

After the Earthquake: Institutional Trust and Governmental Performance in Chile and Haiti

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Abstract

This paper explores the correlation between the public's trust in governmental institutions and the effectiveness of government responses to disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean—a region that is highly vulnerable to natural hazards and where public trust in government has notably fluctuated. I utilized case studies of the 2010 earthquakes in Chile and Haiti based on the high vulnerability to disasters these countries face and their contrasting socio-economic conditions, institutional capabilities, and differing outcomes in disaster management. The methodological approach combines quantitative analysis of survey data with a comparative case study analysis to discern patterns and insights into how effective disaster management impacts public trust. The paper examines differences in governmental performance, social capital, and trust in law enforcement and military institutions in both countries. It reveals that trust in these law-and-order institutions is less affected by tangible outcomes like infrastructure damage and casualties and more so by perceptions of the institutions' crisis management capabilities, which are significantly influenced by the resilience and cooperation of civilian communities during crises. The study underscores the importance of effective governance, local institutional frameworks, public perception, and political accountability in shaping public confidence post-disasters.

Introduction

Institutional trust is significantly bolstered by positive perceptions of governmental effectiveness in key areas such as economic growth, anti-corruption efforts, and the provision of public goods (Espinal et al., 2006). On the other hand, a growing lack of confidence in institutions combined with an increased excursion of scrutiny might impair a government's capacity to effectively handle critical scenarios, such as natural hazard-induced emergencies. This dynamic becomes particularly evident in disaster situations, where public expectations of government involvement are high. Individuals tend to hold the government responsible for managing unforeseeable occurrences effectively.

Over the past two decades, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have witnessed a diminishing faith in governmental institutions and a decreased sense of contentment with the functioning of democracy (Espinal et al., 2006). In the period from 2000 to 2022, Latin America and the Caribbean ranked as the world's second most vulnerable region to disasters, with 1,534 such events impacting approximately 190 million people (Espinal et al., 2006; United Nations, 2023). Given its status as the second most disaster-prone region in the world and the notable decline in public trust in governmental institutions over the past two decades, Latin America and the Caribbean present a uniquely compelling context for studying the impact of disasters on institutional trust.

In this paper, I argue that in Latin America and the Caribbean, the perception of effectiveness of government responses to disasters significantly influences public trust in governmental institutions, with more effective disaster management leading to higher levels of trust and poorly managed responses contributing to a decline in public confidence. Public

confidence can be defined as the level of trust and belief that the populace has in the effectiveness, integrity, and reliability of governmental institutions. This includes trust in law enforcement agencies, elected government officials, local government bodies, federal agencies, and belief in the democratic legitimacy of the system. Enhancing institutional trust is essential for social cohesion, stability, and effective functioning of democratic governance, enabling communities to cooperate with government initiatives and rely on their various organizations and systems for their needs and welfare. Therefore, understanding government performance in disasters is crucial. The findings are particularly salient in contexts where authorities may be less equipped to handle disasters and where the state's capacity to mitigate disaster risk is lower.

Literature Review

Public trust in government institutions is heavily influenced by perceptions of economic and political performance. For instance, Espinal et al. (2006) highlighted that in the Dominican Republic, public trust is primarily shaped by these perceptions rather than civic engagement or democratic values. Valdivieso and Andersson (2017) emphasized the importance of local political dynamics and institutional capacity in shaping public trust during crises. Similarly, Carlin et al. (2014) found that in Chile, public trust significantly decreased following the 2010 earthquake and tsunami due to perceived ineffective disaster management. This underscores the critical role of effective governance, particularly in disaster response, for maintaining public trust.

Local governance plays a pivotal role in disaster management. Valdivieso and Andersson's (2017) study on Chilean municipalities reveals that successful disaster management often results from effective local governance, characterized by strong social

participation and well-coordinated institutional arrangements. Arceneaux and Stein (2006) further support this by highlighting that local politicians are often held accountable for disaster preparedness and response, influencing public perceptions and trust during and after disasters. Arceneaux and Stein (2006) argued that voters are likely to blame government officials for inadequate disaster preparedness, especially when the government could have mitigated the disaster's impact. This aligns with broader literature on responsibility attribution, suggesting that people seek control and predictability in disasters, often attributing blame to those in power.

Social capital plays a vital role in disaster management. Valdivieso and Andersson (2017) found that communities with high levels of social capital and strong participatory networks tend to manage disasters more effectively. Social capital facilitates better communication, resource mobilization, and collective action during disasters. Aldrich (2011) also observed that communities with strong social networks and participatory governance structures recover better from disasters.

Robin Gerritsen's study (2021) on social capital and trust in the police reinforces the importance of social networks in shaping institutional trust. Using data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in the Netherlands, Gerritsen examined how interracial social capital affects trust in the police among young people with and without a migration background. The findings show that for minority groups, higher levels of interracial social capital positively influence trust in the police, whereas for majority groups, increased interracial contact can sometimes negatively impact trust. This underscores the nuanced role of social capital in different demographic contexts and highlights its potential to either build or erode

trust in public institutions depending on the nature of social interactions.

Data from the AmericasBarometer surveys conducted in Haiti and Chile during 2010 and 2012, the data I use for this study, provided significant insights into how social capital influences trust in the National Police. In both countries, individuals who perceived their community as trustworthy exhibited higher levels of trust in the National Police. Findings from Haiti indicated that individuals who viewed their community members as “untrustworthy” have the lowest average trust in the National Police at 48.4. Those who perceived their community as “not very trustworthy” have a higher average trust level of 57.1. Respondents who find their community “somewhat trustworthy” exhibit the highest average trust in the National Police at 68.2. Interestingly, those who find their community “very trustworthy” have a slightly lower average trust in the National Police (62.4) compared to those who find their community somewhat trustworthy.

Toya and Skidmore (2014) explored whether significant disaster events altered societal trust. Their study found that overall societal trust increased in countries that experienced significant disaster events, particularly storms. They suggested that preparations for and responses to storms provide opportunities for societies to engage in activities that enhance social capital. This suggests that social capital tends to appreciate with use. Toya and Skidmore’s (2014) research indicates that disasters, particularly those that can be anticipated such as storms, facilitate the building of “bridging” social capital, which helps improve societal trust. Similarly, Nooteboom (2007) highlighted the role of social capital and trust in the functioning of institutions, emphasizing that trust in institutions depends not just on their effectiveness, but also on the underlying social capital within a community.

On the other hand, corruption significantly erodes public trust and impedes good governance. Gawronski et al. (2023) illustrated that after the 2017 earthquake in Mexico, public expectations of corruption in disaster relief increased dramatically, leading to a growing disenchantment with the state's ability to manage disaster relief effectively. This disillusionment reflected declining public trust as a consequence of perceived and experienced corruption in government operations.

Understanding the relationship between government performance and institutional trust in the context of disasters is crucial for improving public policy and governance. Effective disaster management, bolstered by strong local governance and social capital, plays a significant role in maintaining and enhancing public trust in governmental institutions. Studies indicate that higher levels of social capital and effective disaster management can enhance trust in law-and-order institutions. Conversely, corruption and ineffective governance significantly erode public trust, highlighting the need for transparent and efficient disaster management strategies to foster and maintain institutional trust.

Case Selection

The 2010 earthquakes in Chile and Haiti are valuable case studies for examining the impact disasters have on the levels of trust in government, law enforcement, and military institutions, as well as satisfaction with the democratic system. In Chile, the earthquake and tsunami on February 27, 2010 led to significant consequences, including 521 fatalities, 56 individuals reported missing, over 12,000 injuries, 370,000 homes damaged or destroyed, 800,000 people displaced, and economic damages exceeding \$30 billion. This catastrophe affected at least 1.8 million individuals (about twice the population of Delaware) in Araucanía,

Biobío, Maule, O'Higgins, Region Metropolitana, and Valparaíso.

On January 12th, 2010, Haiti experienced a severe 7.0-magnitude earthquake approximately 15 miles southwest of its capital, Port-au-Prince, claiming the lives of over 230,000 individuals, injuring approximately 300,000, and rendering 1.5 million people homeless. The earthquake inflicted widespread destruction on infrastructure, including buildings, roads, educational and health facilities, and the United Nations mission headquarters. Originating from the interaction between the Caribbean and North American tectonic plates along a fault line, this calamity also triggered secondary hazards such as landslides, fires, and outbreaks of diseases (Americares, 2023).

Despite similar levels of physical exposures to disasters, Chile and Haiti present stark contrasts in socio-economic structures, crime and corruption levels, and the strength of institutions. Chile exhibits significantly higher state capacity, evident in its administrative capabilities, bureaucratic quality, and rule of law. Chile, a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, has shown strong macroeconomic stability, consistent growth in gross domestic product per capita, low unemployment, and a high Human Development Index (HDI). In contrast, Haiti, classified as a low-income country, has struggled with a weak economy, high poverty rates, and the lowest HDI in Latin America and the Caribbean. This divergence extends to democratic performance; Chile displays higher global competitiveness and ease of doing business, while Haiti has faced challenges with corruption, affecting its democracy index ranking and exacerbating issues of trust and institutional strength (Cisterna, 2022).

The 2010 Haiti earthquake was a catastrophic event exacerbated by the extreme

vulnerability of the population and the lack of preparedness and response capacity at the national level. In Chile, the high frequency of small and medium-sized earthquakes, which normally cause limited damage, have served to create a culture of earthquake preparedness among the Chilean population. The country now has rigorous building codes, conducts regular evacuation simulations, and has warning systems in place to alert the population following an earthquake (United Nations, 2023).

Methods

AmericasBarometer, a cross-national survey conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) at Vanderbilt University, measures democratic values and behaviors in the Americas using national probability samples of voting-age adults. The survey covers a wide range of topics like democracy, governance, political culture, civic engagement, and social issues. Its methodology includes a multi-stage, stratified, clustered sampling design, ensuring representative samples of the adult population in each country. The survey has specific adaptations for Chile and Haiti that stratify major administrative divisions and distinguish between urban and rural areas. Random sampling points are selected within each stratum for face-to-face interviews using a standardized questionnaire. The 2010 and 2012 datasets, particularly significant after the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, incorporated questions on housing damage and perception of government performance post-disaster. Respondents evaluated the performance of key figures and institutions that were active in disaster response for each respective country—including Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, her successor Sebastián Piñera, the Haitian National Government, local municipalities, police forces, the armed forces, foreign governments, and local NGOs—on a scale from “very good” to “very

bad.” The survey also addressed the physical and emotional impacts of the earthquakes, experiences of corruption, and broader democratic values and governance, exploring attitudes toward the necessity of political parties and satisfaction with the function of democracy in Chile and Haiti.

To analyze the effects of geophysical disasters on institutional trust, I used a multivariate ordered probit analysis using the model by Cisterna et al (2022). The dependent variable, institutional trust, was measured on a scale from one to seven, corresponding to levels of trust from minimal to very high. The analysis incorporated various covariates, including attitudes toward democracy, social capital, crime, corruption, performance assessments of institutions, government effectiveness, damage and casualties from disasters, and several control variables. My approach involved extracting relevant data from the LAPOP databases for variables of interest. This data was then imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for preliminary analyses, where I cleaned and prepared the dataset for further examination. I conducted frequency distributions and descriptive statistics to establish baseline levels of the responses, particularly focusing on the ordinal data such as performance evaluations of various entities post-disaster.

For variables not directly related to the disaster, I compared Haiti and Chile against a backdrop of other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean using LAPOP’s Data Playground feature on Tableau, which allowed for a comprehensive visualization and analysis of regional trends and differences in various sociopolitical dimensions—providing critical insights that informed my conclusions about how certain variables, particularly trust in law enforcement and victimization rates are influenced by disaster contexts compared to more stable environments.

Dependent Variable

Trust in Institutions

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate their trust in key institutions such as the presidency, military, parliament, and police forces. Questions like, “To what extent do you trust the president?” gauge the public’s trust in the president, which reflects their perception of the leader's integrity and effectiveness. Similarly, trust in the military, parliament, and police are assessed to understand the broader sentiment towards the structures that uphold law, order, and political processes in the country.

Covariates

Attitudes Toward Democracy and Social Capital

The survey captures the populace’s satisfaction with democratic processes and their political engagement through questions such as, “In general, would you say you are very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Chile?” This helps measure the perceived effectiveness and fairness of democracy in Chile. Additionally, the survey explores the respondents’ views on the support for the political system and their belief in democracy as the best form of government, indicating the depth of democratic values and civic responsibility among citizens.

Crime and Corruption

The survey asks respondents about their personal experiences with crime, for example: “Have you been a victim of any act of crime in the last 12 months?” and encounters with corruption, such as being asked for bribes by public employees. These responses help identify areas where the public feels vulnerable and where government intervention may be necessary

to ensure safety and integrity in public services. Factors of crime and corruption directly affect public perceptions of law enforcement and institutional integrity. By measuring personal victimization and experiences with corruption, I can analyze their impact on public trust, revealing how well institutions maintain or rebuild confidence under challenging conditions.

Performance Assessment of Institutions

Evaluating the performance of government institutions and leaders on aspects not related to specific events, such as earthquake response, is crucial for understanding public satisfaction with governance. Questions such as, "To what extent would you say that President Bachelet's government combated corruption in the government?" assess public opinion on various governmental actions, including fighting corruption, managing the economy, and ensuring public safety. This approach provides insights into broader public perceptions of government effectiveness and accountability, encompassing general performance evaluations beyond crisis management.

Government Performance Post-Disaster

The effectiveness of government response to disasters is a crucial aspect of governance, especially in regions prone to disasters. The survey includes questions evaluating the performance of the president, national police, emergency response institutions, and others following significant events such as earthquakes. Because Michelle Bachelet, who was the President of Chile during the 2010 earthquake left office 12 days after the earthquake as scheduled, the survey included questions evaluating both Bachelet and her successor, Sebastián Piñera.

Infrastructure Damage and Casualties

The physical and human impact of disasters can significantly influence institutional trust. Thus, I assessed questions about damage to homes and casualties within households. It is important to mention that the survey conducted in Haiti did not include questions regarding the loss of relatives or friends due to the earthquake, which could potentially influence trust levels. This gap in data may affect the comprehensiveness of the findings and suggests an area for further research to understand the full scope of factors influencing trust after such a disaster.

Control Variables

Demographic controls such as gender, age, marital status, education, and rurality were considered to ensure a comprehensive analysis that accounts for potential confounding factors.

Demographic factors demonstrate a complex relationship with institutional trust, with varying effects across different regions and institutions. For instance, being female is associated with lower trust in some institutions in Haiti, such as in the national police, with a coefficient of -0.1628 ($p < 0.01$). Age is another influential factor. Older individuals tend to trust institutions more, as seen with Chile's Carabineros (national law enforcement agency), where each additional year of age is associated with an increase in trust, indicated by a coefficient of 0.0070 ($p < 0.01$).

Marital status, indigeneity, and years of schooling also reveal varied impacts. Marital status does not show a consistent pattern, while indigeneity, in some cases, correlates with lower trust. In Haiti, indigeneity is linked to lower trust in the national government (coefficient of -0.1563, not statistically significant). Higher educational levels are not always correlated with

higher trust; for instance, in Haiti, more years of schooling slightly decrease trust in the local government with a coefficient of -0.0200 ($p < 0.1$).

Rurality affects trust differently depending on the context; rural residents in Chile, for instance, show more trust in the national government with a coefficient of 0.2171 ($p < 0.05$).

Religious participation often positively impacts trust, particularly notable in Haiti, where involvement in religious organizations leads to a significant increase in trust in the national police, with a coefficient of 0.3090 ($p < 0.01$).

These demographic and social factors together paint a detailed picture of the nuanced and multifaceted ways in which individual characteristics and societal participation shape perceptions of institutional trust.

Main Findings by Theme

Impact of Government Performance on Institutional Trust

In both Chile and Haiti, government performance after the earthquake significantly influences trust in governmental institutions (see Table 1).

Table 1: Impact of Government Performance on Institutional Trust after the Earthquake

Country	Institution	Coefficient	P-value
Chile	National Government	0.2012	$p < 0.05$
Chile	President	0.2310	$p < 0.05$
Chile	Local Government	0.0716	Not Significant
Haiti	National Government	0.2899	$p < 0.01$
Haiti	President	0.2169	$p < 0.05$
Haiti	Local Government	0.1876	$p < 0.05$

The perceived performance of specific entities, such as the President and local government plays a crucial role on public trust, with notable differences in their impact on trust between the two countries. In Chile, the populace's evaluations of performance of the President and national government significantly impacted institutional trust (see Figures 1 and 2), with positive assessments linked to higher trust, evidenced by coefficients of 0.2310 ($p < 0.05$) and 0.2012 ($p < 0.05$), respectively.

Figure 1. Populace’s Evaluations of 2010 Earthquake and Resulting Tsunami Response in Chile

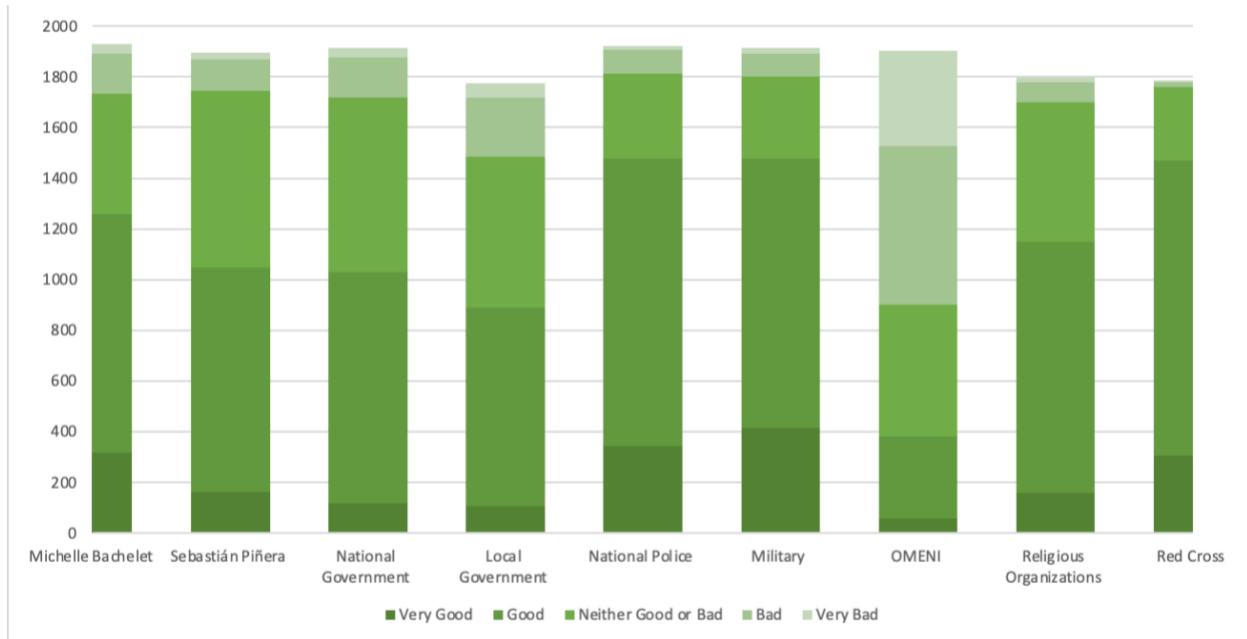
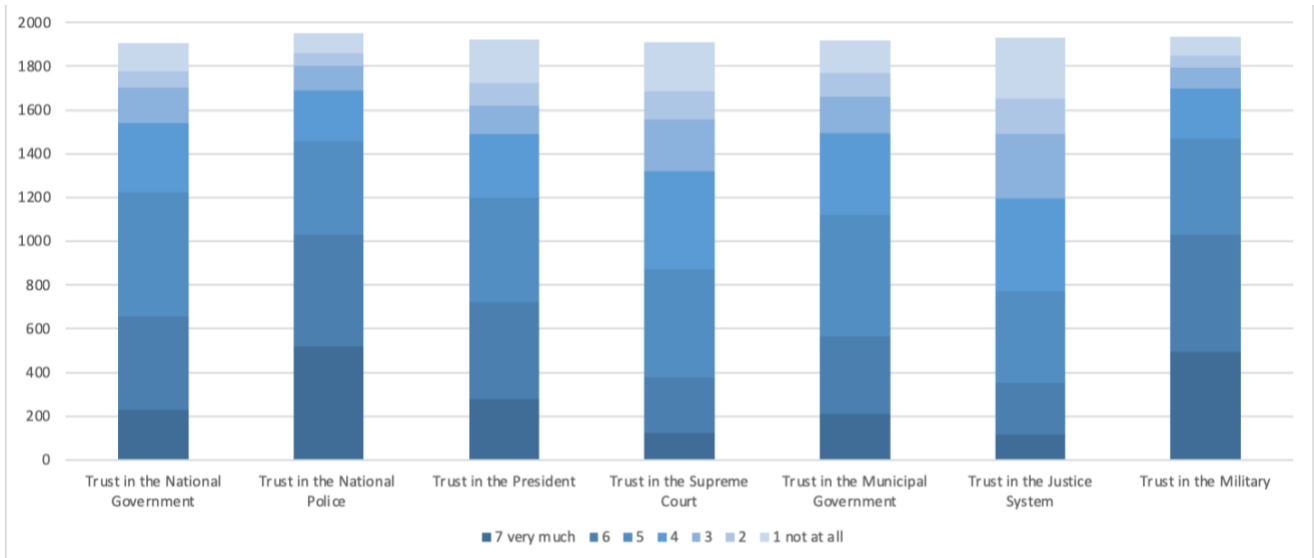


Figure 2. Populace’s Extent of Trust in Various Institutions in Chile



Conversely, in Haiti, while positive evaluations of the national government’s effective performance boosted trust (coefficient 0.2899, $p < 0.01$), local government performance more

greatly influenced trust (coefficient 0.1876, $p < 0.05$), highlighting the importance of local governance in less centralized systems with lower capacity (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Populace’s Evaluations of 2010 Earthquake Response in Haiti

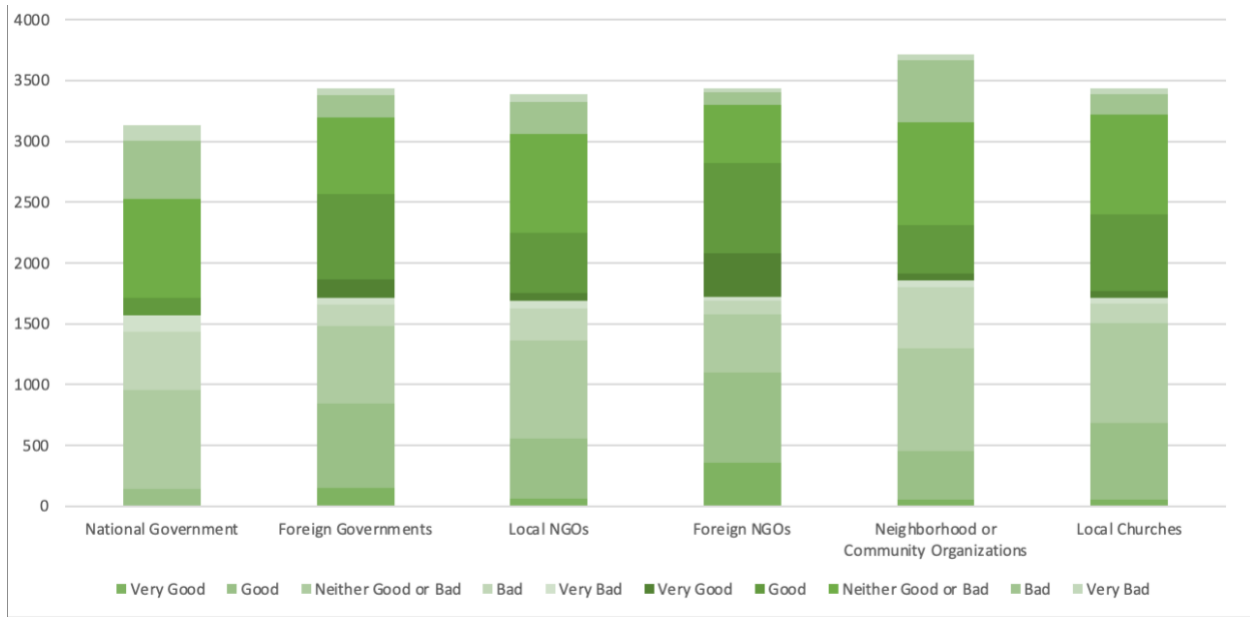
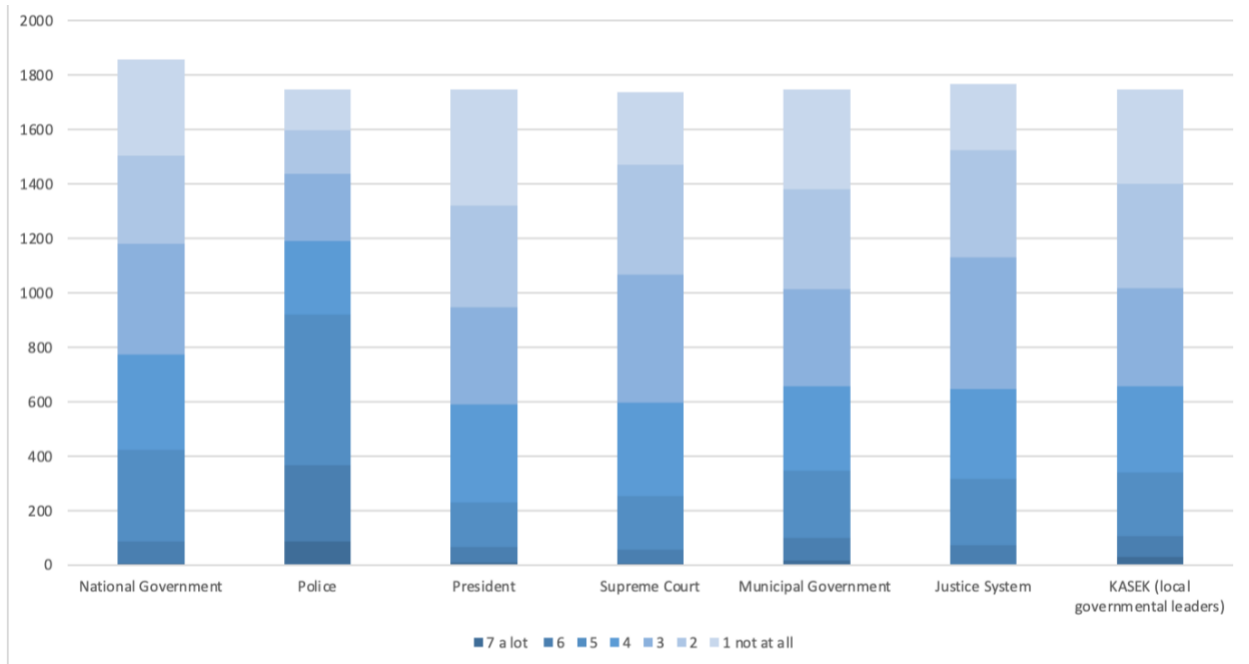


Figure 4. Populace’s Extent of Trust in Various Institutions in Haiti



The perceived benevolence of the government has a significant and positive impact on institutional trust in both Chile and Haiti ($p < 0.01$), illustrating how increased perceptions of governmental goodwill correlate strongly with enhanced trust in both countries.

Moreover, the multivariate regression analysis did not reveal a statistically significant relationship between trust in the national government and the perception of government performance following the earthquake with respect to harm experienced by households during the earthquake (GovEvalEarthQ_X_Harm coefficient = -0.091, $p = .438$ in Haiti and coefficient = -0.017, $p = .736$). The coefficient for the damage sustained by respondents’ residences also did not significantly affect trust. This supports Cisterna et al.’s (2022) model, where the interaction term for Performance \times House Damage also did not reach statistical significance in Chile, as indicated by the coefficients and p-values: -0.0747 ($p = .265$), -0.0227 ($p = .792$), and 0.0547 ($p =$

.642) for the different measures of trust in institutions.

However, it is notable that in the context of Haiti, there was a statistically significant interaction effect between government performance and neighborhood damage on trust in local government (Performance \times Neighborhood Damage coefficient = -0.0917, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that positive perceptions of government response could mitigate some of the negative impacts of earthquake damage on trust.

Attitudes Toward Democracy and Social Capital

Satisfaction with democracy is a significant predictor of trust, though its impact varies. In Chile, there is a significant association between satisfaction with democracy and trust in the national and local governments ($p < 0.05$ for both), whereas in Haiti, satisfaction with democracy is more strongly correlated with trust in the President than the local government ($p < 0.01$ for the President; p -value not significant for local government).

Political leanings and interpersonal trust interact with satisfaction with democracy, influencing trust levels differently across institutions and within the specific contexts of Chile and Haiti (see Figures 2 and 4). In Chile, where political leanings are positively associated with trust in institutions, the statistical significance ($p < 0.01$ for the president, Carabineros (national police), national government, and the military) indicates a strong alignment between individuals' political orientations and their trust in these governmental bodies. There was no statistical significance between political leanings and trust in local government.

In Haiti, the correlation between political leanings and institutional trust is similarly evident but manifests differently depending on the institution in question. For instance, the strongest correlation was between political leanings and trust in the presidency and national

police (trust in the national government was $p < 0.05$ and trust in the president and national police $p < 0.1$). Similarly, there was no statistical significance between political leanings and trust in local government.

Interpersonal trust also plays a significant role in both countries, acting as a robust predictor of institutional trust. The universally strong statistical significance ($***p < 0.01$) across both countries and various institutions underscores that a general societal trust tends to translate into higher trust in institutions. This effect is markedly strong in Haiti, especially in relation to the national police, where interpersonal trust perhaps compensates for or mitigates other institutional weaknesses.

Participation in religious organizations, particularly in Haiti, also shows a distinct positive correlation with increased institutional trust (with significant p-values such as $***p < 0.01$).

Influence of Crime, Law, and Order Institutions

In both Haiti and Chile, law-and-order institutions remained the most trusted compared to other institutions. This weighs the perceived critical role of law-and-order institutions' crisis-handling skills in preventing the erosion of institutional social capital, particularly in developing countries where authorities may be less equipped to handle disasters and where the state has a lower capacity to mitigate disaster risk, such as in Haiti.

Trust in the national police in Haiti was moderately high, and trust in Carabineros (Chile's national police) was high. In 2010, the mean trust level in the national police in Haiti was 4.20 on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being the lowest and 7 the highest on the AmericasBarometer survey. In Chile, this figure was 5.28. This indicates a level of trust that is above the midpoint of the scale. For context, in 2008 and prior to the disasters in Haiti and Chile, the mean trust level

in the national police was 4.32 and 5.04 respectively.

In Haiti, the victimization rate, or the proportion of people who reported being victims of crime, was in the “middle of the pack” in comparison to other Latin American countries. In 2010, 21% of the respondents reported being victims of crime. This rate remained stable at 20% in 2012. The rate of victimization in Chile was lower, with 16% in 2010 and 14% in 2012 (Cisterna et al., 2022).

Comparing trust in the national police with the crime rate reveals an interesting dynamic. Despite a noticeable rate of victimization, trust in the national police remained moderately high. Notably, in Haiti, being a victim of crime and corrupt behavior among police officers significantly decreased trust in law enforcement institutions ($p < 0.05$ for corrupt behavior among police officers). Positive assessments of police performance in the context of post-disaster operations substantially enhanced trust ($p < 0.01$ for police performance). The effective performance of the armed forces in disaster response similarly boosted trust ($p < 0.01$ for armed forces performance). Unlike trust in some national and local institutions, infrastructure damage and casualties due to the earthquake did not show effects on trust in law enforcement and military institutions.

Rebuilding Process and Trust

The rebuilding process after the earthquake is a critical factor affecting trust in government institutions. In Chile, the overall assessment of government performance in rebuilding positively influences trust in the President, while in Haiti, it significantly boosts trust in local government. However, Haiti did not experience an overall boost in trust in local and international national governments following the earthquake. Given the significant role played

by international organizations and foreign governments in the relief and rebuilding efforts in Haiti, trust in these institutions was higher than trust in national and local government institutions in both Haiti and Chile (Zéphyr et al., 2011).

Discussion

Effective environmental disaster risk management (EDRM) at the local government level is partly a function of the broader social and institutional context, including the extent to which individuals can work together and trust one another. Research suggests that municipalities with more transparent management and stronger internal coordination mechanisms invest more in EDRM (Valdivieso and Andersson, 2017). Performance of government institutions in managing disasters and providing services, especially local governments, significantly influences public trust. This is evident in both Chile and Haiti, with Chile's stronger state capacity mitigating some of the negative impact of disasters on trust. Other findings state that local government's efficacy is at the forefront of scrutiny; the effectiveness of a self-managed (or centrally designed) disaster risk reduction strategy, particularly in developing countries with varying levels of competence among local authorities in dealing with disasters, heavily depends on the crisis management abilities exhibited by local governments and their familiarity with the local terrain and population (Valdivieso and Andersson, 2017). These insights are crucial for understanding how government performance affects institutional trust, especially in developing countries with weaker institutions, such as Haiti.

My findings corroborate research by Espinal et al. (2006), which showed that government performance, both economic and political, is a critical factor in determining institutional trust; positive evaluations of government services and perceptions of safety and

corruption were significantly linked to trust in government institutions, though this varied across institutions. The divergence in the impact on different types of institutions underscores the intricate dynamics at play and the importance of analyzing the effects of disasters with a nuanced perspective that considers the specific roles and functions of various institutions within the context of disaster response and recovery.

The main findings regarding attitudes towards democracy and social capital support Carlin's (2014) findings that in less established democracies, citizens who suffer damage from disasters tend toward lower evaluations of democratic institutions and support for democratic values and practices. This effect is substantial, with greater damage resulting in more critical views of local government. This finding is particularly relevant for understanding the effect of disasters on institutional trust in less established democracies, like in Haiti.

This suggests that the public's attitude towards democracy can be significantly altered by disasters, particularly in contexts where democratic institutions are not firmly established. However, social capital, specifically the networks and bonds that tie citizens together, is identified as the main engine of long-term recovery from disasters (Aldrich, 2010) and is positively correlated with the level of satisfaction in democracy and institutional trust. This emphasizes the critical role of social capital in both the immediate aftermath and the long-term recovery phase of a disaster.

Trust was also impacted by law-and-order institutions. Both in Haiti and in Chile, there is little to no academic literature discussing police involvement in maintaining social order, or analyzing their level of involvement in search and rescue operations. In Haiti, news reports emerged indicating that the Haitian police were inadequately prepared to manage the crisis,

particularly in the aftermath of a prison collapse that led to the escape of 3,000 inmates (Cohen, 2010; Pilkington and Phillips, 2010). Consequently, United Nations peacekeepers and United States troops had to intervene due to the low capacity of the State (Pilkington and Phillips, 2010). In this study, I found there is a paradoxical nature of trust in law enforcement, particularly in Haiti, where despite the physical turmoil experienced as a consequence of the 2010 earthquake and ongoing socio political and economic turmoil, only moderate levels of crime victimization and corruption occurred. As a result, the trust in the national police remains relatively high.

It is believed that disasters trigger social breakdown; this is a widely held belief that often leads to the expectation of chaos and disorder following catastrophic events. However, this is a misconception of human behavior during and following disasters (Quarantelli, 2008). Contrary to this assumption, studies suggest that panic is infrequent in disasters and does not typically result in long-term negative consequences. Human responses are more often characterized by cooperation and altruism than by antisocial behaviors like looting (Mawson, 2007).

Following existing research that performance affects institutional trust, one would assume that the public's heightened trust in the police may be attributed to their supposed role in preventing societal collapse. People perceive the police as a bulwark against anticipated disorder, believing they are effectively managing what could have been a severe societal breakdown (Walker, 1996). However, the lack of chaos may not necessarily be a result of police intervention but rather an indication of the inherent resilience and cooperative nature of human behavior in times of crisis. This disconnect reveals a fundamental misunderstanding: the

expectation of social turmoil in the face of disaster is often overstated, and the stability observed is less about the efficiency of law enforcement and more about the innate social resilience of communities. In essence, this scenario illustrates a significant mismatch between public perception and reality, where the true nature of human response to disasters is often underestimated, leading to misplaced credit to police action. The resilience and cooperative nature of communities in times of crisis are central to understanding human behavior during disasters. The stability observed in these situations is more attributable to emergent, adaptive, and pro-social behavior among individuals and informal groups, rather than to formal interventions by police and other emergency services (Quarantelli, 2008). This realization emphasizes the often-underestimated innate social resilience of communities.

This suggests that while the public may perceive law enforcement as a key factor in maintaining order during crises, it is actually the social resilience and communal solidarity that play a more significant role in managing and recovering from disasters. This understanding reveals a fundamental misunderstanding in public perception, where the efficiency of law enforcement is overemphasized, and the community's inherent ability to respond to crises is underestimated.

Moreover, following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, strong patterns of community resilience and pro-social behavior were observed. Despite facing significant challenges, including weak governmental structures and limited resources, local communities demonstrated a remarkable ability to organize and respond to the disaster. Community members engaged in various recovery activities, from providing immediate assistance to participating in reconstruction efforts. This response was characterized by high levels of

cooperation and solidarity, challenging the notion that disasters inevitably lead to social breakdown and chaos (Pyles et al., 2018).

Similarly, people in earthquake-affected regions in post-disaster Chile were more likely to engage in these pro-social activities, coupled with more participation in voting and lower crime rates, as well as higher reported life satisfaction. This pattern of behavior underscores the community's inherent ability to rally and strengthen social ties in the face of adversity, though it is observed that these heightened levels of social cohesion tend to erode over time in less adverse conditions (Calo-Blanco et al., 2017).

Concurrently, my research findings on the role of attitudes towards democracy and social capital underscore the idea that the increased levels of social capital after a disaster can enhance satisfaction with democracy and institutional trust, aligning with a body of prior research (Hideki and Skidmore, 2014; Nooteboom, 2007). This social capital plays a vital role in maintaining order and aiding recovery, positively impacting public trust in law-and-order institutions and respect for the rule of law.

Conclusion

This paper revealed two distinct but interconnected determinants of public trust in Latin America and the Caribbean following disasters. Firstly, the effectiveness of governmental performance in disaster response is a significant factor. Effective disaster management leads to enhanced public trust, while poor management results in trust erosion, particularly in regard to elected officials and federal administrative agencies. Trust in national and local institutions is negatively influenced by tangible factors like infrastructure damage and casualties but can be mitigated by positive perceptions of governmental performance. However, trust in law

enforcement and military institutions is less tethered to these measurable outcomes. This phenomenon arises due to the capacity of civilians and communities to exhibit resilience and cooperation during times of crisis, shaping a favorable perception of these institutions' crisis management capabilities. In turn, this affects trust more than their actual effectiveness.

This distinction is crucial in understanding public trust dynamics, highlighting that it is not solely the concrete actions of law enforcement that matter, but also how civilian actions can increase institutional trust. The study partially validates its thesis that governmental effectiveness increases institutional trust in municipal and federal governments. However, the factors affecting trust in law-and-order institutions are more complex. Understanding institutional trust in disaster contexts requires a multifaceted approach, considering both the direct effects of government response and the indirect influence of societal resilience.

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