How do policy actors assess Southern think tanks?

Insight into factors affecting perceptions of performance in policy communities

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Abstract

Think tanks are increasingly seen as influential players in shaping development policy and practice. In this context, understanding the characteristics that are associated with their success in policy arenas is important for researchers, think tanks themselves, and donors who support capacity building for policy research. Based on cross-institution, cross-country data from IDRC's Think Tank Initiative, this exploratory research investigates factors affecting senior policy actors' perceptions of Southern think tanks, both within and across different domestic policy communities. This research has been conducted using multivariate econometric analysis, and draws on extensive data that covers 49 think tanks in 22 countries in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa. Several statistically significant relationships were identified between policy actors' perceptions of institutions' performance, and indicators of organizational capacity, communications and outreach activities, and policy environment. Factors affecting perceptions of performance include the amount and the sources of funding; respondents' degree of familiarity with surveyed organizations; and the nature of the policy environment. The analysis reveals mixed results on the effect of communications and research quality control. In sum, interesting patterns have been identified which raise questions for further investigation.

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Comment les acteurs de la sphère des politiques évaluent-ils les instituts de recherche sur les politiques?

Comprendre les facteurs affectant la perception de la performance dans les communautés des politiques

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Sommaire

Les instituts de recherche sur les politiques, ou think tanks, sont de plus en plus considérés comme des acteurs influents dans l'élaboration des politiques et des pratiques en développement. Dans ce contexte, une bonne compréhension des facteurs associés à leur succès dans les sphères des politiques s'avère importante pour les chercheurs, les think tanks et les bailleurs de fonds qui soutiennent le renforcement des capacités pour la recherche sur les politiques. Cette étude exploratoire se base sur des données trans-institutionnelles et relatives à divers pays collectées par l'Initiative Think Tank du Centre de recherches pour le développement international (CRDI). L'étude explore plusieurs facteurs pouvant influer sur la manière dont les acteurs de la sphère des politiques perçoivent les think tanks dans diverses communautés des politiques. L'étude s'appuie sur des analyses économétriques multivariées en utilisant des données provenant d'une vaste enquête couvrant 49 think tanks dans 22 pays d'Amérique latine, d'Asie du Sud et d'Afrique. Plusieurs relations statistiquement significatives ont été identifiées entre, d'une part, les perceptions qu'ont les acteurs du milieu des politiques sur la performance des instituts de recherche et, d'autre part, des indicateurs de capacité organisationnelle, des activités de communications et de rayonnement ainsi que de l'environnement politique. Les données suggèrent que la perception de la performance est affectée, entre autres, par le montant et la source du financement institutionnel, le degré de familiarité des répondants avec les instituts de recherche et la nature de l'environnement politique. L'analyse révèle des résultats mitigés sur l'effet des activités des communications et les indices de la qualité de la recherche. En somme, les tendances identifiées soulèvent des questions pertinentes qui méritent d'être approfondies.

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Keywords: Policy research organization, think tank, monitoring and evaluation, performance, reputation, South Asia, Latin America, Africa, IDRC, Think Tank Initiative

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Think tanks are independent, non-governmental organizations that produce research-based evidence that address policy issues, and seek to inform and influence policy making processes through various engagement strategies. They are increasingly seen as influential players in shaping development policy and practice. In this context, this paper seeks to answer the following question: what affects policy community actors' perceptions of think tanks? Having a better understanding of the characteristics of think tanks that are associated with their good standing in policy communities would be helpful. Indeed, think tanks are constantly thinking about ways to increase the impact and uptake of their work, and pay heed to their reputation among key policy stakeholders. Likewise, donors seek to design effective capacity building programming for think tanks that allows them to increase their performance and policy impact.

This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the factors that enable think tanks in developing countries to be perceived as successful in the policy communities (i.e. their reputational performance). To achieve this objective, this research takes advantage of the data collected by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)'s Think Tank Initiative (TTI).[3] TTI is a multi-donor program dedicated to strengthening the capacity of independent policy research organizations (i.e. "think tanks") in the developing world. Since its inception, the Think Tank Initiative has collected, as part of its monitoring and evaluation efforts, a plethora of valuable information from Southern think tanks and policy stakeholders. The data includes various factors related to the work of think tanks and the characteristics of elite-level policy making communities in 22 countries. The TTI sample therefore represents a rich source of cross-country, cross-institution data on think tanks in developing countries. This study uses TTI data to empirically test hypotheses of how factors affect, or not, the perception of think tank performance by policy stakeholders. The types of factors considered include the domestic policy environment, organizational capacities and strategies, and policy actors' characteristics.

Studies about think tanks' involvement in policy spheres are rarely based on quantitative methods.[4] This gap in the literature is due to two main reasons. First, the notion of success is

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[3] The Think Tank Initiative (TTI) is managed by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The Initiative is a partnership between IDRC, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and the Netherlands Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS). See www.thinktankinitiative.org

[4] A notable exception is a study by Struyk and Haddaway (2011). Based on a survey of policy community participants in 19 countries on the effectiveness of 34 policy research organizations in both transition and developing countries, they conducted regression analyses of five dimensions of success constructed from survey questions. One of the main findings of their paper was to establish statistically significant relationships between indicators of policy research organizations' success, on the one hand, and

inherently hard to define and measure, for organizations' goals, attributes, and contexts vary greatly, making it challenging to engage in comparisons. Second, data on think tanks' operations, capabilities, and performance are scarce. For example, qualitative research techniques such as country or institution case studies, policy influencing intervention process tracing, *inter alia,* are usually utilized to explain the development of think tanks. Indeed, qualitative research methods provide valuable tools to conduct in-depth studies with rich narratives that take context fully into account.

This research paper, however, does not seek to explain success in terms of specific policy influencing interventions. Nor does it seek to assess or judge how think tanks operate in their own political contexts, or to explain the founding and evolution of think tanks. Instead, it posits that some internal characteristics of think tanks, as well as those of the context in which they operate, are related to how key stakeholders of the policy making community perceive their success in the policy arena. This study explores a number of potential sources of variation in how senior policy actors assess the work of think tanks. The value of statistical methods is that it allows for exploring the effects of multiple factors simultaneously, and to estimate their relative weight in terms of explaining reputational outcomes (i.e. perceptions of performance measured through survey). What makes policy actors more likely to provide positive assessment of think tank performance? How do policy actors' characteristics affect their attitudes toward think tanks? How does variation in types of funding or staffing, or a change in communications activities and policy linkages, affect perceptions of performance by policy actors? These are some of the questions that this research tackles.

In the section below, a brief review of the literature pertaining to think tanks and approaches for understanding and measuring their performance is provided. Then, the research methodology is explained. Thirdly, empirical findings from a systematic analysis of key factors which may affect reputational outcomes for think tanks are presented. Limitations of the research design are discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research and concluding remarks are provided.

1.2. Background

Think tanks are important players in the knowledge environment. They produce research that addresses policy issues and seek to engage with policy making processes through various strategies. Think tanks vary greatly in size, goals, resources, organizational structure, focus of work, and significance. The political, cultural, institutional, economic, and policy contexts in which they operate differ significantly. While there are considerable difficulties in defining 'think tanks,' several authors have explored ways in which they can be described and classified (e.g. Stone and Denham 2004; Abelson 2009; McGann and Weaver 2000; Rich 2004). The Think Tank Initiative provides a detailed definition of a think tank: an independent, non-

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attributes of policy research organizations (i.e. the way they operate, and the context in which they operate) on the other.

governmental organization that conducts rigorous and impartial research; is not financially dependent on a single source of funds; is nonpartisan and politically neutral; is committed to publishing research findings in the public domain; and has the ability to set an independent research agenda. This paper follows this definition of think tanks.

Traditionally, think tanks were viewed as bridges between knowledge and power. This understanding emphasized their role as knowledge producers and communicators. Think tanks not only seek to generate knowledge and transmit research to policy; they pursue policy change, try to enhance the level of public debate on important policy issues, and can also play a role in legitimizing policies. Think tanks use varying strategies to achieve their desired impact in the policy process, a complex process shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors. Some think tanks aim to achieve policy influence through behind-the-scenes engagement with high-profile policy makers; others actively engage with the media or seek to raise public awareness about policy issues by focusing on advocacy. Think tanks, therefore, in addition to being research organizations, are political actors, a manifestation of the knowledge/power nexus (Stone 2007). This explains why think tanks are usually studied within the broad domain of politics, knowledge, ideas, and power.[5]

A significant body of work seeks to explain how think tanks develop in different contexts. For instance, Stone and Denham (2004) examine the different origins and traditions of think tanks across different regions. Similarly, Datta, Jones, and Mendizabal (2010) cluster think tank traditions according to regional political, economic, and socio-economic trends, and provide an overview of the development of think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia. In a similar vein, other studies explore the origins and development of think tanks in sub-Saharan Africa (Kimenyi and Datta 2011), South Asia (Srivastava 2011) and Southeast Asia (Nachiappan, Mendizabal, and Datta 2010). Other studies examine the growth, development, and organizational structure of think tanks in transitional China (Zhu and Xue 2007), and the role of think tanks in post-conflict settings (Jones et al. 2009).

A constant focus of applied research relates to the question of policy influence – when and how does research produced by think tanks succeed in informing policy debates and influencing policy development? An important body of work, comprised of cross-institution and cross-country qualitative studies that examine cases of successful 'research to policy' – i.e. influence of policy research in the policy process (Carden 2009; Court and Young 2003; Braun et al. 2010). Carden (2009) shows that research for development can influence public policy and decision-making in different ways depending on whether the government has an interest in the issue and the capacity (resources and leadership) to respond. Court and Young (2003) analyze 50 case

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[5] The blog *On think tanks* (http://onthinktanks.org/) provides a wealth of interesting thoughts and findings about think tanks.

studies bridging research to policy in developing countries. Braun et al. (2010) provide a comparative study of 18 policy research organizations. These studies provide valuable findings about the work and impact of think tanks in developing countries.

2. Analytical Framework

2.1. Understanding success

Defining and measuring success for think tanks (and any institution) is a challenging endeavour. There is very little guidance available in the literature on what constitutes "success" for think tanks and how this might be measured in relation to specific contexts. [6] Most would agree that achieving policy influence in the policy making process, i.e. having a certain degree of influence upon the adoption of a specific policy that is supported by evidence from research, is a prominent goal of think tanks. While the impact of think tanks in the public policy process has received significant attention in the literature, there appears to be no common and systematic method for monitoring and evaluating the impact of think tanks (Alcázar et al. 2012).

The research conducted by think tanks can affect policy in various ways, such as improving the knowledge of policy actors and introducing new policy ideas into public debate or into private policy maker discussions (Court and Young 2003). In addition to setting the agenda, think tanks can set the terms of public debate, define problems, and shape policy perceptions. This ability to influence the general climate of thinking about policy, and thus changing policy makers' frame of reference, has been described as 'atmospheric' influence (James 2000).[7] Moreover, successful think tanks can demonstrate leadership and collaboration with other stakeholders to find solutions and carry out tasks beyond the production of research (Grupo FARO 2012).

Nevertheless, some scholars are skeptical of claims that think tanks have direct impact on politics or policies (e.g. Stone and Denham 2004; Weidenbaum 2010). The extended nature of the public policy process, the elusive nature of impact or influence, and the diversity of policy actors involved, make it challenging to methodologically determine the extent to which a think tank influenced a particular policy decision (Weidenbaum 2010). As Weidenbaum explains, [it] "typically takes a decade or more for an idea to be transformed into a specific public policy decision. In the process, a variety of individuals and organizations, in government as well as the private sector, are involved in the inevitable modification of the original idea into a specific statute or regulation" (2010: 135). Indeed, it is difficult, and often inaccurate to equate think tank policy research with policy impact. Impact at the formal policy level (e.g. change in legislation) might not often translate directly into 'concrete' impact such as improvement in people's lives.

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[6] Jones (2011) provides a useful attempt at providing ways to consider, monitor, and evaluate policy influence around five dimensions of broadly conceptualized 'policy impact'.
[7] Cited in Stone and Denham (2004: 11)

Another problem is that so-called objective measures of success or impact are often difficult to encounter. For example, the most commonly used indicators of impact, such as number of papers produced, meetings attended, web hits, frequency of appearance on national television or radio, among others, are in fact measures of intermediary output – visibility – rather than impact on public policy (Weidenbaum, 2010). For instance, media citations are not necessarily synonymous with policy influence. Mendizabal (2009) deplores that "communications is slowly becoming the only means to influence (and in some cases the objective itself), rather than one strategy among many." The emphasis on visibility has been increased by the University of Pennsylvania's *Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report* (McGann 2010). It should be noted that this reputation-based ranking of think tanks worldwide has attracted considerable coverage and criticism.[8]

Notwithstanding the problems that global rankings may generate, the concept of reputation provides valuable insights into success for think tanks. Indeed, building and sustaining a solid reputation is of tremendous importance for think tanks, which strive to demonstrate their neutrality and independence as well as the quality and policy relevance of their research. How think tanks are perceived by policy stakeholders can affect their success in influencing policy. Policy actors use different types of organizations as sources for research-based evidence: government ministries and agencies, international agencies, academia, think tanks, etc. Organizational reputation, therefore, might not only indicate credibility but also the extent of research use (uptake) in policy making communities (Alcázar et al. 2012). Finally, in many circumstances, think tanks may exercise the most influence working discreetly with key stakeholders behind the scenes. This kind of influence cannot be easily captured; however, the concept and measure of reputation might allow for capturing, to some extent, the informal dynamics at play within policy communities.

Accordingly, reputation, or perceptions of performance in policy arenas, represents a useful and operationalizable concept for research. For instance, Struyk and Haddaway (2011) view success for policy research organizations as having "a strong reputation for being constructively engaged in multiple ways in the policy process." Similarly, this research examines the reputation dimension of success for think tanks in policy communities. Think tanks may be viewed as high performing organizations, or not, by policy community actors; what affects those views or attitudes is the object of our inquiry.

2.2. Factors affecting reputational outcome

Several factors which potentially affect how policy actors perceive the performance of think tanks in policy arenas have been identified in the literature.[9] These factors can be grouped into

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[8] For instance, see Mendizabal (2009) for a critique of the emphasis on visibility and index ranking. Also, see Roodman and Clark (2012).

[9] Factors that affect the ability of think tanks to influence or impact policy can be divided into endogenous and exogenous variables. Endogenous variables are internal characteristics that reflect the

four categories: 1) organizational characteristics; 2) communications and outreach efforts; 3) the domestic policy environment; and 4) policy actors' characteristics. These factors are discussed below and hypotheses on their likely effect on reputational outcome are provided.

1. Organizational characteristics

Think tanks vary greatly in terms of mission and objectives. Organizations that place more emphasis on advocacy might emphasize communications and policy outreach activities, and seek to build highly effective coalitions of support with various stakeholders for policy change. However, it is possible that a focus on advocacy may jeopardise a think tank's reputation for non-partisanship, independence, and neutrality. On the other hand, research-heavy organizations might have close links with academia but be less interested in or apt at reaching out to the public or the media.

The capacity to successfully engage in policy making efforts depends on organizational and institutional structure. As explained by Abelson (2009: 62), "the ability or inability to market [think tanks'] ideas effectively may have as much to do with how they define their missions, the directors who lead them, the resources they have, and the strategies they employ to achieve their stated goals as with the political environment." While Abelson makes reference to the "market for ideas" in the US and Canada, this observation is arguably equally valid for Southern countries. In other words, internal features of a think tank such as the human and financial resources available, management practices, how research processes take place within the organization, the various networks it belongs and has access to, among others, shape the ability of think tanks to have an impact on policies.

Another key organizational feature is funding, which is consistently mentioned as a factor affecting the work of think tanks. Abelson (2009) found that for think tanks in the US and Canada, "achieving financial independence is the most significant obstacle they must overcome to ensure a strong presence in the policy-making community (64)." Indeed, funding is crucial to all aspects of think tank capacity, from recruiting qualified staff in order to conduct policy research and communications, to quality and scope of outreach and policy engagement activities. The funding problem is ever more salient in developing country contexts, as think tanks tend to rely heavily on foreign funding. Fiscal uncertainty, competitive pressures for attention and funding, and organizational insecurity are common in the non-profit world in the South (Cooley and Ron 2002). Organizations like think tanks respond to incentives; they may have short-term outlooks, stunting long term planning and positioning. Likewise, research agendas, especially in the case of project-specific funding, tend to be defined by donor

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role, identity, management, and activities of an organization. In this research, key explanatory variables include funding structure, internal capabilities, and practice. Exogenous variables are factors related to the context or external environment which think tanks cannot directly control but that can affect their operation, performance, and impact. See Braun et al. (2010).

preferences and priorities, instead of being fully rooted in local demands and needs for evidence. Long term and flexible (core) funding is necessary to conduct strategic planning. In sum, attaining some degree of financial independence and sustainability, by being able to diversify income sources and having access to core funding, is of crucial importance to think tanks.

Moreover, the sources of funding might have an effect on how think tanks are perceived by local policy actors. In some contexts, foreign sources of funding might indicate credibility. In others, the opposite might be true. For instance, think tanks that receive funds from domestic governments might be more likely to work on national priority issues, as opposed to foreign priorities. Arguably, think tanks whose funding originates from domestic sources may have broader exposure to local policy stakeholders than those predominantly dependent upon foreign donors.

Lastly, it takes time for any organization to establish itself, and build and maintain a strong reputation. Over time, think tanks develop their research, management, and communications skills. They also learn how to reach out to different types of policy stakeholders, and in the process, build useful networks. Well-known, established think tanks have capacity building programmes (e.g. young professional programmes) that attract newly trained staff equipped with novel, state-of-the art research methods and/or communications tools.

> *Hypothesis 1: The amount and the source of funding are likely to influence the policy community's perception of think tanks performance*

> *Hypothesis 2: Established, well-known organizations are likely to have stronger reputations*

2. Communications and outreach strategies and activities

The core aspect of think tanks' work is the production of research. The production of high quality research is fundamental to the success of think tanks, and quality research[10] outputs are expected. For example, reputable organizations are generally expected to have senior research staff (with PhDs), to rely on internal quality control policies and practices for research outputs, and to publish in peer-reviewed publications. Although think tanks may focus on conducting research, they also engage with various actors and push for their ideas and policy recommendations. They use a number of communications and outreach vehicles to disseminate results to decision makers, and to inform the public. This includes, for example, organizing press conferences, making guest appearances on television, and working with reporters. The way that research is communicated affects the credibility of the organization. Think tanks also actively engage in networking with policy stakeholders. Efforts at policy engagement include interacting with stakeholders and directly or indirectly informing or influencing the policy

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[10] Quality research is defined as being evidence-based, robust, rigorous, relevant, and up to date.

debate. Communications and outreach efforts also include synthesizing, packaging, and distributing research results, throughout the research cycle. Still, think tanks may be more influential working with key stakeholders behind the scenes. In such a case, it is difficult to uncover the extent and effect of those links.

> *Hypothesis 3: Strict quality control practices should positively affect perceptions of performance*

> *Hypothesis 4: The use of communications and outreach strategies improves a think tank's reputation among policy stakeholders*

3. Domestic policy environment

The environment in which think tanks operate has a profound influence on their strategies and impact. Court and Young (2003) find context to be the most important factor in determining whether research leads to policy impact. Different institutional and cultural environments affect think tank modes of operation and their ability or inability to influence policy (Stone and Denham 2004: 4). The nature of the political system, legislation, labour, and tax laws governing the NGO and non-for-profit sector, characteristics of the civil service bureaucracy, as well as the degree of press freedom and the availability and easiness to access information *inter alia,* affect the ability of think tanks (and of other knowledge actors) to influence or inform policy through research-based evidence. These are just a sample of factors that affect the demand for, and supply of, research-based evidence as well as its uptake.

Furthermore, developing country contexts tend to be characterised by weaker institutions and civil service, and less institutionalized decision-making settings. As explained by Alcázar et al. (2012), "developing country [think tanks] often operate in more unstable economic and political contexts, where the use of research evidence for policy making is less frequent, and there are fewer institutionalised channels to help the knowledge transfer process". This may create both challenges and opportunities for think tanks' contributions to public policy processes. Carden (2009) shows that research can influence public policy and decision-making in different ways depending on whether the government has an interest in the issue and the capacity (resources and leadership) to respond.

Because think tanks in this study are assessed by policy community stakeholders within their specific domestic policy community context, cross-country differences in variables pertaining to the environment in which think tanks operate should not affect how policy actors perceive think tank performance. More specifically, policy actors within a given country should provide an assessment of think tanks that is based on the particular nature of the market for policy research in that country. However, Struyk and Haddaway (2011) found that "policy environment conditions do have important effects" in terms of explaining variation of perception of think tank performance. Context or environment factors therefore require careful consideration.

Hypothesis 5: The nature of the policy environment context affects the attitudes of policy actors toward think tank performance.

4. Policy actors' characteristics

Policy actors' characteristics might affect how they provide feedback about the work and performance of think tanks. For example, the degree of prior exposure to an organization arguably should affect assessment of think tank performance. Moreover, in many contexts, there is a revolving door between government and think tanks. It is thus reasonable to assume that, in making a judgment on the work of think tanks, policy actors may be biased in favor of organizations they know, have heard of or worked with.

An important consideration is that different types of policy actors require different types of research-based evidence; likewise, think tanks engage with members of the media community, government officials, private sector stakeholders, NGO workers, or academic researchers in different ways. Think tanks might, for instance, tailor their research and advice to respond to the specific needs of the target audience. In return, expectations about the role of think tanks, and demands from policy actors will vary. Therefore, occupation might affect how policy actors view think tank performance.

Hypothesis 6: Policy actors' characteristics are likely to influence their perceptions of think tanks performance.

3. Methodology

This research explores factors affecting how senior policy actors perceive the performance of Southern think tanks, both within and across different domestic policy communities.[11] The analysis is conducted by exploiting data from a multi-country survey of senior-level policy actors on think tank's performance. Regression analysis tools are used to explore a series of hypotheses on potential sources of variation in perceptions of performance. An econometric approach allows for exploring numerous variables simultaneously.[12] These include organizational- and respondent-level characteristics as well as context.

In the section below, the sources of data for the analysis are first briefly presented. Then, the dependent variables specifically examined in this study, that is, measures of policy actor perceptions of think tank performance, are introduced. Finally, the independent variables included in the analysis are presented, before moving to the empirical findings.

3.1.   Sources of data

As mentioned above, this research uses data collected by the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) on various factors related to the operations and strategies of think tanks, and to the characteristics of elite-level policy making communities in 22 countries. The institutions covered include ten think tanks from West Africa; eleven from East Africa; twelve from Latin America; and sixteen from South Asia.[13] More details are available below.

Table 1: Countries and numbers of think tanks included in the analysis by region

West Africa	*East Africa*	*Latin America*	*South Asia*
Benin (1)	Ethiopia (2)	Bolivia (2)	Bangladesh (2)
Burkina Faso (1)	Kenya (2)	Ecuador (2)	India (9)
Ghana (2)	Uganda (3)	El Salvador (2)	Nepal (1)
Nigeria (4)	Rwanda (1)	Guatemala (1)	Pakistan (2)
Senegal (2)	Tanzania (3)	Honduras (1)	Sri Lanka (2)
		Paraguay (2)	
		Peru (2)	

Table 2 below provides some general characteristics (age, number of full-time staff and work mix) of organizations included in the sample.

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[11] It is important to stress here that the purpose is not to provide a ranking of the "best" or most reputable think tanks across the world. Rather, it uses a new dataset which includes data on policy community stakeholders' perceptions of think performance to test hypotheses on a number of enabling factors.
[12] Regression analysis is a helpful method to understand which among the independent variables are related to the dependent variable, and to explore the forms and extent of these relationships (e.g. Wooldridge 2003).
[13] For confidentiality and sensitivity reasons, names of individual organizations are rendered anonymous in both the database and the analysis.

Table 2: Description of the organizations included in the sample

		Africa	Latin America	South Asia
Number of organizations		21	12	16
Age	Younger: Less than 15 years old	12	5	6
	Older: More than 15 years old	9	7	10
Number of full-time staff	Mean	24	30	45
	Min	2	4	14
	Max	74	83	82
Work mix	60% or less research / 40% or more advocacy	4	6	8
	75% research / 25% advocacy	8	4	4
	90% research /10 advocacy	9	2	4

This research takes advantage of the following sets of data collected by the Think Tank Initiative: 1) a Policy Community Survey, and 2) TTI M&E database.

Sources of data: Policy Community Survey

The Policy Community Survey (PCS) was commissioned by IDRC in 2009 and conducted by Globescan. The survey was conducted in the 22 countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia where the Think Tank Initiative is active. It gathered the views of a total of 985 senior-level policy- and decision-makers on their needs for research-based evidence to support policy making work, types of information they use, perceptions of research quality, and assessment of several aspects of think tank performance. Respondents were asked questions relating to their own national policy contexts. It also sought to better understand the areas of relative strengths and weaknesses of particular think tanks. This quantitative survey therefore provides valuable information to reflect on what activities and aspects of organizational capacity are associated with the success of think tanks.

With regards to the methodology of the survey, respondents were selected on the basis of their roles as active, senior members of their respective national policy community, engaged in developing or influencing national government policy. The organizations supported by the Think Tank Initiative were involved in supplying potential respondent names. It is therefore important to acknowledge the interest and potential bias the respondents may have in the survey's subject matter. Finally, the survey was conducted using a mix of online, telephone and face-to-face interview. Out of a total of 985 interviews, 252 were completed online and 733 through offline methodologies (GlobeScan 2011: 11). Respondents were grouped into the following policy actor categories:

- Senior government officials (both elected and nonelected) who are directly involved in or influence policy making;
- Senior staff at non-governmental organizations whose mission is related to economic development, environmental issues, and/or poverty alleviation;
- Editors or journalists who report on public policy, finance, economics, international affairs and/or development, who are knowledgeable about national policy issues;
- Senior staff from bilateral organizations (e.g. DFID, USAID, etc.), or multilateral organizations (e.g. UN agencies, World Bank, etc.);
- Senior staff working at large national and multinational companies (in the private sector);
- Senior staff at universities, colleges, research institutes, and/or think tanks;
- Senior representatives of national trade unions (only in Latin America).[14]

Sources of data: TTI's monitoring and evaluation data

The second source of data is a database implemented by TTI as part of its Monitoring & Evaluation strategy.[15] In addition to baseline data collected at the beginning of the grant period, an annual monitoring questionnaire is administered yearly to all TTI grantees to collect a set of data on various characteristics such as the organization's profile and staff composition; funding; research activities and outputs; organizational performance and governance; and outreach, communications, and policy linkages. This information has been collected and triangulated by regional program staff since 2008. Lastly, in addition to the above-mentioned programmatic sources of data, information about the external environments in which sampled think tanks are operating, such as quality of national institutions and state capacity, was collected from World Governance Indicators.

3.2. Policy actors' perceptions of performance: dependent variables

This research uses data from the Policy Community Survey (PCS) to build two different sets of dependent variables. The PCS assigns 49 think tanks included in the sample scores by policy stakeholders on several dimensions of performance. Note that the unit of observation for each of the dependent variables is the aggregate rating by a respondent for the PCS. Respondents were asked to provide an assessment on each TTI-supported think tank in their country for which they had basic familiarity. Some respondents therefore provided more than one response. This explains why the number of observations for each dependent variable is larger than the number of PCS respondents.

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[14] See GlobeScan (2011) for more information on respondents.
[15] For more information on TTI's monitoring & evaluation, see Think Tank Initiative (2010).

First, a composite variable named *Rating of organization's overall performance (short name: org_performD3)* is created by combining the scores from several questions from the PCS. [16] Respondents were asked the following question: "How would you rate this research organization's performance in each of the following areas currently?" These dimensions are as follow: 1) Focus on high priority issues; 2) Effective engagement with policy makers; 3) Effective partnering with public policy actors other than policy makers; 4) Regional/local knowledge; 5) Knowledge of the policy making process; 6) Dissemination of research/recommendations; 7) Clear communication of its mission, programs and activities; 8) Providing informed critique of public policy; 9) Quality and expertise of its researchers; and 10) Value of its in-person events.

Table 3: Rating of organization's overall performance

Rating of organization's overall performance	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Poor	24	2.22	2.22
Average	153	14.13	16.34
Good	512	47.28	63.62
Very good	394	36.38	100
Total	1,083	100	

Within each dimension, think tanks were given a score of up to 5 points. Scores for the *Rating of organization's overall performance* thus ranges from a minimum of 10 up to a maximum total of 50 points. To facilitate the analysis, these scores were brought back to a 4-point scale through the following transformation: 40 to 50 = 4 (very good); 30 to 40 = 3 (good); 20 to 30 = 2 (average); and less than 20 = 1 (poor). All dimensions are highly correlated with each other, and represent a particular aspect of the overall construct, thereby providing reasonable confidence in the validity of the new variable. [17] Notwithstanding the different roles, functions, and goals of think tanks, scores on the *Rating of organization's overall performance* variable should, arguably, provide a fair reflection of policy actors' overall perceptions of the aggregate performance of surveyed think tanks. Table 3 above provides some descriptive statistics.

Second, the variable named *Rating of organization's research output (short name: res_performD4)* is created by combining the scores pertaining to seven aspects of think tank research outputs. [18] Respondents were asked to answer the following question "Overall, how would you rate each of the following aspects of this research organization's outputs?" The aspects included are the following: clarity, availability, accuracy and reliability of information, timeliness of information, objectivity, quality of recommendations, and relevance (of the organization's research outputs)

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[16] Each dimension is an ordinal variable where responses range from poor (1) to excellent (5); not useful (1) to highly useful (5); and very negative (1) to very positive (5). Source: PCS questions under D3.

[17] An alpha test indicates an interitem covariance of 0.486 and a scale reliability coefficient of 0.918.

[18] "Outputs" is defined as publications, reports, website content, newsletters, and any other written communications.

to policy making activities. [19] Again, to facilitate the analysis, scores were brought back to a 4-point scale through the following transformation: 40 to 50 = 4 (very good); 30 to 40 = 3 (good); 20 to 30 = 2 (average); and less than 20 = 1 (poor). Scores on this composite variable should provide a fair representation of the policy actors' attitudes toward the research produced by surveyed think tanks. Table 4 below provides some descriptive statistics.

Table 4: Rating of organization's research output

Rating of organization's research output	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Poor	37	3.39	3.39
Average	308	28.23	31.62
Good	589	53.99	85.61
Very good	157	14.39	100
Total	1,091	100	

Table 5 below provides summary statistics for both dependent variables for both the global and the regional samples. The global (pooled) sample includes all survey responses across all 49 organizations in three regions. At the global level, there are 1,083 observations for the first dependent variable, rating of organizational overall performance, and 1,091 for the second dependent variable, rating of organizational research output. The Africa sample includes 445 and 448 observations; for the Latin American sample there are 315 and 313 observations; and for the South Asia sample there are 323 and 330 observations for the two dependent variables, respectively. Note that both dependent variables are based on a 4-point scale; values range from one (poor) to four (very good).

Table 5: Statistics of dependent variables by region

Region	Statistics	Rating of organizational overall performance	Rating of organizational research output
Africa	Obs.	445	448
	Mean	3.19	2.77
	Std. Dev.	.76	.76
Latin America	Obs.	315	313
	Mean	3.29	2.96
	Std. Dev.	.67	.63
South Asia	Obs.	323	330
	Mean	3.05	2.67
	Std. Dev.	.79	.71
Global	Obs.	1,083	1,091
	Mean	3.18	2.79
	Std. Dev.	.75	.72

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[19] An alpha test indicates an interitem covariance of 0.479 and a scale reliability coefficient of 0.924

3.3. Sources of variation in performance assessment

In this research, possible sources of variation in performance are explored by examining the association of the two dependent variables with a number of independent variables, included as potential explanatory factors or controls. To enhance the rigour of the analysis, independent variables are lagged at least one year.

A first set of explanatory variables measures core organizational characteristics. Budget of the organization in million dollars ($M; *budget_m*) provides an indication of overall capacity and size. Two variables are included to examine the effects of funding type: the share of funding coming from domestic government contracts (*domes_govcontracts*) and from international sources, e.g. international aid agencies and foreign foundations (*int_funding*). Two variables are included to account for variance in staffing: the number of staff with a PhD (*staff_phd*) and the number of staff involved in communications (*staff_com*). Lastly, two variables to explore the effect of organizational age on respondent attitudes toward think tanks are included. The variable *age1* represents the number of years since the organization was established, while *age2* separates organizations into young (i.e. those set up less than fifteen years before the Policy Community Survey was administered) or older.

A second set of variables seeks to capture the communications efforts used by think tanks to promote their work, as well as the extent to which quality control for research outputs are used. Indeed, policy engagement and public outreach is a key aspect of the work of think tanks. It is generally believed that successful think tanks not only produce quality research but also strive to communicate findings in meaningful and digestible ways. Accordingly, a series of dummy variable are included to account for using press conferences (*press_confs*); making appearances on TV related to policy issues (*tv*); having targeted meeting with policy makers (*target_meetings*); working with reporters (*reporters*); and making formal testimony for parliament or government agencies (*formal_testimony*). Finally, two dummy variables are included to account for whether research outputs are always reviewed before being sent to clients (*quality_control*), and effectively tailored to specific audiences (*tailor*).

A third set of variables seeks to capture how respondent characteristics shape assessment of think tank performance. Dummy variables are included to control for possible variance in preferences based on respondent's gender (*resp_female*) and age (*resp_young*). Other variables include respondent's prior knowledge of surveyed think tanks (*familiarity*) as well as respondent's occupation – for example, government official (*government*), member of the media community (*media*), or NGO senior worker (*NGO*). Finally, a variable measuring respondent views toward the domestic policy making environment (*polmakingprocess*) is included. It is assumed that these views might affect performance assessment.

Lastly, a set of variables are included to control for the effects of context on respondent's attitudes toward think tanks. The government effectiveness (*wgi_effect*) and voice and

accountability (*wgi_voice*) scores from World Governance Indicators (2010) capture the "effect of perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies."[20] To account for potential effect of varying levels of income on respondent's attitudes, GDP per capita PPP is included (*gdpcap*). Finally, we include a variable to account for the number of think tanks in each country (*ttpopulation*), based on McGann (2010). See Appendix 2 for a description and the data sources for all variables. Summary statistics of all independent variables included in the analysis are presented in Appendix 3.

4. Findings

Models were estimated using ordered logit regression analysis (Long and Freese 2006). This regression technique, based on maximum likelihood estimation, can be used with ordered (e.g. from low to high) ordinal dependent variables. Those are variables, for example, with response categories such as in opinion surveys, in which responses range from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Models are first estimated for the full sample (all countries pooled) and then for each of three regions – Africa, Latin America and South Asia.

4.1. Empirical results

The regression results for each of the two dependent variables are reported in tables 6 and 7 (see Appendix 4). Table 6 shows results for the *rating of organizational performance* (*org_performD3*) dependent variable. Table 7 presents the results for the *rating of organizational research output (res_performD4)* dependent variable. In both tables, results for the global (with all countries pooled) sample are presented in the first column, and results for regional samples are shown in columns 2-4. Results for the full models, with all explanatory and control variables, are presented. Below results are presented in relation to the research hypotheses states above.[21] Results are interpreted using odds ratio.[22]

The results for organizations' funding characteristics provide support to the first hypothesis. A positive, significant relationship between total budget (*budget_m*) and rating of organizational performance (*org_performD3*) was found in the global sample. Within the global sample, the odds of receiving more positive performance ratings are about five percent higher for each million dollars in the total budget, holding all other variables constant. While this coefficient is highly statistically significant (at the 0.001 level), none of the coefficients at the regional level are significant. Finally, the total budget indicator is not statistically significant in the model with

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[20] See http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/worldwide-governance-indicators

[21] To make interpretation easier and more relevant, findings are presented by using odds ratios.

[22] We are discussing factor changes in the odds of lower outcomes compared with higher outcomes, for each variable of interest. See Long and Freese (2006: 217-220) on how to interpret odds ratio for ordered logit models.

res_performD4 as the dependent variable in the global, Africa and South Asia samples. Within the Latin America sample, the odds of receiving more positive performance ratings are about three times *lower* for each additional million dollars in the total budget, holding all other variables constant. All in all, it is difficult to make definitive claims on the effect of an organization's total budget on performance assessment.

The data suggests that a higher share of budget coming from domestic government contracts (*domes_govcontracts*) is associated with a higher likelihood of being rated as a high performing organization ('very good' response), in the global sample (see Figure 1). However, the sample variable is statistically significant in none of the regional models. The relationship in the model with rating of research output (*res_performD4*) as the dependent variable and the share of budget coming from domestic government contracts in the Latin America model is positive and significant, but only at the 0.1 level.

Figure 1: Relationship between the share of budget from domestic government contracts and the probability of being rated as "very good" (global sample)
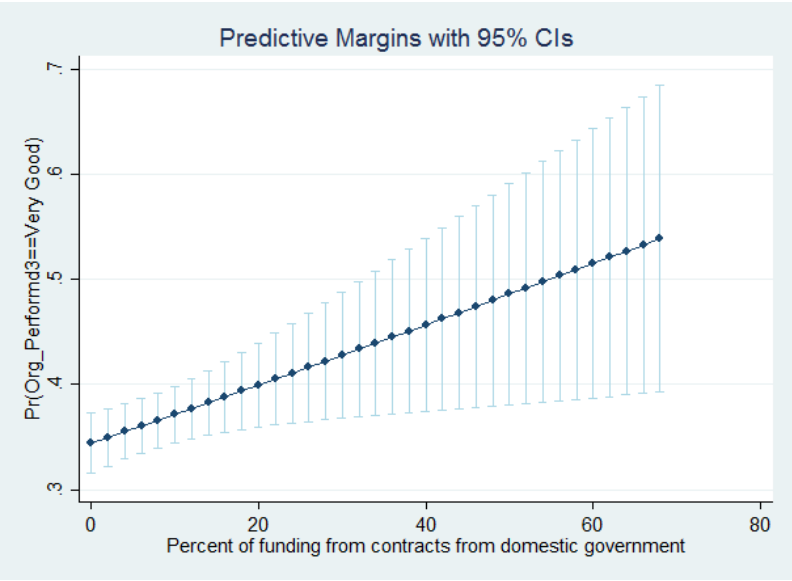
Although none of the coefficients for the *int_funding* variable are significant in the models with *org_performD3* as the dependent variable, the same variable is statistically significant in all models with the second dependent variable (*res_performD4*). While the overall effect is negligible in the global sample, the data suggests that international funding has opposite effects in South Asia, and in Latin America or Africa. Indeed, in South Asia, a larger share of organizational budget coming from international sources of funding is associated with a higher likelihood of national policy actors providing a *negative* assessment of the organizational research output (*res_performD4*). A potential explanation is that policy actors in South Asia have certain feelings about foreign funding, which affect the way they perceive the research produced by think tanks receiving funding from abroad. Nonetheless, in Africa and Latin

America, the relationship between international funding and assessment of research output is positive.

With respect to hypothesis 2, which claims that older organizations are likely to have stronger reputations (i.e. receive higher performance ratings), the data provides contradictory insights into the relationship between organizational age and perceptions of performance. The odds of receiving more positive performance ratings (i.e. of the *org_performD3* dependent variable taking a high value) are 1.8 fold higher for organizations older than 15 years old in the global sample, holding all other variables constant. While the results are not statistically significant for the Africa and Latin America sample, in South Asia the coefficient for *age2* is positive and huge—this should be interpreted with caution. Results are similar in the models with *res_performD4* as the dependent variable, with both coefficients and standard errors in the regional models very large. Overall, the data does not suggest any clear effect of age on reputational outcome.

As suggested by the third hypothesis, one would expect that having strict research quality controls and tailoring research to specific clients would be positively related to the likelihood of being perceived favorably by policy actors. The analysis reveals mixed and inconclusive results concerning the effects of quality controls on performance assessment. The research quality indicator (*quality_control*) is not statistically significant in any of the models with *res_performD4* as the dependent variable. This is contrary to expectations; it seemed reasonable to assume that having reports and policy papers always reviewed before being sent to clients positively would positively affect perceptions toward think tanks. Also unexpected are the results with the *org_performD3* dependent variable. The only model where the variable is significant is the one with the Africa sample, where the relationship between *quality_control* and performance in the Africa sample is negative. These results would warrant additional investigation.

In the model with *org_performD3* as the dependent variable, a positive, significant relationship was found between the variable *tailor* and rating of organizational performance (*org_performD3*), but only in the Africa sample. The data suggests that within the Africa cohort, the odds of having respondents provide positive assessment of think tank performance are about 8 times larger for organizations which always tailor knowledge transfer approaches for specific target audiences, holding all other variables constant. Moreover, quite unexpectedly, none of the coefficients for *tailor* are statistically significant in any of the models (global or regional) with *res_performD4* as the dependent variable. In sum, the data does not provide strong evidence concerning the effects of quality control on policy actors' perceptions of think tank performance.

Hypothesis 4 asserts that the use of communications and outreach strategies improves reputation among policy stakeholders (i.e. should lead to better assessment of performance). Results for the set of communication indicators were not robust to changes in model selection—adding or changing one variable led to major changes in the coefficients. However, one variable,

target_meetings, shows a stable and highly statistically significant coefficient for both dependent variables within the global cohort. This finding is particularly interesting. The data suggests that the odds of respondents providing a *negative* assessment of think tank performance (with both dependent variables) are between 2 and 4 times higher if the organization has held targeted meetings with policy makers during the previous year, holding all other variables constant. This intriguing finding provides empirical support to claims that think tank researchers need to better communicate their findings to non-researchers. For instance, the image of researchers who cannot communicate in a brief, clear and convincing way to busy policymakers comes to mind. Results with the regional models are not statistically significant except for the model with *org_performD3* for the Africa sample, where the odds respondents providing *negative* assessments of think tank performance if the organization has held targeted meetings with policy makers during the previous year are very large. Monitoring data shows that six organizations among the twenty-one in the Africa sample did not used targeted meetings with policymakers during the year prior to the PCS.

The fifth hypothesis is that the nature of the policy environment context affects the attitudes of policy actors toward think tank performance. The relationship between context and think tanks is an especially convoluted one, given its importance in the literature. Since respondents provide performance and research assessments within the context of their own national domestic policy context, some would expect context variables not to be significant. However, the analysis reveals an interesting pattern concerning the effect of context variables on perceptions of performance. The data shows a negative relationship between government effectiveness scores (*wgi_effect*) and performance assessment, in the pooled models (global sample) for the two dependent variables, where the coefficients for *wgi_effect* are both negative and strongly statistically significant. The coefficient for the *wgi_effect* indicator is quite large in the Africa sample for both dependent variables. A possible explanation for these negative coefficients is that, as the quality of the context improves, or more specifically as WGI government effectiveness scores increase, policy actors have heightened expectations about what think tanks ought to achieve. Figure 2 below shows that the odds of being rated as very good for organizational performance diminishes as the WGI government effectiveness score increases, holding all other variables constant. The results are consistent for varying degree of respondent familiarity with surveyed organizations.

Figure 2: Relationship between governance effectiveness scores and performance rating, by level of respondent familiarity (global sample)

Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
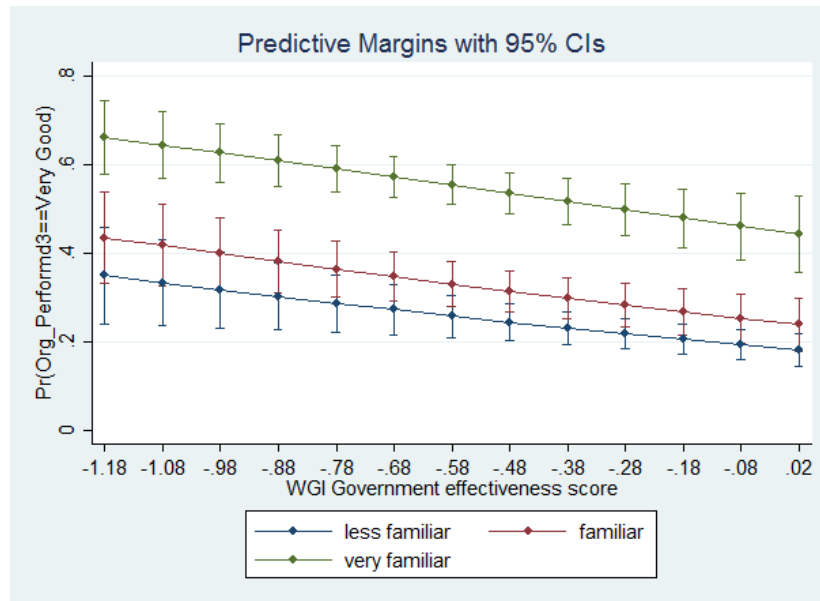
The coefficients associated with the two WGI indicators are not statistically significant in the models for Latin America and South Asia.

Nonetheless, the data suggests a positive relationship between GDP per capita and attitudes towards think tank performance, for both dependent variables at the global level.

Finally, the data provides strong support to hypothesis 6. Several indicators of respondent characteristics are consistently statistically significant across all the different models. First, the degree of familiarity of respondents with the organizations upon which their attitudes are surveyed is strongly statistically significant in all models. The data suggests that the odds of having more positive attitudes toward surveyed think tanks are between 2 and 11 times higher for respondents with a high degree of familiarity (*very familiar*) with the organizations in question, holding all other variables constant. The effect of the variable *familiarity* on respondent attitudes toward think tanks is strongest in the Africa sample, for both dependent variables.

Figure 2 above brings together some of the most salient findings pertaining to the effects of context and respondent-level characteristics on performance assessment. In addition to the context-related dynamics mentioned above, figure 2 demonstrates the effect of familiarity on attitudes toward think tanks. It shows that a higher degree of familiarity of respondents with think tanks being assessed is associated with a greater probability of providing a "very good" rating of the organizational performance. The effect of familiarity on respondent attitudes is positive across regions. Figure 3 below shows that the likelihood of the respondent providing only a fair (2 out of 4) rating in terms of organizational performance diminishes as degree of familiarity of the respondent increases. Results are similar for the *rating of organizational research output* variable.

Figure 3: Relationship between degree of familiarity and the performance rating, by regions
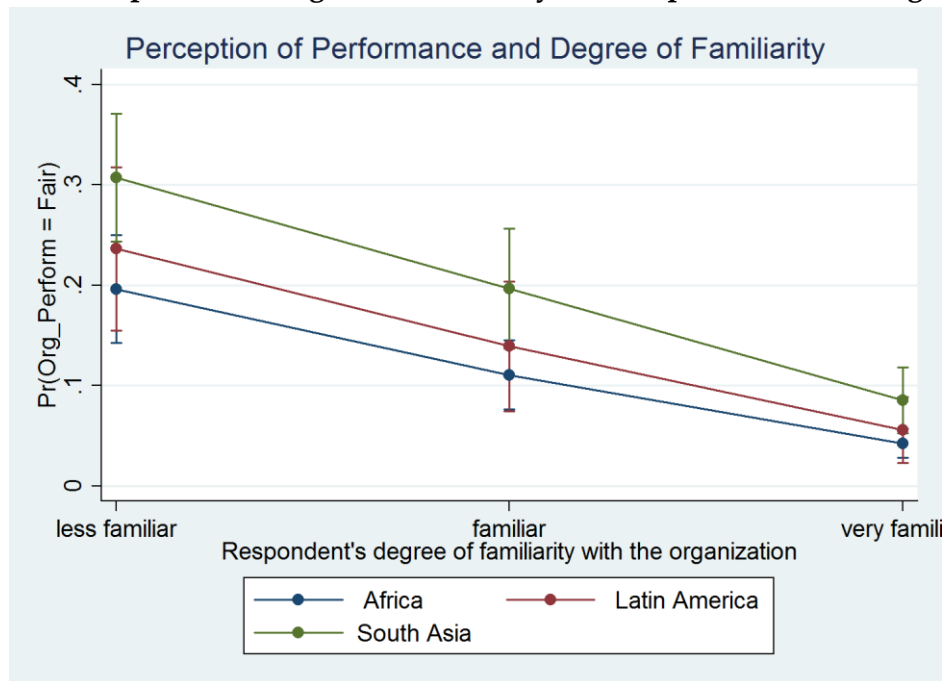
Secondly, the analysis does not provide conclusive findings related to respondent occupation. At the global level for both dependent variables, most of the indicators – e.g. government, media, NGO, etc. – included to capture the influence of professional occupation on performance assessment are not statistically significant. However, within the global sample, researchers seem more likely to provide positive organizational performance (*org_performD3*) ratings while government officials seem less likely to provide positive assessment of research output (*res_performD4*). Moreover, the analysis reveals interesting patterns taking place within regional samples. For instance, in the Latin America sample model with *res_performD4* as the dependent variable, the odds of having more negative attitudes toward think tanks are about three times higher for respondents working in bilateral or multilateral organizations. In South Asia, the odds of respondents having more positive attitudes towards think tank research output are about 2.5 times higher if respondents are working in the media or in bilateral/multilateral organizations. In the model with *org_performD3* as the dependent variable, respondents working in government or in the private sector seem more likely to provide positive assessment of think tank performance in the Africa model. None of the professional indicators are significant in the Latin America model. In the South Asia sample, the odds of having more positive attitudes toward think tanks are about five times higher for respondents working in research environments, again holding all other variables constant in both cases. It is not entirely clear, however, if these findings are robust to different model selection strategies.

Thirdly, the data provides some findings with respect to the age of respondents (*resp_young*). In the model with *org_performD3* as the dependent variable, in the Africa sample the odds of having more positive attitudes toward surveyed think tanks are about 1.7 higher if respondents

are less than 40 years old; while in the Latin America sample, the odds of having more *negative* attitudes toward surveyed think tanks was about 2.6 higher if respondents are less than 40 years old, holding all other variables constant. Also noteworthy is that the variable for respondent gender (*resp_female*) is statistically significant in none of the models.

Finally, perceptions of quality of the current policy making process (*polmakingprocess*) are positively and statistically significantly associated to higher perceptions of think tanks performance and research output for both dependent variables in the global and Africa samples. For the models with the full cohort, the odds of having more positive attitudes toward surveyed think tanks are between 2 and 3 times higher for respondents who feel that the quality of the current domestic policy making process is very good or excellent, holding all other variables constant. The effect is even more significant in the Africa sample with odds between 5 and 8 times higher. These findings are contrary to those previously discussed in the section on context related variables, and therefore, require further investigation.

4.2. Limitations

As stated earlier, this research is exploratory in scope and nature. The findings should be considered in light of the limitations briefly discussed below.

First, statistical methods provide breadth versus depth. In this case regression analysis involved a significant dose of contextual simplification. Second, the study is based on a non-random sample. The TTI sample is not representative of the population of think tanks/policy research organizations in the developing world, which means that findings cannot be generalized beyond the TTI cohort. Moreover, caution regarding drawing causal inferences from observational data is always warranted. When using observational data, there is a difference between finding a correlation between two variables and demonstrating that the relationship is causal. Third, there are also limits to making valid comparisons across countries and organizations given the diversity of organizations and country contexts considered. How this problem affects comparative studies on think tanks is recognized by many researchers, such as (Stone 2004) who points out the problem of "incommensurability of indicators across borders."

Similarly, cross-country and cross-organization differences may or may not be correlated with both the dependent and independent variables. It is difficult to control for unobserved and confounding factors, for example organizational and country heterogeneity. Indeed, it is very likely that important variables were unknowingly omitted from the analysis. This is a problematic, but pervasive, feature of observational data. It implies that, unless we can be certain that the dependent and independent variables are uncorrelated with unobserved differences, it may not be fully appropriate to estimate regressions that pool the different countries together. There is a possibility that the results are driven by time-invariant omitted variables. Inferences based on the global sample should thus only be made with caution.

Another potential issue is that respondent's knowledge of the think tanks introduces the possibility of potential bias in their responses. This possibility is recognized and control variables are included to mitigate it.

5. Conclusion

This research explored a series of hypotheses on potential sources of variation in policy actors' perceptions of performance. Several statistically significant relationships were identified between measures of perceptions of performance by policy actors, and indicators of organizational capacity, communications and outreach activities, policy environment, and respondent characteristics.

The preliminary findings provide insight into key sources of variation in how policy actors assess the work of think tanks, and should be helpful for programmatic reflection on modalities of support for Southern think tanks. Interesting patterns have been established and point to interesting questions for further investigation. Findings are based on data collected by the Think Tank Initiative, covering supported think tanks. Accordingly the analysis is based on a non-random, observational sample. This implies that results cannot be generalized beyond the TTI cohort.

Additional data and a more refined conceptual modelling would certainly further the usefulness and applicability of this study In particular, data on organizational internal features such as leadership, management, governance, and workplace dynamics, would allow drawing a more complete picture of think tanks. However key factors, such entrepreneurship and innovativeness, are arguably hard to quantify. These challenges are inherent to the complexity of studying thinks tanks in a comparative fashion. Analysis of more recent data would be helpful in determining the extent to which key results – for instance, the influence of respondent-level and funding characteristics – are robust.

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Appendix 2: Description of Variables

Variable name	Definition and Source
Overall performance rating (org_performD3)	Dependent variable Source: Constructed from PCS 2010-2011 data
Research output rating (res_performD4)	Dependent variable Source: Constructed from PCS 2010-2011 data
Familiarity (familiarity)	Degree of familiarity of the respondent with the organization 0 = less familiar ; 1 = familiar; 2= very familiar Source: TTI PCS 2010-2011
Quality of policy making process (polmakingprocess)	Five-point scale (1 = very poor to 5 = excellent) of perceptions by respondent of quality of the current policy making process Source: PCS 2010-2011, question A1
Respondent's type of organization (resp_occupation)	Type of organization where the respondent works 1 = Government; 2 = Multilateral/bilateral; 3 = Media; 4 = NGO; 5 = Trade Union; 6 = Research/academia; 7 = Private sector; 8 = Other Source: PCS 2010-2011, question S2
Age of respondent (resp_young)	Dummy: Variable = 1, if respondent is less than 40 years old Source: TTI PCS 2010-2011
Gender (resp_female)	Dummy: Variable = 1, if respondent female Source: TTI PCS 2010-2011
Work mix (work_mix)	Organization's work mix 0 = 60% or less research - 40% or more advocacy 1 = 75% research - 25% advocacy; 2 = 90% research - 10% advocacy Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Age of organization (age1)	Number of years the organization has existed Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Old organization (age2)	Dummy variable: Variable=1, if the organization is at least 15 years old Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Total full-time staff (staff_total)	Total number of full-time staff Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Staff with PhD (staff_phd)	Number of staff with PhD Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Communication staff (staff_com)	Number of full-time communications/public relations staff Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Budget (budget_m)	The organization's total budget (in M$) Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Budget (budget_interval)	Budget of the organization 4 = more than 10 $million; 3 = 5 to 10 $million; 2 = 2 to 5 $million 1 = 1 to 2 $million; 0 = less than 1 $million Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Domestic funding (domes_govcontracts)	Percent of funding from domestic government Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
International funding (int_funding)	Percent of funding from grants and contracts from international aid agencies, foundations and NGOs Source: Source: TTI monitoring data
Quality control (quality_control)	Dummy variable: Variable=1, if reports and policy papers are always reviewed before being sent Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009

Tailor (tailor)	Dummy variable: Variable=1, if organization always tailor its knowledge-transfer approach for specific target audiences Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Targeted meetings (target_meetings)	Dummy: Variable=1, if organization used targeted meetings with policy makers during the previous year Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Press conferences (press_confs)	Dummy: Variable=1, if press conferences organized during the previous year Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Reporters (reporters)	Dummy: Variable=1, if worked with reporters during the previous year Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
Formal testimony (formal_testimony)	Dummy: Variable=1, if formal testimony to the parliament or government agencies made during the previous year Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
TV (tv)	Dummy: Variable=1, if made TV appearance related to policy research Source: Source: TTI monitoring data 2008-2009
TT population (ttpopulation)	Total number of think tanks in country Source: McGann (2010)
WGI effect (wgi_effect)	Government effectiveness score from the WGI Source: World Governance Indicators 2010
WGI voice (wgi_voice)	Voice and accountability score from the WGI Source: World Governance Indicators 2010
GDP per capita PPP (gdpcap)	GDP per capita PPP in 2010 Source: World Bank
Region (REGION)	Africa = 1; Latin America = 2; South Asia = 3

Appendix 3: Summary Statistics

Variable Name	Count	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
budget_m	1282	5.791	4.847	0.102	18.89
domes_govcontracts	1282	7.468	14.38	0	68
int_funding	1282	55	36.8	0	100
staff_phd	1282	4.768	8.141	0	49
staff_com	1282	2.104	2.622	0	11
age1	1282	19.36	14.66	2	62
age2*	1282	0.572	0.495	0	1
press_confs*	1282	0.684	0.465	0	1
reporters*	1282	0.779	0.415	0	1
target_meetings*	1282	0.880	0.325	0	1
formal_testimony*	1282	0.544	0.498	0	1
tv*	1282	0.793	0.406	0	1
tailor*	1282	0.473	0.499	0	1
quality_control*	1282	0.651	0.477	0	1
familiarity	1282	0.881	0.868	0	2
resp_young*	1278	0.259	0.438	0	1
resp_female*	1282	0.222	0.416	0	1
polmakingprocess	1275	1.951	0.914	0	4
multilateral_bilateral*	1282	0.104	0.305	0	1
government*	1282	0.198	0.399	0	1
media*	1282	0.102	0.303	0	1
ngo*	1282	0.132	0.338	0	1
research_academia*	1282	0.144	0.352	0	1
private_sector*	1282	0.0967	0.296	0	1
ttpopulation	1282	59.56	90.80	7	292
wgi_effect	1282	-0.451	0.328	-1.180	0.01000
wgi_voice	1282	-0.265	0.474	-1.320	0.510
gdpcap	1282	3460.6	2519.9	985	9435

Variables marked with a * are dummies where 0 = No and 1=Yes.

Appendix 4: Regression Results

Table 6: Models with rating of organizational performance as the dependent variable

	(Global) org_performD3	(Africa) org_performD3	(Latin America) org_performD3	(South Asia) org_performD3
budget_m	0.0547***	0.0852	0.0866	0.235
domes_govcontracts	0.0143*	-0.0389	-0.0356	0.0162
int_funding	0.00254	0.0108	-0.0300	-0.0382
staff_phd	-0.0157	-0.0890	0.0151	0.0570
staff_com	0.0332	0.0510	0.114	-0.255+
age1	-0.0119	-0.0283	-0.0668	-0.231*
age2	0.624**	2.053	0.361	4.259**
press_confs	-0.317+	-0.353	-0.0777	-1.771*
reporters	0.502*	0.00995	0.601	-0.278
target_meetings	-1.051***	-4.237*		1.660
formal_testimony	0.313+	0.425	-0.835	0.252
tv	-0.272	-1.740	0.815	6.092+
tailor	0.267	2.163*		1.368
quality_control	-0.165	-1.379*		-1.214
familiar	0.779***	0.962***	0.370	0.924*
very familiar	1.868***	2.400***	1.445***	1.429***
resp_young	0.0430	0.553*	-0.948**	0.200
resp_female	0.0296	-0.285	0.332	0.442
1.polmakingprocess	-0.235	0.306	0.743	-0.964
2.polmakingprocess	0.212	0.531	0.647	-0.309
3.polmakingprocess	0.678*	1.696**	0.559	0.00136
4.polmakingprocess	1.100**	2.128**	0.488	1.015
multilateral_bilateral	0.0360	-0.567	0.0189	1.163**
government	-0.00807	0.788*	-0.182	0.780*
media	0.126	-0.600	0.321	1.128*
ngo	0.0826	0.637+	0.407	0.382
research_academia	0.490*	0.311	0.373	1.634***
private_sector	-0.156	1.362**	0.0693	
ttpopulation	0.00364**	0.103*		0.00931*
wgi_effect	-0.827**	-8.619**		
wgi_voice	0.146	2.194*		
gdpcap	0.000119***	-0.00580*		
cut1				
_cons	-2.104***	-7.848**	-6.858	0.0226
cut2				
_cons	0.192	-5.170+	-3.835	2.061
cut3				
_cons	2.794***	-2.363	-0.727	4.780
Number of observations	1076	443	312	321
Number of think tanks	49	21	12	16
df_m	32	32	25	28
Log lik.	-1046.7	-393.2	-263.5	-322.7
Chi-squared	235.9	182.4	79.57	84.26

$^{+} p < 0.10$, $^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$

Table 7: Models with rating of organizational research output as the dependent variable

	(Global) res_performD4	(Africa) res_performD4	(Latin America) res_performD4	(South Asia) res_performD4
budget_m	0.00267	0.0218	-1.152*	0.182
domes_govcontracts	0.00581	0.0220	0.173+	-0.0462
int_funding	0.00490*	0.0217*	0.103+	-0.0522*
staff_phd	0.0122	-0.0723	-0.404	0.0624
staff_com	-0.0437	0.436	0.289*	-0.333*
age1	-0.0203*	-0.0108	0.709*	-0.161
age2	0.383+	0.133	-6.457*	3.631*
press_confs	-0.221	-1.490	-0.596	-1.526*
reporters	0.602*	0.185	5.312*	0.508
target_meetings	-1.269***	-2.805+		0.222
formal_testimony	0.411*	0.690	3.139*	-0.338
tv	-0.324	-0.751	-3.780*	7.355*
tailor	-0.187	0.656		1.725+
quality_control	0.320+	0.379		-0.377
familiar	0.478**	0.584*	0.397	0.759+
very familiar	1.626***	1.760***	1.596***	1.456***
resp_young	-0.0141	0.337	-0.624+	-0.224
resp_female	0.128	-0.132	0.405	0.442
1.polmakingprocess	-0.289	0.462	0.0369	-1.170*
2.polmakingprocess	0.147	0.549	0.437	-0.284
3.polmakingprocess	0.699*	1.548**	0.0944	0.0601
4.polmakingprocess	0.973*	1.636*	0.990	0.429
multilateral_bilateral	-0.342	-0.649	-1.157*	0.913*
government	-0.424*	-0.339	0.0468	-0.230
media	0.0921	-0.439	0.252	0.902*
ngo	0.00286	0.286	-0.258	0.484
research_academia	0.116	0.196	-0.0500	0.324
private_sector	-0.400	0.161	-0.661	
ttpopulation	0.000104	0.0332		0.0102*
wgi_effect	-0.904**	-7.561**		
wgi_voice	0.711**	2.540**		
gdpcap	0.000207***	-0.00428+		
cut1				
_cons	-2.583***	-5.980*	9.945	-0.219
cut2				
_cons	0.230	-3.125	13.37+	2.697
cut3				
_cons	3.232***	-0.271	16.90*	5.870+
Number of observations	1082	445	310	327
Number of think tanks	49	21	12	16
df_m	32	32	25	28
Log lik.	-1061.0	-441.4	-262.7	-314.2
Chi-squared	224.8	132.0	61.42	75.80

$^{+} p < 0.10$, $^{*} p < 0.05$, $^{**} p < 0.01$, $^{***} p < 0.001$