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The Determinations of Public Trust in the Government of Egypt: An Empirical Study

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THE DETERMINANTS OF PUBLIC TRUST IN THE GOVERNMENT OF EGYPT:
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Abstract

Trust is a concept that is usually studied in the context of social interactions. At varying levels, we trust our families and friends, we trust strangers who share some traits with us and even trust institutions like banks with our savings and to handle our personal finances. By expansion, political trust, or the public's trust in government as a whole and as individual agencies. Trust in government forms a basis for the legitimacy. High levels of political trust facilitates the implementation of policies with more willing compliance from the public. This is more evident in situations like global and national crises. In such situations of limited knowledge and high risks, citizens trust the public authorities to take the right decisions that might be, at face value, difficult on the average citizen.

This research follows an empirical approach based on data from the fifth wave of the Arab Barometer Survey to identify the main determinants of public trust in the government of Egypt. After an extensive literature review of the different strands on trust, an ordered logistic regression model was developed that accounts for groups of variables including public perceptions on government performance, media consumption, views on different topics like corruption, democracy and Sharia law and other variables. The study results indicate statistically significant positive association between satisfaction with public services, positive evaluation of the current economic situation, level of social trust and trust in intentions of political leaders and trust in government in general. On the other hand, perceiving democracy as a suitable mode of governance for Egypt, perceiving national institutions as corrupt and believing in Sharia as the ultimate source of legislation have negative impact on the likelihood of trusting the government. Based on these results, several policy recommendations are given for the Egyptian government to rebuild the political trust levels.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nowadays, national governments are operating in a world of megatrends with fast paced changes and constantly shifting dynamics. In this living environment, regular disruptions to the status quo can either represent excellent opportunities for creating public value (for example, technological advancements of artificial intelligence, machine learning tools and others) or imminent existential threats to large portions of the population (for example, global pandemics, scarce resources, cyber terrorism). Furthermore, the global megatrends are not limited to 'new' phenomena or technological breakthroughs. In fact, several international organizations, research centers and consultancy firms argue that long-growing trends like changing demographic patterns, diffusion of the unipolar world to a multipolar one and the increase of individual wealth and power are quickly becoming global megatrends that would change how the world works and pose their own new set of challenges for governments (Modly, 2016; Weller, 2017).

In such a complex situation, valid information is scarce, and the public lack the knowledge and skills needed to make their own decisions. These global drivers greatly impact governments leading to a more "volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operating environment" (van der Wal, 2020, p. 10). Another challenge is that ambiguity and lack of information can be a source of power conflict among different institutional actors both nationally and internationally (Best, 2012). In this case, different agencies interpret the events differently thus avoiding blame or claiming authority for their own gain. Such strategy was used by several governments during the 2008 financial crisis where authorities kept their press releases and public announcements complex and ambiguous on purpose to avoid public blame (Johansson & Nord, 2017).

This kind of operating environment is no longer a rare occurrence that materializes only in natural disasters. As Kuecker (2014) argues, the world will continue facing global crises in different areas, to which the global governance system appears to still have no adequate response and is persistently resistant to change (Hartley et al., 2019). More importantly, as Bughin and Woetzel (2019) argue, there is a widening adaptation gap between countries that have recognized the megatrends and are preparing for them and those who are not.

This operating environment means that public sector organizations need to take the initiative to balance the opportunities and threats and help citizens wade through the unchartered waters (Suarez & Abdallah, 2019). Despite all odds, policy makers are expected to make effective decisions under unavoidable uncertainty (Dessai et al., 2009; Lempert et al., 2003). The public expects governments to have the answers they do not, and plan for the future they cannot foretell. Even with the, traditionally anti-government, Republican US administration, Federal government had to interfere significantly to ease the effects of the global pandemic (Schlesinger, 2020). Still, as Sargent (2020) reports, opinion polls show a majority of Americans believing the Trump administration did not do enough to tackle the crisis. Hence, whether through the financial crash (Dobre & Răsăuțeanu, 2016) or the COVID-19 pandemic (Saez & Zucman, 2020), demand for government action heightens in global crises (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020), leading to increasing levels of trust in governments and their actions (Siegrist & Zingg, 2014).

This effect of trust in government decisions is found most commonly when nations face external threats such as pandemics (Gilles et al., 2011; Prati et al., 2011; Quinn et al., 2013), wars (Mueller, 1970), terrorist attacks (Dinesen & Jæger, 2013; Hetherington & Nelson, 2003) and natural disasters (Healy & Malhotra, 2009). During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments in developing countries have received a surge in trust with the public seeing them as a defense line against a deadly disease (Khemani, 2020). This same understanding applies to

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organizations and businesses as well, where certain policies can make firms more or less skeptic of the government (Cera et al., 2019).

Though in many cases trust in government is generated naturally, La Porte and Metlaz (1996) argue that every act of policy is a potential act of building trustworthiness. As policy makers go through their daily business of making difficult choices, including their impact on public trust into the discussion can greatly make the same decisions easier and less expensive to implement with higher efficiency. Building trust is not an easy task, however, given the self-sustaining nature of distrust (Kramer, 2017). Nevertheless, trust should not be seen as a secondary objective since low trust levels can be a significant impediment to any government policy action (Weymouth et al., 2020). Hence, identifying the main determinants of public trust in government in each society is of paramount importance to governments. Keeping said determinants in mind, policy makers can design their initiatives and programs to prioritize trust-building and achieve optimal results.

On the local level, ten years after the January 25th revolution, Egypt is still setting the foundations of the new state and building its democratic institutions. At this stage, the democratic capital of the country, its political institutions, electoral process and social and economic structural reforms, is what fosters democratic transition (Mitra, 2008). Hence, it is important that this national build–up is based on mutual trust between the people and their government which, in turn, creates a climate where officials can work effectively and avoid stalemate (Hetherington, 1998). Jamil (2019) has shown that in Nepal's transition from monarchy to a republic, improved representation alone was not enough to build trust, but good governance and addressing the people's needs were even more important.

Walking on Egyptian streets today or scrolling through Egyptian social media feeds, one can repeatedly find the discussion revolving, even if at times indirectly, around trust in the

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government. For almost any piece of political news, Egyptians would question the motives and build theories on why the government is following such policy. This happens as society is being increasingly divided between diehard government supporters who would agree with any policy even if it had direct negative impact on themselves, and permanent skeptics who would directly believe in any conspiracy theory that proposes a negative justification for government action that can be positive on its face value.

It follows, therefore, that a study of the determinants of public trust in government in the Egyptian context utilizing more recent data is timely. As the Government of Egypt deals with multiple national security threats on multiple fronts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the diplomatic crisis with Ethiopia and security situation in Libya, besides its ongoing development agenda, it needs now more than ever voluntary public compliance with difficult decisions and policies, which can only be a result of trust. This much needed political trust makes good governance possible, in the same time, the right amount of mistrust supports good governance by driving accountability (Devine et al., 2020).

The objective of this study is to empirically identify the main determinants of public trust in government and assess the relative impact of each determinant with a focus on Egypt post-2013. This objective is articulated in the research question: "What are the main determinants of public trust in the government of Egypt post-2013?" This question is answered through a set of empirical hypothesis introduced in the conceptual framework.

Beyond this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on trust covering different aspects of the topic from psychological, sociological and political perspectives. Moreover, a review of similar case studies in different countries is provided with a focus on studies following an empirical approach. Chapter 3 provides a conceptual framework for this research and introduces its empirical hypotheses. Chapter 4 discusses the dataset used,

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methodology followed and the formulation of the econometric model. The results of the methodology described are reported in Chapter 5 with a discussion of the main findings and insights obtained. Finally several policy recommendation are offered to government officials that would help them design policies to rebuild the trust of the Egyptian people in their government and the study is summarized in Chapter 6 with the main conclusions highlighted and obtained answers to research questions laid out.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Understanding trust

There is a proliferation of research on trust. Scholars from different fields have addressed the topic from different perspectives. A major debate between sociologists and psychologists considers the nature of trust as rational versus relational, or a combination of both (Dunn, 1988; Lewis & Weigert, 1985). In the individualistic rational view, trust is formed as every individual calculates the probability of obtaining favorable outcome. Thus, in an ambiguous situation, trust depends on the perceived cost and benefit analysis built on the behavior of others (Deutsch, 1962). Promoters of rationality thus argue that trust is only relevant when it has an impact on decisions we make and a higher level of trust would lead to a higher likelihood of cooperation (Ermisch et al., 2009; Gambetta, 1988). This understanding is mostly adopted in the business transactions world where dependence on calculative trust was found to have positive influence on suppliers' performance (Axelrod, 1984; Poppo et al., 2016; Williamson, 1996).

On the other hand, advocates of relational trust argue that what rational trust theorists are discussing is actually calculativeness rather than trust (Williamson, 1993). While trust certainly has a rational element, the non – rational elements cannot be explained by rationalist theories (Nooteboom, 2002) and that research ignoring the leap of faith concept misses out an essential component of trust (Möllering, 2005). In this understanding, trust combines weak knowledge with some mysterious, unaccountable faith in the subject. Hence, an actor who thinks trust to be desirable, but not rationally justifiable may still decide to trust (Hardin, 1993) with the hope of building up a rational explanation (Luhmann, 1979). This comes in agreement with Rousseau et al. (1998) who differentiated between trust, being about values and intentions, and confidence, that considers competencies and abilities. Hence, trust is expected to dominate

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when morality – related issues are at stake (De Bruin & van Lange, 2000; Earle & Siegrist, 2006).

Looking further into relational trust, some scholars argue that since it is based on the belief in the goodness of others, relational trust is learned in a very young age (Cooley, 1956; Erikson, 1950; Giddens, 1991; Parsons, 1991; Uslaner, 2002). Furthermore, it is not subject to change on the short and medium terms (Mishler & Rose, 2001) except through hard experience and trauma (Allport, 1961; Glanville & Paxton, 2007; Rosenberg, 1956). Some scholars have even gone further and found evidence that the individual's tendency to trust is actually part of their genetics (Mondak et al., 2017; Sturgis et al., 2010), a view that is highly contested by observations from history where trust in post-war Germany saw sharp changes that contradict with the aforementioned genetically-generated trust thesis (Newton et al., 2018).

Based on the two understandings of the nature of trust discussed above, several models have been developed to explain how trust is formed. As mentioned earlier, most scholars agree that risk and uncertainty are prerequisites for trust formation (Cheshire, 2011), and that trust includes a willingness to become vulnerable to the object of trust (Levi & Stoker, 2000; Sztompka, 1999). Zucker (1977) proposed a three-mode trust production model that starts with process-based trust which is generated through past or expected experiences either first hand or by reputation. The second mode is characteristic-based trust that is generated through social similarities between actors and the third mode is institutional-based trust that is derived from formal social structures.

Another model for trust formation is derived from the rules, roles and routines of the society. Lane (1997) argues that systems of rules that govern interactions among society members enable meaningful interactions between them and thus form the basis of trust. Furthermore, the expectation of the technical capacities of the society's role performers

represents a key element of trust (Barber, 1983) allowing trust to develop in standardized roles rather than individuals (Meyerson et al., 1996). Finally, Feldman and Pentland (2003) describe the trust in the routines of our daily lives, which necessarily also includes the trust in the rules and role performers of the society. This understanding acknowledges that trust can develop over time where Lewicki and Bunker (1996) provide a three-stage model for this development. Trust, they propose, starts based on calculative reasoning in a phase they termed 'calculus-based trust', next 'knowledge-based trust is formed that where predictability of others increases and trust is based on expected actions. Finally, humans develop 'identification-based trust' where the understanding and appreciations of the others' intentions and motives forms the basis of trust.

2.2 Social and political trust

Another important strand in the trust literature is the differentiation between social and political trust. Building on Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital, multiple scholars have studied social trust as the glue that joins society together and facilitates its smooth operation (Newton et al., 2018) and as a key component of the human capital, which is in Fukuyama's (1995) view, more important than physical capital. In fact, several scholars maintain the view that social capital and social trust are the same (Arrow, 2000; Glaeser et al., 2000; Putnam, 2000; Wilson, 1997), or at least, have a mutually reinforcing effect on one another (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Another understanding, however, argues that social capital needs cultivation and requires a prerequisite level of social trust to stabilize social relationships (Hearn, 1997; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Misztal, 1996).

At any case, there is also a debate in the literature on the generation of social trust. One argument is that trust is built bottom-up and stems from personal optimism (Uslaner, 2002) starting at the family and generalizing to strangers (Job, 2005). Hence, small, homogenous

communities tend to have higher levels of social trust (Newton et al., 2018). This would practically mean that social trust, generating from culture, is a precondition for civic engagement among society members (Stolle, 2001). The counter argument held by Putnam et al. (1994) considers social trust a product of civic engagement and people's engagement in their community, where interactions among different people in diverse groups allows people to trust one another. A view opposed by Newton (1997) since time spend interacting with groups is too little to develop trust. Lamsal (2001) also refers to trust by recommendation where we can trust unknown others based on the trust that our connections have in them. This kind of trust gets weaker as the chain of trust lengthens.

As for political trust, Job (2005, p. 2) defines it as the "attitudes people have towards the future actions of government, government organizations and the people who administer them". This understanding promotes a view that trust is an active attitude rather than a passive state (Möllering, 2005), especially in cases of distrust that Hosking (2019) argue to be much more conscious than trust. It is important to make the distinction between political trust in neutral and impartial government institutions (Manning & Wetzel, 2010; Zmerli & Newton, 2017) and in political agents (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Van Deth (2000) further adds an independent element of trust in international organizations and Worthington (2001) adds an element for the political community represented by professional politicians and political parties, where Dunn (1988) even differentiates between trust in the intentions of the politicians and their professional capacities. In a simpler distinction, Keele (2005) divides political systems into the 'regime', or the institutional structure of government, and 'authorities' of the elected leaders of government. He further adds that while distrust in authorities can be resolved through electing new ones, distrust in the regime is more critical and may threaten the continuing of government, and challenge regime legitimacy (Miller, 1974; Miller et al., 1979; Miller & Listhaug, 1990).

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Moving to the relationship between social and political trust, while a group of scholars maintain that there is no relationship between the two (Newton, 1999; Putnam, 2000), Blind (2006) provides an overview of the linkage between the two in an interactional relationship where social capital facilitates collective and collaborative action needed in politics (Arrow, 1974), and a trusted government further promotes social trust (Fukuyama, 1995; Levi, 1997). Other scholars also argue for a one way relationship, where social trust generalizes to form political trust (Job, 2005) but which can only be applicable to well-established democracies (Jamil & Baniamin, 2020). In other studies, it was found that good governance increases social trust regardless of the society's original level of trust (Newton et al., 2000; Pharr et al., 2000; van der Meer, 2003). Still, since most research on the topic is based on cross – sectional data, it is statistically difficult to prove a causal relationship (Siegrist & Zingg, 2014) although a correlation is repeatedly found in most recent research based on updated surveys (Newton et al., 2018; Spierings, 2017).

An important concept in political trust is trust in institutions. The literature includes a debate on whether or not systems and institutions can be trusted and treated the same way as individual trust. Seligman (2000) argues that when we trust systems, we are actually trusting the roles and expected routines rather than the institution itself. Moreover, institutions represent a basis of trust between different actors since shared expectations allow trust to arise (Möllering, 2005), thus, by reinforcing institutions, the radius of trust in the society widens (Fukuyama, 2002).

On the other hand, other scholars argue institutions can also be objects of trust, not just sources (Sydow, 1998; Sztompka, 1999). According to Giddens (1990), trust in institutions happens through 'access points' where the public deal with representatives of the institution. Hence, trust in institutions is based mainly on the visible performance rather the internal workings of the organization. This trust builds up through continual positive experiences and

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can grow further since it is considered impersonal (Luhmann, 1979). In this sense, trust in different institutions is built on different criteria originating from the nature of said institution, a view that is empirically negated by Camões and Mendes (2019) who found that citizens see no differences between institutions when building their trust decisions. Furthermore, institutional trust is built on the assumption that others also share the assumptions on the system (Luhmann, 1988) and as such, these institutions can only be effective if they are trusted (Child & Möllering, 2003). A different approach to explaining institutional trust is offered by Jamil and Askvik (2013) where citizens trust the institutions because they believe in the normative idea upon which it is built.

2.3 Trust in government

Moving to trust in governments, Dunn (1988) explains how citizens are indifferent about how their government is formed as long as they trust its effectiveness. However, while government institutions are still being established, trust is more difficult to achieve. According to Levi (2019), a trustworthy government is one that keeps its promises, delivers public goods and services effectively, engages in fair decision making and can be held accountable for its mistakes. While more discussion on the determinants of trust in government will be presented later in this text, it is worth noting that such elements of a trustworthy government make it impossible for international NGOs and intergovernmental organizations to substitute the role of national governments in the eyes of their citizens (Blair et al., 2017), though working with them can be a source of legitimacy and trust (Khemani, 2020).

But how is trust in government formed? Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003) proposed multiple models explaining this process. In the 'micro performance theory model', trust in every government institution is separate, and the question becomes about the perception of that individual institution as part of the government. Similarly, in the 'dominant impact model',

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individual agencies have their own trust levels, however, certain agencies have larger impact on the overall trust in government. This relative dominance of agencies can change over time depending on the changing roles of different agencies. Alternatively, the 'reversed causality model' offers an opposing understanding where the positive attitude towards the government in general can lead to a positive evaluation of specific agencies, or vice versa in case of distrust. This is important because if a culture of distrust becomes the social norm, government efforts in communicating with the public will not necessarily lead to an objective society. Hence, as Levi and Stoker (2000) argue, a government may achieve all the attributes of trustworthiness, but still not gain the citizens' trust since they lack the sufficient knowledge to believe that government will act in their interest. This, however, does not necessarily link to economic status, where field work by Ali and Hossain (2006) shows that even the poor of Bangladesh had elaborate understanding of how the government works, and are actually more trusting of the government than educated experts, a paradox explained by Jamil and Askvik (2013) by the acceptance and respect to power normalized in large power – distance societies.

A distinction is also made in the literature between new and old, well – established democracies in terms of trust in government. Listhaug and Jakobsen (2018) discuss how trust and support to government is weaker in new democracies since the people have a shorter experience with democracy, have exceedingly high expectations of the political institutions, and the institutions themselves are still weak. Hence, it follows that trust in older democracies is stronger, even it falls at certain times, since the government has a reserve of trust that citizens can use in times of crises (Thomassen & van der Kolk, 2009). A relevant argument is that citizens who vote for the winning party or candidate tend to trust the government more later on (Anderson et al., 2005). In new democracies, however, Esaiasson (2011) argues both winners and losers retain their trust levels as elections stimulate the democratic attitudes among the population. Still, even in a well – established democracy like the US, data has repeatedly shown

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that the acute polarization between political parties leads to a decline in political trust (Hetherington, 2005; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Uslaner, 2015).

2.4 The value of trust in government

But why should governments care about citizens' social and political trust? While some scholars argue that declining trust is of limited political consequence (Citrin, 1974; Citrin & Green, 1986; Lipset & Schneider, 1983), a growing body of literature highlights trust as a cornerstone of legitimacy of the government (Levi, 2019; Suchman, 1995; Yousaf et al., 2016), and its personnel (Jamil, 2019). It is also considered by many as an indicator of good governance in general (Blind, 2006; Bouckaert et al., 2005; Jamil & Askvik, 2013; Kim, 2005; Mishler & Rose, 2002; van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003). Moreover, Uslaner (2018) notes the positive outcomes on the political life including increased voter turnover, willingness to pay tax and greater sense of wellbeing among the population. In general, high levels of trust in government makes it easier to govern, increases citizen willingness to comply and even makes it easier for public agencies to recruit and retain top talent (Hetherington, 1998; Hvidman, 2019; Levi, 2019; Siegrist & Zingg, 2014; Taylor et al., 2009). But this leeway to govern is not without its limits. As Manning and Wetzel (2010) show, higher trust improved governments' capacity in Latin America, but not as much in the more developed OECD countries where the return on investment in trust is much lower, highlighting the need for a public balance between trust and skepticism.

Looking into more specific areas of public policy, research supports the importance of public trust in government in times of crises for an effective government response. Esaiasson et al. (2020) suggest the importance of monitoring citizen trust and actively seeking to build it during difficult times. As Hetherington (1998) have shown, people interpret government actions in crises differently based on the levels of political trust they have before the crisis.

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Generally, research in different areas has shown that society ties tighten, and trust increase when nations face external threats including wars (Greenaway & Cruwys, 2019), natural disasters (Toya & Skidmore, 2014) and others. This peaking trust, however, is found to decline back to normal levels over time as the crisis passes (Gilles et al., 2011; Quinn et al., 2013).

Having mentioned the peaking trust phenomenon in times of crises, it is important to discuss the 'rally round the flag' effect that offers some explanation to this. The term, introduced by Mueller (1970), originally corresponded to the short – lived spikes in approval ratings of US presidents immediately following high profile foreign policy events, especially wars (Brody, 1991; Jordan & Page, 1992; Lian & Oneal, 1993; Mueller, 1970, 1973; Oneal et al., 1996; Parker, 1995). This effect was later extended by several scholars to include terrorist attacks (Dinesen & Jæger, 2013; Perrin & Smolek, 2009; Wollebæk et al., 2012) and other external threats. More recently, empirical studies have indicated the same effect taking place during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis in Denmark (Baekgaard et al., 2020; Schraff, 2020) and several other European countries (Bol et al., 2020). This is especially surprising because opposed to wars and terrorist attacks, the pandemic does not offer a specific visible enemy to the public, in fact, the damage to the economy resulting from government – imposed lockdown measures is more clearly visible (Baekgaard et al., 2020). At any case, the argument has its opponents. Baum (2002) argues that the boost in trust is only a result of decreasing criticism in the media and from political parties to the actions of the incumbent during crises. Moreover, it was empirically found that rally effects are mainly driven by people who already supported the leadership (Edwards & Swenson, 1997; Perrin & Smolek, 2009).

In the context of pandemics, studies of recent outbreaks of Ebola, H1N1, H1N5 and others showed that trust plays a key factor in public compliance with government measures (Blair et al., 2017; Condon & Sinha, 2009; Liao et al., 2010; Podlesek et al., 2011; Prati et al., 2011) even when the public satisfaction with government's performance is limited (Siegrist &

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Zingg, 2014). This is especially important because in such situations, governmental measures like lockdowns and recommendations of personal hygiene are largely voluntary and depend on individual compliance (Han et al., Forthcoming; Sibley et al., 2020). Moreover, beyond the peak of pandemics, the longitudinal study by Gilles et al. (2011) suggests that public trust in medical organizations was a significant predictor for acceptance of vaccines. Additionally, Sibley et al. (2020) suggest that this increased levels of trust will sustain post the lockdown measures and lead to higher satisfaction with government performance.

Another aspect of increasing concern to governments is their eroding influence over information due to the diffusions of the internet and the viral spread of disinformation online that can have damaging impacts on ground (Im et al., 2014). The literature on the topic of misinformation, or 'fake news' as publically known, is diverse and no single direction of causality is agreed on. Spread of fake news is seen in the literature as both caused by growing distrust in political institutions and mainstream media, and a cause of it. Fake news as a determinant of distrust will be discussed later on in this text, however, it is important to note that the consumption of fake news does have an impact on people's decisions and actions, including voting patterns (Guess et al., 2020; Weeks & Garrett, 2014). This consumption is repeatedly found to be a result of distrust towards mainstream media, prompting a migration towards alternative sources which represent an ideal breeding ground for misinformation (Zimmermann & Kohring, 2020). The same work also empirically found that the less one trusts news and politicians, the more one believes in online misinformation. This is because distrusters seek to adopt new forms of viewing the world (Lewandowsky et al., 2017) offered by online disinformation.

A significant volume of literature also discusses the positive correlation between trust and economic growth (Beugelsdijk et al., 2004; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Whiteley, 2000; Zak & Knack, 2001). Scholars cite a wide array of theoretical explanations for this based on both

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social and political trust. In terms of social trust, empirical (Knack & Keefer, 1997; Porta et al., 1996) and experimental (Ahmed & Salas, 2008) show interpersonal trust promotes cooperation and volunteerism, especially in large organizations, thus facilitating faster growth.

As for political trust, Fukuyama (1995) argues that trust is an effective mean to lower the cost of any social, economic or political relationship, hence making it easier for governments to implement their policies. In this understanding, "trusted government institutions can extend the benefits of social cooperation to a growing range of collective problems that would be too costly to resolve without trust" (Scholz & Lubell, 1998, p. 399). Hence, the higher trust in government levels are, the more the citizens comply with the law (Marien & Hooghe, 2011) and the less there is a need for expensive monitoring and punishment mechanisms (Coleman, 1990; Levi, 1988; Ostrom, 1990). In addition, trust was found to force political leaders to be more accountable (Knack, 2002), thus lowering perceptions of corruption that undermine institutional effectiveness (Miller & Listhaug, 1990) and promote the seeking of individualistic solutions by citizens (Della Porta & Vannucci, 1999). From a practical perspective, Exadaktylos and Zahariadis (2014) concluded that low levels of political trust decreased the Greek government's administrative capacity to implement the austerity measures post the 2008 financial crisis, and Lundin (2007) showed that trust is important even between government agencies as a prerequisite for successful cooperation in policy implementation.

Trust is also important to support efforts to adopt e-government systems and increase their adoption by the population (Jameel et al., 2019; Kalu, 2006; Redburn & Buss, 2004). The experience of most developed countries with the adoption of e-government services was not easy. During the early stages of implementation, adoption will face resistance as citizens are not familiar with the risks (Lallmahomed et al., 2017). This is critical because the success of any government digitization effort depends on citizens' willingness to adopt the service (Shareef et al., 2011) based on their perception of its usefulness, which trust was found to be a

significant determinant of (Abu-Shanab, 2017; Carter & Bélanger, 2005; Horst et al., 2007). Beyond adoption, empirical work by Welch et al. (2005) that individuals who trust the government more are more likely to be satisfied with the e – government services provided. But trust in this regard is not just about trust in the political leaders. Since the perceived risks in online transactions are higher including concerns about privacy of personal data (Asiimwe & Lim, 2010; George, 2002), scholars have noted the need for trust in both the integrity of the service providers themselves, and the technical capacity of the systems and infrastructure for e – government to work (Abu-Shanab, 2014; Evangelidis et al., 2002).

2.5 Determinants of trust in government

Building on the significant value of public trust in their governments, Scholars have done significant work to find what the determinants of trust in government are. These vary greatly across cultures and countries (Sulemana & Issifu, 2015), still, it is widely accepted that trust is difficult to establish, but easy to destroy (Siegrist & Cvetkovich, 2001; Slovic, 1993), and governments face difficulty in understanding how to build it (Fukuyama, 1995). Still, it is argued that it is possible to create policies that create trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001; Sztompka, 1999). Moreover, as shown by Frye and Borisova (2019), even short term political events do have an impact on citizens' trust. In a report by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Suarez and Abdallah (2019) suggest making more data available publicly and seeking feedback from all stakeholders as simple ways to enable public trust. This transparency matters because it helps citizens form their perceptions (Alessandro et al., 2019). Walle and Bouckaert (2003) discuss different theories of how trust is different among different agencies of government. Moreover, Blind (2006) discusses the linkage between social trust, i.e. interpersonal trust among society members, and political trust in public institutions.

One of the most cited policies as builders of trust are state welfare policies. The core argument is that according to Putnam (2000), trust is based on the "background of shared social networks and expectations of reciprocity". Hence, by contributing to this building this background, welfare states contribute to trust (Larsen, 2013; Newton, 2001; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Uslaner, 2002, 2008). The literature on the topic argues for a two – way relationship between welfare policies and trust levels, especially social trust. A group of scholars argue that historical levels of trust explain the establishment of current welfare states in Scandinavia (Bergh & Bjørnskov, 2011), their support (Daniele & Geys, 2015) and persistence (Jensen & Svendsen, 2011). Kumlin et al. (2018) explain this by arguing that trust facilitates cooperative outcomes and protects against free riders of the society. On the other hand, welfare systems are found to build the trust levels in society, more specifically in the case of universal welfare policies that Larsen (2007) found to correlate with higher levels of social trust, while selective policies either erode it, or limits it to certain groups of the 'trustworthy' (Kumlin et al., 2018). This is also supported by the results of Anderson and Singer (2008) who found that higher inequality relates to lower levels of political and social trust, which is not necessarily related to the individual's level of income (Krieckhaus et al., 2014; Kumlin, 2011).

On the opposing side, several scholars argue against depending on welfare policies to support political trust. While welfare measures helped ease the effects of the Arab oil embargo in 1973 and maintained political trust levels in the West (Kornberg & Clarke, 1992), major economic crises usually lead to harsh austerity measures and welfare cuts (Starke et al., 2013). Experience from Portugal (de Sousa et al., 2014) and Greece (Ellinas & Lamprianou, 2014) post the 2008 global financial crisis show political trust levels dramatically dropping after austerity measures. Hence, Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) and Uslaner (2011) describe the inequality trap where growing levels of inequality and corruption make it impossible for governments to apply welfare policies leading to reducing trust. Additionally, from a different

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perspective, liberal economists argue that state welfare taking over private sector functions eventually lead to a decay in trust in the private sector that can later develop to the government (Fukuyama, 2001; Stadelmann-Steffen, 2011).

Another determinant widely cited in the literature is the increasing exposure to disinformation or fake news. The impact of news reporting in general, whether on traditional media outlets or online, is thoroughly researched. According to Pharr et al. (2000), citizens' evaluation of government performance are subjective and depend on their access to information. Hence, media exposure has been found to be correlated with increase in civic engagement, political interest and trust in government (J. M. Avery, 2009; Norris, 2000, 2011; Strömbäck & Shehata, 2010). This is not only limited to mainstream media (Ceron & Memoli, 2016), but is also extended to online media usage that was found to advance political knowledge and support for democratic values (Ceron, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2012; Stoycheff & Nisbet, 2014; Valenzuela et al., 2009).

But the impact of media is not always positive. Negative and biased reporting of news has been found to reduce political trust and increase cynicism (Bowler & Karp, 2004; Kleinnijenhuis et al., 2006; Mutz & Reeves, 2005). Trust in mainstream media is rapidly declining, especially during crises and scandals (Newman et al., 2018), which is pushing readers towards alternative sources that may contain disinformation (Zimmermann & Kohring, 2020). Ognyanova et al. (2020) found that while, exposure to fake news is related to distrust in mainstream media, it does not necessarily lead to political distrust as it highly correlates with the original political orientations of the reader, making context important to judge the impact of fake news.

Based on the noted relationship between political and social trust, a group of scholars argued for building trust in government through fostering interpersonal trust within the society.

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This can happen through encouraging volunteerism within the community (Tocqueville, 2000). To explain this, Putnam (2000) argues that volunteering in diverse groups brings people from different backgrounds together who would otherwise distrust each other. Hence, this effect increases with more prolonged volunteering experiences (Newton, 2001). Empirically, studies have shown that students' participation in extracurricular activities is associated with them being more politically aware and engaged later on in their adult life, an important sign of trust in the political process (Damico et al., 1998; Homana, 2018).

The empirical study of determinants of trust, both social and political, is an established field with significant volume of published work from different regions and addressing different perspectives (Zhao & Hu, 2017). While these determinants vary greatly across countries and cultures (Sulemana & Issifu, 2015), and empirical studies from different countries give different and sometimes contradicting results (Tomankova, 2019), a review of different case studies is useful in identifying key themes and spotting possible similarities with previous literature.

Starting with demographic and socioeconomic factors, while some scholars argue that their effect on trust is weak or non – existent (Li, 2004; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Shi, 2001), most empirical work does find them to be major determinants (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Maxwell, 2010; Wenzel, 2006; Wong et al., 2009) with Sulemana and Issifu (2015) concluding that the women of Ghana are less trusting of the public institutions than men, and multiple scholars obtaining results indicating that being young, obtaining higher education and more income all lead to decreased levels of trust (Darwish, 2020; Nasr & Hilal, 2007; Zhao & Hu, 2017). Issues of macroeconomic performance of the government are also found to be significant determinants of trust in different contexts (Addai & Pokimica, 2012; Spiteri & Briguglio, 2018). During the austerity measures and bail out plans throughout Europe post the 2008 financial crisis, Drakos et al. (2019) found that levels of trust dropped significantly, but

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even more so for EU institutions rather than national governments. It is thus not surprising that we are witnessing today a rise in right wing populist politicians in several European countries.

Moving to issues of governance, literature seems to agree that satisfaction with public services and performance of government agencies significantly improves trust in government (Bovens & Wille, 2008; Campbell, 2003; Chanley et al., 2000; Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Citrin & Green, 1986; Espinal et al., 2006; Jameel et al., 2019; Lawrence, 1997; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Nye, 1997; Rockers et al., 2012; Salim et al., 2017; Thomas, 1998; Wong et al., 2009). Other elements of good governance are also found to be significant determinants including satisfaction with democracy (Ariely, 2013; Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Grönlund & Setälä, 2007; Hood, 1991; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin, 2007; Spiteri & Briguglio, 2018; Sulemana & Issifu, 2015; Wong et al., 2009), and elements of decentralization as fiscal decentralization (Kim et al., 2020). It is thus no surprise that the OECD (2017) considers the focus on good governance issues as key to combat distrust. At any case, perceptions of good governance are subjective. Government officials and employees of the public sector for example are found to have more positive perceptions of quality of governance and more trust in government (Han et al., 2019). Moreover, Jamil and Baniamin (2020) argue that the culture of obedience and reliance on authority, coined authoritarian culture orientation by Ma and Yang (2014), can lead to high trust levels in government despite its poor policy performance. This phenomenon, labelled false trust by Norris et al. (2019), appeared repeatedly in low and middle income countries where trust is surprisingly high (Askvik et al., 2011; Jamil & Askvik, 2013; Shi, 2001; Wang, 2005).

In the MENA region, although the shared language and culture of Arab countries allows perceptions of threat to travel across borders (Spierings, 2017), different countries react differently to threats based on the base levels of trust present in the society prior to the crisis (Manning & Wetzel, 2010). Moreover, Fukuyama (2002) argues that the ethnic and sectarian

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tensions and conflicts in the region undermine the effectiveness of social capital altogether. In any case, available studies on public trust in governments of the region are limited, and mostly based on data from during and immediately after the Arab Spring era when factors of interpersonal trust (Spierings, 2019) and perceptions of corruption (Gasser, 2018) where predominant over socioeconomic factors.

A key theme found in the results of different empirical studies from the region highlight sharp political divisions (Alijla, 2019) and ethnic and religious tensions (Addai et al., 2013; Salloukh et al., 2015) as having significant negative impact on generalized trust levels in the respective societies. It is thus not surprising that Alijla (2016) found the perception of equity and fairness of public institutions in Lebanon, a highly politicized society with very exclusive trust circles (Maktabi, 1999), to be a key determinant of trust in those institutions. Moreover, with limited prospects of democracy in the region, even after the Arab Spring, citizens are more interested in the quality of public services and effectiveness of public institutions as determinants of their trust in them (Alijla, 2019; Darwish, 2020; Kong, 2014).

From this literature review, it can be seen that there is a gap in research addressing the determinants of trust in government in the context of Egypt, more specifically, post-2013. Additionally, since there is only very limited work on political trust in Arab and Islamic countries, the impact of Arab and Islamic culture and religious teachings and media atmosphere is understudied. This research attempts to fill this gap through the main research question "What are the main determinants of public trust in government in Egypt post-2013?" and a set of supplementary research questions outlined in the first chapter of this paper.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

The model specification, the selection of relevant explanatory variables to include in the regression from the wide set of measured variables available in the dataset is a key step that must be based on theoretical understanding to support certain hypotheses. For the dependent variable, the survey asked respondents to report their trust in government at four levels: no trust, little trust, some trust, and great trust. These four levels are coded into the variable *Government Trust* as a categorical variable with values 1 to 4 referring to the increasing levels of trust in government.

As for explanatory variables, Nye (1997) identified economic, socio-cultural and political factors as the main determinants of trust in government. Christensen and Laegreid (2003) also add demographic factors to the list of determinants. Those include gender, education level, income and urban or rural living. In Egypt, females are generally considered by the current government as a main supporting base. This has been seen time and again in their exceptionally high participation rates in elections and other forms of informal political support. Moreover, women in Egypt are now witnessing record representation both in the executive and the legislative which is happening only as a direct result of quota systems put in place by the government rather than popular trust in female leadership. Hence, the first hypothesis expects a higher likelihood of trusting the government among women as compared to men.

H_1: Females are more likely to trust the government in Egypt

For political factors, 10-level scale variables for the individual's satisfaction with government performance and their view of democracy as suitable for Egypt are reported. Following the literature, it is expected that having higher levels of satisfaction with the performance of the government in Egypt will be more likely to trust the government.

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H2: Respondents who are more satisfied with government performance are more likely to trust the government in Egypt

Moreover, with the economic performance being a significant indicator for the overall government performance, evaluation of current economic situation is included as a separate variable that captures the views of respondents who might be less interested in politics. It is expected that those who have positive views on the current status of the economy will be more likely to trust the government.

H2*: Respondents who have positive views on the current economic situation are more likely to trust the government in Egypt

As for views on democracy, as a country with new and still unstable democratic procedures, a large percentage of Egyptians do not believe that democracy is a suitable system for the country. With the current government performing poorly on several international democracy rankings and good governance indices, it is expected that those who believe that democracy is suitable for Egypt will be less likely to trust the current government.

H3: Respondents who perceive democracy as a suitable mode of governance in Egypt are less likely to trust the government in Egypt

Media consumption was also accounted for whether traditional media or social media measured by the number of hours of consumption of TV and social media. With the country's mainstream media being largely controlled by the government and rated by international institutions as highly censored, it is expected that those who watch longer hours of TV will be impacted by the directed message and be more likely to trust the government in Egypt.

H4: Watching more TV increases the likelihood of trusting the government in Egypt

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On the other hand, social media is a freer platform for expressing opinions that can be opposing of government policies. In this sense, social media transcends being a platform for expression of opinions, but in fact it was the main organizing tool for the 2011 revolution and is even used today by opposition figures and Muslim Brotherhood figures in exile to communicate their message to the local audience. Hence, respondents who report using social media for longer hours are more likely to be exposed to political opposition messages and therefore less likely to trust the government.

H5: Spending more time on social media decreases the likelihood of trusting the government in Egypt

Following the literature discussed in chapter (2), interpersonal trust is included in the model as an indicator of social capital level. Members of society with higher levels of social capital are expected to be more trusting in general, and thus more likely to trust the government.

H6: Higher levels of social trust increase the likelihood of trusting the government in Egypt

Some variables were also added that are relevant to the Egyptian context, including the perception of corruption at the national level, trust in the intentions of politicians and the perception on Sharia law versus the will of the people as a source of legislation being an indicator of the belief in political Islam. For Sharia, since hardcore believers in Sharia as a source of legislation are typically supporters of political Islam groups, they are less likely to trust the current government that oppresses them and considers them a threat to national security.

H7: Those who believe that Sharia law should be the only or main source of legislation are less likely to trust the government in Egypt

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H8: Those who perceive the national institutions as corrupt are less likely to trust the government in Egypt

H9: Those who believe that political leaders are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens are more likely to trust the government in Egypt

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the approach used to answer the research questions. This begins with a description of the dataset used and its source. Additionally, the rationale behind the selection of variables to be included in the regression model as both dependent and explanatory variables is explained along with a layout of the preliminary statistical analysis steps done to ensure data validity. Finally, the regression model formulation is discussed with pointing out the advantage of the selected model over other possible approaches.

4.1 Data

This study attempts to empirically identify the key determinants of public trust in Government in Egypt. The data set used was the *Arab Barometer Survey[1]* in its fifth wave published in 2018. The survey was conducted by a non-partisan research network to provide insights on social, political and economic attitudes of ordinary citizens of the Arab world. The fifth wave data used in this research includes responses from a representative sample of the Egyptian population whose answers were collected in October and November 2018 and discussed a wide array of topics including socioeconomic, demographic and governance issues.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Before proceeding to describe the model specification, descriptive statistics were run on all the used variables to better understand the data set. This includes computing the mean and standard deviation for each variable in the model. This gives important information on the frequency of distribution of data to ensure it being representative (Altman & Bland, 1996). Moreover, a correlation matrix is compiled, which is important as an input for other scholars

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[1] Available for download at https://www.arabbarometer.org/survey-data/data-downloads/

wishing to reproduce or check the results (Zientek & Thompson, 2009). Finally, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is calculated for the list of variables. The alpha coefficient is an indicator of internal consistency reliability of the data, or in other words, the percentage of variance in the scores resulting from reliable variance rather than random error (Cronbach, 1951).

Table (1) reports the descriptive statistics of all the variables used in the regression model. This includes the number of observations, mean, standard deviation and minimum and maximum values for each variable.

Table (1): Descriptive statistics

Variable Name	Variable Description	Range of Values	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
Government Trust	Level of trust in government	1 (no trust) to 4 (great trust)	2331	2.947	0.9392
Male	Gender of respondent	0 (female), 1(male)	2331	0.5	0.5
Government Performance	Satisfaction with the current government's performance	0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied)	2331	4.849	2.838
Suitability Of Democracy	Belief that democracy is suitable for Egypt	0 (unsuitable) to 10 (suitable)	2331	5.743	2.464
TV hours	Number of hours spent watching TV on a typical day	1 (0 hours) to 5 (10+ hours)	2331	2.315	0.774

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Social Media Hours	Number of hours spent using social media on a typical day	1 (0 hours) to 5 (10+ hours)	2331	1.92	0.951
Sharia	Views on sharia versus will of people as a source of legislation	1 (legislations should be entirely based on the will of the people) to 5 (legislations should be entirely based on Sharia)	2006	3.565	1.179
Economy Evaluation	Evaluation of the current state of the economy	1 (very bad) to 4 (very good)	2222	2.479	0.806
Leaders Intentions	Trust that political leaders are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens	1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)	2231	2.395	0.858
National Corruption	Perception that national institutions are corrupt	1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)	2245	3.146	0.807
Social Trust	Belief that other can generally be trusted	0 (cannot be trusted), 1 (can be trusted)	2331	0.359	0.479

Results rounded to three decimal points

Several conclusions could be drawn from this table. For the dependent variable *governmentTrust*, the results show that more than 72% of respondents have some degree of trust in government. For the categorical variables, the value of mean was around double the

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value of standard deviation, an indicator of typical frequency distribution (Altman & Bland, 1996).

Moving to pair wise correlations, Table (2) reports the correlations matrix with the ones statistically significant at the 95% interval denoted with an asterisk. The table also reports the Cronbach's alpha coefficient which is calculated at 0.5448, meeting the threshold usually accepted in social sciences (Mohamad et al., 2015).

Table (2): Correlations matrix and Cronbach's alpha ceofficient

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Government Trust	1.0000						
Male	-0.0454*	1.0000					
Government Performance	0.4589*	-0.0290	1.0000				
Suitability Of Democracy	-0.2821*	0.0473*	0.0812*	1.0000			
TV hours	0.1087*	-0.3072*	0.1550*	-0.1252*	1.0000		
Social Media Hours	-0.0816*	0.1755*	-0.0542*	0.0942*	-0.1890*	1.0000	
Sharia	-0.1094*	-0.0907*	-0.0162	0.0663*	0.0789*	-0.1974*	1.0000
Economy Evaluation	0.5296*	0.0198	0.5335*	-0.2144*	0.1019*	-0.0305	-0.0384
Leaders Intentions	0.4374*	-0.0025	0.4721*	-0.0885*	0.0784*	-0.1463*	0.0233
National Corruption	-0.3077*	0.0652*	-0.5160*	-0.0175	-0.1165*	0.2042*	-0.0580*
Social Trust	1 0.2138*	0.0271	0.2765*	0.0718*	0.0552*	-0.034	-0.0505*
	8	**9**	**10**	**11**			

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Economy Evaluation	1.0000					
Leaders Intentions	0.4452*	1.0000				
National Corruption	-0.3727*	-0.4086*	1.0000			
Social Trust	0.1305*	0.1552*	-0.1090*	1.0000		
Scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha): 0.5448						

* is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval

It can be seen that all statistically significant pair wise correlations are weak to moderate (below +/- 0.5) which indicates the limited impact of interactions between the variables. They are hence ignored in the regression model discussed next.

4.3 Regression model

Since the dependent variable in this case (citizen trust in government) was coded as a categorical value variable taking only the values of 0 (no trust), 1 (little trust), 2 (some trust) or 4 (great trust), the researcher was interested in the probability of occurrence of each level of the dependent variable given the set of explanatory variables as shown in equation (1). Thus, a linear regression model is not useful. The main limitation with a linear model would be the generation of fitted probabilities that are smaller than zero or larger than one (Wooldridge, 2013).

$$P(y = 1 | \mathbf{x}) = P(y = 1 | x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_k) \qquad (1)$$

To account for the ordered nature of the dependent variable, an ordered logit model (Menard, 2001) is developed with the general form in equation (2). The model reports the odds ratios of the different levels of the dependent variable (trust in government) to occur, i.e. Government Trust = 1,2,3,4 at different levels of the independent variable, holding other variables constant.

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$$P(Y_i = M) = \frac{\exp(X_i\beta - \kappa_{M-1})}{1+[\exp(X_i\beta - \kappa_{M-1})]} \qquad (2)$$

Where beta coefficients representing the log odds (logit) can be used to compute either the probability or odds ratios. But the restricted proportional odds model assumes that for all variables, the relationship between each pair of outcome groups is the same (Williams, 2006), which in this case would mean that the odds of moving from no trust in government to little trust in government is the same as the odds of moving from some trust in government to great trust in government. The generalized ordered logit model (Williams, 2016) overcomes this assumption that is often violated by automatically testing for variables that fit the assumption and apply the restriction on them.

After performing the regression, diagnostic tests are run to ensure the validity of the model. STATA software automatically reports the log likelihood Chi-square value of the model that refers to whether the model as a whole is statistically significant. Additionally, the McFadden's pseudo R-squared (McFadden, 1973) is also reported that captures the proportion of change in terms of likelihood. For each individual variable, the Wald's statistic is reported that identifies the statistical significance of the variable.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

After applying the approach described in Chapter (3), the obtained results are reported in this chapter for the regression model itself and its diagnostic tests. The second part of the chapter includes an analytical discussion of the results to obtain the main insights useful to both academic and policymakers.

5.1 Regression model

Running the logistic regression model as specified in the methodology section, the results obtained are reported in Table (3). For easier interpretation, the results are reported in the marginal effects form for the Government Trust level 4 (great trust). In other words, the change in probability that the respondent will have great trust in the government with a unit increase in the variable holding other variables constant at means.

Table (3): Logistic regression results

For Government Trust = 4 (great trust)		
Variable	**Marginal Effect**	**Standard Error**
Government Performance	0.0190615***	0.00541
Suitability Of Democracy	-0.0286188***	0.00491
TV hours	-0.0099413	0.01272
Social Media Hours	0.002891	0.01055
sharia	-0.0377732***	0.00832
male	0.0099511	0.02288
Economy Evaluation	0.1314413***	0.01801
Social Trust	0.0770128***	0.02088
Leaders Intentions	0.0674027***	0.01506

[37]

National Corruption	-0.03042**	0.01406
Number of observations	1835	
LR chi2(51)	1104.01	
Prob > chi2	0.0000	
Pseudo R2	0.2358	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

The interpretation of the individual variables' marginal effects and their theoretical meanings would be reported in the discussion section below. However, it is important to discuss the results of the various diagnostics run on the model to confirm its validity and reliability for interpretation. It can be seen that the model as a whole is statistically significant at the 99% confidence interval (p<0.01). Moreover, Mcfaden's pseudo R-squared is high, for the purposes of a logistic regression model, at 0.24 which represents a good fit of the model (McFadden, 1979).

5.2 Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the results obtained from the regression model reported above with a focus on the statistically significant variables at the 90%, 95% or 99% confidence intervals.

5.2.1 Evaluation of current government's performance

As described above, the variable *Government Performance* measures the respondents' evaluation of the current government's performance. In the regression model, the results reported show that increasing the satisfaction with current government performance by one level increases the probability of having great trust in the government by 1.9% with statistical significance at the 99% confidence interval. Looking at the different levels of satisfaction, it can be seen that at all levels of satisfaction with government performance, a respondent is more

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likely to have great trust in the government. However, this increase on the odds is not uniform across all levels. Figure (1) shows a distribution of probabilities of *Government Trust* level 4 at different levels of *Government Performance* holding all other variables constant at their means.
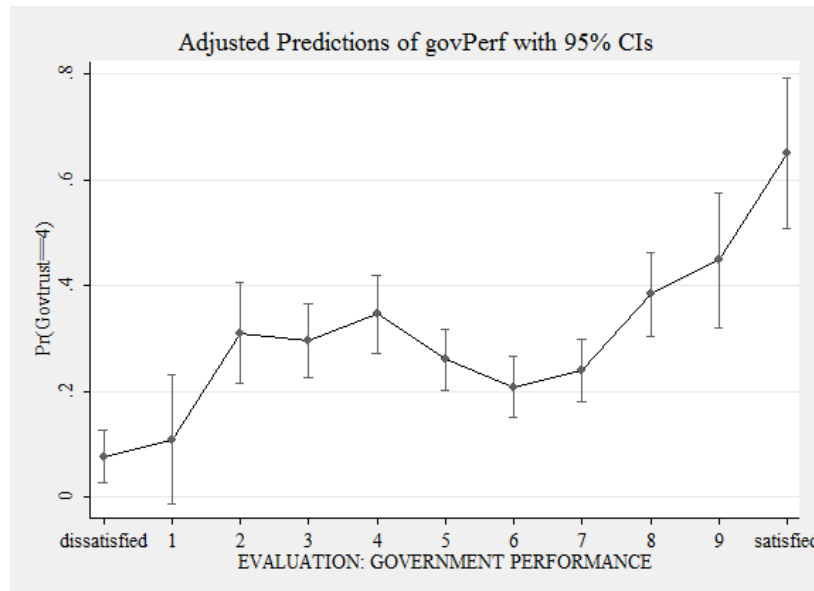
Figure (1): Distribution of predicted probabilities of Government Trust level 4 at different levels of Government Performance holding other variables constant at means (author generated)

Graphically, the curve has a sharp rise when evaluation of government performance is at levels 1 and 2, and then again at level 10, with a plateau at all the levels in between, which contain most of the respondents. This can be explained by the fact that answers are self-reported and prone to subjectivity. Respondents who report even minimal satisfaction with the government's performance, for example at level 1, are 43% more likely to have great trust in the government than those who are completely dissatisfied. This does not change much till the other extreme where respondents who are completely satisfied with the government's performance are more than 8 times more likely to have great trust in the government than those who are completely dissatisfied. Similar results have also been obtained in the literature where

very high and very low levels of satisfaction with government performance result in sharp changes in levels of trust (Wang, 2016).

5.2.2 Evaluation of the suitability of democracy for Egypt

Moving the variable *Suitability Of Democracy*, it captures the respondents' opinions on democracy and their belief that it is suitable for Egypt. Increasing the perception of democracy as suitable for Egypt by one level reduces the probability of having great trust in the government by 2.9%. As shown graphically in figure (2), predicted probabilities of having great trust in government increase initially with increase of perceptions of suitability of democracy for Egypt but then decrease again as that perception increases further giving rise to the overall negative effect described above.
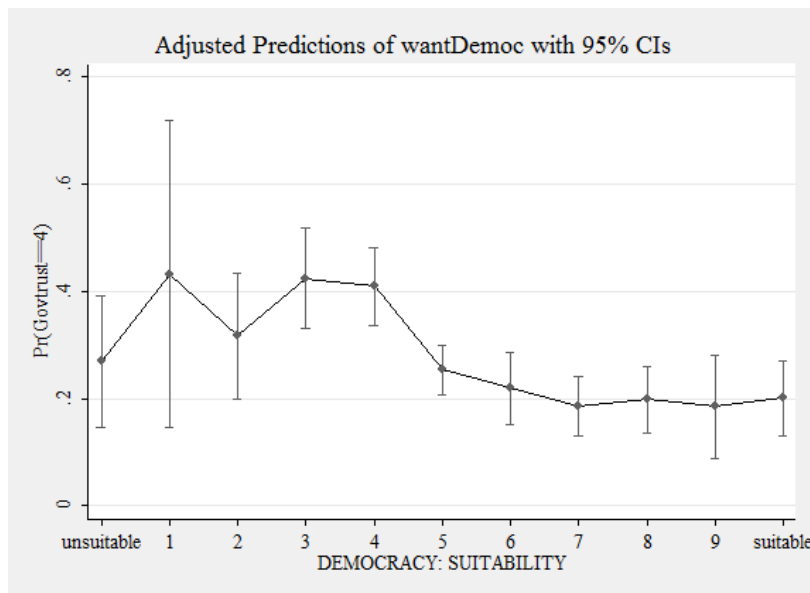
Figure 2: Distribution of predicted probabilities of having great trust in Government at different levels of Suitability Of Democracy holding other variables constant at means (author generated)

One possible explanation for this trend is that respondents who perceive democracy as suitable for Egypt are more likely to view Egypt as currently less democratic, and hence, trust the current government less. However, as shown graphically in figure (3) that represents the cross tabulation of the perceptions of suitability of democracy with the perceptions of the extent

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of democracy in Egypt, respondents who report higher levels of perceiving democracy as suitable for Egypt also report perceiving Egypt as highly democratic. At any case, this correlation was rather weak at only 0.0663 and statistically insignificant warranting further investigation into the issue.
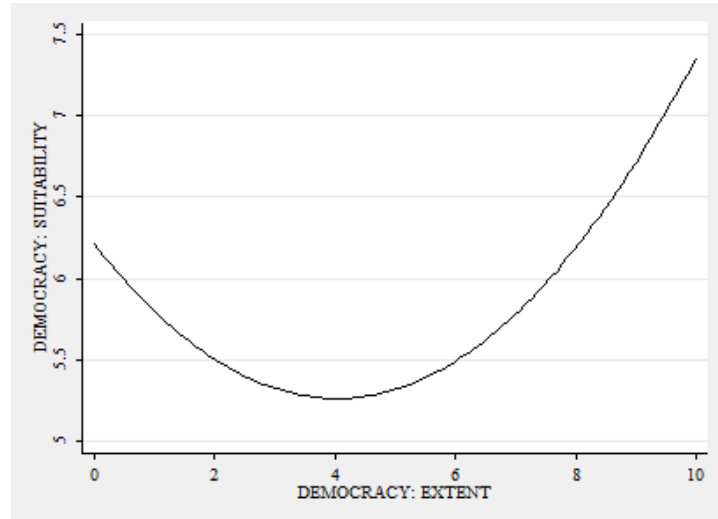
Figure (3): Perceptions of suitability of democracy versus the perceptions of the extent of democracy in Egypt (author generated)

5.2.3 Number of hours spent watching TV and using social media on a typical day

Looking at the impact of media consumption on trust in government, both traditional media (TV) and social media are found to have no statistically significant impact on trust in government in Egypt. This result can contradict with the traditional wisdom in the literature on media consumption. With Egyptian TV mostly owned controlled by the state (Allam, n.d.), it would be expected that Egyptians would not trust their TV outlets (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2019). Moreover, they would be more selective with their consumption avoiding sources they distrust (Tsfati, 2010). In fact, this would have been intensified after two revolutions (2011 and 2013) that were highly dependent on social media and activist journalism for obtaining news (Fernandez-Planells, 2015).

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Still, TV is the most trusted medium in Egypt (Allam, n.d.), and despite it being largely censored, results of the regression model show that it negatively impacts trust in government. This can be explained through a deeper look into the data. While the variable *TV hours* measures the consumption of TV, it does not specify the genre or media material consumed. In fact, survey data from Dennis et al. (2017) show that comedy is the most popular TV genre in Egypt. Additionally, the pairwise correlations between TV consumption, perception of the complexity of politics and interest in politics reported in Table (4) show a statistically significant positive correlation between perceiving politics as complicated and the consumption of TV, and a statistically significant negative correlation between interest in politics and consumption of TV. These two correlations, while not causal, suggest that those who watch longer hours of TV are in fact not watching political news and thus their distrust in government is largely coming from the interaction with other variables. Further research into the TV consumption patterns in Egypt is needed to shed more light on this relationship.

Table (4): Pair wise correlations between TV hours, polComp and polInterest

	TV hours	Politics Complicated	Politics Interesting
TV hours	1		
Politics Complicated	0.1591*	1	
Politics Interesting	-0.2322*	-0.3396	1

* is statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval

[42]

5.2.4 Views on Sharia law

As Islam's religious law, Sharia in its classical form not only regulates the individual's relationship with the God, but also with the society and the state (El Shamsy & Coulson, 2020). Despite the existence of a wide range of political Islam groups that vary greatly in terms of their fundamentalism and approaches, they all agree on their promotion of Sharia as the only viable form of law that should supersede other laws (Roy, 2017). With the ousting of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood from government in 2013 and then labelling them a terrorist organization effectively banning them, Egypt has witnessed a hard crackdown on political Islam groups, especially the more extremist ones. It is thus expected that supporters of and sympathizers with political Islam, who consider Sharia as the ultimate source of legislation, would feel detached from the post-2013 Egypt and distrust the current government.

Empirically, regression results conform to the theoretical understanding above. With statistical significance at the 99% confidence interval, increasing the level of belief that Sharia should be a source of legislation decreases the probability of having great trust in the government by 3.7% holding other variables constant. Looking with more detail, figure (4) shows those who believe that legislation should be mostly or entirely based on Sharia rather are 33% and 45% respectively less likely to have great trust in the government than those who believe legislation should be entirely based on the will of the people.

In this context, it is important to differentiate between followers of political Islam as an ideology, and extremists who follow illegal paths to enforce their ideas. As shown by Masoud et al. (2016), Egyptians, and Arabs in general, are likely to be more convinced with religion-based political arguments, even if they are not direct followers of any political Islamic group. This makes them more prone to radicalization unless the core causes are studied and addressed.
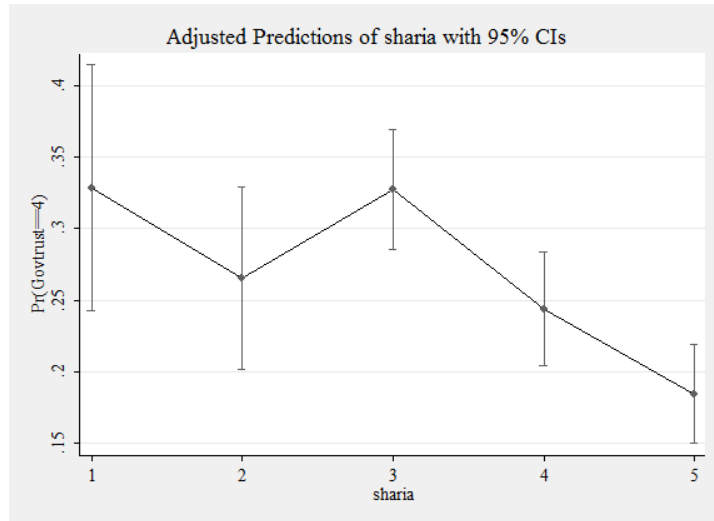
Figure (4): Distribution of the probabity of having great trust in the government at different levels of believing in Sharia as a source of legistlation (author generated)

5.2.5 Gender

Addressing the demographic factor of gender, the model found no statistically significant impact of gender on government trust.

5.2.6 Evaluation of the current state of the economy

Much like the variable *Government Performance*, *Economy Evaluation* reflects the relationship between the livelihood of the people and their trust in government. While the correlation between perceptions of the current state of the economy and the individual's actual income is weak, it is in fact found to be a statistically significant determinant of trust in government. A one level increase in the positive view of the economy increases the probability of having great trust in the government by over 13%. This further reinforces the argument that trust in government is largely based on the perceptions of its performance in different areas rather than the actual results achieved by the government and the tangible quality of its services. Figure (5) shows that the probability of having great trust in the government increases significantly for those who view the current economic situation as good or very good.
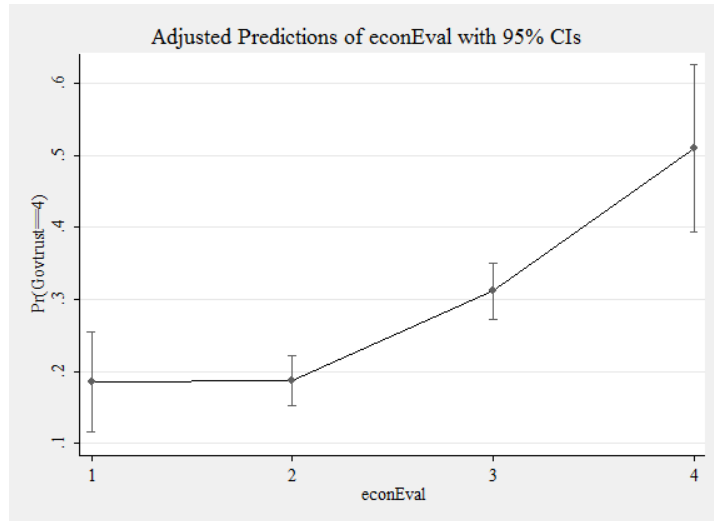
[44]

Figure (5): Distribution of the probabity of having great trust in the government at different levels of evaluation of the current state of the economy (author generated)

5.2.7 Social trust

In agreement with the literature on interpersonal trust and social capital, the regression results show a positive impact of trusting others in general and trusting the government. With statistical significance at the 99% confidence interval, those who believe that others can generally be trusted are 7.7% more likely to have great trust in the government.

5.2.8 Trust in political leaders

Egypt has a long history of bureaucracy and institutionalized government, levels of trust in which have varied over time. As shown by Becker et al. (2011) history of trust, or distrust, in bureaucratic agencies continues to impact trust in newer agencies, even years after their dissolution. But Egyptians appear to personalize the government. The variable *Leaders Intentions* that captures the respondents' perceptions on the intentions of political leaders is found to be a statistically significant determinant of trust in government, with a unit increase in the belief that political leaders are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens increasing the probability of having great trust in the government by 6.7%. Figure (6) shows the distribution of the probability of having great trust in the government at different levels of belief in the intentions of political leaders. It can be seen graphically that those who strongly

agree that political leaders are concerned with the needs of ordinary citizens are around twice as likely to have great trust in the government as those who disagree.

This result means that to some degree, Egyptians perceive the government institutions and government officials indistinctively which contradicts a group of scholars (Dalton, 2004; Klingemann, 1999). On the other hand, this view follows McGraw and Dolan (2007) and Wendt (1999; 2004) who argue that our views about states are often linked to our views about their leaders, a concept reinforced intentionally by many political leaders to boost their popularity. In this sense, the average citizen's understanding of politics is not very different from that of children who equate the government with the President (Easton & Dennis, 1969; Hess & Torney, 1967).
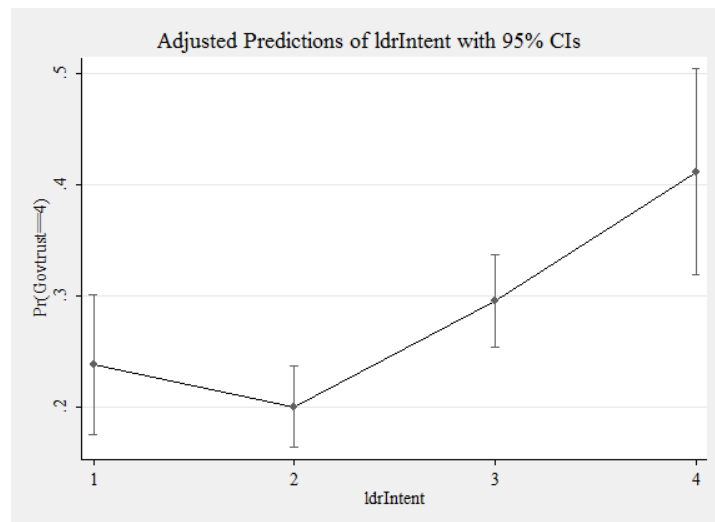
Figure (6): Distribution of the probabity of having great trust in the government at different levels of belief in the good intentions of political leaders (author generated)

5.2.9 Perception of the corruption of national agencies

With Egypt historically having high levels of corruption of government officials on both the petty and grand levels, it is no surprise that perceptions of corruption of national agencies are found to have significant impact on government trust, albeit only at the 95% confidence interval. Increasing the perception that national agencies are corrupt by one level decreases the likelihood of having great trust in the government by 3%.

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Chapter 6: Conclusions and Policy Implications

The objective of this study was to empirically identify the main determinants of public trust in the government of Egypt after both the 2011 and 2013 revolutions using a recent dataset published in 2018. This was done through a set of empirical hypothesis covering a range of explanatory variables. In this chapter, the research done is summarized along with its main conclusions and policy implications.

6.1 Research summary

First, an extensive literature review that covered the different definitions and conceptualizations of social and political trust, the value and practical impact of trust in government and a review of different studies attempting to find determinants of trust. Next, a generalized ordered logistic regression model has been developed accounting for several categories of explanatory variables to find their impact on the independent variable, trust in government. The regressions model estimated the change in probability of having great trust in the government with the change in the independent variables.

Results of the regression model show results that are mostly in line with the literature. Addressing the hypotheses (H_1), (H_4) and (H_5), no statistically significant relationship was found by the model. Hence, the null hypotheses could not be rejected and the gender, consumption of traditional media and social media in fact have no impact on the trust in government in Egypt.

As for (H_2), the public perceptions of the performance of government are found to be significant determinants of trust in government. This positive relationship agrees with scholars who argue for a rational-based trust formulation model where we create our trust judgements based on an assessment of the benefits we receive. A similar relationship was also found with

perception of current economic situation of the country. Therefore, the hypotheses (H_2) and (H_{2*}) could be accepted.

For the perception that democracy is suitable for Egypt, (H_3) could be accepted where regression results show that increasing the level of perceiving democracy as suitable for Egypt actually decreases the likelihood of trusting the government. The same also applies for (H_6), (H_8) and (H_9) regarding social trust and perceptions of national corruption and trust in political leaders respectively.

Relating to (H_7), after a brief experience with political Islam, Egyptians were largely divided along the line of supporting or opposing this form of politics, usually represented by their goal of universally applying the Islamic Sharia law. Survey data still show that over 50% of respondents agree that legislation should be entirely or mostly based on Sharia, with over 27% believing that the will of the people has no place. Regression results show that those are far less likely to trust the current government than those who do not share the same view on Sharia law.

6.2 Policy implications

Drawing on the empirical findings of this research, and on previous literature, this section provides several recommendations of action for policy makers that would build public trust in governments. The recommendations are divided into subsections based on different themes addressed by the proposed policy.

6.2.1 Government performance as a game of perceptions

With varying levels of success, improving public services offered is the ultimate goal of any legitimate government. But this research's empirical findings show the value of citizens' perceptions of government performance and quality of services, rather than the actual results, as a significant determinant of trust. This is why the process of policy making and

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communication of actions and their results is of great importance to building trust in the said policy, and by generalization, the whole government. For example, implementing sound economic policies without taking into account the social inequalities and marginalized groups in society will lead to only short-lived trust after which citizens will demand further political and social reforms (Blind, 2010).

To accommodate this, Weymouth et al. (2020) argue for changing the form of public participation in governance to a partnership. They argue that limiting the design of policies to bureaucrats influenced by lobbyists and influence groups leaves some main public concerns unattended to. In addition, the public can think of the government, even if democratically elected, as imposing policies on them leading to some form of resistance to change (Rozema et al., 2012). Some critical factors of public partnerships in policy design include making collective judgements on the priorities of specific local communities (Rittel & Webber, 1973), integrating input from sources beyond just experts and technocrats (Turnpenny et al., 2009) and communicating policies to the public through performance targets that directly relate to citizens' concerns and creates mechanisms of accountability and monitoring (Boswell, 2018).

But accounting for public perceptions while designing policies should not translate to censoring the media or imposing specific messages. As shown in the discussion section, Egyptians are less interested in news media and the highly censored message available on Egyptian TV does not achieve its desired goal. Cheema (2010) argues for a transparent government with open access to information as a tool to build public trust. This kind of direct communication with the public can remedy low trust and align public perceptions of government agencies with their actual performance (Canel & Sanders, 2013; Lee, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2011; Lee et al., 2012). Moreover, government communication employing familiar and well-designed symbolic elements, including logos and public figure endorsements, evokes positive associations and improves public trust (Alon-Barkat & Gilad, 2017; Karens et al.,

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2016; Susila et al., 2020; Teodoro & An, 2018) and distracts viewers from logically unpersuasive arguments (Alon-Barkat, 2020).

6.2.2 Strengthening the foundations of democracy

Though the regression results show a negative relationship between perceiving democracy as suitable for Egypt and trusting the government, the literature almost unanimously agrees that the proper democratic process and legitimacy and political trust are interlinked and support each other (Blind, 2010). In the context of crises, this is especially important since authoritarian regimes might abuse the surge of trust vested in governments and gain more control (Khemani, 2020). Cheema (2010) argues that improved parliamentary procedures and oversight not only leads to a more controlled executive, but also increases the interface of elected representatives with their constituencies, thus improving trust. Nevertheless, the relationship between democracy and political trust is not linear (Arpino & Obydenkova, 2020). Data from the EU shows that trust levels in government agencies of non-democratic states can be as high as that in the most democratic states (van der Meer, 2017).

In Egypt, data from the Arab Barometer Survey show that levels of trust in parliament are quite low and the majority of people are not interested in politics and find it too complicated, which in turn, reduces participation. Literature shows that, in a young democracy, repeated experiences with the ballot box gradually increases political knowledge and raise interest in the process (Smith, 2002). This happens through the repeated and direct interaction with elected representatives in town hall meetings and community focus groups where citizens get to voice their opinions and form their perceptions of the process first hand (Carman, 2010). This positive impact on trust is even more apparent when voters achieve their intended goals while perceiving the process as fair (Christensen, 2019).

Another channel of strengthening the new democracy is through education. In new democracies, levels of political education and awareness are rather low (Morduchowicz et al., 1996) making even the younger voters engage in affectionate intelligence making judgements based on trust (Susila et al., 2020). Moreover, political trust is a concept that is developed at a relatively young age (Claes et al., 2012). Feddes et al. (2019) studied that effects of teaching democratic values at schools in the Netherlands and improving children's knowledge about the political process and found that it had significantly positive impacts on their trust in the government. Moreover, Claes and Hooghe (2017) performed a longitudinal study on the education of political sciences and civics in Belgium and found that classroom instruction, an open class climate and being a member of school boards and student activities increases levels of political trust of the students. This agrees with Fridkin et al. (2006) who found an association between democratic practices in class and political trust.

6.2.3 Healing the wounds of society

Although the Egyptian people are fairly homogenous in terms of demographics with very limited variations in ethnicities, religions and cultural heritages, the ousting of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) from rule in 2013 instantly alienated a portion of society that either were direct members of the brotherhood, or were ideological supporters and empathizers. Herstad (2017) describes how the brotherhood took a political blow in almost all Middle Eastern Arab states around the same time, leading to the radicalization of some of its elements (Hamid et al., 2017). Beyond the MB, several other political Islam groups operate in Egypt with varying levels acceptance to the democratic process and degrees at which they want to give the state purely religious functions (Ranko & Nedza, 2016). Interestingly enough, Gorman (2018) found that even self-identifying secularists may have negative views of Islamists, but still express support for some Islamist ideological positions. As reported in table (3), the dataset used in this research shows that 45% of respondents still believe in Sharia as the ultimate form of law.

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So how does the policy maker reconcile with such a huge portion of the Egyptian people? Thus far, the Egyptian government has been keen on portraying an image of moderation that is mainly directed at building rapport with Egypt's religious minorities and Western political leaders where the President and other prominent figures regularly attend Christian masses and even sponsored the renovation of Egypt's Jewish cultural sites (Farahat, 2019). As for the Muslim majority, the government has thus far focused its efforts on combating religious extremism and Jihadist thought. From the beginning, the political leadership called on Al-Azhar scholars to review their curricula and reform religious discourse (Mneimneh, 2015), a call to which Al-Azhar responded by several initiatives including mobile anti-radicalization units that communicate directly with the public on coffee shops and other gathering areas, albeit with limited impact (El-Gawhary, 2018).

Nevertheless, the regularly public disagreements between Al-Azhar's Grand Imam Al-Tayeb and public figures aligned with the government speak to a chasm widening between the two sides. Al-Tayeb is regularly seen to be suspicious of the government-sponsored 'religious discourse reform' as an attempt to take control of the constitutionally-independent institution (Wafy, 2020). Policy makers must note that damaging the credibility of Al-Azhar as an institutions of moderation could end up creating more breeding ground for extremist thought. Hence, the Egyptian government should embrace the independency of religious thought as its own form of freedom of thought and expression. Rather than imposing reforms on religious institutions facing internal resistance, the government would be better off sponsoring cross-cultural dialogue that embraces the acceptance of others. As Berger (2019) shows, support for Sharia is not necessarily problematic if paired with the understanding that Sharia is man's own interpretation of religion rather than a fixed set of laws. This conforms with the concept of post-Islamism, a cultural reform of political Islam that allows it to maintain its core Islamic ideals while moving beyond the concept of an Islamic state (Mahdavi, 2020).

6.2.4 Strengthening national institutions

The general public, especially in transition democracies, tend to attribute personality traits to behavioral patterns of different institutions (Shepard, 1935). The empirical results of this research supports this concept. Egyptians are found to link their trust in the political leader with their trust in the government as a whole. Thus, government should make it a priority to strengthen, empower and trust the public institutions and bureaucrats (Khemani, 2020). This devolution of power can only happen through effective decentralization that allows for direct engagement of the lower level government officials (Cheema, 2010). Moreover, reinforcing the independency of other branches of the state, including the judiciary, through respecting the rule of law can significantly add to trust levels in said branches, and by generalization, the government (Blind, 2010). This conforms with Devine et al. (2020) who argue that trust judgements can spillover, for example from one politician or institution to the others.

6.3 Research limitations and recommendations for future work

Despite the value added by this research to fill an important gap of knowledge, there still are several limitation to this work. First, the data used was all self-reported with all the subjectivity expected from that mode of reporting. Conclusions are to be taken with the understanding that they are based on perceived evaluations rather than objective ones. Secondly, dependence on survey data alone limits the scope of results. Complementing the study with qualitative in-depth interviews would add to the value of results, however, it was not possible due to time constraints of this work.

Another set of limitation arise from model specification errors. Statistical studies of social topics cannot be ideal by nature (Avery, 2005). This study is no exception. One of those statistical errors is endogeneity, an error where the values of one independent variable depends on the values of other independent variables. Since social topics almost always have complex

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two-way relationships, it is difficult to avoid this type of error. For instance, this study treats both education level and income as two separate explanatory variables for trust in government. However, in reality, and as shown by numerous studies, income level is itself dependent on education level. Another type of errors is multicollinearity which refers to high correlations among predictors. Statistical literature, however, argues that multicollinearity can be safely ignored in the case of dummy or categorical variables (Allison, 2012) which is the case in this study.

This study calls for several future projects to complement our understanding of trust in government in Egypt's context. Studies on the Egyptians' understanding of democracy and their views on it are necessary to explain why their evaluations of the current government's democracy level and their views on the democracy's suitability for the country do not match. Moreover, further studies on media consumption patterns in Egypt and the differentiation between traditional media and social media platforms are needed to understand their impacts on trust, social and political.

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