

ABSTRACT

The concept of Governance introduces private sector and civil society as major actors alongwith the traditional player, the government, in the management of a country's resources and affairs. The focus, the manner, and the channels for the use of resources in running the affairs of a state determine the direction of governance and the degree of goodness contained. The qualitative addendum of 'Good' with Governance makes it even more difficult to measure. Nevertheless, the researchers, world over, have mostly agreed on a minimal core of characteristics of Good Governance which include, inter alia, efficiency, equity, responsiveness, rule of law, transparency, accountability and decentralization.

This study makes an attempt to measure these macro variables at the micro level. Irrigation being the lifeline of agriculture in Pakistan, its governance environment at the basic operative level i.e. a canal command system was chosen for study in the province of Punjab.

Primary Data was collected from 101 farmers and associations and inter linkages between various attributes were checked by cross tabulation and Chi-square tests. The study tried to capture the experiences and perceptions of the farmers interacting with the Irrigation Department by developing an econometric model using regression techniques. Perceptions of officials of the Department were also studied.

In this study an attempt has been made to develop a measurable model at micro level for a concept, which is primarily qualitative. The exploratory model thus developed lays broad contours of measurability for future research.

The variables found operative in determining the state of governance in the field offices of Irrigation Department stand out as size of the farm, level of the farmer, role played by the local influential, and a collective count of elements of bad governance like lack of transparency, ineffective monitoring, complexity of procedure, indifferent behaviour of government functionaries towards farmers, lack of knowledge, centralization of power, bribe and other forms of corruption, and inefficiency. Ironically period of disposal of petitions is inversely related to scores on bad governance variable. Amongst an all-pervasive environment of bad governance, the speed money turns out to be the single most important determinant of internal working of field offices in the Irrigation Department along with the external influence.

Main findings of the study are that, on average, a farmer had to pay 40 visits, spend Rs.11,589/- and take 21 months to get solved a petition submitted to the local I&P Office. The opportunity cost of his time is over and above these financial costs.

The study concludes with a set of recommendations aiming at long term solutions to the rampant problems of bad governance in the field offices, including a comment on the reforms currently under way in the Irrigation Department of Punjab.