Modeling Trust in Government: Empirically Assessing Mayer et al.’s Integrative Model of Organizational Trust

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Research Objective

• Advance understanding of how citizens’ trust in their government is related to observable / measurable government characteristics
  – Specifically, is the “integrative model of organizational trust” empirically supported by Sahel survey data?

• Assuming trust is related to support, could facilitate insight into causes of unstable governments
  – In particular, what stabilizes a government?
  – Could be useful for determining where and how to apply resources
Trust Critical to Human Interaction

• Psychology: “trust is one of the most important components – and perhaps the most essential ingredient – for the development and maintenance of … well-functioning relationships”


• International relations: trust within the international system is “the underpinning of all human contact and institutional interaction”


• Counterinsurgency: trust building is the military’s “true main effort: everything else is secondary”

  Counterinsurgency, D. Kilcullen, 2010, p. 37
Integrative Model of Organizational Trust

Trust: “the willingness of an individual to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the individual, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party”

Definitions

• Ability is defined as “that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain”
  – In our domain: citizens’ confidence that the government is competent in providing desired services

• Benevolence is the “extent to which a trustor believes that a trustee wants to do good for the trustor”
  – In our domain: the belief that the government acts with kindness and goodwill towards its citizens

• Integrity is the trustor’s perception “that the trustee adheres to some set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable”
  – In our domain: citizens’ perception that the government adheres to and supports ethical and socially beneficial principles of governance, including fairness, justice, democracy, etc.
An Empirical Assessment: Is the Model Supported by Data?

"IN GOD WE TRUST; ALL OTHERS MUST BRING DATA."

- W. EDWARDS DEMING
The Data

- 2010 national-level survey data from Sahel region of Africa: Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso
  - Face-to-face interview of local population
    - Conducted by local survey companies
- Survey comprised of about 140 questions
  - Largely consistent by country
- Almost 3,800 respondents in Nigeria and roughly 1,500-1,700 in the other countries
- Clustered, stratified sample design with post-stratification weights

Survey Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Section</th>
<th>Related Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of information</td>
<td>Q3 - Q5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Q6 - Q11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of other countries</td>
<td>Q12 - Q23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Views of own country</td>
<td>Q24 - Q25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust and Religion</td>
<td>Q26 - Q37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governance, politics and security</td>
<td>Q38 - Q55</td>
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<td>Acts of violence</td>
<td>Q56 - Q59</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Actions</td>
<td>Q60 - Q62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>D0 - D29</td>
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First Order SEM
Table 9. Statistical significance of the paths between the grey factors in the Second Order SEM of Figure 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Burkina Faso</th>
<th>Mali</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Senegal</th>
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<td><strong>Trust in Government</strong></td>
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<td>Ability</td>
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<td>Trustor Propensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other &quot;Non-Mayer&quot; Terms</td>
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*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 8. Fraction of trust in government variance explained (R^2 values) for the Baseline, First, and Second Order SEMs by country.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline Model</td>
<td>0.430</td>
<td>0.340</td>
<td>0.330</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Order SEM</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.228</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Order SEM</td>
<td>0.512</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.270</td>
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Conclusions

- Our data empirically supports the Integrative Model of Organizational Trust general form when applied to government trust
  - Ability and benevolence/integrity are important
  - However, each country does differ in terms of what specifically is important to the citizens in terms of government ability and integrity/benevolence

- But it also is clear that there are other important terms in a model of government trust
  - Begs the question of whether there are other relevant terms we could not assess because the questions were not asked in our surveys
Proposed Integrative Model of Government/Organizational Trust

Factors of perceived trustworthiness

**Ability**
- **Internal**
  - Essential services
  - Economics
  - Individual safety, security
- **External**
  - National security
  - Aid / assistance (as appropriate)

**Benevolence/Integrity**
- **Organizational**
  - Democratic
  - Open / transparent
- **Societal**
  - Free and fair
  - Peaceful, tolerant

**Reputation**
- Effective international relations
- National status

Perception that the government is competent at:
- Internally providing desired services desired by citizens
- Externally maintaining national security and attracting external aid

Perception that the government:
- Operates according to ethical / socially beneficial principles
- Promotes societal conditions desired by the citizenry

Perception that the government conducts effective international relations and fosters national status