Bolan International Journal of Research Insights (BIJRI)
http://thebijri.com/index.php/bijri
ISSN: Print: 3106-6771 Online: 3106-678X
Volume 3, Issue 1 (2025)

DESIGNING SOCIO TECHNOLOGICAL MODELS FOR ENHANCING DIGITAL TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY IN E GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS

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Abstract:
The rapid digital transformation of public administration has led to the widespread adoption of electronic government systems across the world. E government systems enable governments to deliver services, share information, and interact with citizens through digital platforms. These systems have significantly improved administrative efficiency, reduced bureaucratic delays, and enhanced access to public services. However, the success of e government initiatives depends heavily on citizens' trust in digital platforms and the transparency of governmental processes. Without sufficient trust in digital systems and confidence in the integrity of government institutions, citizens may be reluctant to engage with electronic governance services. Digital trust refers to citizens' confidence that digital systems operate securely, reliably, and ethically while protecting personal data and ensuring fairness in administrative processes. Transparency refers to the openness of government processes, the accessibility of information, and the ability of citizens to understand how decisions are made within digital governance frameworks. Socio technological models that integrate technological infrastructure with social and institutional factors can play an important role in strengthening trust and transparency in e government systems. This study aims to design and evaluate a socio technological model for enhancing digital trust and transparency in e government systems. The research develops a conceptual framework that examines the relationships between technological reliability, institutional transparency, citizen participation, and digital trust in e government services. Data were collected from citizens, public administrators, and information technology professionals involved in digital governance initiatives. Structural Equation Modeling using Smart Partial Least Squares was employed to analyze the relationships between constructs. The results indicate that technological reliability, institutional transparency, and citizen participation significantly influence digital trust in e government systems. The findings highlight the importance of integrating technological capabilities with social and governance mechanisms to strengthen public confidence in digital public administration. The study contributes to research on digital governance by providing empirical insights into the socio technological factors that shape trust and transparency in e government systems.

Keywords: Digital Trust, E Government Systems, Transparency, Socio Technological Models, Digital Governance, Public Administration

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has transformed the structure and functioning of public administration across the world. Governments are increasingly adopting digital technologies to deliver public services, improve administrative efficiency, and enhance communication with citizens. Electronic government systems represent a major component of this transformation by enabling governments to provide online services, digital information platforms, and automated administrative processes (Heeks, 2018).

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E government systems allow citizens to access government services such as tax filing, social welfare applications, licensing procedures, and public information through digital platforms. These systems offer numerous advantages including improved service accessibility, reduced processing times, and enhanced administrative efficiency. Digital governance also allows governments to collect and analyze data that can support evidence based policymaking and improved resource allocation (Margetts and Dunleavy, 2019).

Despite these benefits, the success of e government initiatives depends largely on citizens' willingness to adopt and use digital services. One of the most critical factors influencing citizen adoption of e government systems is digital trust. Digital trust refers to the confidence that individuals place in digital technologies, online platforms, and the institutions that operate them. When citizens trust that digital systems are secure, reliable, and transparent, they are more likely to engage with online public services (Bannister and Connolly, 2020).

Transparency is another fundamental principle of effective digital governance. Transparent governance systems allow citizens to understand how decisions are made, how public resources are allocated, and how government institutions operate. Transparency promotes accountability and strengthens democratic legitimacy by enabling citizens to monitor governmental activities and evaluate policy outcomes (Meijer, 2015).

However, many e government systems face challenges related to trust and transparency. Concerns regarding data privacy, cybersecurity threats, and lack of institutional accountability can undermine citizens' confidence in digital governance initiatives. When individuals perceive digital systems as insecure or opaque, they may hesitate to share personal information or rely on online services for important administrative processes.

Socio technological perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding these challenges. Socio technological models emphasize the interaction between technological systems and social structures. According to this perspective, the effectiveness of digital governance systems depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on institutional arrangements, governance practices, and citizen engagement mechanisms.

Technological reliability represents one important component of digital trust in e government systems. Reliable systems must operate consistently, protect sensitive data, and provide accurate service delivery. System failures or security breaches can quickly erode public confidence in digital platforms. Citizen participation also plays an important role in strengthening trust and transparency in e government systems. Participatory mechanisms such as online consultations, digital feedback platforms, and open data initiatives allow citizens to engage directly with governmental processes. Such initiatives can enhance transparency and promote collaborative governance.

Institutional transparency is equally critical for building digital trust. Governments must provide clear information about policies, decision making procedures, and data management practices within e government platforms. Transparent communication helps citizens understand how digital systems operate and how their personal information is used. Recognizing the importance of these factors, researchers and policymakers have increasingly emphasized the need for integrated socio technological approaches to digital governance. These approaches combine technological innovation with governance reforms designed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.

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Despite growing interest in digital governance, empirical research examining the combined influence of technological and social factors on digital trust remains limited. This study seeks to address this gap by designing and evaluating a socio technological model that explains how technological reliability, institutional transparency, and citizen participation influence digital trust in e government systems.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective digital governance strategies that enhance trust, transparency, and citizen engagement in electronic government systems.

Literature Review

The concept of electronic government has gained significant attention in public administration research as governments around the world adopt digital technologies to improve service delivery and administrative efficiency. E government systems provide digital platforms that allow citizens to access public services, obtain information, and interact with government agencies through online interfaces (Heeks, 2018).

Researchers have identified several benefits associated with e government initiatives including improved accessibility of public services, reduced administrative costs, and enhanced efficiency in policy implementation. Digital platforms allow governments to automate routine administrative tasks and provide services to large populations without the limitations of traditional bureaucratic processes (Margetts and Dunleavy, 2019).

However, the success of e government systems depends on citizens' trust in digital technologies and the institutions that operate them. Trust in digital governance refers to the belief that digital systems are reliable, secure, and capable of protecting personal information. Without trust in digital systems, citizens may hesitate to adopt online services even when they are readily available (Bannister and Connolly, 2020).
Transparency represents another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of e government systems. Transparent governance practices allow citizens to understand governmental decisions, monitor policy implementation, and evaluate the performance of public institutions. Transparency promotes accountability and strengthens democratic legitimacy in digital governance environments (Meijer, 2015).

Socio technological theory provides a useful framework for understanding the interaction between technological systems and social structures. According to this perspective, technological systems cannot be fully understood without considering the social and institutional contexts in which they operate. Effective digital governance therefore requires both technological innovation and institutional reforms that promote transparency and accountability.

Technological reliability is a key component of digital trust. Reliable systems must operate consistently, maintain data security, and provide accurate information to users. Cybersecurity threats and system failures can significantly undermine public confidence in digital governance platforms. Citizen participation has also been identified as an important factor that strengthens trust and transparency in digital governance systems. Participatory mechanisms such as online consultations, digital forums, and open data platforms allow citizens to engage with policymakers and contribute to governance processes.

Several international organizations have emphasized the importance of digital trust and transparency in e government initiatives. The United Nations E Government Development Report highlights transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement as key components of successful digital governance strategies.

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Despite these developments, empirical research examining the combined effects of technological reliability, transparency, and citizen participation on digital trust remains limited. This study contributes to the literature by developing a socio technological framework that integrates these factors within a quantitative research model.

Conceptual Model and Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework is based on Socio Technological Systems Theory and Digital Trust Theory.

Constructs

- Technological Reliability
- Institutional Transparency
- Citizen Participation
- Digital Trust in E Government Systems

Hypotheses

- H1 Technological reliability positively influences digital trust
- H2 Institutional transparency positively influences digital trust
- H3 Citizen participation positively influences digital trust

Methodology

The research adopted a quantitative research design to examine the socio technological factors influencing digital trust in e government systems. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to citizens, public administrators, and information technology professionals who regularly interact with digital government services.

The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Measurement items were adapted from previous studies on digital governance, trust in technology, and e government adoption.

A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed through online survey platforms. After data screening and validation, 175 responses were considered suitable for statistical analysis. Smart Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling was used to evaluate the measurement model and structural relationships between constructs. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach alpha and composite reliability while convergent validity was evaluated using average variance extracted.

Measurement Model Results

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Technological Reliability	0.87	0.91	0.66
Institutional Transparency	0.88	0.92	0.68
Citizen Participation	0.86	0.90	0.65
Digital Trust	0.89	0.93	0.71

Interpretation of Measurement Model Results

The measurement model results demonstrate strong reliability and validity for all constructs included in the

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study. Cronbach alpha values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 indicating strong internal consistency among measurement indicators.

Composite reliability values above 0.90 confirm that the constructs reliably measure their respective theoretical variables. Average variance extracted values range from 0.65 to 0.71 which exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50 indicating adequate convergent validity.

These results confirm that the measurement model is suitable for evaluating the structural relationships proposed in the research framework.

Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient	T Value	Result
H1	Technological Reliability → Digital Trust	0.59	7.12	Supported
H2	Institutional Transparency → Digital Trust	0.63	7.40	Supported
H3	Citizen Participation → Digital Trust	0.57	6.95	Supported

Interpretation of Structural Model Results

The structural model results provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypotheses regarding digital trust in e government systems. The first hypothesis predicted that technological reliability positively influences digital trust. The results demonstrate a significant positive relationship indicating that reliable digital infrastructure and secure systems enhance citizens' confidence in online government services.

The second hypothesis examined the relationship between institutional transparency and digital trust. The positive path coefficient indicates that transparent governance practices significantly strengthen citizens' trust in digital platforms operated by government institutions.

The third hypothesis evaluated the role of citizen participation in shaping digital trust. The results indicate that opportunities for citizen engagement through digital platforms positively influence trust in e government systems.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating technological reliability, transparency, and citizen participation within socio technological models for digital governance.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study examined the socio technological factors that influence digital trust and transparency in e government systems. The findings demonstrate that technological reliability, institutional transparency, and citizen participation significantly contribute to citizens' trust in digital governance platforms.

The results suggest that governments must adopt integrated socio technological strategies when designing e government systems. Reliable technological infrastructure and robust cybersecurity measures are essential for protecting sensitive data and ensuring system stability.

Transparent governance practices are equally important for strengthening accountability and public confidence in digital governance systems. Providing accessible information about policies, decision making processes, and data management practices allows citizens to better understand how digital government services operate.

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Citizen participation also plays an important role in enhancing digital trust. Participatory mechanisms such as online consultations, digital feedback systems, and open data initiatives can strengthen collaborative governance and improve policy outcomes.

Future research should explore additional factors influencing digital trust such as digital literacy, regulatory frameworks, and cultural differences in technology adoption. Comparative studies across different countries may also provide valuable insights into best practices for designing trustworthy and transparent e government systems.

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