

Measuring Political Trust: Recognising the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions

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Abstract: Citizens' trust is fundamental to the proper functioning of public institutions. This paper explores how the construct of 'political trust' can be measured to reflect the underlying theoretical factors driving trust levels. It proposes a quantitative methodology to develop a scale that measures trust in public regulatory institutions. Some measurements of trust are dependent on a scale for questions such as 'What is your level of trust in...?' Alternatively, composite indicators are used, based on, for example, trust levels in a set of public institutions. Such measures do not recognise what influences a citizen's trust. The methodology presented here is also a composite measure but incorporates nine drivers and their extent of influence on a citizen's trust. These drivers, identified through a literature review on political trust, include consistency, transparency, outcomes, competence, integrity, openness and inclusiveness, fairness, reliability and responsiveness. The proposed methodology follows four steps: (i) It determines drivers that citizens recognise as influential on their trust in a regulatory institution; (ii) it establishes the extent to which the drivers are influential; (iii) the institution is rated on a scale for each factor; and (iv) each factor rating is weighted on the extent of its influence and a weighted average is computed to determine the level of trust. This methodology was applied to measure trust in Malta's environmental authorities following a demerger. A survey was conducted with the questionnaire's design reflecting this methodology. The empirical findings confirmed that all these factors lead to trust, but variations in the extent to which each driver influences a citizen's trust exist. Responsiveness, outcomes, integrity and openness emerged as slightly less influential on citizens' trust, whereas fairness, consistency, reliability, transparency and competence were the most influential factors. Significant differences are recorded when comparing methods of measuring trust for the two institutions. This composite measure recognises the multidimensional nature of trust, is grounded in the construct's theoretical foundations and provides reasons for variations in trust levels. Institutions can adopt this approach as a tool to regularly monitor citizens' trust and identify areas requiring attention.

Keywords: Political trust, scale development, construct measurement, public regulatory institution, drivers of trust, institutional trust

1. Introduction

Citizens' trust is fundamental to the proper functioning of public institutions and a key factor that supports an active democratic society. Political trust attracts the attention of scholars in various fields, governments and international organisations. They seek to understand what trust is, what drives it, what context brings to trust and attempt to measure this complex construct. Political trust is distinct from social trust, though some scholars present the notion that the two are related. This paper focuses on political trust. The relationship among the concepts of trust, social trust, political trust, and institutional trust is depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The relationship among the concepts of trust

Political trust, i.e., citizens' trust in political institutions, is essential for a democracy's stability, for the political system's legitimacy, for citizens' political participation and adhering to the law (Turper and Aarts, 2017; Schneider, 2017). Political trust is defined by Zmerli as "citizens' assessments of the core institutions of the polity and entails a positive evaluation of the most relevant attributes that make each political institution trustworthy, such as credibility, fairness, competence, transparency in its policy-making, and openness to competing views"

(2014, p.4887). The first statement explains why political trust is important, emphasising political systems and participation. Complementary to that, Zmerli's definition adopts the perspective of citizens' evaluation of institutions and refers to attributes that influence trust. Political trust is an important construct influencing institutions' outputs and consequently the outcomes on society. Institutional trust, a component of the broader concept of political trust, refers to citizens' trust in public institutions, such as regulatory institutions.

Various attempts have been made, both by scholars and international organisations to measure political trust. However, as stated by Schneider, "researchers continue to rely on sum scores or averages of standard 'trust in government' survey questions without fully understanding what the concept means, or whether these measures tap into comparable ideas across the countries in their sample" (2017, p.964). Measures of trust have generally adopted one of two approaches. One approach is the single statement with a scale enquiring about the research participant's "trust in government". This assumes respondents' same understanding of trust and the same extent of influence by factors affecting trust. The second approach that is often applied is a composite index of respondents' trust level in a set of institutions. This approach is based on assumptions that do not allow for a clear understanding and identification of why a citizen's trust level is what it is. Scholarly literature recognises that political trust is influenced by those attributes but, at least to our knowledge, these do not seem to be reflected in measures of trust. This points to a literature gap in that existing measures do not consider or uncover the factors that influence political trust, despite the extant literature that identifies various drivers affecting citizens' trust in institutions.

The aim of this research is to design, propose and apply a quantitative methodology for construct measurement based on scale development. Specifically, it aims to measure the construct of political trust by developing a scale that incorporates the attributes that influence trust. This paper hence asks the research question: 'How can the construct of political trust be measured to reflect the underlying factors driving trust levels?' The methodology distinguishes between factors that influence a respondent's trust and the rating for each driver. This proposed methodology was used to measure trust in environmental regulators operating within a wider political system. The strength of this research, and its contribution to the political trust literature and to scale development and construct measurement literature, lies in that the proposed method is grounded in the construct's theoretical foundations, whilst allowing for the identification of reasons for variations in trust levels. A further contribution emerges as the empirical results provide evidence suggesting a significant difference between the single-statement and this proposed multidimensional measure, furthering the debate on methodologies adopted to measure political trust.

2. Literature review

Trust has been defined as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman 1995, p.712). This widely cited definition encapsulates both the trust an individual has in another person (social trust) as well as a citizen's trust in an organisation or institution (political trust). Applied to political trust, this definition implies risk, interdependability and points to the willingness of a citizen to "be vulnerable" to the political agent. That willingness to be vulnerable may be influenced by the individual's background, experience, perceptions and expectations (Mischler and Rose, 2001), as explained by micro theory.

In addition, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman's (1995) definition adopts the perspective of 'expectation' to 'perform a particular action'. Bauer and Freitag (2017) concur that trust "designates an expectation" (2017, p.2), a notion particularly applicable to public institutions as they are expected to deliver. This dimension is reflected in Gamson's definition which states that political trust represents the "probability ... that the political system (or some part of it) will produce preferred outcomes even if left untended" (1968, p.54). Those outcomes are determined by the conditions which the institution adopts, its policies and processes, which influence public trust (Bouckaert, 2012; Seyd, 2016), as they feed into and inform citizens' "willingness... to be vulnerable", "expectations" and evaluations of the institution. This points to Seyd's (2015) argument that trust "represents a judgement that, even in the absence of ongoing scrutiny or enforcement by citizens, a political actor or institution will act in a way that is broadly consistent with those citizens' interests" (p.74).

Accordingly, two key contemplations emerge and inform this research. First, political trust is marshalled by different attributes. Secondly, an individual's evaluation based on these drivers may provide reasons for the

varying levels of trust. This echoes Seyd's argument that a distinction must therefore be made between "the indicators held to capture the meaning of trust from those held to capture the reasons for that trust" (2016, p.13).

Measuring political trust presents challenges. Though there appears to be a consensus that trust is a multidimensional construct, measures of trust have not often reflected this. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) identify ability, benevolence and integrity as key components of trust. Zmerli's (2014) definition (cited earlier on), refers to credibility, fairness, competence, transparency in policy-making, and openness to competing views. Seyd (2016) lists competence, concern, benevolence, integrity, reliability and fairness as dimensions of trust. Additionally, cultural context plays a role in determining political trust (Marien, 2011; Kaasa and Andriani, 2021) and is particularly relevant when conducting cross-country studies. The OECD (2017) Trust Framework identifies five dimensions, namely reliability, responsiveness, integrity, openness and fairness. Figure 2 presents the construct of political trust according to its multidimensional elements, based on a literature review (refer to Frendo, 2017).

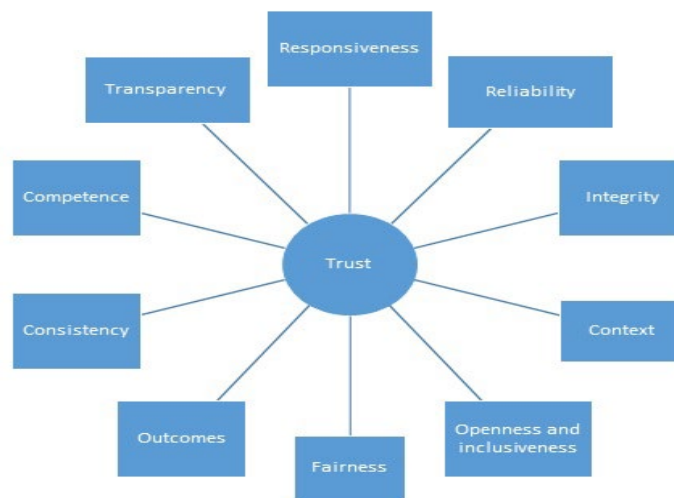


Figure 2: Drivers of political trust

Measures of trust have been carried out primarily through surveys and experiments. Yet, this distinction between the underlying drivers of the concept of trust and the causes that lead to varying trust levels in institutions are rarely incorporated in measures of political trust.

Most measures of political trust comprise a single item, asking the general question, "What is your trust in... [a political institution]?" Admittedly, a single-item question is simpler to administer and faster for research participants. However, no reference is made to the underlying drivers of the concept of trust, neither does it include a "referent against which trust is to be gauged" (Seyd, 2016, p.2), nor does it capture respondents' understanding of trust and their acknowledgement of what influences their trust. Seyd's (2016) review of how political trust is assessed identifies shortcomings in its measurement. He argues that some measures of trust are in effect evaluations of the incumbent officials' performance in the form of "honesty, competence and procedural correctness" (Seyd, 2016, p.2). No evidence indicates that single-item measures are more robust than multi-item approaches, though Ulsnaer (2015) defends the standard question for interpersonal generalised trust, which admittedly is different to political trust, but some arguments may still be applicable.

The alternatively commonly used measure for political trust enquires about research participants' trust in (or attitudes towards) a set of public institutions, presenting the measure of political trust as a composite of these measures. Marien (2011) argues that one cannot simply add these trust measures as respondents may use different criteria to determine their trust in the various institutions. Questions may be unclear as to whether they are enquiring about the political system or the people running the institution. On the other hand, multi-item measures tend to be less prone to capturing respondents' judgements about the incumbents' performance if such measures direct respondents to the determinants of trust (Seyd, 2016).

Reviews on trust measurement (Gillespie 2012, 2015; Hoe, Adnan and Fee, 2021) provide a useful and comparative assessment of existing measures. Concerns are primarily raised about construct validity, about

differences between the concept of trust and how it is measured (Saunders, Lyon and Möllering, 2015). Turper and Aarts (2017) acknowledge that empirical trust measurement relating to trust in public institutions depends on the construct of political trust and cannot be entirely free from measurement error. There still appears to be a literature gap as existing methodologies for measuring political trust do not reflect its latent nature and its drivers.

Many pitfalls identified in the measurement of trust, and referred to above, are because most measurements are not grounded in theoretical foundations. These concerns, though not all entirely addressed, informed the research design presented here.

3. Methodology

The methodology is quantitative, based on a survey using a questionnaire. Surveying through questionnaires is the most adopted method to measure trust (Saunders, Lyon and Möllering, 2015). Distinct from other surveys (as far as we are aware), this questionnaire was designed to incorporate and measure nine drivers of trust extracted from the literature, reflecting the concept's multidimensional nature. The nine drivers were selected given the frequency of mentions that emerged from an analysis of the content of literature on political trust (refer to Frendo, 2017). Though the cultural context is a driver for trust, it was not included in the empirical research since cross-country comparatives were not carried out in this study. The nine drivers are reliability, responsiveness, openness and inclusiveness, integrity, fairness, competence, transparency, consistency and outcomes. Scale measurement was used.

The designed questionnaire was used to measure trust in Malta's environmental regulators. Trust in regulatory environmental authorities has limitedly been the subject of empirical research, though "institutional trust is especially important to government activities that address market failures (e.g. public health or environmental protection) or where long-term gains require short-term sacrifices" (OECD, 2017, p.52-53).

The questionnaire's structure reflects what Seyd (2016) recommended: to distinguish between indicators for the meaning of trust and those capturing reasons for the levels of trust. Consequently, the questionnaire was divided into five sections (Appendix 1). The first section enquired about the respondent's profile, including a question as to whether the respondent or his/her family ever used these authorities' services. This was deemed relevant as experience could be a further reason for the indicated trust level. As argued by Hegtvedt, "individuals' encounters with legal authorities have a profound impact on the perceived legitimacy of those authorities, their compliance with them, and ultimately their trust in the institution of law enforcement" (2015, p.76). The questionnaire's second section (Section B) focused on influences of trust – the drivers - with the intention of capturing the meaning of trust. As argued by Saunders, Lyon and Möllering (2015), the method adopted to measure trust should follow the conceptualisation of the construct. Zmerli's definition of political trust is used to guide the empirical research together with the literature review that led to the conceptual framework for drivers of trust, (Figure 2). Participants were asked to state the extent to which these drivers influence their trust, using a 5-point scale from 'Not at all' to 'Affects me a lot'. The third section (Section C), using the single statement approach with a 5-point scale ranging from 'distrust it greatly' to 'trust it greatly', asked respondents to specify their trust in each authority. Next (Sections D and E), to capture the reasons for the levels of trust, respondents were asked to provide a rating on a 5-point scale for the 'new' authorities for each of the nine drivers of trust.

Data collection commenced in 2017, a year after the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) was split into two authorities, namely the Planning Authority (PA) and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA). Following pilot testing, questionnaires were distributed among tertiary level students, tapping into University of Malta undergraduate and postgraduate students. A total of 325 questionnaires were collected from students, following random face-to-face distribution on campus and an electronic mailshot, giving a 5% margin of error. The decision to involve only tertiary level students in the study was guided by logistical and practical reasons as well as by the primary purpose of the research. The student population by far outnumbers staff members at the University of Malta. Collecting data from students at the University of Malta offered the opportunity to capture research participants from a single cohort, in a single location, saving time and applying the available resources in the most efficient manner. A nationwide survey required additional time and resources which were unavailable. Given that the primary intention of the research was to test measuring trust using the methodology presented here, it was deemed gratuitous to extend the survey beyond the student

population. Data was inputted, checked for errors and analysed using Excel, SPSS and AMOS for frequency, reliability and validity. Trust was measured through the multi-item approach by multiplying each respondent's stated influence of each driver with the respective ratings on each driver and then averaging across respondents.

4. Findings

This section is structured as follows. A demographic profile of survey respondents is first provided. The results for each driver's extent of influence on respondents' political trust are then outlined. A single-statement trust measure is then presented, followed by respondents' ratings for each driver for each institution. Reliability and validity assessments are then displayed. A multidimensional measure of trust is subsequently proposed and compared to the single-question measure.

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The respondents' profile generally reflected the student population as 62.5% were women and 37.5% were men, whereas the gender ratio stood at 58:42. Most respondents (68.8%) were aged between 18 and 24 years, followed by the 25–34-year-olds (17.6%) and the 35–44-year-olds (7.1%). 6.5% of respondents were aged over 44 years. The student population is composed of 75% undergraduate and 25% postgraduate students. 89.6% of respondents stated that they or their family utilised MEPA's services, whilst 40.2% and 13.6% used PA's and ERA's, respectively, indicating that most respondents rated on their perception, observation, and experience.

4.2 Drivers of trust

Research participants were asked to specify the extent to which their trust in a public institution is influenced by the attributes that drive trust. The nine drivers do indeed influence institutional trust as responses are skewed towards the scale's positive end (Figure 3). Fairness, consistency, reliability, competence and transparency are recognised by more than 83% of respondents as influential on their institutional trust.

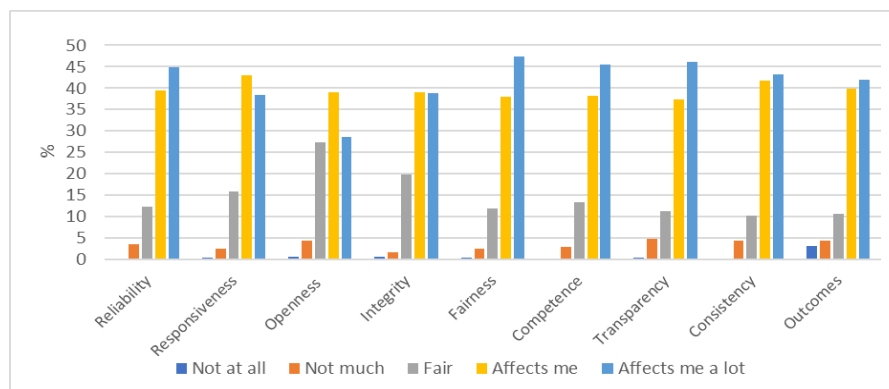


Figure 3: Extent of drivers' influence on trust

Table 1 shows the share of each driver. Fairness accounts for the highest share of influence on trust, followed by consistency, reliability, transparency and competence. This analysis proves that the assumption of equal weights in a composite score is unrealistic, as claimed by Turper and Aarts (2017).

Table 1: Influential drivers of trust

Attribute	Influence
Reliability	11.35%
Responsiveness	11.04%
Openness and inclusiveness	10.38%
Integrity	10.96%
Fairness	11.45%
Competence	11.19%
Transparency	11.28%
Consistency	11.35%
Outcomes	11.01%

4.3 Trust in regulatory authorities

4.3.1 Single-statement measure

Respondents, as shown in Figure 4, almost follow a normal distribution in their trust levels in the case of the PA. It is slightly skewed to the right indicating more trust in ERA, in contrast to trust in MEPA wherein it is slightly skewed to the left. Respondents' trust in ERA averages a score of 3.19, PA registers 2.93 and MEPA 2.64. When this survey was conducted, ERA was a year old though incorporating MEPA's Environmental Directorate and the Resources Authority. This might indicate that newer structures may be trusted more than an older organisation.

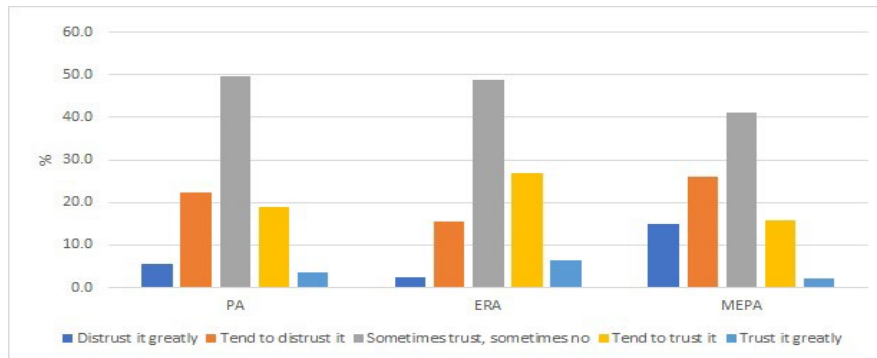


Figure 4: Respondents' trust in environmental regulatory authorities (single-statement measure)

4.3.2 Multi-item measure

A 5-point scale ranging from 'Very Poor' to 'Very Good' captured research participants' ratings of the drivers of trust for two regulatory authorities. As Figures 5 and 6 depict, 'fair' was the most common score respondents allocated for each of the nine drivers of trust. In the case of PA, fairness, transparency, consistency and outcomes register more negative scores than positive ones, averaging ratings of 2.84, 2.83, 2.86 and 2.82, respectively; whilst the other factors average around 3.1. Fairness, transparency and consistency were among the more influential trust drivers. ERA's positive ratings surpass negative ones for all drivers, except for transparency where positive and negative ratings are almost equal. ERA's average score hovers around 3.3, except for transparency and outcomes where the average is closer to 3.1. Therefore, when an institution captures a low rating for a more influential trust attribute, a lower trust value is registered for the organisation. These results provide insights into the reasons for the levels of trust.

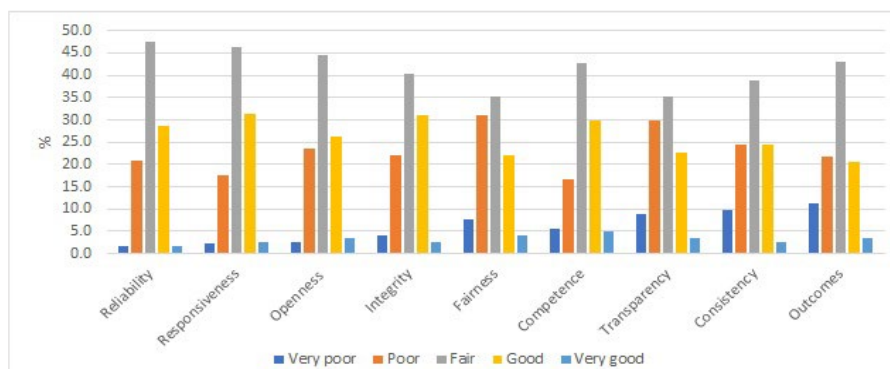


Figure 5: Attribute ratings for PA

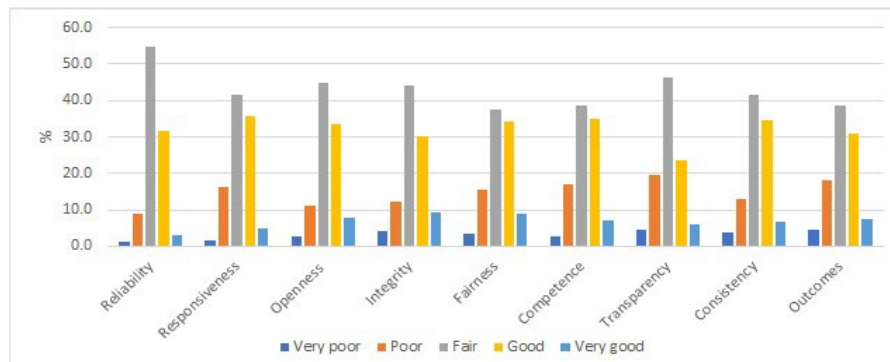


Figure 6: Attribute ratings for ERA

The question that arises here is whether the measure used to obtain a meaning of trust is in effect reflective of the latent variable of trust and whether it is distinct from the measure that seeks to capture the reasons for institutional trust levels. Reliability and validity tests were carried out.

4.3.3 Reliability and validity

The survey's internal consistency reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha for the three trust measurement scales, as shown in Table 2. The reliability statistics denote very good data reliability as each is higher than 0.7. The inter-item correlation matrix returned values that were all higher than 0.3 indicating that all the drivers should be retained.

Table 2: Reliability and validity assessments for trust scale measures

Trust measure	Reliability	Construct Validity	Construct Validity (principal component analysis)		
	Cronbach's Alpha	Pearson correlation coefficient	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Number of components
Trust drivers	0.894	<.01 and >0.113	0.902	<.001	1
PA ratings	0.925	<.01 and >0.113	0.913	<.001	1
ERA ratings	0.922	<.01 and >0.113	0.917	<.001	1

Validity was first assessed for each individual trust measure separately with the purpose of establishing whether the chosen drivers of trust were valid or were measuring additional latent variables through the chosen indicators. For purposes of this study, construct validity, as noted by Saunders, Lyon and Möllering (2015) and Seyd (2016), is of particular interest given that it evaluates the extent to which the survey measures the theoretical construct it was planned to measure. Three methods were used to test for this: Pearson Correlation Coefficient, Explanatory Factor Analysis using Principal Components Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis. All three methods provided evidence that suggests that the identified drivers, incorporated in each trust measure, were valid. In the case of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient, as per Table 2, all values were significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) and above the critical value of 0.113. (Note: Table of results is not included due to page limitations.) In addition, one factor was extracted with the principal components analysis (Table 2), with different factor loadings higher than 0.7 for the respective constructs for each scale, supporting the conceptual framework drawn from the literature and Turper and Aarts's claim of an unrealistic assumption of equal loadings on the latent construct of trust (2017). Confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence suggesting convergent validity for each individual measure, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Convergent validity for each individual scale based on confirmatory factor analysis

Trust measure	Confirmatory Factor Analysis			
	Composite reliability (CR)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	CR>AVE	Convergent validity
Trust drivers	0.876	0.504	0.876>0.504	Yes
PA ratings	0.924	0.574	0.924>0.574	Yes
ERA ratings	0.935	0.617	0.935>0.617	Yes

- No Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) or correlation since one latent variable was extracted for each measure.

Given that the same drivers were used to measure the respondents' meaning of trust and reasons for their level of trust in the two authorities, (though questions were different) it was deemed appropriate to assess construct validity, examining convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 4 presents evidence suggesting convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 4: Construct validity for the three measures

Components	Reflective of	CR	AVE	Correlation	MSV	ASV
Factor 1	ERA rating	0.775	0.575	1-3: 0.601	0.361	0.067
Factor 2	Trust	0.715		1-2: 0.137		
Factor 3	PA rating	0.772		2-3: 0.038		
Convergent validity		CR>0.7 AVE>0.5 CR>AVE		Discriminant validity	AVE>MSV AVE>ASV	

The questionnaire is truly measuring three different constructs, as was the intention and as reflected in the questions' wording. The higher correlation between factors 1 and 3 indicates the similarities of the constructs of measuring respondents' ratings of the two institutions. The construct for the meaning of trust appears to be separate from the construct underlying the trust rating for each institution, providing comfort to propose measuring trust based on this measurement instrument and approach.

4.4 Proposed multidimensional measure of trust

Whilst all attributes are relevant, the empirical findings indicate that slight variations in the extent of influence of each driver exist for each respondent. Therefore, the trust measure was computed by the weighted average of each respondent's rating and his/her extent of influence of each respective driver. The PA and ERA's average scores were calculated to be 2.57 and 2.81 out of 5, respectively, both below 'fair' (Table 5). This measure can act as a comparative baseline for future trust ratings of PA and ERA.

Table 5: Multidimensional measure of trust

	Weighted average
PA	2.57
ERA	2.81

4.5 Comparing single-statement with proposed multidimensional measure of trust

The average scores for respondents' trust in the PA and ERA were 2.93 and 3.19, respectively, when the single-question was asked. These are, numerically, close to the multidimensional measure of 2.57 and 2.81, respectively. However, are they significantly different to justify adopting the multidimensional measure for measuring trust as opposed to the single statement? The Student's t-test was used to determine this. The Student's t-test result (Table 6) rejected the null hypothesis of no difference between the two measures' scores. This was the case for both the PA and ERA trust measurements, presenting evidence suggesting a significant difference between a single-statement measure and the proposed multidimensional measure. The question as to which one better reflects research participants' trust remains and necessitates discussion.

Table 6: Student's t-test for single and multidimensional measures of trust

	Paired Differences					T	df	Significance	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
				Lower	Upper				
PA trust	.42623	.76404	.05005	.32761	.52485	8.515	232	<.001	<.001
ERA trust	.46218	.83739	.05428	.35525	.56912	8.515	237	<.001	<.001

5. Discussion and conclusion

The results contribute to three important aspects in the debate on the measurement of political trust. First, the empirical findings confirm the conceptual framework on the attributes that drive political trust as drawn from the literature review's analysis on political trust. Results show that the nine identified attributes are all influential with some variation in the extent of influence. Fairness, consistency, reliability, transparency, and competence emerge as the top five drivers of trust with openness being the least influential. This contributes to the political trust and regulatory policy literature as it not only confirms these attributes but also measures the extent of

what makes a public regulatory institution trustworthy. Zmerli's (2014) definition of political trust could be refined to recognise the attributes' varying influential extents - if the findings were generalisable, pointing to the need for further research.

Second, these findings strengthen the argument that in construct measurement, it is essential to understand what the concept means. As Schneider (2017) laments, it is a flaw to measure a construct without that understanding. The measure must reflect the construct's components or underlying influential factors – a consideration that is even more critical for latent constructs, such as trust. This has implications for the methodology used to measure constructs, leading on to the third point.

A key debate in the literature is whether to adopt a single or multidimensional measure for political trust and how to design the multidimensional measure. This decision should be guided by the nature of the construct and our understanding of that construct. The proposed multidimensional measure of political trust incorporated nine drivers, returning internal consistency, indicating that it truly measured the latent construct of trust. Single question measures, in the field of psychology, are generally deemed inappropriate to measure latent behavioural constructs. One may argue that the single-question measure of trust and the ratings for each institution had a positive and significant correlation (PA 0.667 (<.001); ERA 0.600 (<.001), implying that those who rated an institution highly using the single-question measure also provided a high composite rating. However, the single measure does not address what Seyd (2016) argues for: that the measure's design should distinguish between the meaning of trust and the reasons for the levels of trust. The proposed method for measuring political trust does. In addition, the measure's design is grounded in theoretical foundations of political trust; it has been tested for reliability and validity, including construct validity.

It is the multidimensional, stepwise design and method for measuring political trust, grounded in theoretical foundations, that is the main contribution this research makes to the literature. Building on the strengths and limitations of existing measures of trust, the proposed methodology followed four steps to measure the construct of political trust: (i) It determined drivers identified through the literature and that citizens recognise as influential on their trust in a regulatory institution; (ii) it established the extent to which the drivers are influential; (iii) the institution was rated on a scale for each factor; and (iv) each factor rating was weighted on the extent of its influence and a weighted average was computed to determine the level of trust. In addition, it allowed a comparison between the single-statement and the multidimensional measure of trust. The proposed method emerged as reliable and valid, having internal consistency in the collected data and construct validity, implying that the method of measurement matched the construct that had to be measured. Construct validity is not commonly presented but here it is particularly important. The construct measurement of political trust is this research's contribution.

Yet, the study has two primary limitations, namely that the drivers were identified from a literature review and that the empirical data were solely collected from tertiary-level students from a single country. Further research should be aimed at examining the possibility of generalising these findings. This would involve refining the set of drivers through a content analysis of a systematic literature review, conducting the study in different contexts, nationwide across a set of countries and public institutions. The questionnaire could then be refined and tested for robustness. A comparison between single-question and this multidimensional measure could follow.

In conclusion, trust is an abstract construct, and one may aptly argue that it cannot be measured. Yet, attempting its measurement can assist advancement in understanding trust, the attributes that drive it, and reasons for changing levels. Certainly, trust is complex. This proposed measure has sought to reflect that complexity. The composite measure, or at least its instrument, appears to be valid - though certainly not flawless - to provide us with a deeper understanding of what citizens value and expect from institutions.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

SURVEY ABOUT TRUST IN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORS (ERA, PA, MEPA)

Since April 4th 2016, MEPA has been split into two authorities – the Planning Authority responsible for the sustainable use of land for our planning system, and the Environment and Resources Authority set up with the aim of “safeguarding the environment for a sustainable quality of life”.

ERA (Environment and Resources Authority)
PA (Planning Authority)
MEPA (Malta Environment and Planning Authority)

Section A – Profile (/ - Tick where appropriate)

Male ☐ Female ☐ Age _____

Current in Family _____ Year of entry _____

Undergraduate ☐ Postgraduate ☐ Place of Residence _____

Have you or your family ever used the services of the following authorities?

☐ Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)
☐ Planning Authority (PA)
☐ Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)

Section B

Which of the following factors affect your level of trust?

	Not at all	Not much	Fair	Affects me	Affects me a lot
Reliability					
Responsiveness					
Openness and Inclusiveness					
Integrity					
Formality					
Competence					
Transparency					
Consistency					
Outcomes (Environment Protection, Planning Policy, Enforcement)					
Other:					

Section C

What is your level of trust in Environmental Authorities?

What is your level of trust in the Planning Authority (PA)?

What is your level of trust in the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)?

What is your level of trust in the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)?

	Distrust it greatly	Tend to distrust it	Sometimes Trust, Sometimes No	Tend to trust it	Trust it greatly
What is your level of trust in the Planning Authority (PA)?					
What is your level of trust in the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)?					
What is your level of trust in the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)?					

Section D

How do you rate the Planning Authority (PA)?

How do you rate the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)?

How do you rate the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)?

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Reliability					
Responsiveness					
Openness and Inclusiveness					
Integrity					
Formality					
Competence					
Transparency					
Consistency					
Outcomes (Environment Protection, Planning Policy, Enforcement)					
Other:					

Section E

How do you rate the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA)?

How do you rate the Planning Authority (PA)?

How do you rate the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA)?

	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Reliability					
Responsiveness					
Openness and Inclusiveness					
Integrity					
Formality					
Competence					
Transparency					
Consistency					
Outcomes (Environment Protection, Planning Policy, Enforcement)					
Other:					

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE