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Exploring the Implications of Relationship between Public Trust and Governance Using Regression Analysis

Ali Abdullah Bajwa

Student, School of Management, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, China

Zhou Lulin

Professor, School of Management, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, China

Naveed Ahmed Wahla

Student, School of Management, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, China

Abstract:

This paper focuses on the issues facing the public administration of the Government of Pakistan by correlating public trust with multiple governance indicators. The overall sphere of the governance was divided into three main segments, which included, performance, empowerment and self-expression. All the subordinate indicators with which the administrative performance was analyzed were distributed within these three macro segments. A questionnaire distributed to the general public was used to judge the strength of the relationship between trust in government and different indicators of performance under the purview of the public administration. Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the strength of the variables to trust in the administration. The results show that similar to research done in other countries most of the factors mentioned in literature, such as corruption and quality of public service did have a strong relationship with trust, however, environmental performance, citizen input, right to criticize govt. seemed not to have a significant relationship with trust in Pakistan. Using the results segments governance with strong relationship to trust and weak administrative performance were identified. The research provides a general framework, which will help increase trust of the public in the government, which is of utmost important to improve the ability of the Pakistani public administration to deliver goods and services to the general public.

Keywords: *Public trust, governance, performance, empowerment, self-expression, administration, multiple regression, Pakistan*

1. Introduction

The term governance refers to the formal and informal processes that determine how public decisions are made and how administrative actions are carried out from the perspective of maintaining a country's constitutional values. Public administration is considered a constituent pillar of governance.

Good administration is a model of administration. As a principle, good administration summarizes the margins inside which the public administration activity should take place, by establishing, on the one hand, a set of ethical rules of behavior, and on the other hand, standards to be taken into account by the public administration activity (Matei and Băieșiu 2014). Therefore, the public administration activity should be developed efficiently, effectively and economically.

Good governance is focused on creating a consensus through negotiations and mediations among different stakeholders mainly the public. Good Governance has a major impact on administration by providing equity (i.e. all men and women have equal opportunities to improve or sustain their well-being and growth), effectiveness and efficiency (i.e. it achieves results that meet the need of the public while making the best use of the available resources) and last but definitely not the least accountability (i.e. all the decision makers in government administration, the private sector and the civil society are answerable to the general public and to the institutional stakeholders.)

In the past public administration has mainly used so-called 'hard indicators', such as resources and outputs, to monitor performance (Bouckaert and van de Walle 2003). However, the increased attention on accountability and issues around social impacts and outcomes have stimulated the introduction of 'soft' indicators—e.g. citizen and user satisfaction targets. Moreover, there is a greater demand for information on performance in relation to 'governance' as a whole, including multiple indicators such as quality of life. Bouckaert and van de Walle found that trust can be considered a sufficiently strong indicator of good governance. This study aims to pursue this line of analysis to determine the administrative performance of the government of Pakistan.

A study on administration (Matei and Băieşiu 2014) found that it is useful that the administration have the initiative in setting a trust based relation with the citizens. As this will give the administration greater stability. Furthermore, a study on corruption and trust in Asian countries (Chang and Chu 2006) found that there is a strong trust-eroding effect of political corruption in Asian democracies. Therefore, corruption as an indicator of trust in the Pakistani administration has been used in this study.

In a study on the validation of a scale for measuring government performance (Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies 2015) found that while the trust of the citizens in the government has been faithfully studied by public administration scholars, there has been a lack of emphasis on assessing trust at a meso level of government organizations. The authors opined that studying trust at this level will help determine effects and antecedents more precisely and accurately. The authors proposed a scale consisting of nine items measuring three major dimensions. For our study we have used a similar scale of three major dimensions to help validate the importance of trust in public administration.

A study on public trust in government in Japan and South Korea (Kim 2010) provided us with multiple indicators of trust and support namely, government performance, ability to influence policy and self-expression. The results in the study, which were obtained by regression analysis showed a positive relation between these three macro-factors and public trust. For the purpose of this research we will follow the model illustrated and used in this paper. According to Kim (2005, p. 611), higher citizens' trust in public institutions ensures good governance and successful implementation of policies.

A lot of academics have come to the conclusion that trust in government represents an evaluation of government performance, demonstrating whether performance is in accordance with the normative expectations held by the public (Levi and Stoker 2000; Miller and Listhaug 1999). This provides us with the basis of using public perception of performance as an indicator of performance.

The public has many more connections and interactions with the administrative institutions and organizations than with political organization and other such representative institutions. The experience of the administrative actions taken by the government have a direct connection to public opinion about the political system as the whole (Rothstein, 2005, pp. 108-9). Therefore, not only does it makes sense to look closely at the level of trust in public administration institutions and organizations but also use this as an indicator of the degree of success of a political system.

A study on the causal relationships between quality of governance and economic growth (Wilson 2016) at the provincial level in China during the post-Mao reform era found that the observed positive association between governance and growth reflects the ability of provincial governments to harness the potential created by economic growth to implement subsequent governance improvements. Both potential directions of causality between quality of governance and economic performance have support in the prior theoretical and empirical literature. Looking first at the effect of governance on economic growth, there are several potential channels through which causality may operate. Professionalization of the bureaucracy provides bureaucrats with predictable, merit-based career paths within the civil service, creating stability and longer time horizons that encourage investment in public infrastructure with long-term payoffs rather than present consumption (Rauch, 1995). Furthermore, the systematic rule-based decision-making should also increase the effectiveness of major infrastructure projects that involve collaboration between different government agencies (Evans and Rauch 1999). A stable and trusted bureaucracy can promote long-term investment by private businesses, by reducing the perceived risk associated with changing government policies and bureaucratic turnover (Evans and Rauch 1999).

A study on the dynamics of public support for government policies in the US after 9/11 found that support from the public for allocating resources to address issues such as homeland security will be greater if increased trust in government can be sustained (Chanley 2002). Therefore, the results of the research point to the significance of the level of public support and the importance of maintaining it. This indicated that to successfully tackle the outstanding administrative issues facing Pakistan trust in the administration has to be developed to successfully overcome the problems facing the country.

Furthermore, in recent years, economists and economic historians have also begun to emphasize the importance of effective institutions—the “rules of the game” that govern the interactions between economic actors and constrain the potential abuse of political power—in determining a country's prospects for economic growth (North 1990). Furthermore, a study on citizen participation in macroeconomic policy (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2003) found that there is a very real need to invest in communication. The presentation of macroeconomic policy and the method of implementation for e.g. the time frame has a direct impact on the perceptions of policy stakeholders i.e. the public, and this directly determines whether a certain policy would be successful or not. Hence, it is clear that the view of the public on this issue will have a direct impact on the success of any administrative action.

A study on co-governance and accountability (Ackerman 2004) found that the best way to tap into the potential of society and to energize them is through “co-governance,” which involves inviting social actors i.e. the civil society to participate in the core activities of the state. Participation of society is mostly seen as a way to decrease cost of government usually through outsourcing tasks and jobs, an example of which would be NGO's and other organizations within communities and societies. However, this is not the true participation as has been envisioned by the UNDP and the World Bank (UNDP 2002; World Bank 2003). Active engagement and participation is still rare in practice and would implementation of this principal would go a long way in ensuring effective administration. This can only be achieved by governments if they are aware of how best to interact with different sections of society by making policies to counter problems certain demographics face.

In a paper on social impact assessment (SIA) and public participation in China (Tang, Wong et al. 2008) the importance of SIA was discussed in great detail. The study highlighted the significance of SIA's as a tool of measuring the impact of development and other such administrative efforts. The paper studied in detail how SIA helps to address the social issues that arise out of planned administrative efforts and that this helps to maintain, sustain and develop an environment of contentment. SIA in essence protects and

helps involve the public in a dialogue, which has a direct effect on their future. All this highlights the importance of building public trust for effective governance and administration and this will be kept in mind while conducting this study.

An article on the Governance and conflict relapse (Hegre and Nygard 2015) shows that the risk of conflict in countries characterized by good governance drops rapidly after a conflict has ended or after independence. In countries with poor governance, this process takes much longer. This only adds to the importance of building trust between the government and the citizens since Pakistan is marred by conflict. Furthermore, a study on trust in governments (Suh, Chang et al. 2012) pointed to the possibility of interpersonal trust “spilling up” to trust in institutions and the likelihood that trust in one institution “spills over” to trust in other related institutions. Therefore, build-up of trust between the government and the people will lead to a build-up of trust between the armed forces and the citizens, which will facilitate the military establishment to successfully tackle the problems it faces.

In a study on reform in the public administration (Aoki 2015) it was recommended at a study of administrative reform must take into account how to best determine the priority of reforms, the outcomes of which must be identified. This leads to the conclusion that the sequences in which administrative reforms evolve have a direct bearing on the results. Therefore, any reform should be subjective and based on the results of the demographic dynamics applicable to that particular area. Keeping in mind the findings of this research, the results from the study will be used to determine the demographics that need to special attention and prioritize their reform in order to address the root cause of the problems of the people.

2. Methodology

Results from the first part of the research, which involved collecting data from surveys helped us build a clear picture of the situation. It is important to keep in mind that the factors used for this to determine administrative performance were mined from literature and they were chosen as such because all these factors were shown to have a significant relationship with trust in the federal government in research done by experts in the field in other developing countries. Multiple regression was run in order to show the degree/strength of the relationship between trust the dependent variable and the independent variables. Here we will breakdown the results and look at some statistical outliers. In order to determine, which issues are of pressing importance for the Pakistani administration.

2.1. Ethical Issues in Research

Research in the field of social science examines multifaceted problems which encompass cultural, legal, economic, and political phenomena (Freed 1994). This means that research in the field of social science must concern itself with “moral integrity” to ensure that research process and findings are “trustworthy” and valid (Biber 2005). Firstly, fitness for intended use is a consideration, which is of great significance, relates to the degree to which the data conforms to the essential requirements of the research for which it was carried out. Sampling error has to be accounted for and is a big issue in this form of research. Survey population which describes the actual population from which the survey data are collected is of great importance in order to obtain a clear picture of the issue at hand.

3. Results and Analysis of Data

This section highlights the findings from the data collected from survey respondents using the

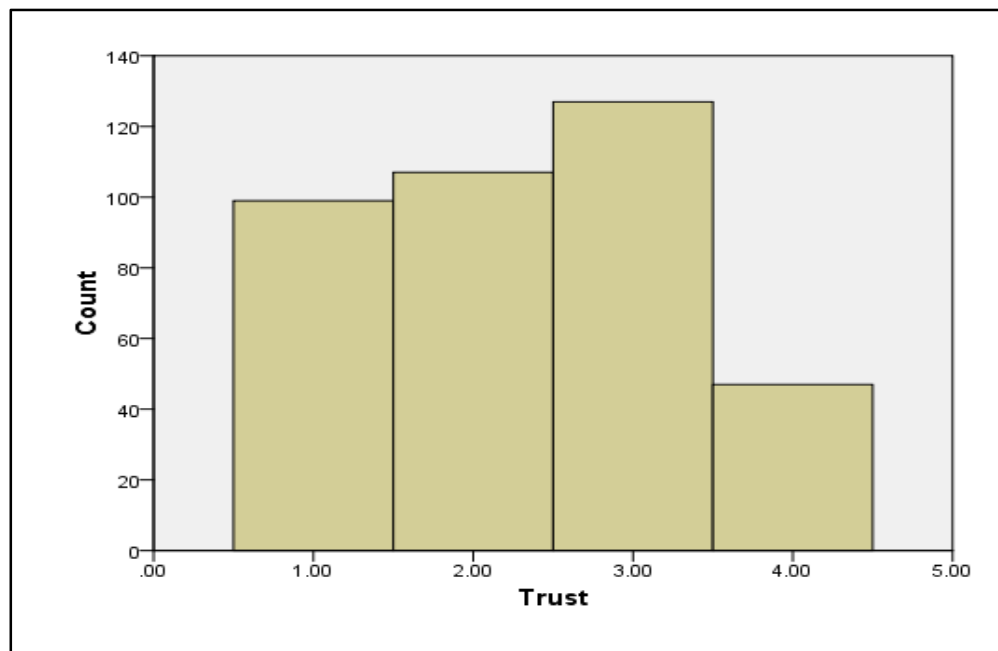


Figure 1: Histogram showing trust distribution

2015 Beta		
<i>Performance</i>		
Standard of living	.04	
Economy	.26***	
Quality of Public Service	.12***	
Crime	.09**	
Refugees	.08**	
Environmental protection	-.04	
<i>Empowerment</i>		
Power to influence policy	.03	
Right to be informed	.01	
Official attention to citizen input	-.03	
<i>Self-expression</i>		
Right to gather and demonstrate	.04	
Right to criticize government	.00	
R^2	.260	
Adjusted R^2	.252	
F	32.13***	

Table 1: Results of Regression Analysis: Correlation between Public Trust and Performance, Empowerment, Self-expression variables.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; 1: Trust a lot; 2: Trust toadegree; 3: Don't really trust; 4: Don't trust at all.

The results of analyses show that the government's performance in dealing with the economy, political corruption, quality of public services, and crime was positively associated with trust in federal government in the 2015. The results of the study showed that with the exception of environmental protection and official attention to citizen input and the right to criticize government the other variables have strong linkages to trust. Interpreting the scale of relationship strength, you can see that economy showed 'very strong' linkages. This implies that economy of country is an essential determinant of an individual's level of trust in the administration. Therefore, policies targeting economic uplift of citizens will lead to an increase in trust in the administration. At a time when trust is at an alarming low point among the public it would be prudent to focus on the economy which is shown to have strong linkages to trust, otherwise the administration and the public's trust deficit is bound to fall further. Focusing on economic welfare by increasing minimum wage will lead to an increase in trust the public has in the administration. This in turn based on the results of previous studies will increase the administration's ability to make reforms and move towards the ideal of good governance Moving on to quality of public service and crime, which also show strong linkages to trust meaning that the better the bureaucracy serves the public the greater will be the trust the public places in the administration, furthermore, the better the govt. handles crime, the greater will be the trust of the public in the administration. The ability of the government to handle refugees both internal and external also showed 'a strong relationship with trust. This highlights the importance of dealing effectively not only with afghan refugees but also with Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's). The sooner the govt. relocates them the greater the trust the public will place in the federal government. Similarly, right to influence policy also shows a strong linkage to trust, meaning that the perception of the public in terms of ability to influence policy should be high. Similarly, right to be informed shows linkages, this linkage is not as strong as the earlier ones, possibly due to the boom of electronic media organizations in Pakistan. These organizations perform a role, which was previously the purview of the information department of the government. Right to gather and demonstrate in another aspect that the public feels is strongly related to trust and as such it is the governments duty to ensure that this happens. The research finding point out that environmental protection, which is a hot topic in most western countries is not an important issue when it comes to trust in the administration of Pakistan. This may be owing to the fact that Pakistan's economy is not solely dependent on heavy manufacturing industries. Furthermore, Pakistani citizens don't feel that trust is dependent on the official attention to citizen input, this may be explained due to a lack of a strong functioning civil society and grassroots democracy that are at the root of this concept. In addition to this right to criticize the government also did not show strong linkages, the reasons for this can be grouped together with those relating to attention to citizen input. As literature points out united public support for the administration allows for the administration to function freely (Chanley 2002). Keeping this in mind it can be recommended that the government pay heed to the level of trust the public has in the administration and to initiate campaigns and devise policies aimed at boosting public trust in the administration. Many scholars argue that citizens with higher levels of trust in the political establishment are more likely to grant bureaucratic discretion to public administrators than citizens with lower levels of trust. Trust, therefore, can alleviate the friction between managerial flexibility and political accountability in the modern administrative state (Cooper, Knotts et al. 2008) and this is of utmost importance to Pakistan which is marred by bureaucratic inefficiency as exhibited by the performance variable in this research. The degree of maneuverability political leaders have in the reform process is influenced by environmental factors (Christensen, Laegreid et al. 2002). Therefore, focusing on areas of weakness and improving performance standards and empowering citizens while allowing them express themselves freely will foster the building of trust in the Pakistani government, which will facilitate an environment conducive to reform and development in the troubled region. Overall, it can be said that the lack of trust in the government of Pakistan especially within specific, is a worrying indicator of poor administration. The government needs a cohesive response to counter all outstanding issues in order to build trust between different

segments of the public and the government, which as literature informs us is of fundamental importance in any successful administration.

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