

Public Trust in Government Institutions

Dimple Verma*

*Headmistress, Govt. High School, Karamgarh, District Shri Mukatsar Sahib (Punjab) INDIA

Abstract - Government accountability is especially important for modern democracies and plays a very significant role in the society enabling the government to govern, encouraging the citizens' participation in the governance processes and enhancing the overall stability of the society. This research paper focuses on the theoretical analysis of the phenomenon of public trust in the Indian context; it explains its facets, influences, outcomes, and possible approaches to rebuilding it. This study aims at surveying the factors that erode and foster trust, the consequences of deteriorating trust and closer look at the ways the Indian government could try to rebuild the trust of its citizens because of literature review, case studies, and facts related only to India.

Keywords: Public trust, government institutions, India, democracy, governance, corruption, transparency, accountability.

Introduction - India, being the world's largest democracy, is a relevant country for describing the state of public trust in government. The social and political structures of the country and their change over time as well as having a diverse populace provides a backdrop that is suitable for analyzing the determinants of trust in government (Chhibber&Nooruddin, 2004). Even though trust is very important in Democracy in India it has faced a set back from various issues such as corruption, inefficiency of bureaucracies, and polarization (Krishna, 2011).

The findings on dimensions of public trust in India are as follows: Like in other democratic nations, the concept of trust in the Government of India includes the several facets conveying the civil relation between the people and the governmental structures. However, these dimensions may manifest differently in the Indian context: However, these dimensions may manifest differently in the Indian context:

1. Competence: The ideology that holds that Indian government structures have both the knowledge and efficiency necessary to manage the country's manifold problems, including poverty, social injustice, and ecological decline (Dreze& Sen, 2013).

2. Integrity: In India, corruption is one of the crucial social issues that considerably erode people's confidence (Transparency International, 2023). The people appear to seek high ethical standards that should be followed by the government officers regarding bribery and other vices.

3. Fairness: Since India is a diverse country it requires a government that is neutral with special consideration that should be given to none to all citizens regardless of their status in society.

4. Benevolence: The people of India have a right to have an expectation of the Indian government to protect, uphold, and provide for the Indian citizens' needs, well-being, and growth (2012). This dimension is especially important in a country where poverty rate and inequality are still major issues.

Determinants of Public Trust in India: The formation and erosion of public trust in government institutions in India are influenced by a multitude of interconnected factors: The formation and erosion of public trust in government institutions in India are influenced by a multitude of interconnected factors:

1. Government Performance: The public trust relates to the easy delivery of the Indian government in providing essential amenities with regard to eradicating poverty, generation of employment opportunities, and boosting the economy as evidently described in the Planning Commission (2012). Thus, there is a positive correlation between confidence that the government responds to people's needs and their quality of life, and trust. On the other hand, perceived failure in service delivery, poor economic management, or weak policy maturity can act as the causes of trust (Chhibber&Nooruddin, 2004).

2. Transparency and Accountability: India too has emerged progressive in the area of transparency enhanced by measures such as the Right to Information Act (RTI). Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings that prevent effective implementation of the activities and proper dissemination of the information at the local, regional, and national levels of government. Improvement in the area of accountability like on appointment of independent anti-corruption agencies and proper judicial checks and

balances also play a vital role.

3. Political Leadership: Lipset (1963) and Almond and Verba (1965) had also concluded similarly that the behavior, language and ethical characteristics of leaders have an impact on voters' trust in Indian politics. Informative leaders' perceptions are positive regarding their honesty, competence, and public-spiritedness, while erode confidence leaders involved in scandals, corruption, or partisan politics. It should be noted that, with the help of social media, the leadership's actions and words have become more significant and noticeable.

4. Media and Information Environment: Media in India is considered as one of the most lively and operates effectively to influence perception of the people on government (Jeffery, 2016). On the other side, the media as a scrutinizer that monitors the government can also act as a destructor of trust with the help of such tools as biased reporting, sensationalism, and misinformation. The problem of fake news, propagandas, and echo chambers' increase on social media adds complexity to the information situation, which hinders the formation of opinion among the citizens.

5. Social and Economic Conditions: Dreze and Sen (2013) explained that India has tremendous socioeconomic differentiation; poverty, social inequality, and others can erode the public's confidence in government authorities. Thefts, corruption and other incidents of fraudulent activities make the citizens to lose trust in government's capacity and or willingness to respond to their concerns this is especially when they feel locked out in the gains of the economic progress. However, social unrest and conflict are potential determinants of distrust, especially when the citizens doubt the government's ability to provide for order and security.

Consequences of Declining Public Trust in India: The consequences of declining public trust in government institutions in India can be far-reaching and detrimental to the country's democratic fabric and overall well-being:

1. Political Apathy and Disengagement: When citizens lose trust in government, they may become disillusioned with the political process and disengage from civic activities (Newton & Norris, 2000). This can lead to lower voter turnout, decreased participation in public consultations, and a weakened civil society.

2. Increased Social Unrest: Distrust in government can contribute to social unrest and conflict, as citizens may resort to protests, demonstrations, or even violence to express their grievances (Krishna, 2011). This can disrupt social order, hinder economic development, and create a climate of instability.

3. Weakened State Capacity: Declining trust can undermine the government's ability to implement policies effectively, as citizens may be less willing to cooperate with government initiatives or comply with laws and regulations (Levi, 1998). This can lead to a vicious cycle, where government ineffectiveness further erodes trust, making it

even more difficult to address societal challenges.

4. Economic Consequences: Loss of trust can negatively impact the economy, as investors may become hesitant to invest in a country where the government is perceived as unreliable or corrupt (Guiso et al., 2004). This can deter foreign direct investment, reduce economic growth, and exacerbate poverty and inequality.

Case Studies: Public Trust in Action (and Inaction) in India: Examining specific cases can provide valuable insights into how public trust influences government initiatives and policies in India: Examining specific cases can provide valuable insights into how public trust influences government initiatives and policies in India:

1. Aadhaar: The Biometric Identification System: Aadhaar – Policy Objectives and Impact The Aadhaar number allocation based on biometric identity was conceived as the world's largest identification system with the singular policy objective of enhancing the deliverables of government services and curbing fraudulent practices (UIDAI, 2023). Nonetheless, it was marred with controversy because of privacy, data integrity and informational misuse among the public (Khanna, 2018). The people of India were never informed properly by the government about how Aadhaar would be implemented which denied them trust and empowered the courts (Supreme Court of India, 2018). Subsequent attempts at recovering user privacy rights and highlighting the system's capability of delivering social welfare programs have helped in recovering some measure of trust (Bhatia, 2020).

2. Demonetization: In November 2016, the Indian government claimed that it sought to eliminate the black money and corruption by replacing the 500 and 1000-rupee notes with the new series of 500 and 2000-rupee notes (Ministry of Finance, 2016). Despite being backed by some of the citizens in the early years, it received criticism by the harshest measures of the regular civilian struggling to earn to make ends meet especially the informal sector (Das, 2017). Lack of adequate planning and communication in relation to the policy was a major cause for the public's disappointment and reduced trust (Ghosh, 2017).

3. COVID-19 Pandemic Response: The measures taken by the Indian government regarding COVID-19 pandemic were received with positive and negative feedbacks of the society at first. Thus, though the measures, such as the nationwide lockdown, proved effective in slowing down the virus's spread, their sudden implementation and absence of sufficient assistance to the affected groups led to severe economic losses and social turmoil (Ray et al., 2020). But subsequent actions of the governments to increase the vaccination drive and offering various relief packages among other things, have gradually assisted in the rebuilding of some trust (Government of India, 2021).

These case studies help to understand the multifaceted nature of factors that affect the level of trust of the population in India. Although the measures are proclaimed by

governments as rather helpful, their outcomes critically depend on such aspects as the information disseminating strategy and the respect for the citizens' concerns.

Strategies for Restoring Public Trust in India: Rebuilding and sustaining public trust in government institutions in India requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of distrust and fosters a culture of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Rebuilding and sustaining public trust in government institutions in India requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes of distrust and fosters a culture of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness:

Table 1 (see in next page)

1. Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts: There is the need to escalate the anti-corruption crusade in India at all tiers of leadership. These measures range from improving the capabilities of the anti-corruption agencies, enhancing the protection of the whistleblowers, and ensuring that there are efficient and politically unrelated probes and trials (Transparency International, 2023).

2. Improving Service Delivery: This means that improving the quality as well as effectiveness of public services for instance health, education and physical infrastructure is flexible as a way of rebuilding confidence (Planning Commission, 2012). This includes reducing wasteful bureaucratic procedures, implementing technology and innovative solutions, and emphasizing on clients' or citizens' oriented perspectives.

3. Enhancing Transparency and Accountability: The Indian government should keep on with the advocacy to increase transparency in decision making, expenditure, and purchasing (Peisakhin & Pinto, 2010). These strategies of widening the coverage of the Right to Information Act and using technology in giving out information helps put power back into the hands of the citizens and creates trust.

4. Promoting Inclusive Governance: Overcoming difficulties and responding to wants and concerns of violated and discriminated populace subsets is central to gain its trust from each segment in the Indian society (Beteille, 2003). This entails policy measures that aim at increasing the social and economic equity, striving for affirmative action, equal chances, and opportunities, and taking measures to correct previous wrongs.

5. Building Political Consensus and Collaboration: Trust in India: Trust building process needs political leaders to positively engage in dialogue, achieve consensus on tremendous issues, and they have to work in tandem across party divide in a large diversified country like India (Jayal, 2013). It could also act as the means toward the depolarization of the political process and the attainment of a cultured consensus about the nation's that is needed for the future.

6. Leveraging Technology: Digital governance has further been identified as a growing trend in the Indian context giving frameworks opportunities to offer better, more

transparent services, effectively manage change, and integrate citizens in governance over processes (Bhatia, 2020). The other areas that involve feedback mechanisms, grievance redressal, and consultations using the available digital platforms can make citizens to feel part of the decision-making process, hence increasing trust.

Conclusion: The Indian people have precious little faith in their government institutions as it is and it must be preserved. Thus, the Indian government may regain the citizens' trust by combating the sources of distrust, increasing the effectiveness of accountability systems, improving the quality of provided services, as well as encouraging the policy of inclusive governance. It is the long and gradual process of constructing and maintaining trust through work, flexibility, and understanding of the Indian people needs and wants. This suggests that a government that receives and sustains the confidence of the people is in a better position to tackle the nation's problems, promote unity and cohesion as well as work towards the advancement of the social well-being of its people.

References:-

1. **Beteille, A. (2003).** *Equality and Universality: Essays in Social and Political Theory*. Oxford University Press.
2. **Bhatia, A. (2020).** India's Aadhaar: Biometric ID, Big Data, and the Digital Welfare State. *World Development*, 127, 104757.
3. **Chhibber, P., & Nooruddin, I. (2004).** Do Party Systems Count? The Number of Parties and Government Performance in the Indian States. *Comparative Political Studies*, 37(2), 152-187.
4. **Das, G. (2017).** Demonetisation and its Impact on the Indian Economy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(8), 10-13.
5. **Drèze, J., & Sen, A. (2013).** *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*. Allen Lane.
6. **Ghosh, J. (2017).** Demonetisation and the Crisis of Legitimacy. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 52(5), 15-18.
7. **Government of India. (2021).** *COVID-19 Vaccination in India: Progress and Challenges*. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
8. **Guiso, L., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2004).** The Role of Social Capital in Financial Development. *American Economic Review*, 94(3), 526-556.
9. **Jayal, N. G. (2013).** *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History*. Harvard University Press.
10. **Jeffery, R. (2016).** *India's Newspaper Revolution: Capitalism, Politics and the Indian-language Press 1977-99*. Oxford University Press.
11. **Khanna, T. (2018).** Aadhaar: A Biometric History of India's 12-Digit Revolution. *Foreign Affairs*, 97(6), 118-130.
12. **Kohli, A. (2012).** *Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India*. Cambridge University Press.

13. Krishna, A. (2011). *Democracy in India: Challenges and Opportunities*. Oxford University Press.
14. Levi, M. (1998). *Of Rule and Revenue*. University of California Press.
15. Ministry of Finance. (2016). *Withdrawal of Legal Tender Character of Existing 1 500 and 1 1000 Notes: Rationale and Impacts*. Government of India.
16. Newton, K., & Norris, P. (2000). Confidence in Public Institutions: Faith, Culture, or Performance? In S. J. Pharr & R. D. Putnam (Eds.), *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* (pp. 52-73). Princeton University Press.
17. Peisakhin, L., & Pinto, P. M. (2010). The RTI Act: Public Information as a Tool for Citizen Empowerment. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(31), 54-62.
18. Planning Commission. (2012). *Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17): Faster, More Inclusive and Sustainable Growth*. Government of India.
19. Ray, D., Subramanian, S., & Subramanian, K. (2020). India's Lockdown: An Interim Report. *Centre for Economic Policy Research*.
20. Supreme Court of India. (2018). *Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India & Anr*. Writ Petition (Civil) No. 494 of 2012.
21. Transparency International. (2023). *Corruption Perception Index 2022: India*.
22. UIDAI. (2023). *Aadhaar: Empowering Residents of India*. Unique Identification Authority of India.

Table 1: To give a name to the theory, one could call it Simple System Model of Political Trust and Behaviour since it is a system where one element affects the other element.


