

THE ROLE OF INSTITUTIONAL TRUST AND POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PAKISTAN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *A substantial literature have attributed that weak political accountability and failure in governmental performance is basis of declining political trust in Asian countries. Thus Pakistan as an Asian country and emerging democracy also facing both challenges of political accountability and governmental performance. Examining political trust in Pakistan data triangulation is used. It is gathered by interviews (n=20) and from previous literature. However, data is thematically analyzed, that is expedient technique for multiethnic country like Pakistan. Therefore, it is find out that weak political accountability and lower government performance have robust trust eroding effects in Pakistan. Thus the overall results are categorical about people lacking trust over political accountability institutions.*

KEYWORDS: Political Accountability, Institutional Trust, Government Performance, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

In 1947 when Pakistan came into existence and got freedom from British raj, nation building and democratic consolidation was lone duty of political elite. However, military interventions and incapable political elite failed to democratize the country with all its fundamentals (transparency, accountability, freedom of expression, rule of law). Another reason was their colonial legacy, awarding jobs, titles and lands to a specific group was pervasive in colonial system to meet the certain colonial objectives. Thus, this colonial history is root cause of political corruption and further it give birth to other major issues such as economic deprivation, no substantial health and education facilities, government failed to provide clean water and employment opportunities, moreover, load shading and inflation, terrorism, energy crisis, tax evasion etc.

To this end, politicians are mainly responsible for all this deprived condition. They cheated public by the name of democracy but in fact they are saving their own interests. Most of the politicians are industrialists and landlords and money is the prerequisite of politics. And elections are very costly, spending money considered as investment and it is supposed to consider that after coming in power it will be recovered by massive corruption. However, some cultural factors like loyalty with a leader and party, candidate's affiliation with certain tribe or community, follower of certain Islamic sect like Shia, Sunni, Beralwi etc. Despite all buffering facts, it is be adequate to argue that, poorer economic and political performance leads to de-legitimization of institutions. It is general fact, public is despair from their corrupt politicians and not satisfied with accountability of politicians.

However, NAB is a primary institution that handles mega corruption scandals of politicians and public officials but there are some other institutions such as election commission of Pakistan, public accounts committee, judicial commission ombudsman also in operation to

ensure accountability. In this chain of accountability institutions, NAB is a primary institution that is responsible to ensure performance of other accountability organizations such as election commission, judicial commission and various provincial agencies. Apart from government organizations mentioned above, the Parliament is one of the most important structures in the chain of accountability. The Parliament does not merely form the bridge between people and the government but its role is also critical because it is also the institution to which many accountability institutions report. Moreover, a Parliament and its elected representatives are important vehicles through which citizens and civic groups can also extract enforcement of various laws and policies.

It is pertinent to note that this study will analyze the public trust about these institutions working in drawing out political accountability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A voluminous literature relates political accountability and citizen's level of trust over their institutions in Asian democracies. However, weak accountability systems leads to lower level of public trust (Chang and Chu, 2006). Though, important starting point is political corruption, service delivery failure that saliently determine the weakness of accountability system and it further leads to erosion of citizen's level of trust or satisfaction. While trust or satisfaction, Kaase, demonstrate that satisfaction with democracy and trust in government are indicators of the same (Kaase, 1999). Indeed, mass media highlight the political scandals of parities and their representatives to build a competition and strategically politicized corruption issues in political debate (Sberna and Vannucci, 2013). However, in public sphere these facts are crucial for voters, media and political elite (Sandri, Seddone & Venturino 2015). That is the reason, in last five years the burning subject of speeches delivered in parliament was corruption and public service delivery. As stated earlier, political corruption and citizen level of trust are inversely proportional to each other. In simpler terms, as political corruption decreases, voters trust increases and vice versa and it is a behavioral determinant of voters in elections as well (Vegetti, Poletti, & Segatti, 2013). In this regard, when accountability extracted by elections, provision of services by previous government play a crucial role to get reelected and win public trust. This is the face, government performance is positively associated with political trust (Wang and You, 2016). In public debate anti-political statements shows political distrust and corruption scandals fuels these debates. Especially, virtual public sphere (social media) is an aiding forum that engage likeminded people and encourage these political debates.

These political debates revolves around the political corruption which is betrayal of public trust towards political institutions and direct violation of fundamentals of democracy (accountability, transparency, openness etc.). Moreover, political distrust among public, leading to legitimacy crisis in political systems (Anderson and Tverdova 2003). But unfortunately, this phenomena is yet un-resolved in most of societies.

METHODOLOGY

As far as this paper is concerned, triangulation of data is used in which primary data is collected by semistructured (n=20), secondary data sources such as journal articles, online websites,

social networking sites used. Therefore, all data is thematically analyzed that is empathetic technique for analyzing data from multiethnic countries like Pakistan

Data Analysis

This study find out after data analysis, pervasive corruption and low public service delivery are the reflection of accountability system failure. Poor are getting poorer and rich are getting rich, to date we have not experience any powerful to get punished over corruption. Furthermore, informants highlight the deprived economic condition of country, people doing suicide due to hunger, acute shortage of water, worst unemployment, and country is near to bankruptcy, around 40% of revenues is used in debt servicing but accountability institutions are sleeping. Informants are firmly believe that massive corruption is a big issue and public office holder somehow abusing their powers and plundering public money. Public is not their priority, instead of serving people, elected representatives have self-serving behavior. Whether accountability institutions working up to the mark, then the situation is not as worse as it is. Moreover, informants highly lights the facts how accountability is not done satisfactorily. Such as, political hiring's make the system weak, politicians hire their own loyal persons on key posts. While another informant said parliament has not culture of accountability, in question answer session time most of the candidates are missing, parliamentary committees are made on several issues but they are not fully functional, take long time to resolve an issue and usually no pertinent examples of fruitful results. On a relevant node, intraparty accountability is not a tradition, parties not punish their ministers and parliamentarians on the basis of corruption allegations. Pakistani people are not satisfied with their political accountability situation. This argument will explained but two main themes one is weakness of accountability system and other is failure of public service delivery. **Accountability system weakness and political distrust**

The first factors revolves around the massive corruption, in fact it is a reflection of failure of accountability institutions in Pakistan. Corruption is perceived in all societies as a social pathology that causes great material and moral damage and is a threat to the society's continual development. Unfortunately, corruption is endemic in Pakistan, no structure, no tier and no office of public sector is immune from it. Its spread is enormous. It has reached every organ of state beyond executive, it has put its claws on judiciary and legislature even. Notably every sort of corruption is prevalent in Pakistan but as far as mega corruption, politicians are the biggest beneficiaries. (Rasool, 2012). And they had played major role behind impotency of accountability institutions in past. If we turn over the pages of political history of Pakistan in order to develop a better understanding regarding the roots of political victimization, the results could be quite depressing. There is plethora of examples that are evidenced brutalized opponent's supporters, they were jailed and tortured on political reasons. Such imbalances in accountability measures badly affect the public trust.

Mostly informants indistinctly condemn political victimization that is main failure of political accountability. They planned to reject such politicians who exercise selective accountability practices in past and thus their emphasis is across the board accountability.

Across the board accountability, uninterrupted political and democratic government and nonvictimization/singling out a particular politician can save the country otherwise country will face irreparable loss. As it was done by previous governments ruthlessly took debts and recklessly misused by officials. Their extreme purpose was to start mega projects to gain big commission and kickbacks. Say no to fascism, say no to political victimization, and say no to

all kind of extremism. Only yes to cultural civilized, peaceful, tolerant and corruption free Pakistan. It is a dream of every Pakistani and absolutely mine also but our political elite make us despair in every aspect.

Another facilitating elements of corruption is political hiring that licking the system like a duck. Instead of meritocracy heads of accountability bodies and other offices hire on political preferences and as a reward they serve their political masters. These political appointments discourage the deserving candidates and on the other hand when nonprofessionals and incompetent officials lead the office botchily.

Informants are agree about this fact that successive governments systematically hire their loyalist on key post bypassing seniority and merit. Resultantly, with both hands they looted the country but no one was there to ask. Yahya Ahmmad said

I came to know from a reasonable source there are 1900 seats were vacant in police and it had been 1400 appointments had been done on political basis. It is a biggest irony an ordinary person in Pakistan cannot even register and initial investigation report without reference of political elite. In this situation how can a one believe over the impartiality of institutions? It is ought to realize that politics is playing the biggest hindrance in the effectiveness of institutions and specially police in regulating law and order state. It is crucial to make the institutions politics free otherwise their efficiency will remain a question mark.

Another challenge is poor parliamentary investigation and justice delays that erode the public trust. However attendant study turn around political intuitions thus parliament, the elected sovereign institution representing the aspirations of the people, is obviously seen to have the most important role in this, but the general perception in Pakistan is that expectations are not being met. Parliament is also supposed to undertake accountability on its own in several areas. Parliamentary oversight is one of its three basic functions, the other two being legislation and representation. Each parliamentary committee has the authority to receive public petitions, undertake probes, summon public officials and recommend suitable action. Parliamentary committees are considered to be the most effective instruments of accountability all over the world. Unfortunately, despite their powers, parliamentary committees both at the national and provincial level have not been very active or effective, barring a few exceptions. With regards to parliamentary accountability and poor investigation, informants highlight election commission of Pakistan role that at present lacks comprehensive legal and procedural framework for accountability of elected representatives. Such as Mr Naem said,

It is a fact that so far the ECP (election commission Pakistan) has not effectively scrutinized the financial affairs of the political parties. It is the most neglected area of accountability in our political milieu. Political parties under Rule 4 of the Political Parties Rules, 2002 are required to submit their annual audited accounts to the Election Commission. These accounts, casually filed, are never minutely examined by the ECP. Political parties are also not filing tax returns even though it is a requirement under section 114 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001. Strangely, the FBR (federal board of revenue) is also not enforcing the law that is a sad reflection on our state of governance. On the one hand, political parties are not complying with tax laws, and on the other the ECP, Parliament and the FBR are totally insensitive to this issue. It is high time that the

Standing Committees of Senate and National Assembly on Tax take note of this lapse and call the FBR's stalwarts for this inaction.

In this regard Mr Amjad express his views as

Meaningful participation of masses in democracy and electoral process can only be ensured if they have the right to question their leaders about use of their money. This would also make the party a responsible and accountable entity when in power. Politicians need to act responsibly in all spheres — whether in power or in opposition. Their role is pivotal for effective working of institutions of the state. Being role models, it is imperative for them to show others by their conduct, the supremacy of rule of law. If they indulge in corruption and malpractices, the entire system becomes discredited.

Government performance and Institutional Trust

Scholars established a positive association between government performance and political trust (Chang & Chu, 2006). Moreover, in democratic setup public expect competency from government and public service delivery is a testing instrument. If government is efficaciously make available public services such as health, education, and employment etc. then public trust will be high if not then it will be low. However in Pakistan government badly failed to provide basic public services. According to a report from the International Food Policy Research Institute, Pakistan remains near the bottom of the Global Hunger Index, standing at 106 among 119 developing countries ranked. In June 2013, the official unemployment rate in the country was 6.24 per cent, but due to growing joblessness, the government has not announced unemployment figures for the last two fiscal years, showed a State Bank of Pakistan report. The forthcoming condition badly damaged the public trust, informants badly condemn the government performance in their interviews

As Mr zubair said,

Previous government performance was not close to well. It was pathetic and massively destroyed Pakistan.

Did they think it is performance or to be ashamed.

Another informant Inyat rizvi said

Politicians are bunch of fools and losers. They did not perform when they are in power but near election they start politics over blaming each other. It should be enough now, people of Pakistan should take stand reject them with power of their votes. They ought to respect their votes.

Above comments shows the despondency of people led to distrust among people about their government performance and have lot of frustration regarding politicians and their political roles. Wrong policies of politicians, VIP culture and worse debt management was major flaws of previous government that make the condition worst. Tax payers money instead of spending on public, bigger part used on official protocols, management of prime minister, president and governor houses, in government hospitals beds are not available to patients and politicians used to go abroad for their medical treatment, perform Haj and Umera with their families on government package. These are few instances of ruthless spending of politicians on themselves (Abbas, 2018). However, performance paradigm consist of two chunks, one is macro performance like unemployment, inflation, financial growth (Newton and Norris 1999) and the other way round micro performance that is public service delivery (Rose and Pettersen 2000). However political trust varies from country to country based on government performance,

stability of government, poverty elevation and unemployment rates (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995). Ironically Pakistan is facing both type of challenges micro performance and macro performance. It is a common practice, successive governments used to made strong commitments at election times to overcome all type of crisis prevailing in country but it did not meet the targets in several areas.

In this regard, literature establish a clear link between micro performance and democratic satisfaction at individual level and country level (Ruelens, Meuleman & Nicaise, 2018). So, it is quite obvious that unemployment affected once live and changes its satisfaction level. Moreover, most research focuses on unemployment's negative personal consequences, such as depression or suicidal tendencies, there is also a long research tradition that links it to political phenomena such as voting behavior and political extremism. However, it leads to negative association of political trust and people satisfaction with democracy (Bauer, 2018).

Unemployment is a serious issue, that describe by Saba khan

Government could not perform well. Instead creating jobs, government made another institutions who takes written test from employee for recruitment and charge fee from unemployed. It is and additional burden on unemployed who have no surety whether they got job or not, it is really pathetic, I did masters in 2013 since then I spent thousands of rupees in applying jobs, test fees but so far not successful in getting regular job.

In similar domain Fareeha razaq said

Job crisis is a biggest issue in Pakistan, though other issues like health, education, security, terrorism also but according to my point of view unemployment is biggest one. What we want may be a rehashing of our approach towards job creation and economic improvement as a result of the present policies as occupancy the incorrect direction.

Another micro performance challenge is inflation which is deadly disease in developing economies like Pakistan. By increasing daily use commodities (Wheat, Milk, Sugar, Oil etc), it not merely affect everyday life of the people but whole social framework including political environment of a country. Unfortunately, successive governments failed in meeting their microeconomic targets people have unrest and lower trust on government (Yosuf & Nauman, 2015). Moreover, extensive literature also link up the microeconomics performance and people trust on their national parliament, it is a common observation there is a negative evidences of trust in case of lower micro economic performance (Ruelens, Meuleman & Nicaise, 2018). The advocates of political economy aspect have claimed that a key determinant of government performance is microeconomics (Offe, 1984). Government soul responsibility is to provide basic necessities to their citizenries, whether failure leads to lose support from public. Both egotropic and sociotropic concerns of the people about their economic condition have been connected to deviations in attitudes towards political institutions (Levi & Stoker, 2000).

In this regard respondents are very clear that common men's main concern is bread and butter. As Mr. Abid said

As for as my observation is government is throwing funds in mega projects like motorways and bridges but a common men life is going tough or toughest, a simple labor wage is 400 rupee a daily and 1200 per month, how he can manage when wheat is 40 rupee per kg, milk is 100 rupee per kg and edible oil is 100 rupee per kg. In this condition he hardly arrange food for

family, and kids study, health, new clothes etc are maids dream for him. So, I feel concerned about people of Pakistan and surging inflation and government's criminal negligence.

Another respondent khurram showed his concern as

I am government employee, in yearly budget my pay is increased ten percent and inflation rate is more than it. Electricity was 2 rupees per unit in past years but now 8 rupees per unit, irony is that in global market petrol prices are remarkably down but our government did not reduce it. Are these things are public friendly, politician are just making money and buying properties in abroad, taking dual nationalities for their families and settled them there and we are here bearing these hardships. Now this is a time to make them accountable not give them chance again. Not merely this accountability agencies ought to take action against them and bring our money back in Pakistan.

Wholesomely all informants are empathetic about misery of people and politicians negligence, adoption of wrong policies, disloyalty of Politian's and deviation from commitment taken at election times.

However, third micro performance challenge is financial growth. The role of government is the appliance of economic governance and concerned with the availability of commodities in market economy. However, lower rates of consumer products improve the living standard of general public. In economic sector government performance is very crucial in building up aiding protocols to flourish working environment, job creation and assure diverse ways of earnings. Besides this, financial growth is calculated by amount of current deficit, government expenditures on education and health sectors in relation to gross domestic profit, exchange rates in open rate market and dollar price. However in Pakistan financial crisis is long been contested issue and poor governance of economic institutions is a major reason of it. So, poor economic governance is a chief cause of mistrust of public and mismatch skills, non-transparency of public services. Notwithstanding, government has lost its likelihood of trust and integrity. Besides this, lower financial growth is responsible for moving investment from Pakistan, industrial sector is badly affecting, power working environment and energy crisis such as electricity and gas shortages.

In this regard informants also shows their concern, such as Mr. Abid said

Financial growth is inevitable, it is extreme need to improve economic governance by increase professionalism and clarity. Moreover capacity building at institutional level to curb corruption and build strategy to increase investment. Whether same practices keep continue situation will be worsen and worsen. Mr. Arif said

Though overall financial condition is quite worse as well income of ordinary citizen is very low, in presence of surging inflation it is very difficult to live a comfortable life for a common citizen of Pakistani

Lastly micro performance indicator that is public service delivery. When government deliver public services to their citizen or people perceive it is delivering then public views are pro-government and they trust over their policies and functioning of institutions otherwise they express their annoyance (Van de Wall & Bouckaert, 2003). Besides this, political culture and demographic factor is also a determinant of political trust (Christensen & Lægheid, 2005), and crucial for political legitimacy. However it is declining in developing countries and particularly emerging democracies (Khan, 2016). As discussed earlier, Pakistani government is failed in

various sectors inclusive public services. According to World Bank report Pakistan is underserved by state institutions. Pakistan statuses low on all six evaluating indicators of public service provision (worldbank.com). Governance is not operational in a manner through which organizations and employees make sure the provision of public services and form public policy (Basit and Alvi 2012).

To the interviewees end, they are also express their reservations on government performance in public service provision and highlight several interconnected issues with scarcity of public service delivery in Pakistan.

Mr Zohair said

Unfortunately, division of power is very necessary to provide public services to ultimate public and the absence of local government system in Punjab is also one of the root causes of marred public service delivery. However, overall it is government and its institutions negligence and they are responsible for poor service delivery.

Mr. Rauf has said

In my opinion, exiting institutional performance is not satisfactory. As a citizen in spite of paying taxes we are not getting public services but those who are write off their bank loans and not paying taxes are getting richer and richer. So how can we trust government who is taking action in such big issues?

CONCLUSION

Wholesomely, all above discussion articulates around political trust over accountability institutions in Pakistan. In this regard bad performance of accountability institutions and government performance played a vital role. When government remain unsuccessful in controlling corruption, establishing meritocracy, failed to provide employment, substandard living and inferior public service delivery then who can people happy with their institutions performance. All forgone discussion substantially discussed these issues. Thus, evidences from literature, data acquired from interviews and social media content analysis it is concluded that people are not satisfied with political accountability institutions and have not working at their fullest potential.

Future Research

As far as future research is concerned, after reviewing extensive literature and primary data analysis, the underpinning study infers that most of literature is based on different variable this combination of political accountability, public service delivery in the prism of political trust is not subjected to research. However it is worthy to explore political trust and everyday politics thereby policy preferences of political party and influences of voters over them can be stab out. Moreover, electoral way of political accountability is long procedure rather social media conversation is a quickest way to discuss political graveness. Furthermore, degree of political trust is somehow anticipated the future of politicians whether they will be reelected or not.

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