

Does good governance matter for institutional trust?: Case from Nepal

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The institutional trust is gaining popularity to evaluate the effectiveness of governance system. The assumption behind it is that the legitimized governance system in public and private institutions generates institutional trust. Scholars trace out a number of factors which include economic and socio-demographic factor, performance level of government, critical citizens and good governance determines the level of institutional trust. In this context, the question of research is raised as “does good governance generate institutional trust in Nepal?”. I correlate governance indicators with the trust variables. The governance indicators are measured by accountability, transparency, rule of law and Citizen’s participation variables of public and private institutions. To map the institutional trust influenced by good governance, data were collected from 34 districts out of 75 districts of Nepal. Altogether, 2404 respondents were identified through multi-stage random sampling to gather data on institutional trust. The study reveals that citizens positively evaluate public institutions if they perceive that public institutions such as the national government, local governments, the police as well as the private sectors institutions are accountable, transparent and responsible, practice rule of law and are inclusive. However, there is variation of good governance impact to generate trust in specific institution. There should be redefine the good governance in the local context.

Key words: Institutional trust, good governance and Nepal

Introduction

Trust is gaining popularity in recent times as a tool to evaluate the effectiveness of the governance system of a country. Citizens' level of trust and confidence in the system of governance depends on a number of factors such as the government's capacity to perform. Therefore, trust is a strong indicator to judge the legitimacy of the regime and the system of governance. A more trustworthy government finds it easier to formulate and implement policies and may nurture the support and help of citizens in these respects. More confidence in the government fosters better quality of governance and encourages citizens to comply and abide by the rules and regulations. It also promotes citizens' participation in the governance processes and encourages them to pay tax.

It is clear that the government failure to meet the expectations of the citizens leads to distrust. Trust or distrust does not just remain an attitude but they are also related to behavior. Van de Walle and Six (2006, 12p) further argue that the trust and distrust have direct implications for the government. Distrust causes suspicion on the government and its actions. Distrust may impede policy implementation (Walle and Six, 2006, p12). The research on trust reveals that low level of trust is characterized by declining tax, participation in protest politics, etc. In the case of distrust on the government, these behaviors may become more extreme. People may not register in the government database, reject public service and eventually withdraw from the state affairs (Walle and Six, 2006, p12).

At present, Nepal is in a transitional phase of democratization. The governance pattern is changing frequently. Before 1990, Nepal experienced party less Panchayat System, then multi-party democracy along with monarchism in the period 1990 to 2006, people's republic since 2006 along with federalism. Recently, Nepal has drafted the new constitution which promises to be more democratic and socially, politically and economically more inclusive. In this back ground, I examine the impacts of good governance to generate trust in Nepal.

Institutional trust

Trust is 'an attitude or action of an individual or process', 'willingness to ascribe good intention to have confidence in the work and action of people' and 'predictability of others behaviour'. Trust for trustee will be a function of the trustee's perceived ability, benevolence and integrity

and the of the trustor's propensity. Sztopka(1999) argues that people may have different targets of trust, including specific individuals, groups and organizations.

Thus, Rothstein and Stolle (2008) argue that trust is embedded in the structure and characteristics of political institutions. Kim (2010) highlights that the level of government's performance, their well-being and satisfaction with life are associated with public trust in the government. Several scholars in developed countries emphasize economic and democratic performance of the government that have bearings on citizens' on trust in government (Wong et al, 2011; Donovan and Bowler, 2004; Mishler and Rose, 2001). Mishler and Rose (2001) also found that government performance is a significant source of political trust in the new post-communist democracies.

Norris argues that the rise of 'critical citizen' in advanced societies results in the decline of political support whereas Putnam attributes this decline to the decrease of social capital. Blaine G. Robbins (2011) argues institutional quality and generalized trust form a positive reciprocal relationship. Putnam (1993) opines strong society because of informal societal factors cause to form strong state. In contrast, Levi (1998) and other state-centered scholars argue for the opposite causal order in which institutional quality precedes generalized trust. According to them generalized trust emerges because of fair, universalistic, power-sharing, incorruptible state that are effective at sanctioning noncooperative behavior and securing credible commitments. Trust is both an outcome and an antecedent of relationship. It forms a basis for relationship, thus generates social capital and eventually leads to good governance.

Trust has extrinsic, instrumental values in helping to reduce the risks and transaction costs of relationship. This is particularly important when risks are difficult or expensive to manage by formal means such as government control, legal contract and hierarchy. Trust may also be valued for its own intrinsic value.

Nooteboom(2002) Trust should be taken as a four place predicate: the trustor (1) trusts a trustee(2) in one or more aspects of behavior(3) under certain circumstance(4). Trustees can be individual people but also collectives such as organization and institutions. The relation between trust in people and trust in organizations depends on the positions and roles that people have in organization and on the organization mode of coordinating behavior concerning aspects of

behavior that one may trust, it is customary to distinguish trust in competence (ability to conform to expectation) and trust in intentions (to perform in good faith according to best of competence). Competence includes technical and cognitive competence. Trust in intention of the trustee require his or her commitment i.e. attention to possible mishaps and absence of opportunism.

Trust and good governance

Governance is important for development of trust and confidence (Kim, 2010). The extent of governance either good or bad influences the level of trust perceived by people. There are two approaches in building trust in government namely good governance and good enough governance approach. The core features of good governance are accountability, transparency, participation, the rule of law etc (Kim et al 2005; Kim & Jho 2005). According to them, this is a idealistic and may not be practical in all case (Kim 2009). Therefore, it demands revision of its concept. In contrast, good enough governance might be more realistic approach for developing countries. Its core elements are focus, sequencing, selectivity and pragmatism (Grindle 2007).

World Bank (1994, xiv) defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources. UNDP (1997, 2-3) views governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Likewise, OECD (1995, 14) denotes governance as the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The basic elements of good governance are:

- **Accountability:** In general accountability refers to borne the responsibility of the activities carried out and its result, respond satisfactorily to the concern and issues raised. Accountability is about compliance of rule, regulation and law. It may not be enough condition in developing country. People demand the performance of government or an

institution based on existing rules and regulation so that productivity of goods and service are produced and eventually people gets benefits (Kim, 2009).

- Transparency: Dictionary meaning of transparency refers to free from pretence or deceit. It is also easily detected or seen through or readily understood. The other aspects of transparency in public service require clarity, integrated decisions, logical, rational, accountable, truthful, accurate and open.
- Participation: People's participation is about the Citizen's involvement in decision-making and implementation of thus decided decision and finally getting benefits. As per UN (2008) it involves series of inform-consult-involve-collaborate-empower.
- Rule of law: The Legal Dictionary say that the rule of law is an abstract term which can mean different things in different context. The term means rule as per law. No one can be ordered by the government to pay civil damages or suffer criminal punishment except in strict accordance with well established and clearly defined laws and procedures. In a second context the term means rule under law. No branch of government is above the law, and no public official may act arbitrarily or unilaterally outside the law. In the third context, the term means rule according to a higher law. No written law may be enforced by the government unless it conforms with certain unwritten, universal principles of fairness, morality and justice that transcend human legal system.

Governance comprises the institutions, processes and conventions in a society which determine how power is exercised, how important decisions affecting society are made and how various interests are accorded a place in such decisions. Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest. However, good governance faces the serious challenges as well as praises to meet its purpose which was posited as a condition before developing countries to get aid from donors and developed countries. Social scientist and critical politicians raise key question on good governance because the condition of developing countries did not change as prescribed. The question is that good governance for whom and bad for whom? And still 'ugly governance' too (Farazmand, 2013, 353p)? Alternatively, Ali Farazmand(2013) prescribes

“sound governance”. According to him, sound governance focuses on process, structure, cognitive and value, management and performance, ethic and transparency, and participation and Citizen Engagement (Farazmand, 2013, 357p).

Good governance in Nepal

The constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 50, emphasizes to establish a public welfare system of governance by establishing a just system in all aspects of the national life through the rule of law, values and norms of fundamental rights and human rights, gender equality, proportional inclusion, participation and social justice. To make governance system of Nepal as good, Government of Nepal framed Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act, 2008. The act aims to make public administration of the country pro-people, accountable, transparent, inclusive and participatory. The act emphasizes on the basic values of good governance such as rule of law, corruption-free and smart (lean or smooth) administration, financial discipline and efficient management of public work and resources to create situation for providing public service in speedy and cost-effective manner. The act clearly spell out the basis of concerned authority which includes greater interest of nation and people; equity and inclusiveness; rule of law; guarantee of the human rights, transparency, decentralization and popular participation while carrying out administrative functions to maintain good governance in the country pursuant to this Act or other prevailing laws. This act explains the departmental responsibilities in central, regional and local level of public institutions as well as key positions such as Minister, chief secretary, secretary, and chief of departmental incumbent of public institutions. This Act suggests public servants mandatorily to be accountable to their jobs as per prevailing rules and regulations.

Likewise, Government of Nepal formulated Right to Information Act, 2007 with the objective of making the functions of the state open and transparent in accordance with the democratic system and to make responsible and accountable to the citizen. The Act also aims to make the access of citizens simple and easy to the information of public importance held in public bodies.

As per these Acts which are directly related to good governance, all the public or semi-public or organized private organization are obliged to obey these rules for translating good governance into reality so that citizen perceive good governance in real sense.

Methodology

In order to find out the Citizen's trust in Nepal, Central Department of Public Administration in support of Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) conducted a trust survey nationwide. Multi-stage sampling method was used for selecting study area and respondents. At first, three ecological belts- Mountain, Hill and Terai were selected. In the second stage, 48 constituencies (20 percent) out of 240 were identified. As a result, 4 constituencies from Mountain, 21 constituencies from Hills and 23 constituencies from the Terai were selected randomly. In the third stage, one polling-booth from each of the 48 constituencies was selected. These 48 constituencies cover altogether 34 districts of the country. The respondents were selected using systematic sampling methods. For this, the voter list prepared by Election Commission to conduct Constituent Assembly was used to locate respondents. The total number of voters in each polling booth is divided by 50 and then each respondent was selected according to the quotient. The altogether 2404 respondents were approached to collect opinion on Citizen's Trust in Nepal.

Findings

Citizens' Trust

In order to find out level of trust on public institution in Nepal, a question "how much confidence people have in various public institution in Nepal" was asked. In a questionnaire survey, 18 institutions were listed. The following table 1 listed the citizen's perception ordered from highest trust level to lowest trust level. At the top of the highest trust level occupied by University, media and hospitals. Locally based institutions such as lower courts, Village Development Committee (VDC), District Development Committee (DDC) and Chief District Office (CDO) offices attracted a lot of trust from Citizens. Central public institutions such as Army, Higher Judiciary, Civil Service, Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), Police, Trade Union, Central Government etc were found less popular than above mentioned institutions. Non-governmental Organization and political parties appeared at the bottom tier. The result showed that service oriented institutions was more popular in Nepal than local development institutions. Central institutions were less popular in Citizen's trust ranking. Most Nepalese Citizens did not have positive attitude towards political parties and NGOs. Political

party was also a only institution which was less than 50 percent of trust level. The trust scores for all other institution were above 50 percent and some as high as around 90 percent.

Table 1
Institutional Trust

Institutions	Low	N	High	N	Total N
University	11	240	89	1914	2154
Media	11	253	89	1995	2248
School/College	12	272	88	1998	2270
Hospital	15	340	85	1974	2314
Lower Courts	20	454	80	1791	2245
VDCs	20	462	80	1868	2330
CDO offices	21	469	79	1793	2272
DDC	21	469	79	1793	2262
The Army	22	494	78	1801	2295
Higher Judiciary	23	504	77	1673	2177
CIAA	25	504	75	1533	2037
The Police	29	664	71	1666	2330
Civil Service	30	652	70	1499	2151
Trade Unions	32	636	68	1377	1896
Central Government	39	826	61	1303	2129
Parliament	42	872	58	1197	2069
NGOs	42	859	58	1211	2070
Political Parties	60	1370	40	910	2280

Source: Field study, 2014

The least trust in political parties raises a serious question of establishing democracy and to sustain it. Low trust in political parties may be attributed to the democratic vacuum created by political infighting among the major political parties that have been led to 26 government between 1991 to 2016.

Institutional trust based on governance indicators

The main hypothesis of the research was to find out that good governance generate trust in public institutions. I correlate some governance indicators with the trust index variables. Good governance indicators are measured by accountability, transparency, rule of law and citizen's participation variables of some selected public and private institutions such as National

government, District Development Committee, Village Development Committee, District level offices, CBO/NGOs and Banking organizations.

Table 2
Pearson's Correlation between institutional trust index and citizen's perceptions on good governance

	Accountability		Transparency		Rule of law		Citizen's participation	
	Trust index	N	Trust index	N	Trust index	N	Trust index	N
Organs of government and private sector								
National Government:	.250**	1236	.243**	1230	.190**	1241	.203**	1228
DDC	.243**	1279	.174**	1272	.193**	1260	.147**	1254
VDC	.235**	1279	.207**	1274	.230**	1268	.196**	1256
District Level Offices	.168**	1281	.184**	1260	.175**	1269	.138**	1252
Police	.130**	1305	.125**	1278	.122**	1283	.196**	1257
NGO/CBO	.202**	1253	.133**	1227	.147**	1236	.098**	1224
Private Sector	.105**	1280	.132**	1256	.102**	1252	.105**	1246
Banking Institutions	.168**	1288	.094**	1266	.070*	1246	.101**	1239
** Correlation is significant at 0.001 level								
* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level								

Source: Field study, 2014

All the correlation coefficients between good governance and trust index were positive and highly significant. It meant that the indicators of good governance such as accountability, transparency, rule of law and people's participation had positive relationship with trust index. The meaning was that good governance mattered for generating trust in public and private institutions.

Sources on good governance-based trust

Good governance which is assessed in level of accountability, transparency, rule of law and people's participation is a independent variable whereas institutional trust as dependent variable. A question is asked to respondents as to what extent you consider the governance of eight public and private institutions. These public and private institutions include National Government, District Development Committee (DDC), Village Development Committee (VDC)/Municipality, District Level Office, Police, NGOs/CBOs, Private sector and Banking Institutions. For each public and private institution, sub-questions on the level of accountability, transparency, rule of

law and people's participation was asked. Employing regression model, following result is explored.

Table 3
Regression model of good governance and trust index in public and private institutions

	Accountability with trust index		Transparency with trust index		Rule of law with trust index		Citizen's participation with trust index	
	B	p-value	B	p-value	B	p-value	B	p-value
(Constant)	1.15	.000***	1.35	.00***	1.35	.00***	1.373	.00***
National Government	.116	.000***	.121	.00***	.03	.266	.124	.00***
DDC	.097	.004***	.057	.092*	.079	.02**	.001	.981
VDC	.059	.070*	.064	.061*	.129	.00***	.076	.025**
District Level Offices	-.016	.606	.027	.428	.02	.556	.006	.855
Police	-.034	.267	-.016	.619	.00	.835	.097	.002***
NGO/CBO	.053	.069*	.008	.785	.05	.084*	-.031	.309
Private Sector	-.011	.731	.024	.462	.00	.854	.021	.511
Banking Institutions	.120	.001***	-.004	.917	-.056	.136	-.023	.496
F	15.33	0	10.63	0	10.77		10.57	0
Durbin Watson	1.778		1.626		1.669		1.664	
R Square	.106		.077		.077		.078	

*** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

** Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

* Correlation is significant at 0.10 level

Source: Field study, 2014

- Institutional trust and accountability: In this regression model, the assumption is that level of accountability in eight public and private institutions determines the institutional trust. When I combine the level of accountability in these public and private institutions, it appears that this model can explain 10.6 percent total variation in institutional trust index. F-statistic¹ is 15.33, and implies that the equation is statistically related to

¹ The F-statistic indicates whether it is sufficiently high enough to reject the null hypothesis. In review, the null hypothesis is that the dependent variable is statistically unrelated to all of the collective independent variable in the model. A high value of the F-Statistics (generally greater than ten) allows us to reject this. If the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, the adjusted R² will be quite small.

dependent variable. Durbin-Watson² statistic is 1.778 and implies that autocorrelation is not a problem in this model. The model reveals that the level of accountability in National Government, DDC and Banking sector has significant relationship with institutional trust at one percent level of significance. Likewise, the level of accountability of VDCs and NGOs/CBO has significant impact on institutional trust at 10 percent level of significance. The level of accountability of the rest of institutions such as district level offices, police and private sectors does not impact on institutional trust.

- Institutional trust and transparency: Likewise, the regression model which explains that the level of transparency in the eight public and private institutions has impacted on institutional trust. When combining the transparency level of these institutions, the model explains 7.7 percent the level of variation in institutional trust. The value of F-statistics is 10.63 and implies the equation is statistically related to dependent variable. The value of Durbin Watson is 1.626, means that there is no problem of auto-correlation. The regression model explains that the transparency level impacts on institutional trust at one percent level of significance. The transparency level of DDC and VDC also cause to generate institutional trust at 10 percent level of significance. But, the rest of public and private institutions do not appear to generate institutional trust.
- Institutional trust and rule of law: The third regression model explains the institutional trust is the functions of rule of law. In this model, the rule of law is measured in eight public and private institutions. When I combine the rule of law in these institutions, the total variation is 7.7 percent which represents the proportion of the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables. The value of F-statistics is 10.77 which mean that the equation is statistically related to dependent variable. The value of Durbin-Watson is 1.669. It also says that there is no problem of autocorrelation. The result shows that the rule of law of VDC is highly significant to generate institutional trust at one percent level of significance, the DDC at five percent significance level and NGOs/CBOs at 10 percent significance level. The rule of law of rest five public and private institutions do not impact to generate institution trust.

² The Durbin-Watson statistic has a range of zero to four and a Durbin-Watson statistic near two(i.e. roughly 1.70-2.30) generally indicates that autocorrelation is not a problem.

- Institutional trust and citizens' participation: The fourth regression model is about the Citizen's participation impacts to generate institutional trust. The Citizen's participation is measured in eight public and private institutions. The total variation is 7.8 percent which explains the proportion of dependent variable by independent variables. The value of F-statistics is 10.57 which mean that the equation is statistically related to dependent variable. Likewise, the value of Durbin-Watson statistic is 1.664 which means that there is no problem of autocorrelation. The result shows that there is significant relationship between Citizen's participation of National government and Police to generate institutional trust at one percent of level of significance. Likewise, the Citizen's participation of VDC has significance relationship with institutional trust. But the rest of the public and private institutions do not impact to generate institutional trust.

Conclusion

The trust refers to the citizen's confidence and trustworthy on public or private institution due to service delivered by them. In this study, the level of confidence and trustworthy are differing from institutions to institutions. University, media and hospitals acquire top rank in the people's perception on confidence and trustworthy. Likewise, locally based institutions such as VDCs/Municipality, CDO offices and DDC are in top-middle range. Security agencies, CIAA and civil service are in middle range of trust index. Trade Union, central government, parliament are in lower level of trust index. But political parties and NGOs are in lowest rank of trust index. The study shows that service oriented institutions are found in the top rank of trust index and policy oriented institutions in the lower rank. The reason behind is those institutions which are in people's contact frequently, people perceive higher trust on them. Trade union, NGOs, political parties do not perform their job as per people's aspiration. As a result people rate them as lower index of trust.

The study shows that indicators of good governance and trust index correlate with each other. It means these good governance indicators matters to generate trust in public and private organization. However, the indicators of good governance vary in institutions to institutions. For example, accountability in National government, DDC, VDC, NGO/CBO and Banking institutions has significant relationship with trust index. The relationship between transparency in

national government, DDC and VDC with trust index has significant relationship. In case of the rule of law, DDC, VDC and NGO/CBO have significant relationship with trust index to generate trust. People's participation in National government, VDC, and Police has played significant role to generate trust. Thus, the research shows that there are variations of good governance to generate trust in public and private institution. These kinds of variation to generate trust may be whether public or private institutions follow the spirit of good governance strictly or not. Or, it might be the reason; the definition of good governance can be changed on the basis of local context.

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