

Citizen trust in local government: Explaining the role of village service

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ABSTRACT: Trust in local governments is needed in crises such as natural disasters, economic emergencies, or political unrest. The purpose of this study was to measure citizen trust in government public services, particularly in village areas. The data used in this survey was collected through questionnaires distributed to rural communities that use government public services. Explanatory Factor Analysis was applied to analyze the data. The results of this study indicated that the quality of public services was the dominant factor. However, partisan involvement was a factor of concern in increasing citizen trust. The practical research is useful to increase trust in village government services as part of the supporting factors for the success of central government development programs.

1 INTRODUCTION

The current decline in the image of public institutions can cause degradation of public trust. Public trust in public institution is an absolute necessity since the purpose of the institution itself is to serve and meet the needs of the community both directly and indirectly (Bertot et al., 2016), therefore building relationships and trust in the community is very important for public institutions. A good relationship between the community and the public institution result in confidence on the service process and that the institution is one of the right choices (Kim 2014), so that the desire to use services outside public institutions is smaller. Therefore, public trust is a critical to understand so that the agency can increase community trust and in turn will lead to trust in their organization (Danish, et al. 2013). Service performance is another critical problem that civil servants try to improve by doing excellent service based on what the community expects and desires (Taylor 2014). Improving public services is a long-term effort, to realize a real bureaucratic concept in which the public is primary right holder is not an easy task (Graham et al. 2015). Public service laws are enacted to strengthen, monitor, and provide direction, such as Law no. 25 of 2009 regarding Public Services. It aims to improve the delivery of public services by creating a mechanism to ensure public expectation and demands of the citizens are met.

Implicitly, bureaucratic trust is the primary function of government performance. The bureaucratic reform policies are aimed to increase citizens trust in one country and are equally suitable for other countries (Grimmelikhuijsen & Knies 2017). Trust can be defined as relationships between two or more individuals, between individuals and organizations (such as

companies or social service departments), or between several organizations" (Ma & Wang 2014). Research in public administration discussed citizen attitudes on public sector, public trust, citizens' assessment on public institutions officials (Ramesh 2017). Some of them assessed the competence of public officials in carrying out designated assignments and affective evaluation of ethical and caring behavior or having the interests in service users (Griffin & Halpin 2018). The trust in institutions requires employees to be competent, credible, and willing to act for the greater public interest. Public trust concerns the extent to which citizens have confidence in public institutions to operate in the best interests of society and their constituents (Ferry et al. 2018).

Regarding bureaucratic performance, a lack of trust relates to limited administrative authority delegation, excessive oversight, and excessive dependence on formal rules and procedures (Katoch et al. 2017). Besides, the low level of public trust undermines morale, retention, and recruitment of civil servants. Apart from evidence, policymakers concern with the status of trust in the public bureaucracy (Mourtada & Salem 2015) as it often offers poor administrative performance and cause declining public satisfaction.

Public service plays an essential role in general welfare. The main problem for civil government services is the lack of perceptions of citizen trust. It needs the correct steps to increase citizen trust (Agyemang & Ofei 2013). Several previous studies analyzed about the implementation of good governance. However, only very few focused on measuring citizen trust. The studies found that ethnic majority had more trust in public institutions than minority. Identity, language of administration, and lack of equal representation in the

bureaucracy were also considerably determined the level of trust citizens had in public institutions.

Further, political patronage in service delivery has subverted the quality of public institutions and trust. Interestingly, citizens who support and being affiliated with the ruling party tend to have more trust in government. Police and village-level officers are least trusted, owing to endemic corruption (Ramesh 2017). The models reveal that the movement of power to select local leaders from the hands of upper-level government to residents erodes the influence of the so-called 'traditional authority orientation' among citizens, and enables them to assess trust level according to the competence of the government. Furthermore, elections cut back the trust-generating result of institutional tendency as voters. The voters are enfranchised within the 'input' method of the presidency, so accentuation 'outputs' less (Ma & Wang 2014). Trust is correlated with both subjective (at the individual-level) and objective (at the national level) indicators of performance. The quality of institutions also matters as countries with lower levels of public sector corruption experience higher levels of trust in the civil service (Houston et al. 2016).

This study measures citizen trust in public services of the government, especially in the village. The measurement used several indicators, including Quality of service, Information and Knowledge, Partisans, and Promise of Politicians.

2 METHODS

This study measures citizens' trust in government public services village areas. The measurement used several indicators i.e. quality of service, information and knowledge, partisans, and promise politicians promise. This study was a survey that collected the data using questionnaires.

The unit of analysis was rural communities that used public services. The data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling. The population in this study was all villagers in the Sidoarjo District who used and had been involved in public services in the village administration, aged between 17–65 years. The minimum education level was high school or equivalent. The sampling method was probability sampling and the technique of determining the sample unit was simple random sampling. The sample size in this study was 185–200.

Data was collected by distributing questionnaires and direct interviews with respondents. The measurement of data used a Likert scale to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of the respondents on the object. This research was conducted within three months period from January to March 2019.

In the data processing stage, researchers used SEM (Structural Equation Modelling). The results of data analysis were interpreted to find out dimensions that formed citizen trust. The recommendations in this study were the results of discussion and interpretation

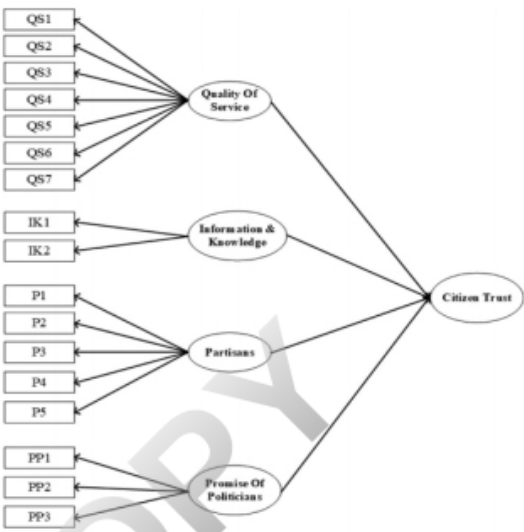


Figure 1. Research framework.

of data analysis processed by SEM. The researcher formulated the research framework as presented in Figure 1.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The testing instrument was aimed to measure formative indicators of Citizen Trust. The outer weight significance value with T-statistics > 1.96, it was obtained through a resampling (bootstrapping) procedure which meant construct validity and reliability was not required.

As shown as Table 1, Citizen Trust measurement used four indicators, namely: quality of service, information and knowledge, partisans, and promise of politicians. Quality of service indicator had an outer weight, which was the most dominant in forming Citizen Trust with a value of 0.401 significant with CR = 34.46. Quality of service showed that the government is responsive in terms of policymaking and promotes their ideology. It also indicates political parties continue the previous program when in power, public services are provided on time, the behavior of friendly public service providers, public service providers, can always solve problems, and the quality of public services is excellent. Awareness of the need for unique and satisfying public services has grown from the government before the reform era but has not been followed by implementing public service providers as expected (Houston et al. 2016). The village officials hold responsibilities to provide public services. Good or bad services offered to the community will depend on the quality and quantity, effectiveness, and efficiency (Ma & Wang 2014). The population as the party being served will receive the service in various perceptions.

Table 1. Path coefficients of citizen trust indicators.

Latent variable	Outer weight	Critical ratio (CR)
CT11 <- CT1	0,601	8,820
CT12 <- CT1	0,698	12,232
CT13 <- CT1	0,784	21,394
CT14 <- CT1	0,827	32,371
CT15 <- CT1	0,701	17,129
CT16 <- CT1	0,646	14,739
CT17 <- CT1	0,766	22,675
CT21 <- CT2	0,878	32,214
CT22 <- CT2	0,897	50,948
CT31 <- CT3	0,802	25,907
CT32 <- CT3	0,868	45,523
CT33 <- CT3	0,804	14,574
CT34 <- CT3	0,633	8,057
CT35 <- CT3	0,763	22,293
CT41 <- CT4	0,901	30,989
CT42 <- CT4	0,915	68,754
CT43 <- CT4	0,775	20,726
Quality of Service (CT1) -> CT	0,401	34,46
Information & Knowledge (CT2) -> CT	0,157	21,01
Partisans (CT3) -> CT	0,324	14,70
Promise of Politicians (CT4) -> CT	0,232	16,74

Source: Results of data processing from SmartPLS.

The indicator of Information and Knowledge with outer weight value of 0.157 significant with CR = 21.01. This indicator explained how information about services can increase citizen satisfaction and confidence in good public service performance. This indicator was a less dominant factor in shaping Citizen Trust because it had the smallest value outer weight compared to other indicators. Ease of access to information and knowledge can increase citizen trust in the government (Ma & Wang 2014). Communities need information about the government and legal services. The public will feel justice and security once it is fulfilled.

Indicator of Partisans with a value of 0.324 was significant with CR = 14.70. This indicator explained how partisan affiliation in government increased citizen trust, satisfaction with service quality, trust in government policies. Non-partisans also share the same beliefs with individuals, increased trust in non-partisans through excellent performance. This indicator was also the dominant factor to form Citizen Trust because as it was the second largest value outer weight after the quality service indicator. The importance of community participation in the formulation of public policies in the region's public administration is the result of the collaboration of various actors, both government, society, experts, and social institutions (Graham et al. 2015).

The Politician Promise had an outer weight value at 0.232 significant with CR = 16.74. This indicator explained that honest public service provider, fair public service providers, promises made by politicians are fulfilled, and local politicians are more reliable than

the national level. Trust in politics is inseparable from the political actors themselves. Here the existence of a political elite is one of the focus. The political elite is a small group of people who have a significant influence in making and implementing political decisions. The political elite, in this case, has a source of power that includes political power, and the existence of this political elite is little when compared to the population in a country (Hessami 2014).

4 CONCLUSION

This research focused on all government public service in village areas. From the result, it can be concluded that quality of service is a dominant factor that can increase citizen trust. The village officials should also foster good relationships with the partisans and increase the involvement of non-partisans in village development activities.

This research has an implication on public services in villages which function as the extension of central government.

It also expected that this research shed light not only on Citizen Trust to build excellent public service, but also on how to create good governance in local government

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