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Exploring the impact of good governance on citizens' trust in Pakistan

Momna Yousaf*, Fareeha Ihsan, Abida Ellahi

Fatima Jinnah Women University, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

In democratic governments, administrative ethical practices have always been recognized as a critical tool for determining the good governance and a crucial element to be incorporated in building citizen trust. In this context, the purpose of this research is to assess how unethical actions affect the Good Governance practices in developing citizens' trust. Field survey was conducted by sending questionnaires to 1000 Pakistani citizens who were above the age of 20, having minimum education of high school diploma. The response rate was 53.3%. The results confirmed the causal relationship between good governance and citizen trust and a negative moderating effect of unethical actions. The findings may be practically useful for both research and policy making, since it investigated the citizens' perspective of good governance, citizen trust and unethical behavior. The findings emphasize addressing the ethical modeling and re shaping of the behavior of public sector specifically in Pakistan, hence, it opens the way for future studies on the reflection of ethics and culture on good governance and citizen trust.

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1. Introduction

Citizens' trust and good governance have been generally viewed as closely interconnected. One of the most revolving questions in citizens' mind is "Whom should I be wary of if not the government who wields great power with great temptations to abuse it" (Bentham, 1999). Trust in government is regarded as "*the sine qua non of good governance... While good governance breeds trust, trust is a prerequisite for democratic governance in the first place*" (Blind, 2007). Trust, in this regard, is considered one of the most crucial components for the legitimacy and sustainability of any political systems.

Bouckaert (2012) discussed three levels of trust in government. "At the macro-level, trust relates to political institutions and the functioning of democracy. At the meso-level, trust relates to policy making – the ability of governments to manage economic and social issues, and to generate positive expectations for future well-being. Finally, at the micro-level, trust refers to the impact of government on people's daily lives through service delivery. Although distinct, these three levels interact and a significant lag in trust at one level may affect trust at other levels and influence policy outcomes".

Despite its importance, citizens' trust in government and political organizations has been falling down in both developing and developed countries over the past few years (Cheema & Popovski, 2010). This decreasing level of public trust and its harmful effects on government and society has been a major area of worry for politicians, journalists

and citizens (Bok, 2001). Due to the absence of the political trust, citizens become dissatisfied with the prevailing system or order, which may bring disaffection and withdrawal from the political process, leaving behind a fragile state that may be unable for any national development (Diamond, 2007). A state based on good governance can increase public trust as well as an economic efficiency by implementing social welfare programs. However, the strength of relation of good governance and citizen's trust can easily be destroyed by the presence of corruption. The corruption not only extinguishes social trust, but also restrains the national development of politics, economies and society. The decreased level of trust among public refrain them from investment, obeying rules and regulations, increases transaction cost and hinders businesses and economic activities in the country.

1.1. Issues of good governance in Pakistan

According to Ismail and Rizvi (2013) three basic elements of governance have been seen in Pakistan: "one, decentralisation to the local government level; two, the implications of corruption and corrupt practices as an impediment to good governance and as a cause of the failure of institutional structures with particular reference to the process of planning; and finally, the social and economic costs of mal-governance". Corruption as the main indicator of poor governance has been increasing in the country over the past decade. Javaid (2010) pointed out that the scale of corruption is maximum in "development projects and procurement (including defence and public sector corporations) and the bank loan write offs which rocks the foundation of the economy". Chene (2008) also identified that "Corruption manifests itself in various forms in Pakistan, including widespread financial and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: momenah.yousaf@gmail.com (M. Yousaf), fims89@yahoo.com (F. Ihsan), abia.el@gmail.com (A. Ellahi).

political corruption, nepotism, and misuse of power. Both petty and grand corruptions are prevalent in the country". Khan et al. (2012) suggested that the country must develop a system to ensure credibility by punishing highly visible corrupt officials.

Transparency Corruption Perceptions Index (2014) reported Pakistan's CPI score of 29 out of 100 and ranking of 126 among 175 countries. In Pakistan, "corruption has had adverse effects on human development (which contributes to people's inability to fight corruption through an improvement in governance as a result of deprivation of knowledge, literacy and rights)" (Ismail & Rizvi, 2000) as well as on economic development of the country. Daily Times (2012) reported that the State Bank of Pakistan emphasized on implementing the good governance practices to provide a push to economic growth, as good governance regimes produce an "attractive investment climate necessary to maintain investors' confidence, resulting in positive impact on the share price and creating possibilities for raising low cost capital".

Citizens' demand for good governance components such as quality service, fair treatment of individuals, transparency, accountability, participation and for strong measures to reduce corruption (UNDP, 1997) which is basically an ethical or moral necessity. This approach raised the importance of citizen's views about the trust, governance and unethical actions in Pakistani public administration. All ethical or moral actions of public administrators have a direct connection to the citizens' views about the good governance. This situation has impelled a new look at the role of unethical actions in shaping the relation of citizen's trust and good governance in the context of a developing country such as Pakistan. This article is an attempt to explore the complex relationships of good governance, citizen trust and unethical actions. As Pakistan has been an energetic victim of poor governance and unethical issues like corruption; therefore, it has been selected to investigate the role of good governance practices in shaping citizens' trust. This paper examines the issue of governance by unfolding the citizens' views about the functioning of administration and its principals.

Citizens' trust has been analyzed through trust in administrative and political system and trust in Pakistani public organizations and institutions. While unethical actions have been examined through seeking the opinions of general public about the frequency of unethical actions like corruption and nepotism taking place in administration. This paper provides a hint about the factors that undermine the citizen's trust and the tools of good governance that are required for building the citizen's trust. Through identifying the factors required to improve the trust, government can improve the governance to meet the expectations of citizens, thus, can increase the citizens' trust to improve the legitimacy of government. The findings contribute to the existing literature by describing the public administration within the context of ethical laws. The following research questions have been used to guide the study:

1. What is the impact of good governance practices in developing citizens' trust?
2. To what extent, unethical actions moderate the effect of good governance practices in developing citizens' trust?

2. Literature review

2.1. Good governance

According to Kaufman, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2010), governance is tradition, values and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised including the process of selection, accountability and replacement of government, the respect and rights for the citizens, and the capacity of government to formulate and implement the policies. Governance is a broad concept, operates at every level and it is good when it responds to the collective problems of citizens and fulfills their needs in an appropriate and accepted way (Griffin, 2010). There is no

universal or one model for good governance that could be applicable in all situations (Saich, 2007). According to Elahi (2009), good governance is defined as a process as well as a structure that guide the political and socio economic relationships and it refers to several characteristics or indicators such as: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness and accountability. Citizens' perspective of good governance is the improvement of the structure of public service and administration.

The principles of good governance identified by the World Bank also followed the citizen centric approach. These principles includes, *voice and accountability* which refers to participation of citizens to select government and their freedom of speech, association and media, political stability and absence of violence and terrorism; *regulatory quality* which means ability to formulate and implement regulatory policies and *rule of law* which means the extent to which agents have confidence in rules of society and control of corruption (Kaufman et al., 2010). These principles intrude three different dimensions of good governance with citizens' perspective. First, good governance requires check and balances on the political and bureaucratic structures and functions for restraining arbitrary actions and corruption. Second, freedom in political affiliation and participation and third, the exercise of authority in management of economic and social resources for policy making. These indicators are widely accepted but indicators of good governance could vary according to environment, society, size of economy, tradition, and religion etc.

In a democratic society, participation or voice of citizens in selecting a government is a prerequisite of any democracy. Waheduzzaman (2010) explained that World Bank and IMF consider participation as an important indicator of good governance. Rule of law refers to fair legal framework that is enforced impartially. Dion (2010) included the concept of impartiality in the definition of rule of law that laws are applicable to all people equally; no person should have favor in application of laws and regulation. Accountability is another indicator of good governance which is like a block to build good governance (Rahaman, 2009; Ray, 1999). Accountability refers to the extent to which one must answerable to higher authority or public for one's actions (Shafritz & Russell, 1997). The remaining two indicators of good governance are transparency and responsiveness (Griffin, 2010). Transparency refers to the clarity and availability of decisions and information to those who have concern for that information. Responsiveness means that institutions and processes of government try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time framework (United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2007). Responsiveness is a desired practice to attain good governance fully from the perspective of citizens. Salminen and Norrbacka (2010) defined it as how timely public officials correct their mistakes and respond to the problems of citizen.

Zubair and Khan (2014). conducted a study to investigate the general assumption that if rule of law, political stability, mechanisms for control of corruption and voice and accountability exist, good governance and economic growth would be the outputs in Pakistan. Robinson and Sattar (2012) found that in Pakistan, corruption charges were used to legitimize "good governance" coups and military rule and in one case, President of the country dissolved the democratically elected government on the charges of corruption and nepotism. Taghavi, Nikoomaram, and Tootian (2011) observed that corruption or any misuse of governmental power for personal benefits is a common phenomenon prevailing in administrative and political systems of many countries. This comes from different factors such as "over interference of government in economy, inappropriate administrative system, excessive bureaucracy and complexity, governmental and private monopolies, expansion of rent, non-transparent regulations, weak management, unequal distribution of incomes, interference of high-ranking politicians and governmental authorities, lack of accountability of government" etc. A study by Bhatti and Munshi (2015) revealed that an excessive political interference in official matters is one of the major

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