

The Role of Service Quality and Service Transparency in Building Public Trust in Public Services: A Literature Study

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Abstract: Public trust is a major element in making public service delivery effective and legitimate. Service quality and service transparency have often been identified as key determinants of public trust, but the evidence remains fragmented across different public service contexts. The study seeks to synthesize existing research on the role of service quality and service transparency in building public trust in public services. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. Articles were retrieved from Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect and SpringerLink using pre-defined search keywords. Following the screening and eligibility assessment process, 25 studies published between 2019 and 2025 were included in the review. The results indicate that service quality increases public trust via responsiveness, reliability, accessibility, and professionalism, and service transparency strengthens trust via openness, accountability, and access to information. The review further finds that these two factors are complementary dimensions that shape perceptions of governmental competence and integrity. Based on the literature synthesis, an integrated conceptual framework is proposed to explain the relationship of service quality, service transparency and public trust. This study adds value to the public administration literature through the provision of a comprehensive synthesis of the extant evidence and the identification of avenues for future research on public trust in public services.

Keywords: Service quality, service transparency, public trust, public services, systematic literature review.

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Introduction

Public services are one of the government's primary instruments in meeting the needs of the community while also realizing good governance. The quality of services provided by government agencies is a crucial indicator in assessing the effectiveness of public service delivery. As service users, the public demands not only fast and accurate service but also transparent and accountable service ([Siahay, 2023](#)). Public trust in public institutions is a crucial social asset in supporting the success of government policies. High levels of public trust can increase public participation, compliance with regulations, and the government's legitimacy in implementing development programs. Conversely, low public trust is often associated with poor service quality, convoluted bureaucracy, and a lack of transparency in public information ([Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011](#); [Umpain et al., 2024](#)).

From a service management perspective, service quality is understood as an organization's ability to meet or exceed customer expectations. This concept encompasses tangible dimensions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, which directly influence customer perceptions of the service they receive. Various studies have shown that service quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction and trust ([Waddington et al., 2019](#)). In addition to service quality, service transparency is also becoming an increasingly important factor in the context of modern public services. Transparency refers to the government's openness in providing information to the public regarding procedures, costs, service times, and complaint mechanisms ([Nguyen et al., 2021](#)). Good transparency can reduce information asymmetry between service providers and users and improve public perception of the integrity of public institutions ([Mugellini et al., 2021](#); [Wallace & Latcheva, 2006](#)).

Recent studies have further confirmed the importance of service quality and transparency in strengthening public trust in public institutions. ([Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024](#)) found that high-quality electronic public services significantly improve public trust and satisfaction in e-government services ([Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024](#)). ([Similarly, Pratolo et al., 2022](#)) demonstrated that transparency and accountability positively affect public trust through improvements in service quality. These findings indicate that the success of modern public services depends not only on service efficiency but also on the ability of government institutions to provide transparent and accountable governance ([Pratolo et al., 2022](#)).

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between service quality, service transparency, and public trust, the existing evidence remains fragmented across various public service contexts, such as local government administration, village governance, and e-government services. Most studies focus on specific institutional settings and examine direct

relationships among these variables, resulting in limited understanding of the mechanisms through which service quality and transparency jointly influence public trust across different public service environments ([Locatelli et al., 2017](#)). Furthermore, there is still a lack of comprehensive literature synthesis that integrates recent findings, identifies dominant research themes, and highlights knowledge gaps requiring further investigation. Therefore, this study conducts a literature review to synthesize existing evidence on the role of service quality and service transparency in building public trust in public services. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How does service quality influence public trust in public services? (2) How does service transparency contribute to public trust? and (3) How do service quality and service transparency interact in strengthening public trust, and what research gaps can be identified from the existing literature? The findings of this review are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which service quality and transparency influence public trust and to offer directions for future research in public administration and public service studies ([Ceva & Ferretti, 2021](#)).

Research Method

In this study, a systematic literature review approach was adopted to identify, evaluate and synthesize previous studies related to service quality, service transparency and public trust in public services. A systematic review was considered appropriate, given that it provides a systematic and transparent process for the synthesis of relevant findings across different studies. The article selection process was rigorous and was conducted according to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework. The relevant articles were collected from Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect and SpringerLink databases using combinations of the keywords service quality, service transparency, public trust, government trust and public services. The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2019 and 2025 ([Moher et al., 2009](#); [Moher et al., 2010](#)). To ensure that the reviewed literature was selected systematically and transparently, the study adopted a structured article screening process ([O'Dea et al., 2021](#); [Panic et al., 2013](#)). The selection procedure involved four stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The process of article selection is presented in Figure 1.

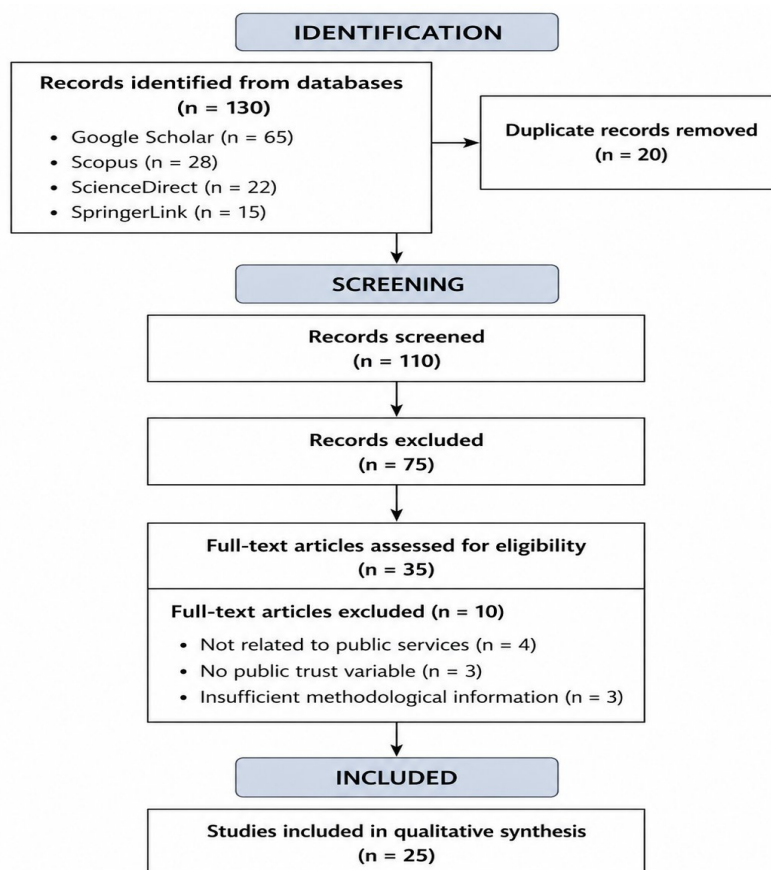


Figure 1 PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Literature Selection Process

Articles were retrieved from multiple academic databases and filtered based on a set of predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Figure 1). The studies selected for the qualitative synthesis were included after the eligibility assessment. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined prior to screening to guarantee relevance and quality of the reviewed studies. The qualitative synthesis included articles meeting these criteria. Table 1 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this study.

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication Period	Articles published between 2019 and 2025	Articles published before 2019
Publication Type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, books, book chapters, editorials, and reports
Language	Articles published in English	Articles published in languages other than English
Research Topic	Studies discussing service quality, service transparency, and public trust in public services	Studies not related to public services, service quality, transparency, or public trust

Accessibility	Full-text articles available for review	Articles with unavailable full text
Relevance	Studies providing empirical or conceptual evidence relevant to the research objectives	Studies lacking sufficient information relevant to the review objectives

The article selection process was performed in several steps according to the criteria presented in Table 1. Relevant studies were identified by searching Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink databases using combinations of the keywords service quality, service transparency, public trust, government trust, and public services. The search was restricted to articles published in the period 2019-2025. Duplicate records were then removed, and the remaining articles were screened based on their titles and abstracts. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were then evaluated by full-text review to determine their relevance to the objectives of this study. The articles were later analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach was adopted to find out the recurring patterns, dominant themes and relationships among service quality, service transparency and public trust in public services. The results of the selected studies were synthesized and grouped into key themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing public trust and to suggest possible avenues for future research.

Result and Discussion

The selected studies were analyzed and synthesized through a thematic approach in order to identify common recurring patterns in the context of service quality, service transparency and public trust in public services. The analysis identified several dominant themes that appeared consistently across the reviewed literature. These themes are the key elements that shape public trust. They offer an understanding of the mechanisms by which public service performance is incorporated into citizens' views of government institutions. Results are discussed in the following sections.

Service Quality as a Determinant of Public Trust

The reviewed studies consistently indicate service quality as one of the most significant factors affecting public trust in government institutions. Trust is more likely to be built when services are delivered effectively, reliably and responsively in various public service contexts such as e-government services, local government administration and public service agencies. Some of the key dimensions of service quality identified in the literature are responsiveness, reliability, accessibility, clarity of information and professionalism of public officials. Several studies have found that responsiveness and the timely delivery of services are especially important in

shaping public perceptions of government performance. When citizens receive services quickly and correctly as they expect, they are likely to view public institutions as competent and capable of delivering on their duties. Positive service experiences also rely on reliable service systems and clear communication, which can lead to public trust ([Lanin & Hermanto, 2019](#)). Also, the findings show that the relationship between service quality and public trust goes beyond service satisfaction. Satisfaction is the citizen's immediate evaluation of a service experience, while trust is a more general and enduring perception of institutional credibility and competence. In this context, service quality is a means for government agencies to demonstrate their ability to effectively respond to the needs of the public. Recent research on digital public services also indicates that service quality is a key driver of trust in online contexts. Ease of use, accessibility, responsiveness and availability of the information are some of the features that significantly contribute to building citizens' trust on e-government platforms. This finding suggests that improvements in the quality of digital services can contribute an important role in enhancing public trust in modern public administration ([Gozgor, 2022](#)).

The Role of Service Transparency in Building Public Trust

Another important factor that shaped public trust in public services was transparency in public services. All the studies reviewed concur that information should be open on the procedures of the service, costs, time to complete, regulations and complaint mechanisms. Transparent services allow citizens to access relevant information easily, eliminating uncertainty and building confidence in government institutions. Transparency, according to the literature, helps to build public trust by increasing accountability and reducing information asymmetry between the service provider and the user of the service. If government agencies openly share service standards and operational procedures, citizens can more effectively assess the performance of public institutions. Such openness creates an impression that public organizations are managed fairly and responsibly, and that they adhere to established regulations ([Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011](#)). Several studies also suggest that transparency appears to enhance perceptions of institutional integrity. Service quality reflects the ability of government agencies to provide services whereas transparency reflects the commitment to openness and accountability. Citizens are more likely to trust public institutions if they see that decision-making processes, resource allocation and service delivery activities are carried out transparently and are subject to monitoring by the public. Recent digital governance initiatives have also opened new opportunities for improving transparency in service delivery. Citizens can access information more efficiently and participate more actively in the monitoring of public services using e-government platforms, online information systems and digital complaint channels. This has made transparency an increasingly

important element of the efforts to strengthen public trust in contemporary public administration.

The Interaction Between Service Quality and Service Transparency

According to the literature, service quality and service transparency should not be treated as separate factors in the building of public trust. Rather, the two dimensions interact and complement each other in shaping citizens' perceptions of government institutions. Service quality is mainly a reflection of the competence of public organizations to provide effective and responsive services; and service transparency reflects their integrity, openness and accountability. The studies reviewed suggest that high-quality services alone may not be enough to build long-term public trust if citizens perceive a lack of transparency in decision-making processes and service delivery. Transparency initiatives may also prove ineffective if the performance of service does not meet public expectations. Thus, when government institutions provide quality services and transparent practices that demonstrate their competence and integrity, respectively, public trust is more likely to be developed.

The interaction between these two factors is especially strong in the case of digital public services. The availability of online service platforms makes accessing services easier and more efficient and increases transparency via information, service tracking systems and complaint mechanisms available to citizens. It is therefore an opportunity for digital transformation to increase the quality of service and transparency at the same time and thus contribute to higher levels of public trust. The synthesis of the reviewed literature suggests that service quality and service transparency are complementary dimensions in building trust in public services. Quality of service improves citizens' perceptions of government competence, while transparency improves perceptions of accountability and integrity. Together, these dimensions offer a stronger basis to build public trust, and to develop effective and citizen-oriented public services.

Emerging Research Trends and Knowledge Gaps

The review identified several emerging trends in the literature on service quality, service transparency and public trust. One strong trend is the increasing importance of digital public services and e-government systems. The role of digital platforms in improving service accessibility, responsiveness and transparency has been emphasized in recent studies. The uptake of digital technologies has made it possible for government institutions to deliver services more efficiently while increasing access to information and accountability mechanisms for the public. A second emerging trend is the rising attention to accountability and citizen participation as correlates of public trust. Several studies show that trust depends

on the quality and transparency of services, but also on the possibilities for citizens to participate in the monitoring, evaluation and feedback of public service delivery. It indicates a shift in public administration research from a service perspective to a more citizen perspective. These developments notwithstanding, there remain several knowledge gaps. First, most studies have been conducted in institutional or local settings, making it difficult to generalize findings to other public service sectors and administrative contexts. Second, while service quality and transparency are often examined as determinants of public trust, there is little research that has examined the combined effects in an integrated analytical framework. Thirdly, the role of digital transformation as a factor that may strengthen or mediate the relationship between service quality, transparency and public trust is still limitedly evidenced. These gaps indicate the necessity of future studies to investigate the interaction of service quality, transparency, accountability and digital governance in diverse public service settings. Findings from such studies may help to develop a broader understanding of the factors that influence public trust and support the development of more effective public service strategies.

An Integrated Framework of Public Trust in Public Services

From the synthesis of the reviewed literature, one can propose an integrated framework to explain the development of public trust in public services. The results reveal that service quality and service transparency are two complementary dimensions that jointly impact citizens' trust in government institutions. Service quality contributes to public trust through reinforcing perceptions of governmental competence. Responsiveness, reliability, accessibility and professionalism are components which indicate the capacity of public institutions to deliver services efficiently and to satisfy citizens' expectations. Positive service encounters lead citizens to see government organizations as capable and dependable. At the same time, service transparency improves perceptions of integrity and accountability, and in turn, enhances public trust. Openness in providing information, clear service procedures, accessible complaint mechanisms and public access to information from government reduces uncertainty and increases confidence in public institutions. Transparency allows citizens to inspect the delivery of public service and enhances perceptions of fairness and accountability. The literature also indicates that public trust is bolstered when both dimensions are in operation at the same time. High quality services without transparency may undermine citizens' confidence in institutional integrity, and transparency without effective service delivery may weaken perceptions of governmental competence. Therefore, service quality and service transparency together offer a stronger foundation for the construction and maintenance of public trust in public services. This framework emphasizes the need for a balance of competence and integrity in public administration. Therefore, it is insufficient to improve the quality-of-service delivery; the efforts to improve the public trust should also

focus on strengthening the transparency and accountability mechanisms in public institutions.

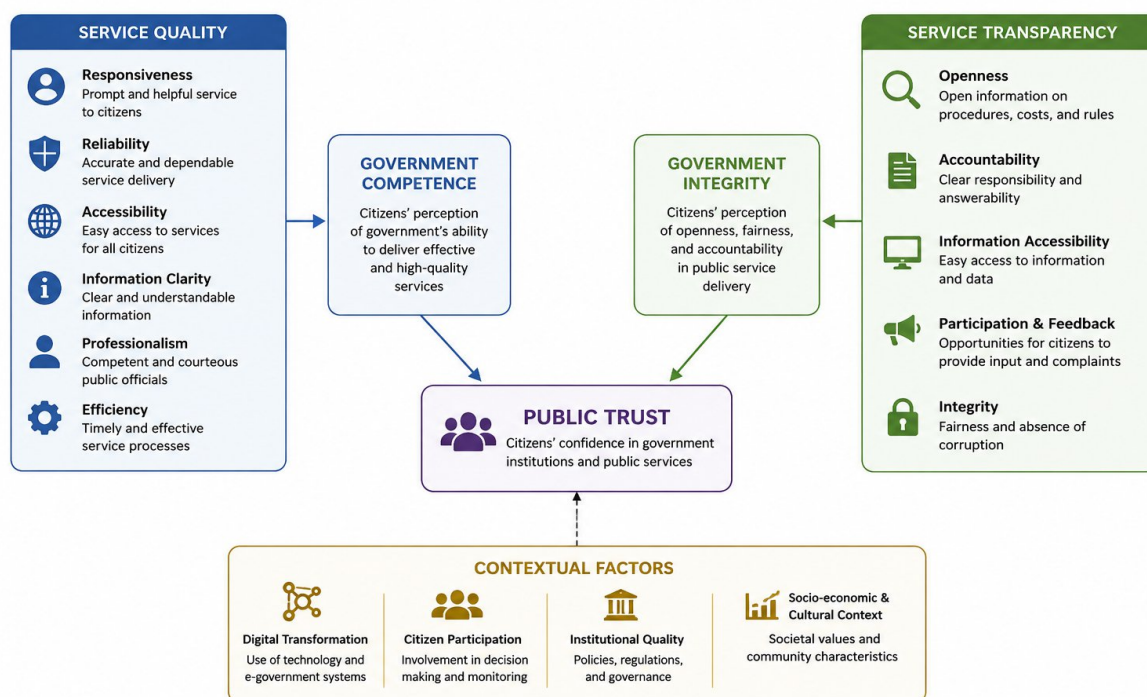


Figure 2 Integrated Framework of Public Trust in Public Services

The present in Figure 2 an integrated framework that emerges from the synthesis of the literature reviewed on the development of public trust in public services. The framework shows that service quality and service transparency are two complementary dimensions that affect public trust through different mechanisms. Quality of service enhances public trust and reinforces perceptions of government competence, and is demonstrated by the responsiveness, reliability, accessibility and professionalism of service delivery. When public services deliver on citizens' expectations, government institutions are more likely to be seen as capable and dependable. Conversely, service transparency improves public trust by positively affecting perceptions of government integrity and accountability. Transparent information, clear service procedures and accessible complaint mechanisms enable citizens to monitor the public service delivery and reduce the information asymmetry. The framework also proposes that public trust is further enhanced when competence and integrity are present at the same time. Hence, the pursuit of service quality and transparency should be seen as mutually reinforcing strategies for the development and maintenance of public trust in public institutions.

Conclusions

The results of this literature review support the fact that service quality and service transparency are important variables in shaping public trust in public services. Service quality is the ability of public institutions to provide responsive, reliable, accessible and professional services, and service transparency is openness, accountability, and availability of public information. Both factors contribute to positive public perceptions of government institutions. In addition, the literature indicates that service quality and service transparency are closely related in the process of building public trust. Quality services support public perceptions of governmental competence, and transparency supports perceptions of integrity and accountability. When these two dimensions are present at the same time, they are likely to reinforce the public trust. Therefore, in order to build public trust, it should not only be the focus on service performance but also the transparency of public service delivery.

The key finding of this review is the identification of the integrated relationship between service quality, service transparency and public trust. The framework proposed here points to governmental competence and integrity as the key mechanisms through which public trust is generated and sustained. This point of view provides extra insight into how public trust can be fortified in today's public service settings. There are still several issues to be investigated. Most of the studies conducted so far have been carried out organizational and geographical settings, which restricts the generalizability of their findings. Future studies may focus on the application of the proposed framework in other public service domains and investigate the impact of digital governance, citizen participation, and institutional accountability on public trust.

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