

Assessing Public Trust in Local Government: A Case Study of District Gujrat, Pakistan

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Abstract: The primary goal of this study is to analyse public trust in the Gujrat district's local government, which was constituted under the Punjab Local Government Act-2013. This Act established a local government system in which elected representatives were given "political, administrative, and fiscal responsibility and authority in order to promote good governance, effective service delivery, and transparent decision-making through institutionalized participation of the people at the local level" (Punjab Local Government Act 2013). This article assesses how satisfied Gujrat's people are with the governance, political participation, and fiscal management given by the local government system in order to assess the resultant public trust in local government. For this study, a survey of public opinion was undertaken in the district of Gujrat. Based on their responses to the most of questions asked concerning the performance of the local government system in relation to governance, political participation, and fiscal management, people demonstrated a higher level of trust in local government. The statistical analysis validates all hypotheses and the conceptual model, and demonstrates a direct significant relationship between fiscal management and trust in local government, between governance and trust in local government, and between political participation and trust in local government. The paper argues that local government is vital for strengthening participatory democracy in Pakistan. It is anticipated that in the long run, it would lead to the consolidation of democracy, the emergence of more capable leadership, and the growth of more responsive political parties.

Keywords: Decentralization, Governance, Political Participation, Fiscal Management, Public Trust

1. Introduction

Local governments are flourishing in both developed and developing societies, and they are expected to take on increased duties in delivering services, eradicating poverty, and enhancing development. Despite the fact that the idea of local government has existed since the dawn of civilization, it has only recently sparked academic interest. The literature review revealed that there is a growing body of knowledge on local government that covers a wide range of topics (Baldersheim et al., 2019; Goodman, 2019; Christensen et al., 2020; Berman, 2019; Grindle, 2009; Kincaid & Steytler, 2009; Saito, 2008; Tomkinson, 2017), including the relationship between decentralization and local government, local government reforms, multilevel governance, and local government systems in unitary and federal governments. Several studies have looked into the role of local governments in allowing women, youth, minorities, and other underrepresented groups to participate in grassroots politics. Many studies have looked at how decentralizing power enhances government by allowing citizens to participate in policy formation and accountability. Service delivery is another component of municipal governance that has attracted a lot of scholarly attention.

Since Pakistan's inception in 1947, successive regimes have developed numerous local government systems at different times. As a result, various investigations on the role and performance of these local government systems have been undertaken (Jabeen & Mubasher, 2018; Hussain et al., 2017; Asif, 2019; Alam, & Wajidi, 2013; Aslam & Yilmaz 2011; Cyan, 2007; Friedman, 1960; Hasnain, 2010). The majority of these analyses, on the other hand, approach the issue from a macro perspective and rely heavily on secondary sources. As a result, the purpose of this research is to look deeper into the performance of local government system at the micro level through a survey of public opinion. Gujrat is a well-known district in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Gujrat district spans 3,192 square kilometres, with a population of 2,756,289 people according to the 2017 Census. Females account for 51.57 percent of the total population. Rural areas are home to over 70 percent of the population. Gujrat is divided into three tehsils, 119 Union Councils, four Municipal Committees, four Town Committees, and one cantonment. Tehsil Gujrat is the most populous tehsil in the district, accounting for 54.33 percent of the total population. Sarai Alamgir is thinly populated, having only 8.9 percent of the district's population, while Kharian has 36.69 percent. On August 21, 2013, the Punjab Assembly passed the Local Government Act 2013. Elections for local bodies were held in October 2015, in accordance with the local government legislation of 2013. The district of Gujrat was divided into rural and urban local government entities for the local government elections. The district council was made up of 117 union councils that represented rural residents. For the urban population of Gujrat city, a municipal corporation was formed, consisting of 12 union councils. The urban population of these towns was represented by municipal committees of Kharian (11 wards), Sara-i-Alamgir (12 wards), Lala Musa (24 wards), Kunjah (11 wards), Jalal Pur Jattan (24 wards), and Dinga (12 wards).

Both federations and unitary states build local government systems to enhance citizens' political engagement and better resource utilization, resulting in improved governance. The inclusive feature of governance, as well as increased chances to participate in policy decisions at the local level, fosters trust in local government and its representatives. This study investigates how inclusive and participatory governance, a variety of political participation opportunities, and prudent fiscal management contribute to public trust in the Gujrat district's local government, which was established under the Punjab Local Government Act-2013. A survey based on a structured questionnaire and a carefully chosen representative sample is used to record public opinion in Gujrat concerning governance, political participation, fiscal management, and public trust in local government.

2. Public Trust in Local government

The sources and effects of public trust in government vary over time and space. Individuals' expectations of the type of government they should have, how government should work and interact with other social and economic institutions and citizens, and political leaders', civil officials', and citizens' behavior all play a role in citizens' faith in government. (Cheema 2010, p.4). While some argue that citizens' trust in public institutions to act in the best interests of society and its constituents is a measure of public trust in government, others argue that trust in government is a measure of how well a government performs in relation to the public's normative expectations (Kim, 2010). According to some investigations, good governance plays vital role in creating public trust in local government (Beshi & Kaur, 2020; Jameel et al., 2019).

People are becoming increasingly connected to their representatives in local government, therefore faith in their representatives is critical to trust in government. At the individual level, trust is defined as "having faith in someone; believing that someone is good, sincere, and honest; and believing that something is accurate or correct or that you can rely on it." (Soanes 2005, 1645). In this context, this paper attempts to gauge public trust in the members of local government by inquiring people if they agree that their representatives (a) acted in the best interests of public; (b) were competent of carrying out their responsibilities; (c) performed their work well; (d) were sincere in their duties; (e) and were honest in their work.

Citizens' assessments of government performance are strongly linked to their trust in the government. This study examines the relationship between local government performance in terms of governance, fiscal management, and encouraging political participation on the one hand, and public trust in government on the other. People who have more trust in government are more likely to be satisfied with their representatives' and the government's performance. Citizens' trust in government is becoming increasingly important as we effort to sort out where public expectations come from and how government reacts. The paper examines impact of perceived performance of local government on public trust in government, which adds to the field of public administration and governance.

3. Methodology

This quantitative study relies on primary data collected through a survey of public opinion. The study's carefully selected sample contained a total of 841 people. The demographics of the respondents reveal that males exceeded females by 61.95 percent to 36.98 percent, with trans genders accounting for 1.07 percent of the total number of respondents. More than 40 percent of the people in the study were between the ages of 20 and 39. A significant section of responders were older, with 17.2 percent of those aged 60 and more. Nearly a quarter of those polled were illiterates, yet many were university graduates (22 percent). Then, approximately 70 percent of the people surveyed live in rural areas. Because Gujrat is the most populous Tehsil in the district of Gujrat, it is home to more than half (53.63 percent) of the persons interviewed. This suggests that the sample chosen for this study is fairly representative and adequately stratified in terms of gender, education, rural-urban location, and geographic distribution. A standardized questionnaire with closed-ended questions and Likert scale values was employed in the investigation. The questionnaire includes a number of questions to gauge public opinion on the role of local government in delivering good governance, political participation, and fiscal management. Items were also included to gauge public's trust in local government. The questionnaire's many items were adapted from the existing literature on the subject. These questions, however, were revised and modified to make them more meaningful in the context of Pakistan and understandable to the interviewees. For literate respondents, the questionnaire was translated into Urdu, the national language, while the survey staff read the questionnaire to illiterates and elderly with reading disabilities. To quantify the public opinion on various questions, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed. The discussion of survey results in the next section includes a summary of the results in respect to good governance, political participation, fiscal management, and public trust in local government. Statistical metrics are used to verify the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Using reliable statistical processes, the survey results are used to evaluate the hypotheses established in light of the adapted conceptual framework. In the section on statistical analysis and hypotheses testing, the results are presented.

4. Discussion of survey results

This section presents the findings of survey to understand the public perspective in this regard. Each variable's findings are described in its own section.

a) *Public Perspective on Governance*

To determine the public opinion regarding the governance espoused by the local government system, a number of questions were asked by the people. Primarily, the majority of respondents (52.9 percent) agreed that the local government system performed well and adequately fulfilled its responsibilities. Despite this, a sizable number of respondents (27 percent) expressed dissatisfaction. The others were neutral. Then, it was assessed if people were satisfied with their elected representatives' performance in terms of providing various services. Although the majority of respondents claimed to be content, many remained undecided (27.6 percent), and 20.8 percent were dissatisfied. When asked if they were satisfied with the way their representatives attended their workplaces during their office term, the majority of respondents appeared satisfied; yet, a significant number of respondents (22.2 percent) remained neutral, and nearly a quarter remained dissatisfied. Similarly, the majority of respondents believed they were well informed about the plans and programs that had been introduced

in their neighborhood. However, a sizable percentage of respondents remained neutral, and over a quarter of those polled expressed dissatisfaction. In response to another question, the vast majority of respondents believed they had been consulted and that project plans had been changed to accommodate their preferences and needs if desired. However, a large portion of the respondents remained neutral, with a quarter remaining disappointed. Similarly, the clear majority of respondents believed they were kept up to date on their local government's earnings and expenditures. However, a sizable percentage of respondents remained neutral, with more than a quarter remaining dissatisfied. The LG system, according to the vast majority of respondents, performed well. However, a few of people remained undecided. Then, about a third of respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of their representatives and the local government system in reaching their expectations. Similarly, the majority of respondents agreed that LG had given marginalized groups opportunity. While a small percentage of respondents (18.7 percent) were indecisive, 27.4 percent of those polled expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. For another inquiry, the majority of respondents endorsed the local government system's initiatives for various training programs. Despite this, 18.7 percent of respondents were neutral, and 27.3 percent disagreed. In the same vein, when people were asked if there were any meetings to gather public feedback, the majority of participants agreed, 18.0 percent were undecided, and 29.3 percent disagreed. Eleven items of the questionnaire assessed public opinion to determine how well the local government system performed in terms of governance in district Gujrat. The interviewees all agree that the local government system has performed well in all aspects of governance. On the other side, less than a third of the respondents disagreed on almost all of the questions. In general, it appears that local government has played a substantial role in introducing improved governance at local level.

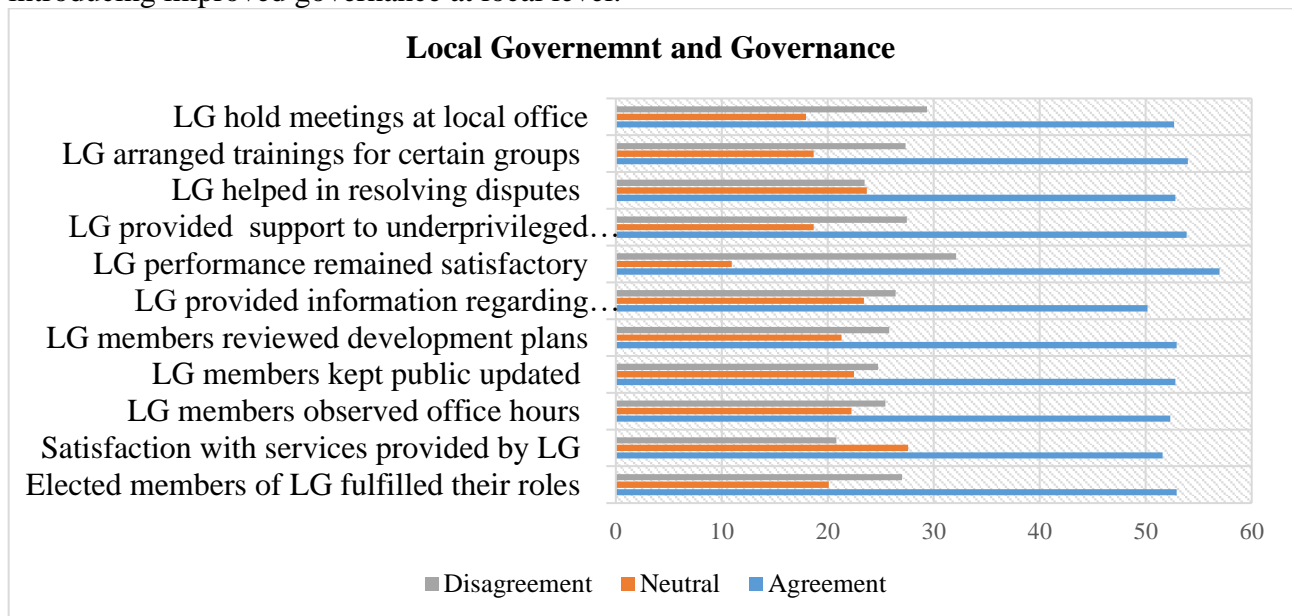


Fig. 1: Opinion on Governance

b) Public perspective on Political participation

Six items were included in the questionnaire to determine how involved people were in election campaigns, demonstrations, and the political process in Gujrat's local government system. it was observed that people were more engaged in politics as a result of the local government system, which brings them closer to the government. People have a greater ability to influence the election outcome because the constituency and electorate are smaller. People are more active in the electoral process in LG elections than in national elections, according to the majority of respondents (63.3 percent). However, a sizable percentage of people (13.6 percent) remained neutral. 23.1 percent of respondents, on the other side, disagree with the assertion. Overall, local governments were considered to have successfully encouraged citizens to actively participate in electoral campaigns, hence ensuring political participation.

People who are generally uninterested in national elections are becoming more involved in local elections. In this context, respondents were asked if they agreed that people have worked more actively in LG elections to support a candidate or political party than in the national elections. The majority of people (65.8 percent) claimed more active participation in the LG election campaign than during national elections. While 18.3 percent of respondents remained neutral, 25.9 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement. Overall, the local government was credited with successfully encouraging citizens to actively participate in electoral campaigns, so ensuring political participation. Responding to another question, a vast majority of respondents (61.8 percent) agreed that people attended more political meetings and election rallies in support of their preferred candidate in LG elections as compared to national elections. While 15.6 percent were undecided, another 22.6 percent of respondents stated they did not agree with this claim. Overall, the local government system reaffirmed the majority's political engagement.

When asked if they agree that individuals exhibit political yard signs or bumper stickers for a political party or candidate more actively during LG election as compared to national elections, majority of the respondents (56.1 percent) agreed. While 22.7 percent of respondents remained neutral, 21.2 percent disagreed. The findings suggest that local governance has a significant impact on people's willingness to participate actively in local politics. Finally, the respondents were asked if they agreed that people had more willingly sponsored any party or candidate in local body elections than in national elections. Many respondents agreed (43.3 percent) with this claim. 35.4 percent, on the other hand, were unsure. In contrast, 21.3 percent of respondents said they do not believe that people donate more generously to any candidate or political party in local government elections.

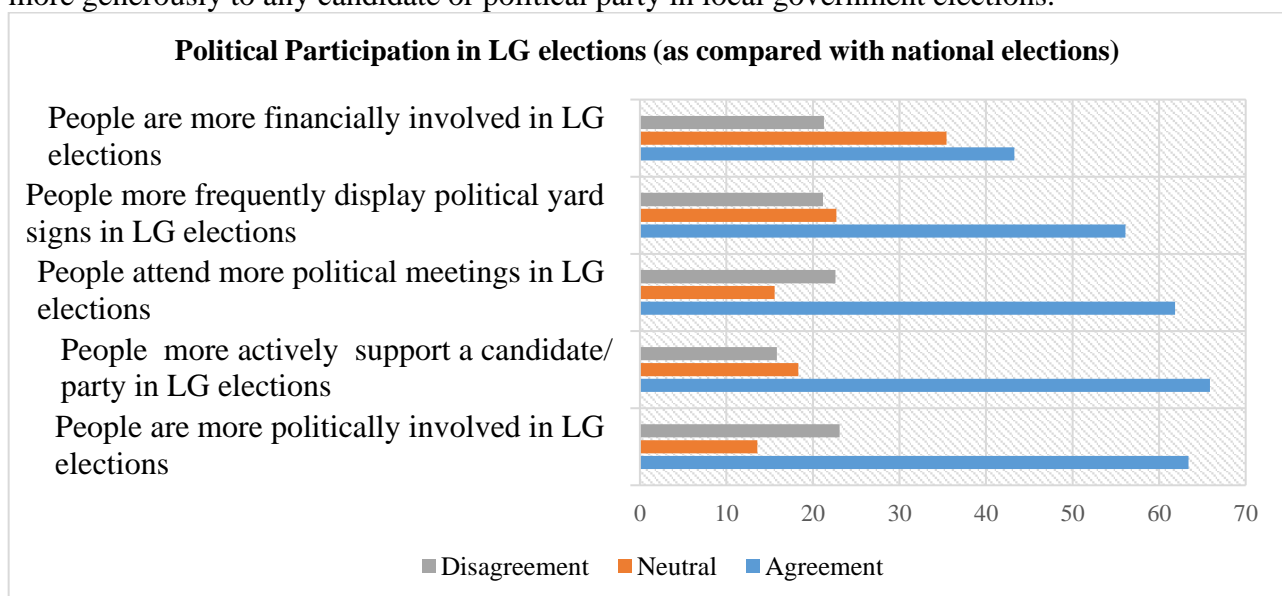


Fig. 2: Opinion on Political participation

c) Public perspective on Fiscal management

The survey included seven questions aimed at determining how efficiently resources were used and how satisfied people were with being consulted while planning activities or generating revenue. The local government system not only delegates power at the local level to promote democracy at the grassroots, but it also allocates sufficient funds for community development. In the Gujrat district, where the LG system was established under the Punjab Local Government Act 2013, it was questioned if this system has provided adequate funds for community development. The majority of interviewees (50 percent) agreed that adequate funds for community development had been designated. However, 14.1 percent of those surveyed were indecisive, and 35.9 percent disagreed. In order for the LG system to work effectively, community development funds must be dispersed appropriately to various subdivisions of local government. People were asked if LG system adequately allocated community development resources to their local councils. A sizable percentage (45.8 percent) of those interviewed agreed. However, 15.6 percent were undecided, and 38.6 percent

disagreed. Overall, the results showed that more individuals were satisfied with the way community development funds in Gujrat's district were distributed to different local entities.

Representatives in the LG system are expected to be more responsive to public needs and to exercise more inclusive governance while staying in regular contact with the public. LG members are supposed to use community development funding and collaborate with the local community to establish development projects. When spending community development funding, respondents were asked if members of the LG system consulted with those around. Many respondents (46.2 percent) agreed with this claim. However, 13.8 percent of those polled were undecided. A large percentage of responders (40 percent) disagreed with this statement. People in Gujrat appear to be skeptical about LG members using monies in consultation with the general public. Funds must be dispersed fairly throughout the union council or local territorial entity for efficient local governance. In light of this, the question of whether local government members allocated monies fairly across the union council was raised. A sizable percentage of those surveyed (47.8 percent) agreed. However, 11.1 percent of those interviewed were undecided. Despite this, 41.1 percent of those surveyed disagree with the statement. People appear to be unsure about whether money were distributed fairly and evenly throughout the geographical divisions.

Equitable financial allocation throughout the territorial subdivisions of the local government system is central to the public trust and good governance. Therefore, respondents were asked if LG representatives used any standard benchmark while allocating funds in their territorial units. Many respondents (43.4 percent) agreed that funds were distributed fairly and that a well-thought-out approach was followed. However, 30.9 percent of those surveyed were undecided. On the other hand, 25.3 percent of people disagree with this statement. Local government systems allow governments to earn revenue by charging fees for a wide range of LG services. However, in order to reduce corruption, fiscal accountability is crucial in underdeveloped countries. As a result, the Punjab Local Government Act of 2013 mandated the disclosure of fee statements by local governments. In this regard, the respondents were questioned if they agreed that fee statements for LG services were displayed appropriately in local government offices. Many of those surveyed (40.5 percent) agreed. However, 27.9 percent of those interviewed were undecided. On the other hand, 31.6 percent of people disagree with this assertion. To meet their fiscal obligations for community development and infrastructure enhancement, local governments must generate revenue. The LG system, on the other hand, is meant to collect money through levying reasonable taxes. People questioned if the new community taxes were levied by the local government in an appropriate manner in this setting. The majority of individuals (50.2 percent) surveyed disagree with this claim. 26.4 percent said taxes were levied in a sensible manner, while 23.4 percent were undecided.

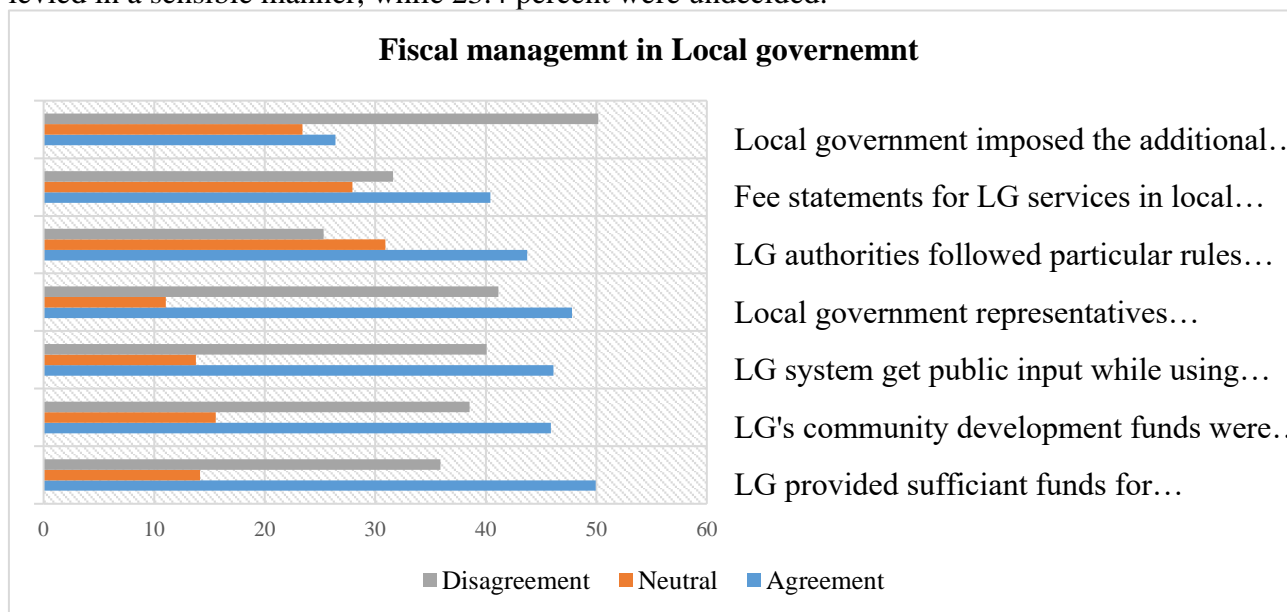


Fig. 3: Opinion on Fiscal management

d) Public perspective on Public trust in local government

To assess public trust in LG representatives, people were asked if they agreed that LG representatives operated in the best interests of the public. The vast majority of those polled (56.2 percent) expressed confidence and trust in their elected representatives. While 21.8 percent remained undecided, 22.0 percent disagreed, claiming that LG representatives did not act in the people's best interests. Overall, though, the level of trust in representatives looked to be satisfactory. Similarly, in another question, People were asked if they agreed that LG representatives were competent to carry out their tasks to determine their faith in their local representative's competency. The overwhelming majority (57.8 percent) of those polled agreed. While 20.3 percent remained neutral, 22.1 percent disagreed and questioned the competence of their representatives.

Furthermore, people were asked if they believe LG representatives perform a good job. Nearly majority of the respondents (49.7 percent) agreed. While 20.1 percent of respondents were undecided, a sizeable number of respondents (30.2 percent) disagreed. Then, to assess public trust in LG members, people were questioned if the members were serious in their tasks. This statement was endorsed by the majority of individuals (51.9 percent). On the other hand, 21.8 percent were undecided. Despite this, 26.3 percent of people surveyed disagreed and questioned the sincerity of their politicians. Finally, to assess public trust in LG's representatives, people were asked if members were honest in their work. The majority of people (51.5 percent) trust their elected representatives and believe they are trustworthy in their work. 26.4 percent, on the other hand, were undecided. Yet, 22.1 percent disagree and do not have faith in their representatives' honesty when it comes to assigned responsibilities. The general level of confidence, though, appears to be acceptable.

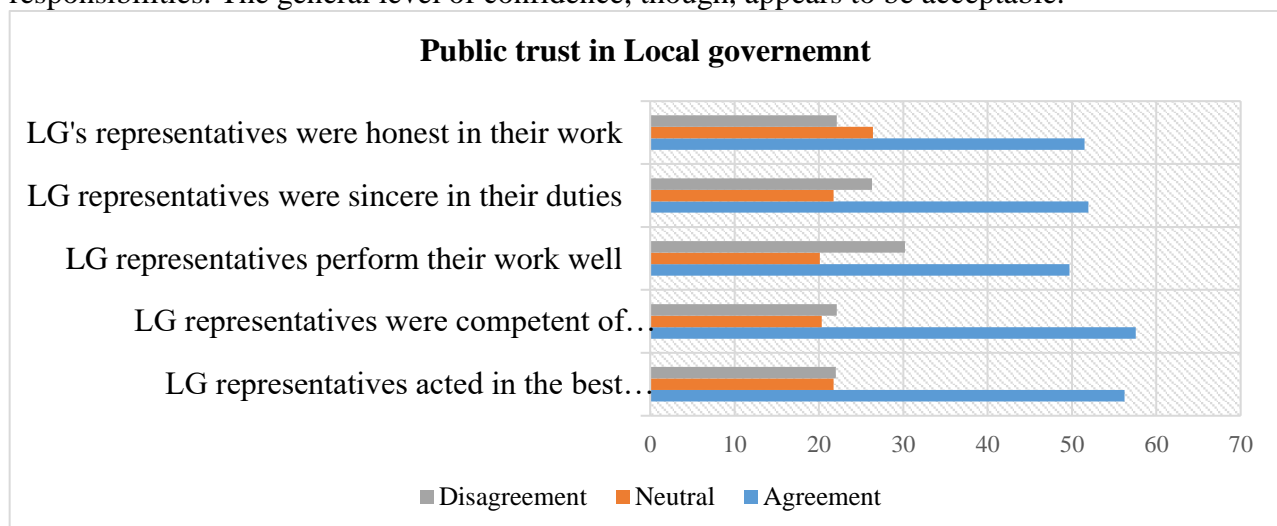


Fig. 4 Opinion on Public trust

5. Statistical analysis and Hypotheses testing

The preamble of the Punjab Local Government Act-2013 states, “Whereas it is expedient to establish an elected local government system to devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments; to promote good governance, effective delivery of services and transparent decision making through institutionalized participation of the people at local level; and, to deal with ancillary matters” (Punjab local government Act-2013). This preamble demonstrates that the Act's devolution of power is intended to promote good governance, political engagement, effective service delivery, and fiscal management. The preamble of the Act and the conceptual framework used by Taye Demissie Beshi and Ranvinderjit Kaur (2019) in their study “Public Trust in Local Government: Explaining the Role of Good Governance Practices” has provided the foundation for the following conceptual model. The model is based on three independent variables i.e., Good Governance, Political Participation, and Fiscal Management in local government and dependent variable is Public Trust in local Government. Using data from an

opinion survey, this study aims to investigate the three hypotheses listed below using this conceptual framework.

H1: Governance play a positive and significant role in promoting public trust in local government in district Gujrat.

H2: Political participation play a positive and significant role in promoting public trust in local government in district Gujrat.

H3: Effective fiscal management play a positive and significant role in promoting public trust in local government in district Gujrat.

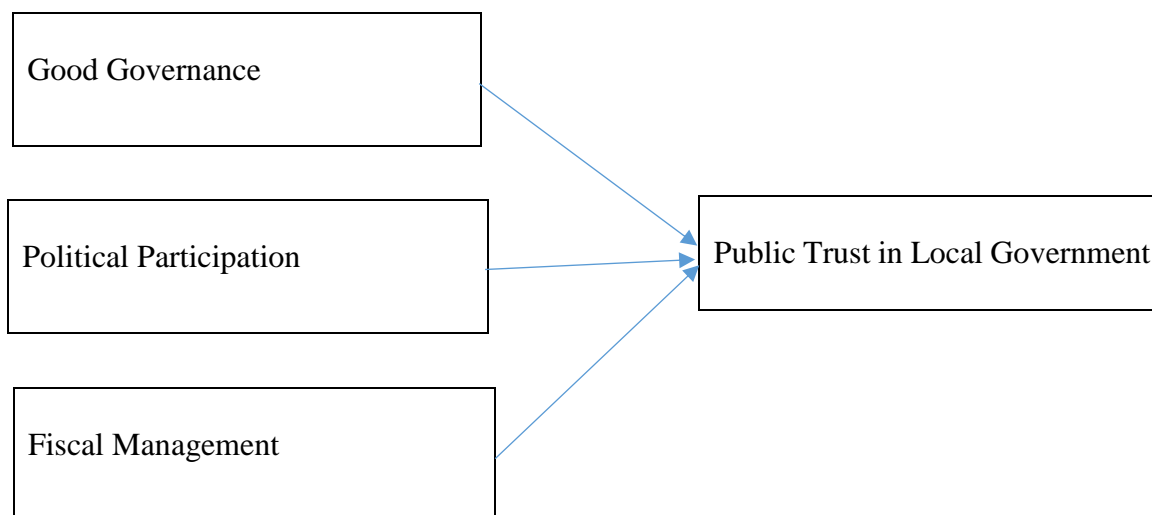


Fig. 5: Conceptual framework of the study

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

We conducted all of the reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity tests. Outcomes ensure that all study items are reliable indicators of latent variables. The results reveal that all of the measuring models' requirements were met. All of the items had loadings greater than 0.720. A higher degree of outer loading factors indicates a higher level of indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2013). In the table, item 8 of Fiscal Management (0.797) has the highest level of reliability among all other items, while item 10 of Fiscal Management (0.747) has the lowest level of reliability and likewise falls below the 0.7 threshold number. The majority of fiscal management, governance, political participation, and trust in local government are all in the 0.7-0.8 range.

The regression results are shown above. Smart PLS is used to do the multiple regression analysis. To judge the regression findings, the results are presented and analyzed using popular measures. The table shows the path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. With a t value of 3.867, a beta of 0.074, and a p value of 0.002, the results suggest that there is a direct significant relationship between fiscal management and trust in local government. With a t value of 10.992, a beta of 0.516, and a p value of 0.002, there is a direct significant positive relationship between governance and trust in local government. The findings also demonstrate that there is a direct significant relationship between political participation and trust in local government, with a t value of 5.349, beta 0.280, and p-value of 0.000. All pathways are considered to be meaningful, according to the results. In the district Gujrat local government settings, the significance of the data validates all of our hypotheses and conceptual model. The results also show that governance has the highest beta value for increasing people's trust in the local government system.

Table 1: Outer Loadings and VIF

Items	Fiscal Management	Governance	Political Participation	Trust in Local Gov.	VIF Values
FM1	0.747				1.738
FM2	0.770				1.919
FM3	0.791				2.101
FM4	0.795				2.087
FM5	0.759				1.898
FM6	0.797				2.034
FM7	0.796				2.026
GOV1		0.749			1.713
GOV2		0.756			1.771
GOV3		0.767			1.815
GOV4		0.748			1.783
GOV5		0.753			1.744
GOV6		0.728			1.620
GOV7		0.731			1.664
PP1			0.726		1.331
PP2			0.788		1.512
PP3			0.731		1.366
PP4			0.755		1.457
TRUST1				0.760	1.457
TRUST2				0.780	1.621
TRUST3				0.793	1.649
TRUST4				0.743	1.453

Table 1 shows the outer loads as well as the variance inflation factor (VIF). In this study's conceptual model, there are four variables: fiscal management, governance, political participation, and trust. To examine the measurement model, it is first put to the test with outside loads and VIF. The outside loads are used to determine the model's convergent validity. The strength of the relationship between items and the latent variable is measured using outer loads (Henseler et al., 2015). With respect to the type of study and setting employed in research, there are a number of thresholds reported and explained in the literature. The most reliable outer load threshold is that values of outer loads should be more than 0.7. (Henseler et al., 2016). The values of outer loads higher than 0.7 confirms convergent validity of scale used in research. The results reveal that all of the measurement models' requirements for outside loads have been met. All of the items have loadings greater than 0.7. A higher level of validity is indicated by a higher level of outside loading factors. Table 1 demonstrates that the item FM 6 of fiscal management has the highest level of validity among all fiscal management measures, with a score of 0.797. Furthermore, the scores for Governance, Political Participation, and Trust in Local Government range from 0.7 to 0.8. The convergent validity of the scale utilized in this study is confirmed by this analysis.

The validity of the scale is also verified using the VIF criterion. The VIF values explains the collinearity among the items and latent variable. The presence of collinearity hampers further statistical analysis of the data. Furthermore, larger VIF values in data pose a severe difficulty in structural model evaluation (a statistical treatment carried after the confirmation of measurement model). Table 1 shows that there is no concern of collinearity in the data because all of the VIF values are within the VIF benchmark range. The implied range for VIF is that values should be less than 5. (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler et al., 2015). This verifies that the scale's validity requirement has been met, and the data is ready for statistical analysis.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Fiscal Management	0.892	0.893	0.916	0.608
Good Governance	0.868	0.869	0.899	0.559
Political Participation	0.741	0.743	0.837	0.563
Trust in Local Gov.	0.770	0.771	0.853	0.592

Cronbach's alpha, Dijkstra-rho Henseler's (rho A), composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and Fornell-Larcker Criterion values are listed in Table 2. These metrics are also critical for evaluating measurement models. The scale's reliability, consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are all ensured by the statistical standards indicated above. The measurements utilized are common and important for the scale's and data's reliability, consistency, and validity (both convergent and discriminant validity) (Hair et al., 2021; Henseler et al., 2015). Cronbach's alpha (α) is the first metric. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of consistency. The values of α should be greater than 0.7. The results show that all the α values are greater than 0.7 i.e., fiscal management (0.892), governance (0.868), political participation (0.741), and trust in local government (0.770). Second measure is Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (rho A). It is measure of data consistency estimation (Henseler et al., 2015). The values of rho A should be greater than 0.7 benchmark. The results show that all values of rho A are greater than 0.7 i.e., fiscal management (0.893), governance (0.869), political participation (0.743), and trust in local government (0.771). The third measure is composite reliability which is marked as more reliable and consistent measure of reliability in PLS analysis.

The composite reliability values should also be more than 0.7, which is the PLS composite reliability threshold (Hair et al., 2021). Fiscal management (0.916), governance (0.899), political participation (0.837), and trust in local government (0.853) all have composite reliability scores above 0.7. Composite reliability values are also greater than α values. The other measure of convergent validity is the AVE, which is considered more sound and crucial in further data analysis, such as structural model evaluation (Henseler et al., 2016). All AVE values should be greater than or equal to 0.50. The results support the AVE threshold, which is 0.608 for fiscal management, 0.559 for governance, 0.563 for political participation, and 0.592 for trust in local government. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion is the final criterion. This measure is defined by Fornell and Larcker (1981) as the square root of AVE. It's a criterion for discriminant validity. The qualification for this measure is that it must have higher values than the previous variables' values. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion values met the aforementioned criterion, with actual values of 0.780 for fiscal management, 0.748 for governance, 0.750 for political participation, and 0.769 for trust in local government.

Table 3: Paths Results

	Beta Values	T Statistics	P Values	Hypotheses	Result
Fiscal Management >Trust in Local Gov.	0.074	3.867	0.002	H3	Accepted
Governance > Trust in Local Gov.	0.516	10.992	0.000	H1	Accepted
Pol. Participation > Trust in Local Gov.	0.280	5.349	0.000	H2	Accepted

The regression results are presented in Table 3. Smart PLS version 3.2.2 is used to perform the multiple regression analysis. To judge the regression findings, the results are presented and analyzed using popular measures. The table shows the path coefficients (beta values), t-statistics, and p-values. With a t value of 3.867, a beta of 0.074, and a p value of 0.002, the results suggest that there is a direct significant relationship between fiscal management and trust in local government. Similarly, with a t value of 10.992, a beta of 0.516, and a p value of 0.002, there is a direct significant positive

relationship between governance and trust in local government. The findings also demonstrate that there is a direct significant relationship between political participation and trust in local government, with a t value of 5.349, beta 0.280, and p-value of 0.000. All pathways are considered to be meaningful, according to the results. In the district Gujrat local government settings, the significance of the data validates all of our hypotheses and conceptual model. The results also show that governance has the highest beta value for increasing people's trust in the local government system.

Conclusion

Local government systems are intended to promote political participation and good governance at the local level. People are more likely to trust local government as a result of increased engagement, inclusive governance, and service delivery. The purpose of this study was to see how well the local government system established under the Punjab Local Government Act of 2013 performed and how much trust was developed in local government. This quantitative study drew on primary sources and gathered data from a public opinion poll. The vast majority of individuals in Gujrat district expressed satisfaction in response to several items of the questionnaire. They exhibited a high level of trust in their political representatives and the system. The study used statistical measures to determine the link between the dependent variable (Public trust) and the independent variables (good governance, political involvement, and budgetary management). The analysis suggests that there is a direct significant relationship between fiscal management and trust in local government. Similarly, data verified direct significant positive relationship between governance and trust in local government. The findings also demonstrate that there is a direct significant relationship between political participation and trust in local government. Hence, the data validates all of our hypotheses and the conceptual model. The results also show that governance has the highest beta value for increasing people's trust in the local government system. The findings suggest that the local government system is relevant and useful in Pakistan and elsewhere. It has been established that the local government system not only inculcates a sense of ownership in the people, but also creates political awareness and increases political involvement. In the long run, it may aid in the consolidation of democracy, the growth of more responsive political parties, and the emergence of more capable leadership.

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