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PUBLIC TRUST MODEL DESIGN (STUDY: GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN IRAN)

Mansoureh Moradihaghighi, *Daneshfard Karamollah and Naser Mirsepasi

Department of Public Management, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

In this research, we study and evaluate the impact of accountability on public and political trust using the proposed model based on theoretical foundations. The research method is based on survey strategy which has used questionnaires to collect data and statistical software (SPSS and LISREK) to study and analyze the hypotheses. Teachers, Education and Training Organization staffs in Tehran and headquarter staffs of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Co. constitute the statistical population in this research out of which the sample has been selected and the final questionnaires have been distributed among them. The findings of the research confirm that there is a significant relationship among a three-dimensional model of public perception about accountability level of governmental organizations, level of public trust in governmental organizations and level of political trust in government. The continuity of such investigations and also further studies in this field can be a foundation for more government's attention to accountability, public trust and political trust concepts.

Keywords: *Accountability, Public Trust and Political Trust*

INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of the important aspects of human relationships and the underlying partnership between members of the community. Trust is the basis of daily transactions and dealings in human societies in the relationship between the individual and the social relationship between the trust is a vague concept that different aspects have been addressed, and this multiplicity Partly sense, given its size and variety (Iranneghad and Panahi 2005). According to Robert Bhn (1995) Trust, one of the three major issues facing scholars of public administration has always been. The absence of this element limits the flexibility and freedom to lead. Trust plays the role of informal relationships and the lack of dependence on legal rules and procedures itself. It seems that in most countries due to a combination of factors such as alienation and lack of social capital, a critical media, especially the lack of government accountability; trust in the State, significantly decreased. If you neglect this problem, many long-term injuries will follow. In this paper we consider the notion of trust and the influence of some important variables underlying theoretical foundations for an increase or decrease in public trust in government organizations is evaluated.

Political Trust

When talking about public trust it means that people expect the officials and employees of governmental organizations to respond their expectation through interacting their actions with public. In this Interaction there is a kind of Uncertainty and lack of knowledge about how the things are done in public organizations. In other words public trust means the level of public expectations in getting positive responses from public authorities to their wishes; public trust bond citizens and institutions and organizations that they represent and thereby the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic government increases. Also it is emphasized that only a moderate level of trust is productive; which means that extreme emotional trust of people in government and public administration prevents criticism and improvement of their operation and the reduction of public trust will question the legitimacy of public administration and political system (Larson, 2007).

According to Citrin public trust refers to the public feelings about politicians and their policies. Lipset and Schneider consider political trust to the political leaders limited and claim that whenever people think that the politicians only think of their own interests, their trust in government declines (Heidari, 2008). But

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Easton believes that public trust is directed toward both political regime and the holders of authority in society. Norris mentions 5 factors in his definition of public trust including: Supporting the political community such as a nation and country, supporting the constitution of the country, supporting the administration regimen such as democracy, and supporting political actors and political institutions, including the government, parliament, the judiciary system, the bureaucracy, and parties. Political trust is more about elites and political leaders, but political trust is more general and in addition to the political actors deals with their political institutions and sometimes also the political system. This study deals with political trust which covers all the three components of a regime as a conclusive and complete political structure. According to Bretzer the political trust dimensions includes a wide continuous range of political trust in general / concept to the specific political trust which includes the three dimensions. These three dimensions include the level of people's trust (or belief) in the political system, the level of people's trust (or belief) in the active agents of the political system and the level of people's trust (or belief) in Political institutions (Shayeganfar, 2007)

Public Trust

Public trust is the trust of the people towards individuals, institutions, and other special elements/phenomena with defined responsibility(ies). Public trust stands tall in any democratic and civilised society, because it is a representation of trust of the citizens towards the governance processes. The manner and mode of anticorruption crusade go a long way in affecting either positively or negatively the public confidence on anti-corruption institutions and agents. Public trust means different things to different people and professions. However, one philosophy is central in all, which is the focusing of attention on the 'public interest'. In the words of Denhardt and Gilman (2002: 75-76), our collective trust in government relies on a robust perception that government employees are acting in the public interest.

Accountability

Accountability is defined as the act of considering people responsible for the specified duties, or in other words asking the reason for the done undone tasks and its principles include (Khanzadeh, 2008) the existence of clear definitions of the tasks, specification of the responsibilities, non-delegation of responsibility about the duties and reasonableness and rationality of the responses. According to Scott the concept of accountability is traditionally created by the legislators and includes the official responsibility of the government to respond to Ministers, Parliament and Courts about their actions (Scott, 2000). The purpose of accountability in its general sense is to make people aware of the ins and outs of the officials decisions. According to Aqueen accountability has 3 main purposes: accountability as a means of controlling the government, accountability as a guarantee of appropriate use of public resources and accountability as a means of improving government services (Fqihi, 2001).

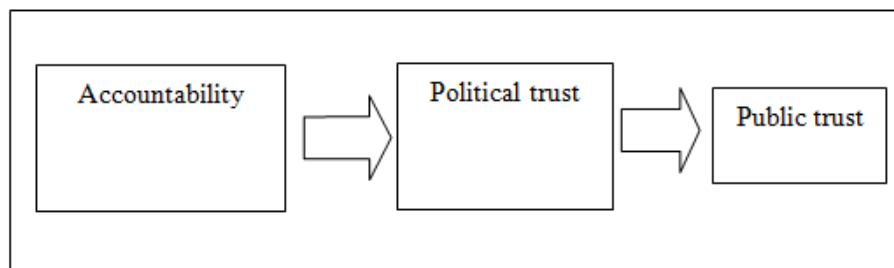


Figure 3: The relation among accountability, Public trust and Political trust

Theoretical Framework, Conceptual Model and Research Hypotheses

According to Robert Denhardt, today many people do not trust the government but it is not just because of that the governments do not work well. Modern public management seeks attracting the public trust by improving efficiency and reducing government spending. However, it is not enough as the real reason why people distrust the government is that they don't count the government accountable (especially in such topics as ethics and rectitude) (Denhardt, 1999). It has been for years that public management theorists

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believe that accountable governments will succeed in attracting public trust in the society. This research attempted to cover the factor directly affecting the public trust in the government (accountability). The relation among the research main variables is presented in Figure 3 in the form of a conceptual model. According to the fundamental principles above, the conceptual model was presented as in Figure 4 in order to evaluate the way accountability influences public trust and political trust.

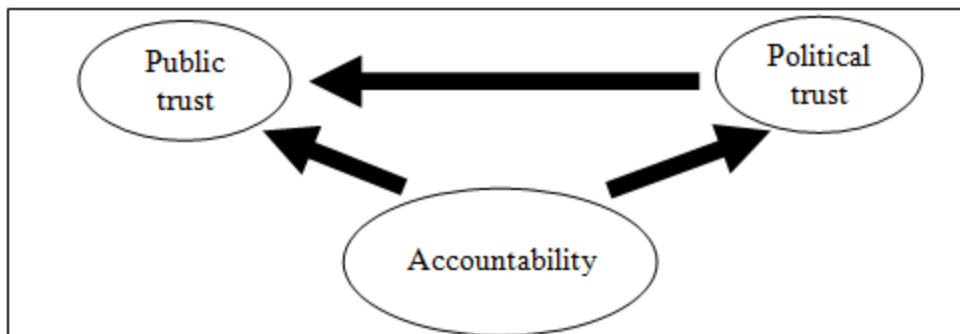


Figure 4: Conceptual model

Research Hypotheses

The Main Hypotheses

- 1- Accountability influences public trust level in government and governmental organizations.
- 2- Accountability influences political trust level.
- 3- Public trust has an impact on political trust.
- 4- Accountability has an impact on public trust through the political mediating variable

MATERIALS AND METOHDS

Research Methodology

In the analytical model of the research, Public trust and Political trust are endogenous variables and accountability is the exogenous variable. Alternatively, the latter variable can be considered as independent variable and public trust and political trust as dependent variables. The questionnaire is the fundamental data collection tool based on which 17, 9 and 25 questions have been considered for accountability, public trust and political trust variables respectively using 5-point Likert scale. In order to assess the questionnaire's reliability, a prototype was pretested with 40 questionnaires and then trust coefficient was calculated using the data obtained from the questionnaires and Cronbach's alpha method which revealed 0.876%, 0.901% and 0.811% reliability for accountability, public trust and political trust variables respectively. These figures indicate that the questionnaire has dependability and in the other words, the required reliability. In order to assess the validity of the questions, content validity was used in the way that the questionnaire was prepared referring to the standardized questionnaire in books, management research journals and different theses and desired reforms and changes were then applied and the final questionnaire was formulated referring to professors and experts.

Statistical Population

According to the research's variables, the statistical population of this research is all of the teachers, Education and Training Organization staffs in Tehran and headquarter staffs of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Co. Due to the vast spatial domain and large size of the statistical population, it was preferably assumed unlimited and total size of required sample was calculated using unlimited population sampling in order to enhance trust. A total number of 405 questionnaires were used in this research.

Research Findings

Analysis of Research Variables Status

The one-sample t-test was used to study the current status of research variables in the statistical population and the results are shown in Table 2. According to the carried out calculations, status of each

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variable is determined according to its significance figure and upper and lower limit marks. If the significance figure is smaller than 0.05 and also the two limit marks are positive, the mean value of the variable will be greater than 3 and the status of the variable is appropriate. If the significance figure is smaller than 0.05 and also the two limits are negative, the mean value of variable will be smaller than 3 and the status of variable is inappropriate. As it can be seen, all the research variables are in an inappropriate status.

Table 2: Mean test of a statistical population ($H_0: \mu=3$)

Variable name	Mean	Standard deviation	Sig.	Lower limit	Upper limit	Variable status
Accountability	2.8541	0.89908	0.018	-0.2662	-0.0256	Inappropriate
Public trust	2.7158	0.90133	0.000	-0.4048	-0.1636	Inappropriate
Political trust	2.7680	0.85464	0.000	-0.3463	-0.1176	Inappropriate

Analysis of Research Variables Measurement Models

Before getting into the phase of hypotheses and conceptual models testing, it is necessary to ensure validity of endogenous variables (public trust and political trust) and exogenous variables (accountability) measurement models. So, the measurement models of these variables are presented respectively in the following using first and second order Confirmatory factor analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis is one of the oldest statistical methods used to determine the relationship between latent variables and observed variables (questions) and represents the measurement model (Byrne, 1997).

A) Accountability Variable Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis results for accountability are shown in Table 3. According to LISREL output, the calculated value of X^2/df is less than 3, RMSE value is equal to 0.091 and the P-Value is equal to 0.000. Also, GFI, AGFI and NFI values are 0.91, 0.90 and 0.92 respectively indicating the model's relatively high goodness of fit. Evaluation of model's goodness of fit indicators shows that accountability measurement model is appropriate and all the model's numbers and parameters are significant.

Table 3: Standard estimation model and factor loadings of accountability variable

Item	Accountability components	T Statistic	Factor loadings
1	Ethical accountability	15.59	0.69
2	Legal accountability	19.47	0.81
3	Financial accountability	22.31	0.88
4	Functional-administrative accountability	25.18	0.95
5	Political accountability	21.71	0.87

Table 4: Standard estimation model and factor loadings of public trust variable

Item	Public trust components	T Statistic	Factor loadings
1	Interaction and adaptation (confidence in government)	23.52	0.92
2	Solving public problems (government problem solving)	22.70	0.90
3	Sense of justice (justice-oriented Government)	21.25	0.86

B) Public Trust Variable Measurement Model

The results of first order confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 4. As can be seen, the calculated value of x^2/df is less than 3, value of RMSEA is equal to 0.071 and P-Value indicator is equal to 0.000. Also, values of GFI, AGFI and NFI are equal to 0.93, 0.90 and 0.91 respectively. Analysis of model's goodness of fit indicators shows that measurement model of this variable is appropriate and all its figures

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and parameters are significant. The results of measurement model indicate that there is a positive and significant correlation among the components of public trust variable.

C) Political Trust Variable Measurement Model

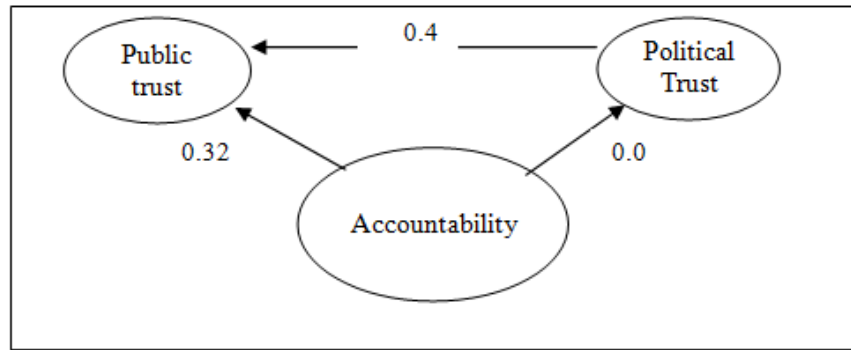
The results of Confirmatory factor analysis for the political trust variable are shown in Table 5. The calculated value of X^2/df is less than 3, RMSEA value is equal to 0.04 and P-Value indicator is equal to 0.0000. Also, the values of GFI, AGFI and NFI are equal to 0.90, 0.91 and 0.91 respectively. Analysis of model's goodness of fit indicators shows that measurement model of this variable is appropriate and all its figures and parameters are significant. The results of measurement model indicate that there is a positive and significant correlation among the components of political trust variable.

Table 5: Standard estimation model of political trust variable

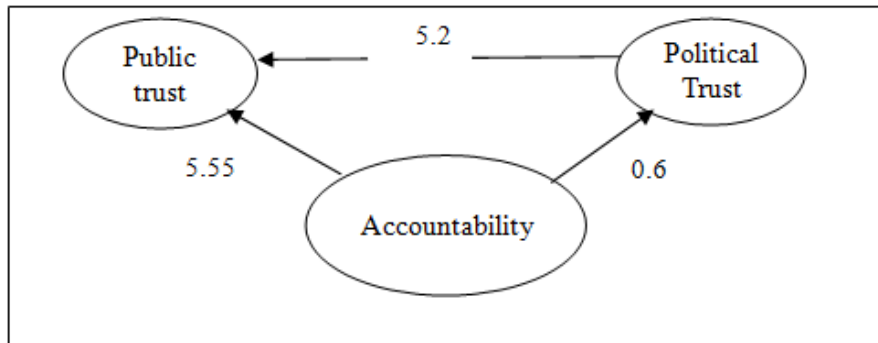
Item	Political trust components	T Statistic	Factor loadings
1	Trust in political institutions	23.70	0.94
2	Trust in political system	19.79	0.83
3	Trust in political brokers	18.56	0.80

Structural Model Analysis (Path Analysis) of the Research

After ensuring the validity of the measurement models (Confirmatory factor analysis of public trust, political trust and accountability variables), the main research hypotheses were tested or in other words, the relation among main variables (latent variables) were evaluated. These relations were analyzed using multivariate analysis or multiple regressions and in this regard, structural equations model and in particular, structural models (path analysis), were employed. It should be noted that standard coefficients and significance figures are used to confirm or reject the hypotheses. Also, confidence level is 95 percent and error level is 5 percent for all pathways.



[Diagram 1]: The research model in standard estimation



[Diagram 1]: The research model in significance figures

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A) Goodness of Fit (Suitability)

The model’s goodness of fit indicators are: χ^2 , df, P-Value and RMSEA. The best suitable parameter in LISREL software is χ^2/df (Chi-square to degrees of freedom) so that χ^2/df the smaller than 3, the better the model’s goodness of fit (suitability). RMSEA indicator is the model’s mean squared errors. This indicator is built based on the model errors which its permissible limit is 0.09; it means that if it is smaller than 0.09, it will be acceptable and if it is smaller than 0.05, it will be very good.

Table 6: goodness of fit indicators of structural model

Indicators	Chi-Square	Degree of freedom	P value	the model’s mean squared errors
Indicators’ Values	1711.98	582	0.000	0.096

The values obtained in Table 6 show that the conceptual model has a good fit. The model’s mean squared errors (0.096) is equal to 0.09 and ratio of chi-square (1068.31) to degrees of freedom (365) is smaller than 3. Also, values of GFI, AGFI and NFI are equal to 0.91, 0.91 and 0.92 respectively which represent relatively high model’s fit. Therefore, the model has a high fit and suitability and indicates that the regulated relations of the variables has been reasonable based on the theoretical framework.

Table 7: Results of structural equations model (path analysis)

Hypothesis	Path	Standard coefficient	t-Value	Result		
Hypothesis 1	Accountability	Public trust	0.32	5.55	0.10	Approved
Hypothesis 2	Accountability	Political trust	0.03	0.60	0.0009	Rejected
Hypothesis 3	Public trust	Political trust	0.41	5.21	0.17	Approved
Hypothesis 4	Accountability – Political trust – Public trust					Approved

B) The Model Hypotheses Analysis

As it was observed, the model is in a good condition in terms of suitability indicators. As also shown in Table 6, the following results were obtained about the relation among the model’s components.

1. Accountability has a direct, positive (0.32) and significant effect (5.55) on the level of public trust in government organizations. Therefore, the first research hypothesis is approved.
2. Accountability does not have any significant effect on the level of political trust (factor loading, 0.03, and significance level, 0.60). Therefore, the second research hypothesis is rejected.
3. Public trust has a direct, positive effect (0.41) and significant effect (5.21) on political trust. Therefore, the third research hypothesis is approved.
4. Accountability has a direct, positive and significant effect on public trust equal to 0.32 (hypothesis 1) and also political trust has a direct, positive and significant effect on public trust equal to 0.41 (hypothesis 4). Therefore, hypothesis No. 4, that is, political trust mediating the relation between accountability and public trust is approved. It means that accountability influences public trust through mediator variable of political trust confirming mediatory role of political trust, accountability has an indirect, positive and significant effect on public trust equal to 0.13. The results of the research hypotheses analysis are presented in Table 7.

Conclusion

Analysis of the research’s findings based on structural equations model indicates that accountability has a direct effect on public trust but has an indirect effect on political trust. Also, political trust has a direct and significant effect on public trust. In general, performed tests on the research conceptual model and calculated statistical indicators suggest that data collected from the sample is compatible with the research conceptual model. Therefore, the suggested conceptual model is generally approved despite some

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modifications. However, the following points should be noted about the theoretical findings of this research:

The present tried to investigate and analyze the important element of accountability related to the direct interaction of government and public and analyze in more details the role of public trust in political trust changes as well. In this way, it emphasized on the complementary and basic role of these concepts. Another point is that introducing the concept of political trust in public management and studying interactional relation between public trust in government organizations and political trust, the present research emphasizes more significantly on the close relation between political and administrative spheres compared to the previous research on this field as here the relation between these two spheres is trust-based and is considered from the public perspective. This point draws our attention when we find out that most of the previous researchers in sociology and political science (perhaps due to the necessity of their fields of study) have been mainly dealing with political trust on a macro-level. At the same time, researchers in the field of public management have also considered trust concept through government organizations and public bureaucracies, perhaps again due to the necessity of their fields of study. Therefore, the author has attempted to fill the unwanted gap in this context using the simultaneous study of these two concepts.

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