, 2011). Thus, the generalizability of results partly depends on the electoral rules and partly on other incentives for personalization. As argued earlier in this article, Hungary may be viewed a strong case in this respect. Although, a large percentage of candidates are elected in single-member districts, the overall picture supports the leading role of parties as opposed to individual legislators. In countries, where

personalization is at the same or a higher level, the positive relationship between legislator performance and democratic satisfaction likely prevails.

Second, the overall level of satisfaction may also influence how much effect can *any* factor have. In countries with high levels of democratic satisfaction, the effect of legislator performance are likely to be smaller, because citizens are already satisfied with how democracy works and there is limited room for improvement. Third, one may think that the quality of democracy matters in how well the conclusions of the analysis travel across countries. It is possible that in mature democracies citizens connect legislator performance to democracy in a different way than in consolidating or even hybrid democracies. The argument of this study may hold in all cases: the link between citizens and legislators is the first in the chain of delegation in all democracies, and thus the quality of this link may influence how citizens evaluate the performance of the political regime irrespective of its stability or objective quality.

Having said that, the consequences of the results may drastically differ across democracies. In consolidated democracies, on the one hand, a positive effect of legislator performance on democratic satisfaction may further strengthen representative democracy in the long term. The role of the individual legislators is especially important in this context as trust in political parties and other representative institutions are in worldwide decline (Algan et al., 2017; Ceka, 2013; Citrin and Stoker, 2018; Torcal, 2014). On the other hand, in de-consolidating democracies and hybrid regimes, a strong legislator performance may purchase legitimacy and satisfaction with the regime (Distelhorst and Hou, 2017). Together with a heavily parochial political culture, a positive relationship between perceived legislator performance and satisfaction with democracy may obscure tendencies of de-democratization, lessens the negative reception of institutional changes and stabilizes a system with a broken representative link.

The study has, of course, its limitations. First, although the advantages of using *perceptions* measuring legislator performance are clear, research should look at the effect of more objective measures of performance. Research could probe, on the one hand, what activities citizens take into account when they evaluate their legislators, and on the other hand, what external factors affect the citizens' perceptions of said activities. Media coverage, the legislators' credit claiming and advertising as well as party activities are just a few examples of what may be important in this respect. Second, survey data are not the most appropriate to demonstrate the causal relationship between two attitudinal variables. There is great potential in experimental research in pinpointing the effect of legislator performance on SWD. Clearly, there is a lot we do not understand yet. Nevertheless, the results of this study demonstrate that we should look more into how the individual legislators' behaviour can affect democratic evaluations, and how it contributes to the perceived quality of democracy.

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Supplemental material

Additional supplementary information may be found with the online version of this article.

Appendix A – The Citizens’ Expectations of Legislator Behaviour.

Table A1. The Respondents’ Expectations of MP Behaviour.

Table A2. The Respondents’ Preferences about the Foci of Representation.

Figure A1. Correspondent Analysis Plot of Expectations and Preferences.

Appendix B – Factor Analysis (FA) of the Legislators’ Performance and Indicators of Satisfaction.

Table B1. Correlation Matrix of Performance and Various Indicators of Satisfaction.

Table B2. Interitem Correlations and Cronbach’s Alpha.

Table B3. Factor Loadings (Pattern Matrix) and Unique Variables.

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Table C2. The Joint Distribution of Performance and SWD in Survey 1.

Table C3. The Joint Distribution of Performance and SWD in Survey 2.

Appendix D – Main Model.

Table D1. Random Effects GLS Models Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy.

Figure D1. The Expected Value of Satisfaction with Democracy Over the Different Levels of Legislator Performance.

Appendix E – Robustness: Post-Treatment Bias.

Table E1. Random Effects GLS Models Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy.

Appendix F – Robustness: Coarsened Exact Matching.

Table F1. Maximum Likelihood Random Effects Estimates in the Matched Sample.

Appendix G – Robustness: Random-Effects Ordered Logit Regression.

Table G1. Random-Effects Ordered Logit Regression Estimates.

Figure G1. The Estimated Probabilities for the Different Values of SWD Over Performance.

Appendix H – Robustness: Two Survey Waves and Party Affiliation.

Table H1. Random Effects GLS Estimates with Interactions (Survey Wave and Government Voter), and OLS Estimates Per Sub-Samples.

Figure H1. The Expected Value of Satisfaction with Democracy at the Different Levels of Legislator Performance and Across Survey Waves and Party Affiliation.

Appendix I – Robustness: District Leaning.

Table I1. Random Effects GLS Estimates Across District Leaning with Interactions (Government Voter).

Figure I1. The Expected Value of Satisfaction with Democracy at the Different Levels of Legislator Performance and Over Party Affiliation and District Leaning.

Appendix J – Robustness: Additional Checks.

Figure J1. Rotated Factors of Satisfaction by Survey Waves.

Figure J2. The Scatterplot of Satisfaction with Democracy and the Rotated Factor of Satisfaction Across the Two Survey Waves.

Table J1. Random Effects GLS Models Explaining Satisfaction with Democracy.

Notes

1. Although there is evidence that parliaments as institutions try to connect with citizens (Griffith and Leston-Bandeira, 2012; Leston-Bandeira, 2012a, 2012b), we know much less about whether or not citizens pay attention.
2. This difference is statistically significant ($F=9.69$, $p=0.001$).
3. The analysis mitigates this uncertainty by seeking out information on citizen expectations of the legislators’ behaviour. A brief discussion of this matter is available in the Online Appendix.
4. In the first sample, the preceding election is 2014, in the second it is the 2018 elections.
5. For an analysis of non-voters see the Online Appendix.
6. Results are very similar if the data is pre-processed applying Coarsened Exact Matching (CEM), as well as in the case of random-effects ordered logit estimation. For the respective models, see the Online Appendix.
7. Government voters behave the same way in both government and opposition districts: stronger legislator performance correlates with higher levels of satisfaction. Opposition voters, on the other hand, either reveal a positive reaction to performance (in government districts), or react negatively to increasing performance (in opposition districts). For the models taking into account the leaning of the district, see the Online Appendix.

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