

CORRUPTION AND GOVERNMENT TRUST: A SURVEY OF URBAN AND RURAL INHABITANTS IN THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST OF THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate citizen attitudes toward control of corruption, their trust in government, and the relationship between trust and corruption in order to determine whether these factors are conducive to governance reform. The sample consists of 3,600 respondents surveyed in late 2005-early 2006 in the north and northeast regions of Thailand. The findings indicate that almost three-quarters of the respondents said that petty and routine corruption was unacceptable; only one-third said they trusted or somewhat trusted public officials. Trust and control of corruption attitudes are positively, although weakly, correlated. The findings suggest that citizen attitudes toward corruption and their levels of trust in government are not antithetical to the notion of good governance. The data reveal considerable variation, however. Using partial correlation analysis, education and urban-rural distinctions are identified as key: persons with higher educational attainment and urban inhabitants are more likely to state that petty and routine corruption is unacceptable, and they are less likely to trust public officials, than persons with less education or persons living in rural areas. Gender and age have surprisingly little effect.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption, trust and good governance are generally viewed as closely interrelated. The accepted wisdom holds that corruption results in bias and distortion of the law, and thus runs directly counter to the rule of law dimension of governance, as well as negatively affecting the transparency and accountability dimensions. Corruption may also lead to a reduction of administrative capacity and a rise in the price of administration (Nye, 1989; Bayley, 1989). Trust in government or political trust, on the other hand, has been described as “the sine qua non of good governance... While good governance breeds trust, trust is a prerequisite for democratic governance in the first place” (Blind, 2006: 16-17). Trust is fostered through transparency and accountability, and vice versa. Trust is corroded by corruption.

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A closer examination of the dimensions and key indicators of good governance reveals considerable conceptual overlap among corruption, trust, and good governance. Elimination of corruption frequently appears as part of the definition of good governance. The argument that where there is transparency and accountability there is trust verges in many formulations on the tautological. Interestingly, there is no standard definition of good governance. It is a multidimensional construct, defined differently by different agencies. Some definitions identify four dimensions of governance, others six, yet others eight (<http://www.worldbank.org>, <http://www.adb.org>, <http://www.escap.org>). Good governance has been defined as consisting of all or some combination of the following: accountability, transparency, participation/voice, rule of law/predictability, regulatory quality, political stability, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness. Controlling corruption and its variants (e.g. “efficiency”) are sometimes treated as a separate dimension, although corruption is generally subsumed under rule of law. The dimensions complement and reinforce one another, and there is also overlap among them.

To sort out the conceptual relationships among political (as opposed to social) trust, control of corruption and good governance is not the focus of this paper. Rather, the assumption is made that good governance and controlling corruption are correlated, without entering into a debate as to whether corruption is part of the definition of governance or whether it is an outcome of governance. A further assumption is that trust and good governance are mutually reinforcing. Citizen trust is a necessary condition for good governance, while good governance itself leads to citizen trust.

The question arises: what is the relationship between political trust and control of corruption? If good governance is positively associated with both control of corruption and levels of citizen trust, then logically should not citizen trust be positively associated with control of corruption? Contrary to the preceding argument, however, is it possible to posit that a traditional political culture may weaken the relationship between trust and control of corruption? That is to say, citizen trust may co-exist in a traditional political culture together with prevalent corruption. Moreover, the concept of corruption itself is likely to be culturally determined, to the extent that what passes for corrupt practice in a so-called modern culture characterized by Weberian legal-rational norms may be viewed as acceptable and non-corrupt in a more traditional culture.

The alternative hypothesis, that political trust and control of corruption are unrelated or only weakly related, derives from the concept of traditional societies as antithetical to “a logic of governance rooted in the rule of law” (Heinrich et al., 2004: 10). In the traditional culture, emphasis is placed on hierarchical relationships and patron-client ties (Girling, 1981; Rabibhadana, 1969; Riggs, 1966; Siffin, 1966). Hierarchy in social relations means that those higher up in the hierarchy are ascribed certain authoritative powers and wisdom, and are deferred to by those lower down in the scale. Patron-client linkages imply an exchange relationship: a patron has the duty to protect and promote the welfare of his clients; a client returns the favor by obeying and carrying out the wishes of his patron (Samakarn, 2004). Charoenwongsawad (2004: 30-31) has identified three core values underlying patron-client ties in Thailand: putting the interests of one’s own group above all other interests; making

reciprocity and mutual interdependence the basis for patron-client relationships (e.g. superior-subordinate, politicians and public officials, public officials and citizens); and placing a high value on gratitude and loyalty (“*katanyu*” which is akin to filial piety, except in this case it extends to piety shown by clients to their patrons), including the return of past kindnesses and favors. Thus, in the traditional culture, public/private distinctions carry little weight. A holder of public office, in his role either as patron or as client, would pay scant attention to norms of transparency or rule of law.

Thailand presents an example of a transitional culture in which, despite a gradual modernization of the polity, many features of the traditional society remain solidly entrenched, especially in rural areas. Indeed, the political economist Anek Laothamathas (1995) has proposed a framework of “Two Thailands” (“*song nakara*”) for the analysis of Thai politics and society. The first Thailand is predominantly rural and agricultural or working class. Its ways are the traditional ways, and its politics is based on patronage. The second Thailand is primarily urban and middle class, with a tendency to espouse Western standards and norms. Politics provides an arena for a clash of the two cultures.

The Thai government has made a public commitment to good governance, to the extent of promulgating a Royal Decree on Good Governance in May 2003. In 2002, the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission was created, with the objective of promoting effective performance of government agencies consistent with public sector development policies and principles of good governance (<http://www.opdc.go.th>). Prior to this, 1998 saw the creation of King Prajadhipok’s Institute, a juristic body under the supervision of Parliament. One of the stated objectives of the Institute is to present “models of good governance in practice to target groups around the country” (<http://el.kpi.ac.th/kpien>).

Governance reforms in Thailand have been supply side, by and large. Little attention has been paid to the demand side. Are the values and attitudes of Thai citizens conducive to, and supportive of, governance reform? If they are not, then this does not augur well for the success of reforms. Beginning with Almond and Verba’s seminal work in the 1960s, sociocultural approaches have focused on cultural factors as determinants of the success or failure of public policies (Almond and Verba, 1963 and 1980; Inglehart, 1977; Eckstein, 1966 and 1988; Laitin, 1995). Schedler and Proeller summarize the thrust of sociocultural approaches as follows: “(U)nless a society’s political institutions are congruent with its underlying political culture, those institutions will be unstable” (2007: 190). The question then can be reformulated as, is the concept of good governance congruent with the underlying Thai culture? What is the nature of trust in government, and what are the attitudes toward control of corruption? Are there urban-rural distinctions, and is there regional variation?

This paper is part of a series that reports on research designed to address some of these questions. In seeking answers to the questions, the research draws attention to the demand side of governance. Specifically the purpose of this paper is to investigate citizen attitudes toward control of corruption, trust in government, and the relationship between trust and corruption in a transitional culture, using survey data

from the north and northeastern regions of Thailand. The data reported here are by region (north/northeast) and by extent of urbanization (urban/rural dichotomy).

MEASUREMENT AND SCALE CONSTRUCTION

The Data Set

The data reported here are taken from a larger field survey conducted by the author in eight provinces in the north and northeastern regions of Thailand in late 2005 – early 2006. Each region is divided into two strata based on urban/rural distinctions: urban areas are represented by town municipalities; rural areas are represented by villages outside municipal areas. The data are based on a sample of 3,600 respondents: 840 respondents in town municipalities in the north and 840 respondents in the northeast; 960 respondents in rural villages in the north and 960 respondents in the northeast. A multistage stratified sampling design was used. The National Statistical Office of Thailand provided generous assistance in drawing the sample and supplying area maps.

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire consisting of some 70 items. In addition to demographic and socio-economic questions, the first part of the questionnaire also contained items related to access to information and public officials and offices, and levels of satisfaction with public service provision. The second part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit attitudes toward the dimensions of governance, as well as attitudes toward corruption and citizen trust in government. The questionnaire and survey design are described at length in Punyaratabandhu (2006).

Scale Construction

For this paper, four scales have been constructed. The first scale measures attitudes toward petty corruption. The second and third scales measure satisfaction with public officials' performance and satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems, respectively, as proxy measures for rational or utilitarian trust. The fourth scale measures trust in public officials as a proxy for relational trust. Scale construction is described below.

Political Corruption. The term corruption has a wide variety of meanings, as discussed comprehensively by Heidenheimer, Johnston, and LeVine (1989) in their introductory essay to the *Handbook on Political Corruption*. For this study we employ a public-office centered definition of corruption proposed by Bayley:

Corruption, while being tied particularly to the act of bribery, is a general term covering misuse of authority as a result of considerations of personal gain, which need not be monetary.(1989: 936-937, emphasis added)

This concept of corruption extends not only to bribery, but also to nepotism and misappropriation (Nye, 1989: 966):

(Corruption) ... includes such behavior as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgement of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses).

Heidenheimer (1989: 158-160) makes a distinction between petty corruption, routine corruption, and aggravated corruption. Petty corruption and routine corruption involve the bending of official rules and use of patronage powers. In return, gifts are given to, and accepted by, officials and patrons. Heidenheimer notes, "(In traditional patron-client settings)...activities that would be considered 'routine corruption' by official Western standards are standard procedures deeply rooted in more general social standards and obligations" (1989: 159). Aggravated corruption, by contrast, is more heinous, and extends to "dirty graft," kickbacks and payoffs.

For this study, a two-item corruption scale was constructed, designed to measure respondents' attitudes toward petty and routine corruption. No attempt was made to measure attitudes toward aggravated corruption, such as officials tolerating organized crime in return for payoffs, because it was assumed that respondents would uniformly express negative attitudes in such cases. Instead, responses were sought to the following Likert-type items: "Do you think it's wrong for government officials to accept 'envelopes' for speeding up services?" and, "If government officials to accept 'envelopes' to turn a blind eye on petty violations of the law, do you think it's wrong?" The Cronbach's alpha for the two-item corruption scale is 0.825.

Political Trust. The literature on political trust distinguishes between *utilitarian or rational trust*, also known as strategic or calculative trust (Coleman, 1988; Gambetta, 2000; Hardin, 2002), and relational trust, also known as *affective or moralistic trust* (Giddens, 1991; Parsons, 1952; Cooley, 1956). Rational trust has been described as "I trust X to do Y" (Job, 2005), which involves consideration of information or knowledge about X and calculation of whether X will do what I want. Thus political trust from a utilitarian or rational perspective involves trusting the government to perform. Relational trust, on the other hand, "has ethical roots, and is based on belief or faith in the goodness of others... (as in 'I trust you')" (Job, 2005: 4). With respect to political trust, relational trust takes the form of trust in public officials and trust in government.

Rational Trust. In this study, satisfaction with performance is used as a proxy measure for rational trust. The rationale is that if a citizen is satisfied with a government's performance, then he or she is likely also to trust the government to perform. Two satisfaction scales were constructed, each designed to tap a different aspect of performance satisfaction. The first scale measured satisfaction with public services, while the second scale measured satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems of poverty, education, and health.

a) *Satisfaction with public services scale.*

This is a composite of four Likert-scale (“satisfied,” “somewhat satisfied,” “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” “dissatisfied”) items where respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their District Office, their local police station, their local health center, and the local branch of the Bank for Agricultural Cooperatives. The Cronbach’s alpha for the four-item scale is 0.809.

b) *Satisfaction with the government’s ability to solve problems scale.*

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the government’s ability to solve problems of poverty, education, and health. A Likert-scale (“satisfied,” “somewhat satisfied,” “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” “dissatisfied”) was employed. The Cronbach’s alpha for the three-item scale is 0.846.

Relational Trust. Relational trust or affective trust was measured by asking respondents to rate their trust in public officials, including elected officials. Respondents were asked, “How much would you say you trusted the following (public officials): *kamnan* and village headmen; local *tambon* (or municipal, depending on location) councillors; members of parliament; government officials; and the local police?” The first three categories are elected; the last two categories are civil servants. The Cronbach’s alpha for the five-item Likert-type scale is 0.871.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Characteristics of the Sample

Table 1 reports percentages by region and stratum for gender and age. The percentages are the result of the sampling procedure that was employed for this study. The sample consisted of households drawn using a multi-stage systematic sampling procedure.

One respondent was selected from each household, alternating between head of household, spouse, and other resident family members over the age of 20. As shown in Table 1, women comprise roughly 55.0 percent of the total sample, and men 45.0 percent. The average respondent age is 43.76 years in the north, and 45.38 years in the northeast. Over 50 percent of respondents are between 36-55 years of age.

Table 1. Gender and Age, by Region and Stratum (Percentages)

Demographic Characteristics	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	49.1	43.5	45.4	45.2
Female	50.9	56.5	54.6	54.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Age</u>				
Less than 25	4.2	6.9	4.5	8.9
26 - 35	16.9	18.3	15.7	27.4
36 - 45	27.1	29.4	28.6	29.4
46 - 55	27.0	24.8	28.5	21.8
56 - 65	19.4	15.5	15.0	9.8
66 or older	5.5	5.1	7.6	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2 reports percentages by region and stratum for education and occupation. As expected, there is a marked divide between urban and rural populations. Respondents residing in towns show far higher levels of educational attainment than respondents living in villages. In town municipalities, only 10.4 percent and 29.8 percent of respondents in the north and northeast, respectively, had less than a sixth grade education. The figures for rural villages are 52.8 and 59.9 percent, respectively. By contrast, 31.8 percent and 21.9 percent of respondents in the north and northeast, respectively, held a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas in rural villages the figures drop to 6.2 and 3.4 percent, respectively.

In addition to urban-rural distinctions, regional differences exist. Respondents in the north are better educated than respondents in the northeast. The education gap is more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas. Whereas there is only seven percentage points difference between persons having less than a sixth grade education in rural villages in the north and northeast, the difference increases to 42 percentage points for persons living in town municipalities. The same pattern holds with respect to tertiary education. In rural villages in the northeast, only 5.1 percent of respondents had the equivalent of two years or more of college, in contrast to 8.9 percent of rural respondents in the north. The contrast is far more pronounced for urban inhabitants: 8.9 percent in the northeast as opposed to 46.6 percent in the north had two years or more of college.

With respect to occupation, agriculture was given as the primary occupation of respondents in the rural villages of the north and northeast (41.8 and 65.5 percent, respectively), followed by working as hired labor or employees (24.6 and 11.6 percent, respectively), self-employment in trade and commerce or engaged in other business activities (15.3 and 11.7 percent, respectively), and being homemakers/housewives (7.5 and 5.5 percent, respectively).

In the town municipalities, only one percent of respondents gave agriculture as their primary occupation. The leading occupation was trade and commerce or other self-

owned business (38.6 and 40.5 percent in the north and northeast, respectively), followed by hired labor or employees (24.3 and 19.9 percent, respectively), public sector employees or officials (12.8 and 13.0 percent, respectively), company employees (9.8 and 5.2 percent, respectively), and being homemakers/housewives (5.2 and 13.3 percent, respectively).

Table 2. Education and Occupation, by Region and Stratum (Percentages)

Educational Attainment and Occupation	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
<u>Educational Attainment</u>				
Less than 6 th Grade	59.9	29.8	52.8	10.4
6 th Grade	21.7	11.8	18.4	11.9
9 th Grade	5.4	12.4	9.2	13.7
12 th Grade or Vocational Certificate	7.9	16.5	10.8	17.5
Diploma or Higher	1.7	7.6	2.7	14.8
Vocational Certificate				
Bachelor's Degree or higher	3.4	21.8	6.2	31.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<u>Occupation</u>				
Agriculture/ Fishing/ Animal husbandry	65.5	1.5	41.8	1.2
Merchant/ Self-employed	11.7	40.5	15.3	38.6
Employee	11.6	19.9	24.6	24.3
Company employee	0.4	5.2	1.0	9.8
Government service/ State enterprise	2.6	13.0	5.3	12.8
Student	1.4	2.5	2.4	4.3
Retired	0.7	3.5	1.7	1.7
Housewife	5.5	13.3	7.5	5.2
Other	0.6	0.6	0.4	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Control of Corruption

Respondents were asked whether they had ever heard of, or indeed had personally encountered, instances of corruption concerning government officials within the past three years. "Hearing of corruption" was defined broadly as reading about alleged corruption in the news media, or hearing about corruption from radio or television, or hearing about corruption from local neighborhood sources. The data show surprising regional as well as rural-urban variation (Table 3). Respondents in the northern region were far more likely to have heard about cases of corruption than respondents in the northeast. As expected, urban residents were more likely to say they had heard of corruption cases than their rural counterparts. Whereas 54.3 percent of rural respondents and 40.5 percent of urban respondents in the northeast said they had never heard of corruption cases within the past three years, the figures drop to 33.6

percent and 15.2 percent for respondents in urban and rural areas, respectively, in the northern region.

Table 3. Knowing About Corruption, by Region and Stratum (Percentages)

Knowing About Corruption	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
In the last 3 years, have you ever heard about cases of corruption involving government officials?				
Never	54.3	40.5	33.6	15.2
Sometimes	32.9	39.4	42.9	37.1
Often	12.7	20.2	23.6	47.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	$\chi^2=38.230$, d.f.=2, p=.00		$\chi^2=139.387$, d.f.=2, p=.00	

Attitudes toward petty and routine corruption were measured by a scale created by aggregating the responses to two questions: “Do you think it’s wrong for government officials to accept ‘envelopes’ for speeding up services?” and, “If government officials accept ‘envelopes’ to turn a blind eye on petty violations of the law, do you think it’s wrong?” As shown in Table 4, over two-thirds of respondents in the northeast and three-quarters of respondents in the north said they thought petty and routine corruption was unacceptable (as measured by the preceding questions). In the northeast, urban inhabitants were more likely than rural inhabitants to say that corruption was unacceptable (71.9 percent as opposed to 64.1 percent, respectively), whereas in the north, the percentages for rural and urban respondents were equal (75.2 percent and 75.6 percent, respectively).

Table 4. Attitudes Towards Corruption, by Region and Stratum

Corruption	Percent Responding			
	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
Petty & Routine Corruption is ...				
Acceptable	12.5	5.6	6.8	9.4
Somewhat Acceptable	2.6	5.0	2.3	1.0
Somewhere In-Between	13.1	11.1	9.6	10.0
Somewhat Unacceptable	7.7	6.5	6.2	4.1
Unacceptable	64.1	71.9	75.2	75.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	$\chi^2 = 33.957$, d.f.= 4, p = .00		$\chi^2 = 11.587$, d.f.= 4, p = .02	

Rational or Performance Trust

Rational trust is measured in this study by two composite proxy variables: satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems of poverty, education, and health; and satisfaction with public services provided by the local District Office, police station, health center, and local branch of the Bank for Agricultural Cooperatives, a state-run enterprise. The rationale for the selected proxies is that satisfaction with present performance is associated with trust that the government will perform in the future.

Table 5. Rational/Performance Trust, by Stratum (Percentages)

Rational/Performance Trust	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
Satisfaction with public services				
Dissatisfied	1.0	2.7	0.9	1.6
Somewhat Dissatisfied	5.5	11.0	4.6	8.8
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	36.0	38.5	19.8	31.1
Somewhat Satisfied	40.3	40.5	44.6	42.8
Satisfied	17.3	7.3	30.2	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	$\chi^2=57.169$, d.f.=4, p=.00		$\chi^2=70.655$, d.f.=4, p=.00	
Satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems				
Dissatisfied	1.7	5.2	3.6	8.7
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3.3	12.0	7.1	19.2
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	31.3	43.5	27.6	39.5
Somewhat Satisfied	33.0	29.2	37.0	24.6
Satisfied	30.8	10.1	24.7	8.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	$\chi^2=173.141$, d.f.=4, p=.00		$\chi^2=184.360$, d.f.=4, p=.00	

Satisfaction with Public Services. Less than 10 percent of the overall sample expressed dissatisfaction with public services (Table 5). Of those expressing some degree of dissatisfaction, residents of the northeast tended to be more dissatisfied than residents living in the north. In both regions, urban dwellers were significantly more dissatisfied (13.7 percent and 10.4 percent in the northeast and north, respectively) than rural inhabitants (6.5 and 5.5 percent in the northeast and north, respectively). In contrast, a majority of respondents said they were either "satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with public services. Residents of the northern region expressed a significantly higher degree of satisfaction than residents of the northeast. Rural inhabitants were significantly more satisfied (74.8 percent and 57.6 percent in the north and northeast, respectively) than urban inhabitants (58.5 percent and 47.8 percent in the north and northeast, respectively).

Satisfaction with the Government's Ability to Solve Problems. With the exception of the rural northeast, satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems was

lower than satisfaction with public services. In both the north and northeastern regions, rural inhabitants expressed a far greater degree of satisfaction (61.7 percent and 63.8 percent in the north and northeast, respectively) than urban inhabitants (32.7 and 39.3 percent in the north and northeast, respectively). Note should be taken that whereas 53.1 percent of the total urban sample had previously said they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with *public services*, only 36.0 percent said they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the government’s *ability to solve problems* – a drop of 17 percentage points. The responses for the rural sample are not very different, however, on these two items: the percentage of rural respondents who said they were “satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” was 66.2 percent for public services, and 62.8 percent for satisfaction with the government’s ability to solve problems.

Although the percentage of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with the government’s ability to solve problems was not very high, nevertheless, the percentages were higher than dissatisfaction with public services. Urban inhabitants showed a greater degree of dissatisfaction (27.9 percent and 17.2 percent in the north and northeast, respectively) than rural inhabitants (10.7 percent and 5.0 percent in the north and northeast, respectively).

Relational Trust

Relational or affective trust was measured by asking respondents to rate their trust in public officials, including elected officials. The degree of trust evidenced by the responses is not particularly high: half of rural respondents (55.8 percent and 48.2 percent in the north and northeast, respectively), but only one-quarter of urban respondents (26.4 percent and 24.1 percent in the north and northeast, respectively) said they “trust” or “somewhat trust” public officials (Table 6). At the opposite end of the spectrum, about 10 percent of rural respondents said they “don’t trust” or “somewhat distrust” public officials, in sharp distinction to the approximately 30 percent of urban inhabitants who expressed distrust of public officials. The percentages are similar for the north and northeast regions.

Table 6. Relational Trust, by Stratum (Percentages)

Relational Trust	Northeast		North	
	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)	Rural Villages (n=960)	Town Municipalities (n=840)
Trust in public officials				
Don't Trust	1.8	8.0	2.0	6.1
Somewhat Distrust	9.2	21.9	8.6	22.8
Neither Trust nor Distrust	40.9	46.1	33.5	44.7
Somewhat Trust	28.1	20.6	40.6	22.2
Trust	20.1	3.5	15.2	4.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	$\chi^2=198.678$, d.f.=4, p=.00		$\chi^2=194.166$, d.f.=4, p=.00	

Correlations Between Corruption and Trust Attitudes

One of the objectives of this paper was to investigate the relationship between trust and corruption attitudes. Table 7 displays Pearson product-moment correlations between corruption attitudes and trust variables. The relationships are statistically significant: corruption attitudes are weakly but *negatively* associated with both rational trust (as measured by satisfaction with public services and satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems) and with relational trust (trust in public officials) ($r = -.041, -.095,$ and $-.162,$ respectively). Persons who find corruption unacceptable are *less* likely to say they are satisfied with public services or the government's ability to solve problems than persons who are more accepting of corruption. Persons who find corruption unacceptable are also *less* likely to say they trust public officials than persons who are more accepting of corruption.

Table 7. Correlations Between Corruption and Trust Attitudes

Variable	Rational/Performance trust		Relational trust
	Satisfaction with public services	Satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems	Trust in public officials
Corruption	-.041*	-.095**	-.162**
Satisfaction with public services		.342**	.455**
Satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems			.580**

* significant at the .05 level

** significant at the .01 level

Rational/performance trust and relational trust variables are positively associated, as is to be expected. Satisfaction with public services is correlated with satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems ($r = .342$), and both are correlated with trust in public officials ($r = .455$ and $.580$, respectively).

Predictor Variables of Corruption and Trust Attitudes

What kinds of respondent characteristics are related to corruption and trust attitudes? In this section we examine the relationship between respondent characteristics such as gender, age, educational attainment, place of residence (urban/rural), and region of residence (north/northeast) and respondent attitudes toward corruption and their trust in government. Table 8 reports partial correlation coefficients between respondent characteristics as predictor variables and corruption and trust variables as dependent variables. The interpretation of the partial correlation coefficient is that it represents the average change in the dependent variable per unit change in the independent variable, holding all other predictor variables constant.

Table 8. Predictor Variables of Corruption and Trust Attitudes: Partial Correlation Coefficients

Variable	Corruption	Rational/Performance trust		Relational trust
		Satisfaction with public services	Satisfaction with government's ability to solve problems	Trust in public officials
Region	.056**	.195**	-.090**	.043**
Degree of Urbanization	n.s.	-.096**	-.215**	-.224**
Gender	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	-.038*
Age	.037*	.078**	n.s.	n.s.
Educational Attainment	.082**	-.126**	-.152**	-.170**

* Significant at the .05 level ** Significant at the .01 level n.s. = not significant
 Note: Gender (F=0, M=1); Region (NE=0, N=1); Degree of Urbanization (rural=0, urban=1)

Corruption Attitudes. Of the five predictor variables, only three are statistically significant: age, educational attainment, and region of residence are weakly but positively associated with corruption attitudes (partial $r = .037, .082, \text{ and } .056$, respectively). Older persons and persons with higher educational attainment tend to say that petty and routine corruption is unacceptable more than younger persons and persons with less educational attainment. Residents of the northern region tend to find corruption more unacceptable than residents in the northeastern region.

Rational/Performance Trust: Satisfaction with Public Services. Four out of five predictor variables are statistically significant: age and region of residence are weakly but positively associated with satisfaction with public services (partial $r = .078 \text{ and } .195$, respectively); educational attainment and degree of urbanization are weakly but negatively associated with satisfaction with public services (partial $r = -.126 \text{ and } -.096$, respectively). Older persons and northern region residents are more likely to be satisfied with public services than younger persons and residents in the northeastern region. Persons with higher educational attainment and persons living in town municipalities are likely to be *less* satisfied with public services than persons with lower educational attainment and persons living in rural villages.

Rational/Performance Trust: Satisfaction with the Government's Ability to Solve Problems. Three out of five predictor variables are statistically significant: educational attainment, degree of urbanization, and region of residence are weakly but negatively associated with satisfaction with the government's ability to solve problems (partial $r = -.152, -.215, \text{ and } -.090$, respectively). Persons with more educational attainment, persons living in town municipalities, and residents in the northeastern region are likely to be *less* satisfied with the government's ability to solve problems of poverty, education and health than persons with lower educational attainment, persons living in rural villages, and residents of the northern region.

Relational Trust: Trust in Public Officials. Four out of five predictor variables are statistically significant: gender, educational attainment, and degree of urbanization are

weakly but negatively associated with trust in public officials (partial $r = -.038$, $-.170$, and $-.224$, respectively); whereas region is weakly but positively associated with trust in public officials (partial $r = .043$). Men, persons with higher educational attainment, and persons living in town municipalities are likely to have *less* trust in public officials than women, persons with lower educational attainment, or persons living in rural villages. Residents of the north region tend to have more trust in public officials than residents in the northeastern region.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to investigate citizen attitudes toward control of corruption, trust in government, and the relationship between trust and corruption in order to ascertain whether these factors were conducive to governance reform. In regard to control of petty and routine corruption, nearly three-quarters of all respondents said such corruption was unacceptable. More than half of all respondents said they were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with performance (a proxy for rational trust), but only one-third said they trusted or somewhat trusted public officials (relational trust). That trust levels are not very high is consistent with data on trust in other developed and developing countries that indicate a secular decline in levels of reported trust in government (see, for example, Blind, 2006: 9-12).

The correlation between trust factors and control of corruption attitudes was weak but statistically significant. Persons who found corruption unacceptable were *less* likely to express trust in government or its agencies. These findings are thus consistent with the accepted wisdom which holds that citizen trust is positively associated with control of corruption. The findings do not support the perspective of a traditional society based on personalism and patronage, the logic of which implies that trust and corruption attitudes are unrelated. The preliminary findings would suggest that citizen attitudes toward control of corruption and their trust in government in the north and northeast regions of Thailand are not antithetical to the notion of good governance, which requires mutually supportive and cooperative relationships among government, civil society, and the private sector.

Further examination of the data, however, reveals the existence of considerable variation. Using partial correlation analysis, a multivariate procedure that measures the relationship between two variables holding other variables constant, the following conclusions are drawn. First, educational attainment is a key factor. Persons with higher educational attainment are more likely to say that petty and routine corruption is unacceptable than persons with lower educational attainment. Persons with higher educational attainment are at the same time less likely to express trust in government and its agencies than persons with lower educational attainment. A plausible explanation for the effect of education could be that educated persons are more cognizant of social norms and the stigma attached to corruption. Their responses could be interpreted as either reflecting their true opinions or perhaps the responses simply constitute lip service to the concept. An argument might also be made that more educated persons are likely to have greater access to information and are presumably more sophisticated (are more aware of the shortcomings in their elected

officials and bureaucrats) than less educated persons. Hence, they are likely to trust government and its agencies less.

Second, gender and age have far less significance than might have been expected. There are no gender differences with respect to attitudes toward corruption or performance trust. Women, however, are somewhat more likely than men to say they have trust in public officials. Older persons are somewhat more likely than younger persons to say that petty and routine corruption are unacceptable. They are also more likely to say they are satisfied with public services. Age is not significantly related to the remaining trust variables, however.

Third, degree of urbanization makes a difference when it comes to trust. Urban inhabitants tend to trust government and its agencies far less than rural inhabitants. It could be the case that because urban residents have far greater exposure to, and interact more frequently with, local officials as well as central government officials than do their rural counterparts, they are more likely to be aware of flaws and/or irregularities in the provision of public services. As reported earlier, urban inhabitants are far more likely to say they have heard about cases of corruption involving government officials than rural inhabitants. It could also be the case that urban inhabitants have higher standards and expectations regarding public officials than rural inhabitants. Most urban residents in the workforce, except for those employed in the informal sector, pay income taxes. Most persons employed in the rural agricultural sector do not pay income taxes. It is reasonable to assume that income taxpayers are more demanding of the services rendered by government and its agencies than those who pay no taxes.

Finally, regional differences exist. Residents of the north are more likely than their northeastern neighbors to find corruption unacceptable. They are also more satisfied with public services and have greater trust in public officials than residents in the northeast. Nevertheless, they are also less satisfied with the government's ability to solve problems than residents in the northeast. What accounts for the regional differences? One conjecture is that the then Prime Minister (Thaksin Shinawatra) was from the north, and his political party had a strong northern base. The government's populist policies generated popular support in the poorer regions of the country, but the strongest support for Thaksin and his government was to be found in the rural areas of the north region.

In conclusion, the survey data indicate that citizen attitudes toward control of corruption and their trust in government in Thailand's north and northeastern regions are congruent with notions of good governance. For governance reforms to generate stakeholder participation and response, however, consideration should be given to the information needs of citizens. Information should be tailored to education levels and reading skills. Rural areas in particular should be targeted.

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