

Analyzing The Impact of Good Governance on Public Trust: The Mediating Role of Institutional Legitimacy in Jordan's Public Sector

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of good governance on public trust in Jordan's Public Sector, examined the mediating role of institutional legitimacy between good governance and public trust in the public organizations, and suggested a model encompassing three major ministries, three central agencies, and three public institutions. The data were collected from a stratified random sample of 383 supervisory and managerial participants via questionnaire. A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique was used for data analysis. Findings revealed that (i) governance principles —transparency, accountability, and responsiveness— have a significant positive effect on public trust, (ii) institutional legitimation has a strong positive effect on public trust, (iii) institutional legitimacy significantly mediated the relationship between good governance and public trust, and (iv) the importance of strategic reforms to support transparency, improve communication, and promote inclusive public engagement. This study recommended (i) Government institutions should develop mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and participation to ensure decision-making that is in the best interests of citizens and enhance their trust. (ii) Emphasis should be placed on establishing institutional legitimacy through adherence to societal values and norms, as this is a key link between good governance and public trust.

Keywords: Accountability, Governance, Jordanian public sector, Legitimacy, Trust

1. Introduction

Good governance is essential for bolstering citizens' trust in government by implementing transparency, public participation, and accountability, which are vital to the democratic process in every nation. Research demonstrates that governance practices improve the legitimacy of public organizations and their responsiveness to people's demands, which increases citizens' trust (Beshi and Kaur, 2019; Jameel et al., 2019; Taamneh et al., 2020; Kulmie et al., 2024). This practice becomes critical in countries facing persistent challenges in public sector performance.

In Jordan, public trust in government institutions has historically been low due to the insufficient citizen involvement in their decisions and activities (Hartanto et al., 2021). Efforts in e-governance have significantly influenced the impressions of the public due to the legitimacy of the government and trust of people (Alnaser et al., 2022; Al-Haddad et al., 2023). With the introduction of e-governance, service delivery accountability and transparency are promoted, as well as they are crucial for building up trust in the institutions of government (Taamneh et al., 2019; Alnaser et al., 2022; Almaaitah et al., 2024).. Prior studies have often generalized governance principles without exploring their unique features, including transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Alsoud et al., 2014; Alrawabdeh, 2017). This study seeks to fill these gaps by empirically examining the mediation role of institutional legitimacy, which elucidates how governance principles affect public trust in governmental institutions in Jordan.

Ignoring the principles can dramatically decline public trust due to the low governance performance and service provision, particularly during periods of crisis (Herati et al., 2023). The problem becomes complex when government transparency is missing and there is insufficient involvement of citizens in government decisions (Porumbescu, 2016; Tanduklangi, 2023). Notwithstanding continuous endeavors to reform and enhance governance in Jordan, public trust in the government is low. The diminished public trust raises apprehensions about the efficacy of governance techniques in bolstering citizen confidence, indicating that good governance alone is inadequate for fostering trust. Therefore, it is expected that the institutional legitimacy as a mediating variable will have a huge impact on the link between good governance and public confidence in the Jordanian public sector.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Good Governance and Public Trust in Government

Public trust in government is widely acknowledged as a core component of political legitimacy and democratic governance. Trust in institutions emerges from perceived fairness, transparency, and responsiveness (Tyler & Jackson, 2013). It is a psychological state rooted in the belief that government actors act competently and fairly; trust serves as both a normative goal and a functional prerequisite for effective public administration. When public trust is eroded, policy compliance, political participation, and institutional legitimacy are all jeopardized (Lee & Ko, 2020).

Moreover, the correlation between good governance and trust is strengthened by the premise that increased happiness of citizens is due to effective governance methods. It was argued by Beshi and Kaur (2019) that there is a greater likelihood that citizens trust their institutions and public officials if they believe that their government is democratic and successful. Jameel et al. (2019) showed that effective governance has a considerable impact on the attitudes of the people towards the government, and e-government acted as a variable of mediation.

In 1989, the World Bank brought the term “good governance” into wider circulation, and it has since taken root across numerous scholarly fields. In the decades that followed, researchers and practitioners increasingly recognized that the quality of governance meaningfully shapes economic growth—and, by extension, people’s everyday well-being. This view is echoed across the international system: multilateral development banks, agencies within the United Nations, regional economic fora, and global standard-setting institutions now treat governance as a core determinant of macroeconomic performance and social outcomes. In practical terms, good governance supports investment by protecting property rights, curbs corruption through credible accountability, and sustains healthy market activity through clear and predictable regulation (Fraj et al., 2018). Accordingly, there is wide agreement that sound governance enables public debt to be managed efficiently and increases trust in tax compliance responsibly through coherent fiscal and monetary frameworks. Taken together, these features position good governance as a central lever of economic development and have spurred a substantial body of research examining its links to growth (Abbas et al., 2021).

In Jordan, the relationship between public trust and effective governance is particularly pronounced; the confidence of people in their government is linked closely to their personal experiences with the provision of public services and the perceptions of governmental procedural integrity (Khattab et al., 2015). Taamneh et al. (2023) confirmed the importance of integrating people in the governance, where participatory governance bolsters the trust of the public through accountability and transparency.

Due to the rapid spread of digital technology in the world in general and Jordan in particular, there is an urgent need to have a modern governance that deals with this technology to obtain the trust of people. Furthermore, Kulmie et al. (2024) stressed that good governance should have some characteristics such as accountability, transparency, rule of law, equity, and participation. These characteristics form the foundations for better development and prosperity.

In a study regarding public trust in Indonesia, Hartanto et al. (2021) offered valuable insights for researchers and policymakers about the expectations that people had of their government and perceptions related to good governance, which resulted in greater trust in local government. Their study concluded that practices of good governance enhance and develop the trust that the public has in their government, and that signposted key directions for policy.

How practices of good governance promote public trust were examined by Mansoor (2021), and the results of his study showed that good governance practices were directly associated with the trust of the people in their government due to its performance.

Farwell et al. (2018) showed that nonprofit organizations in Canada gained public trust through transparency and financial accountability. This finding underscores the universality of trust-building mechanisms across sectors. Hartanto and Siregar (2021) investigated the relationship between overall public trust placed in local government and perceptions of responsiveness, accountability, and transparency.

A growing empirical literature connects specific governance indicators—transparency, accountability, regulatory quality, and inclusiveness—to measurable economic outcomes. For example, Surdea-Hernea (2021) highlights how inclusive governance architectures tend to yield superior economic results, while Kaufmann et al. (2011) document positive cross-national correlations between governance quality and multiple macroeconomic indicators. More recently, Harwanto and Nendi (2025) report that effective governance—defined by transparency, accountability, and inclusivity—enhances performance by strengthening investor confidence and curbing corruption. They further emphasize that clear, consistently enforced legal frameworks are essential to the effectiveness of governance itself and, by extension, to sustained economic growth.

2.2 Institutional Legitimacy and Public Trust in Government

Institutional legitimacy refers to the policy acceptability and government-citizen interactions. When a state is recognized as having legitimacy by the citizenry, the people have a greater predisposition to provide the vital resources, such as taxes, for improving the governing capabilities of the nation. (Lee & Ko, 2020).

In numerous developing states, there are increasing worries about the legitimacy of a state as well as the misuse of power, which is affecting the public trust in public institutions. Therefore, operational governance arises as a key component in building official legitimacy and supporting both transparency and accountability. Good governance is considered an essential device in decreasing corruption and attaining sustainable growth by creating the doctrines of the law, confirming public participation, and supporting governmental efficacy (Arif, 2024). There are three chief sources of legitimacy: individual, society, and institution (Schulte, 2019). Individual Legitimacy includes interest, trust, feelings, political understanding, and others. Institutional legitimacy includes performance, personality, and territory. Social legitimacy relies on the degree to which it is completely incorporated in a society or community and is based on customs, shared principles, social relations, and social belonging (Scholte, 2019).

It is important to focus on the citizens' participation and engagement to strengthen democracy, foster responsive governance, and support policy legitimacy (Ghannam & Taamneh, 2017; Riduan, 2024). Policy legitimacy is supported by elements including the public perceptions regarding fairness, the acceptance and support, the compliance with policy, the transparency, the perceived political efficacy, and the trust of the governmental institutions (Riduan, 2024). Indeed, the perceived legitimacy in relation to institutions is an essential determinant in achieving the public trust of government (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2018; Dellmuth and Gustafsson, 2023). Institutional legitimacy signifies the conviction of the public that government and the various organizations exercise authority in responsible ways that align with established standards and values of the government (Dellmuth and Gustafsson, 2023). If citizens regard government and the various structures of it as having legitimacy, then there is a great public inclination to collaborate and trust the government (Tyler and Jackson, 2013).

Conversely, the absence or weakness of institutional legitimacy may contribute to the erosion of public trust and undermine the supposed relationship between government and citizens based on respect and accountability. (Svitlana et al., 2020).

Justice and procedural fairness are two moral and procedural pillars that support institutional legitimacy. Citizens' trust in state institutions is increased, and ties of loyalty and belonging are strengthened, when there is a general feeling of fairness and the application of clear, equal rules for everyone. A government's legitimacy can indeed be evaluated not only by the outcomes it attains but also by the decisions and policies it makes. Long-term political and social stability is strengthened when people believe their opinions are valued and that organizations do not discriminate or exclude them. This fosters mutual trust (Hamm, Trinkner & Carr, 2017).

Fisk and Cherney (2016) believed that there is a greater likelihood for citizens to view organizations as having legitimacy when they view them as having procedures for decision-making that are transparent and equitable. The public's satisfaction with government effectiveness and customer service delivery can increase their perceived trust in the organizations in question (Ibraheem, 2023). Increased accountability and transparency in the operations of government foster the confidence of citizens and the belief in the legitimacy of the institutions (Fisk & Cherney, 2016). Indeed, social trust within society may serve as a precursor for shaping the international and national views of legitimacy. About public participation and leadership communication, trust and legitimacy may be built through interactions and communication between the public and elected officials, being more effective (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2020). Understanding the relationship between public trust and institutional legitimacy is varied and complex; Economic variables, historical background, and political culture significantly affect those relationships (Džunić et al., 2020). The relationship between the trust the public has in government and effective governance is impacted significantly by institutional legitimacy. It is based on the opinion of the public about whether the power of a political institution is exercised responsibly (Lee and Ko, 2020; Dellmuth and Gustafsson, 2023).

Lee and Ko (2020) found the ways in which the connection between policy acceptance and government-citizen ties is modulated by institutional legitimacy (Lee and Ko, 2020). If the public considers government institutions legitimate, then they have a greater inclination to trust them and to follow their decisions and programs. (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2015).

Public trust may be eroded during the execution of the policies of the government if institutional legitimacy is deficient (Ali, 2022). Institutional legitimacy can be enhanced by elements such as equity, accountability, and openness, as well as when governmental entities have efficacy (Verhaegen et al., 2021; Riduan, 2024).

Legitimacy of government agencies is bolstered if the perception of the public of those organisations is that they are equitable, responsible, and transparent, and that they provide public services effectively. Their ability to deliver public services efficiently and effectively enhances public trust in them and leads to broader acceptance of their role and authority in society. (Džunić et al., 2020).

Comparative analyses of cross-country performance consistently underscore governance as a salient explanatory factor (Khan, 2007). A substantial body of empirical work identifies governance as a key driver of economic expansion (Gani, 2011; Cooray, 2009). Within this literature, scholars emphasize not only the importance of governance itself but also the institutional conditions that make its benefits realizable. Strong, credible institutions help set the trajectory of long-run development, whereas weak or extractive institutions heighten the risk of crisis and protracted stagnation (Acemoglu et al., 2001).

Dellmuth and Tallberg (2015) point out that social trust is a prerequisite for shaping international and domestic perceptions of government legitimacy. When mutual trust prevails among members of a society, government institutions are more likely to be viewed as legitimate and trustworthy. This social trust indirectly contributes to strengthening government legitimacy because it generates a general sense that the state works for the benefit of all, which increases people's acceptance of its authority and decisions.

The channels linking governance to economic growth operate both directly—through policy credibility, market confidence, and resource allocation—and indirectly—through social cohesion and the distributional environment (Adams & Mengistu, 2008). In addition to promoting growth, good governance is associated with lower income inequality. Its importance has risen globally, especially among developing economies seeking to attract investment and achieve sustainable, inclusive growth (Globerman & Shapiro, 2002). By contrast, poor institutional quality undermines political and economic performance, discouraging productive activity and innovation (Abbas et al., 2021). As noted by Jalilian et al. (2006), economic development expands the resource base while simultaneously fostering institution building; resilient institutions, in turn, underpin the rule of law and lower levels of corruption. Consistent with this perspective, developed economies tend to exhibit greater political stability than developing or low-income countries (Abbas et al., 2021).

In addition, it is not always easy to see how legitimacy and effectiveness are connected. People may not accept an institution as legitimate just because it does a good job or is successful. To understand this relationship, studies (Stollenwerk, 2018; Schmelzle & Stollenwerk, 2018) say that we need to pay attention to the person who is in charge of governance.

In summary, institutional legitimacy can be considered essential for the connection between the trust of the public in the government and effective governance. Elements such as accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, and fairness enhance the legitimacy of the institutions of the government and, subsequently, increase the public trust and improve their adherence to the policies and decisions of government (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2015; Lee and Ko, 2020; Goldenberg et al., 2023; Riduan, 2024).

However, empirical research specific to the Jordanian context remains limited, underscoring the need for further investigation into these dynamics within the Jordanian public sector. Given Jordan's evolving governance landscape—particularly in the context of e-government and public sector reform—further empirical study is necessary to understand these dynamics more fully.

The study underscores the critical significance of good governance in fostering and enhancing confidence in public institutions. Nonetheless, empirical research investigating the mediating role of institutional legitimacy within the Jordanian public sector is scarce. This study seeks to address this gap by investigating the influence of institutional legitimacy on the connection between effective governance practices and public trust.

This study seeks to analyze the effect of effective governance on public confidence in the public sector in Jordan and its influence on institutional legitimacy. Moreover, it seeks to ascertain the influence of institutional legitimacy on the formation of public trust. The study seeks to examine the mediating effect of institutional legitimacy on the connection between effective governance practices and public trust in governmental institutions.

The following hypotheses are built based on the above literature review:

- H1: Accountability is positively associated with public trust in government.
 H2: Responsiveness is positively associated with public trust in government.
 H3: Transparency is positively associated with public trust in government.
 H4: Good governance is positively associated with institutional legitimacy.
 H5: Institutional legitimacy is positively associated with public trust in government.
 H6: Institutional legitimacy mediates the relationship between good governance and public trust in government

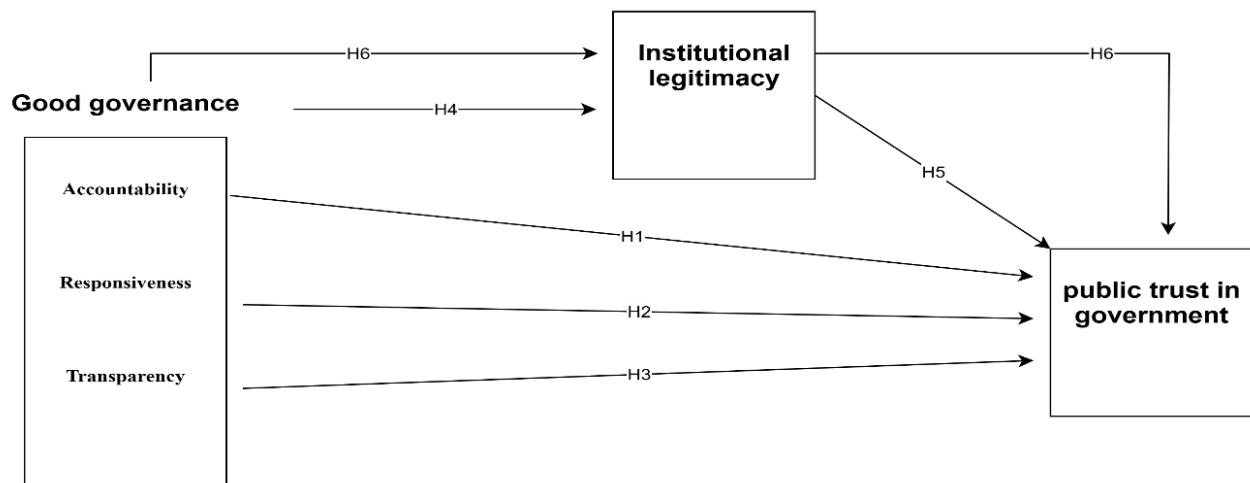


Fig. 1: Research framework

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design and Approach

A research methodology that was a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the impact of good governance on public trust in government institutions in Jordan, with a focus on the mediating role of institutional legitimacy. PLS4 (Smart partial least squares) was adopted due to its suitability for testing complex mediation models with latent constructs. PLS4 Smart was also used for data analysis. This method is appropriate for exploratory studies with non-normal data distributions and complex structural relationships.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

The target population consisted of supervisory and managerial employees in Jordanian public institutions. A total of 383 valid responses were collected through stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across institutional categories. The survey was carried out between August and October 2024.

Respondents were selected from nine public sector entities, including:

- Ministries: Health, Public Works, and Education
- Central agencies: Department of Land & Survey, Civil Status & Passport Department
- Public institutions: Cities and Villages Development Bank, National Aid Fund, and Jordan Customs

These institutions were selected due to their high level of public interface and service delivery relevance, which made them critical for assessing governance quality and institutional trust.

3.3 Survey Instrument

Based on the previous studies, there was a modification to the questionnaire, which was made up of five sections. Section (1) demographic data about the participants. Section (2) focused on the effective method of governance that was evaluated through a scale of 12 items that encompassed three dimensions, namely accountability, responsiveness, and transparency, as adapted from the work of Kaufman et al. (2010). Section (3), the assessment of the trust that the public placed in government, with a scale of 8 items that was adapted from the work of Taamneh et al. (2023). Section (4), the assessment of institutional legitimacy using a scale of 12 items that was modified from the work of Suchman (1995). (Appendix 1)

Each item was measured using multiple **5-point Likert-scale** items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Items were translated into Arabic and reviewed by governance scholars and Arabic experts to ensure linguistic and conceptual equivalence. A **pilot study (n=30)** was conducted to assess reliability and comprehension. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.80 across constructs.

3.4 Methodological Justification

The choice of a managerial respondent base ensures informed perceptions on institutional governance, enhancing construct validity. Furthermore, PLS-SEM was chosen over covariance-based SEM due to its predictive focus, robustness with small-to-medium samples, and relaxed assumptions about normality. This analytic strategy is well-suited for emerging economies where governance dynamics are multi-layered and evolving.

3.5 The Characteristics of The Respondents

The characteristics of the sample show the ratio of males to females was 64% to 36%, respectively. Regarding the distribution of ages, 11% were younger than 30 years of age, 16% had ages between 31 years and 40 years of age, 39% of participants were aged between 41 years and 50 years of age, and 34% were over 51 years of age. With regard to functional status, 28% of participants were directors, 31% had roles as deputy/assistant directors, 27% were heads of departments, and the remaining 14% worked as divisional heads. The educational background varied, with 35% holding postgraduate degrees, 9% having diplomas, and 56% having bachelor's degrees. With regard to work experience, 8% of participants had 5 years or less, 13% of participants had from 6 years to 10 years of work experience, 22% had from 11 years to 15 years, 28% had 16 years to 20 years, and 29% had 21 years or more.

4. Results

Within this study, SEM (structural equation modelling) was used for the examination of causal relationships between the variables. The SEM analysis could be undertaken using the software SmartPLS 4.0. Initially, the measurement model evaluated convergent validity through the utilisation of items with the cross-loading of composite reliability, the average variance extracted, and the values of Cronbach's alpha for consideration of internal consistency; see Hair et al. (2017).

Then, there was an examination of discriminant validity by using HTMT (Heterotrait- Monotrait) and Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). For the evaluation of the structural model strength as explained using the endogenous constructs, the research followed the work of Falk and Miller (1992) in using the value of R-squared (R^2) to show the strength of the structural model. During the final stage of the assessment of the structural model, there was employed for the testing of the hypotheses of the study. As a technique of resampling, bootstrapping allows estimation of path coefficient standard errors through repeated drawing of subsamples and replacement from within the original data.

4.1 Measurement Model

4.1.1 Convergent Validity and Item Loading

Evaluation of the measurement model included assessment of discriminant validity, convergent validity, and the reliability of internal consistency; all of these are considered crucial for ensuring the accuracy and robustness of latent variable constructs. Reflective measurement models were employed for the analysis, with indicators chosen with the assumption that the latent constructs are reflected in them. Multiple items were used to measure each of the constructs so that underlying theoretical dimensions could be captured. Based upon the analysis of the data, the outer loading value of each of the constructs exceeded 0.70, with one item lying lower than the CL3 threshold, and so that item was deleted so that it could be ensured that the validity of the construct was satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017). However, the average variable extracted (AVE) value was more than 0.5, and so, according to the work of Hair et al. (2017), it was at a satisfactory level in relation to convergent validity. Cronbach's alpha measured the internal consistency, with the value of it being over 0.70, and so that was considered satisfactory. The composite reliability value for each of the constructs was also over 0.70, and so they too were considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2017). As such, there were no issues within the study with regard to internal consistency and convergent validity, as Table 1 shows.

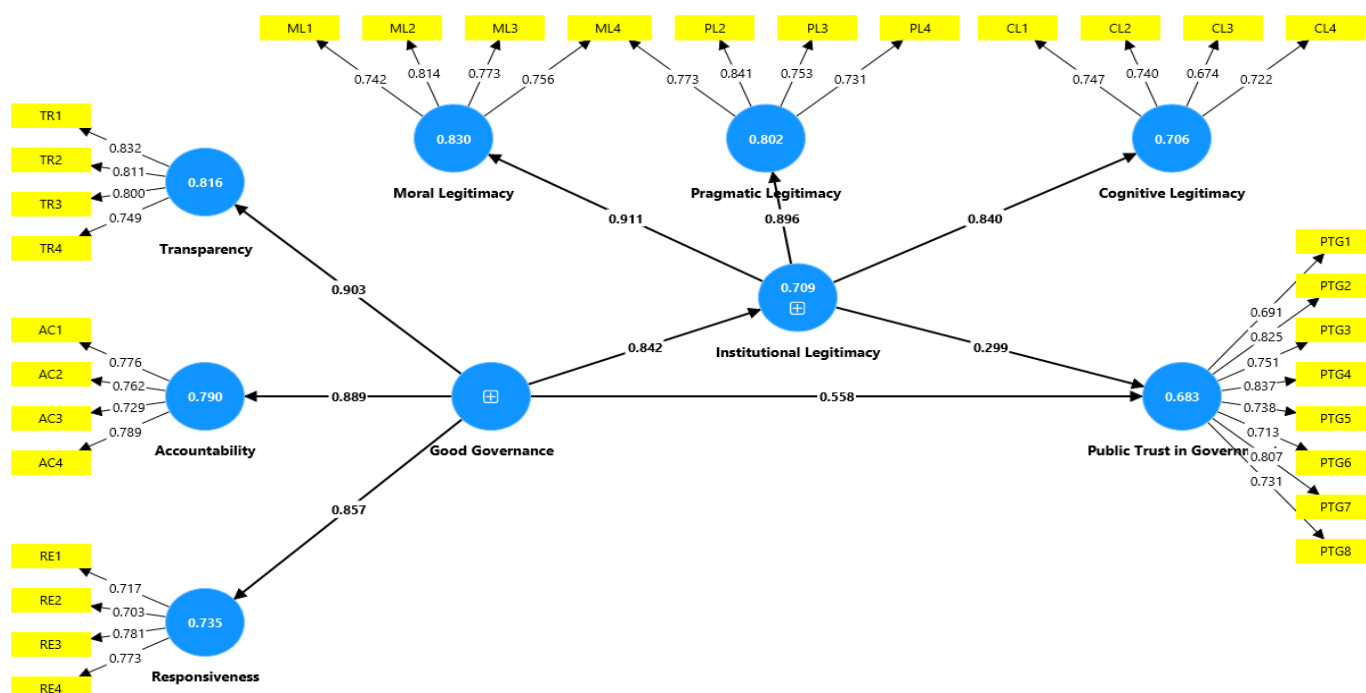


Fig. 2: Item loading

Table 1: Convergent Validity

		Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Accountability	0.776 0.762 0.729 0.789	0.762	0.763	0.584
Cognitive Legitimacy	0.747 0.740 0.674 0.722	0.701	0.700	0.520
Moral Legitimacy	0.742 0.814 0.773 0.756	0.774	0.778	0.596
Pragmatic Legitimacy	0.773 0.841 0.753 0.731	0.778	0.779	0.600
Public Trust in Government	0.691 0.825 0.751 0.837 0.738 0.7130.807	0.897	0.901	0.583
Responsiveness	0.731 0.717 0.703 0.781 0.773	0.731	0.738	0.553
Transparency	0.832 0.811 0.800 0.749	0.810	0.814	0.637

4.1.2 The Discriminant Validity

Two approaches are taken for the assessment of discriminant validity. Firstly, the Fornell-Larcker criterion can be calculated by taking the square root of AVE, which is then divided by interconstruct correlation. Table 2 has the results demonstrating that the AVE square roots have higher values than the correlation between the constructs (see those below diagonal values put into italic). That shows that discriminant validity is satisfactory with regard to Fornell-Larcker (1981) criterion. Secondly, HTMT (heterotrait-monotrait ratio), a new criterion for assessing discriminant validity, has a strict 0.90 threshold (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). It is shown by the analysis within the Table that the value of HTMT lies below 0.90 and that, then, means that discriminant validity is satisfactory based upon the criteria of HTMT (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). So, each of the constructs is considered to have discriminant validity, and so the measurement model was assessed as being good, and the study could move forward to the formulation of a hypothesis for the model.

Table 2: Fornell-Larcker criterion

	AC	CO	ML	PL	PTG	RE	TR
Accountability	0.764						
Cognitive Legitimacy	0.648	0.721					
Moral Legitimacy	0.696	0.655	0.772				
Pragmatic Legitimacy	0.648	0.623	0.736	0.775			
Public Trust in Government	0.696	0.671	0.731	0.641	0.763		
Responsiveness	0.650	0.626	0.660	0.611	0.691	0.744	
Transparency	0.707	0.646	0.713	0.666	0.758	0.658	0.798

Table 3: Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) - Matrix

	AC	CO	ML	PL	PTG	RE	TR
Accountability							
Cognitive Legitimacy	0.856						
Moral Legitimacy	0.806	0.848					
Pragmatic Legitimacy	0.837	0.833	0.841				
Public Trust in Government	0.843	0.841	0.814	0.761			
Responsiveness	0.827	0.840	0.825	0.801	0.845		
Transparency	0.839	0.834	0.843	0.833	0.816	0.844	

4.2 Structural Model

The research model validity needed to be evaluated, and the hypotheses tested. Firstly, there was a need for the endogenous variable model power to be determined, and so the research determined the path coefficient lying between the constructs of the model. The value of R² for a valid approach ought to be close to or greater than 0.1 (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). In accordance with the analysis, the public trust placed in the government has an R² value of 0.683, as explained by path coefficients for institutional legitimacy and good governance. Table 4 shows the results of the indirect and direct hypotheses. The results show a significant and positive association for accountability ($t = 10.160$; $\beta = 0.208$), transparency ($t = 10.477$; $\beta = 0.235$), and responsiveness ($t = 10.303$; $\beta = 0.190$) with the level of trust the public has in government. Likewise, the findings showed that there is a significant and positive relationship between good governance and institutional legitimacy ($t = 59.36$; $\beta = 0.842$). Meanwhile, there was a significant and positive association found between institutional legitimacy and the public trust of government ($t = 5.934$; $\beta = 0.299$). So, there was full support for H1, H2, and H3 of this research, which projected a positive association for the accountability, responsiveness, and transparency to the level of public trust in the

government. Likewise, there was also full support for hypothesis 4, which had proposed a positive association between good governance and institutional legitimacy. Hypothesis 5 was held to be true as well in projecting a relationship between institutional legitimacy and the level of public trust in government. As Table 4 shows, mediation hypothesis 6 was supported by results for institutional legitimacy mediating a relationship of public trust of government with good governance ($t = 5.866$; $\beta = 0.252$).

Table 4: Bootstrapping results

Hypotheses	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
Good Governance -> Public Trust in Government	0.813	0.016	49.416	0.000
Accountability -> Public Trust in Government	0.208	0.020	10.160	0.000
Responsiveness -> Public Trust in Government	0.190	0.018	10.303	0.000
Transparency -> Public Trust in Government	0.235	0.022	10.477	0.000
Good Governance -> Institutional Legitimacy	0.842	0.014	59.36	0.000
Institutional Legitimacy -> Public Trust in Government	0.299	0.05	5.934	0.000
Mediation Result				
Good Governance -> Institutional Legitimacy -> Public Trust in Government	0.252	0.043	5.866	0.000

5. Discussion

It was found that all the hypotheses of the study could be supported, which showed that good governance is responsiveness, transparency, and accountability, which were related positively and significantly to institutional legitimacy and overall trust of the public in their government. Meanwhile, the relationship between public trust in government and good governance was mediated by institutional legitimacy. Hypothesis H1 results show that there is a positive association of trust in government with accountability. There is robust substantiation by the empirical evidence of the transformative effect that accountability has upon public trust in their government, as the high correlation in the statistics evidences ($p < 0.000$; $t = 10.160$; $\beta = 0.208$). Those figures align with findings in the work of Yousaf et al. (2016), Farwell et al. (2018), Russell (2019), Hartanto et al. (2021), Hartanto and Siregar (2021), Mansoor (2021), and Kulmie et al. (2024), all of whom found there to be a positive relationship between the trust the public has in their government and accountability.

The study of Kulmie et al. (2024) demonstrated that the enhancement of the practices of good governance and the improvement of the delivery of public services could improve the trust of the public. Their article asserted that good governance, as characterised by the rule of law, participation, equity, accountability, and transparency, was the basis for prosperity and development. Meanwhile, the research of Hartanto et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of the practices of good governance for the development and enhancement of the trust that the public had in the government; as such, they provided key direction for policy. The trust the public has in local government was explored by Beshi and Kaur (2020), and they had the aim of providing an explanation of the role played by good governance practices. For them, government accountability was essential for fostering trust in government amongst the public. The importance of the element of accountability whilst making decisions over public matters was depicted, along with the importance of higher levels of trust in the government amongst the public, founded on transparent and fair governmental practices.

It highlights the importance of accountability while making decisions over public matters, along with the importance of establishing higher levels of trust amongst the public that are founded on transparent and fair governmental practices.

There is substantial support for H2, with the indication that there is a favourable influence of responsiveness upon public trust of government, with the evidence from the data ($p < 0.000$, $t = 10.303$, $\beta = 0.190$); as such, responsiveness was discovered to have a positive association with public trust of government overall. Public trust was linked with good governance in the work of Yousaf et al. (2016), Cheema, Lee, and Porumbescu (2019), Beshi and Kaur (2020), Hartanto et al. (2021), Hartanto and Siregar (2021), and Prasetya (2023). It has been indicated within the literature that responsiveness influences public trust, with the responsive decisions of the government in the best interest of the citizenry having a significant impact upon the trust that citizens place in their government. A positive relationship between responsiveness and trust was shown in the work of Beshi and Kaur (2019). Likewise, the important role that is played by responsive governance in shaping the trust that the public places in government was demonstrated by Lee and Porumbescu (2019). Wang (2002) also noted that responsive administration may enhance the trust that citizens have in their government over substantial periods. Mansoor (2021) also revealed a positive impact from perceived responsiveness upon the trust that citizens placed in the agencies of government and their representatives, reflecting the significance of government responsiveness for everyone, since failure to comply on time with the issues or demands of people may result in uncertainty and a lack of trust.

The results of (H3) point out that there is a positive relationship between transparency and increased trust in government. The data indicated that this relationship is statistically significant with a p-value less than 0.000, a t-value of 10.477, and a beta coefficient of 0.19.

There is consistency between the transparency-related findings and the outcomes presented in the work of Jameel et al. (2019) and Kulmie et al. (2024). Farwell et al. (2018) noted that transparency involves disclosure of all figures and factors regarding key matters noted.

In addition, transparency means that people can easily access information issued by government agencies, which helps them feel that the government is acting legally, which increases people's trust in it. In recent years, there has been growing interest in governments sharing information with citizens transparently and clearly, as this supports public trust in government and increases public participation in public affairs. Calls for media and press freedom have also grown, as they are an important means of conveying the truth, exposing corruption, and strengthening oversight of government performance. In line with this trend, numerous international laws and treaties have been enacted that guarantee individuals' right to access information and support freedom of expression and the media (Song and Lee, 2015).

In addition, transparency is seen as a key to solving the problems facing democratic governments. When governments act openly and share information and details of their decisions with citizens, this helps build public trust.

So, for the creation of administrative transparency, numerous efforts can be made at the level of government to enhance the trust that citizens have in their government further (Mansoor, 2021). The idea that open government initiatives and transparency enhance trust in government and legitimacy significantly, with the idea that there is always increased trust in the decisions of government when clear information is disseminated by that government. Hypothesis H4 shows a strong positive association between good governance (including responsiveness, accountability, and transparency) and institutional legitimacy; the data provided clear evidence ($p < 0.000$, $t = 59.36$, $\beta = 0.842$) supporting this association. These findings are consistent with recent studies in the field, such as Schmelzle and Stollenwerk (2018) and Tallberg and Verhaegen (2020).

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Schmelzle and Stollenwerk (2018) have demonstrated a correlation between legal governance and effective governance, describing this relationship as the "virtuous cycle of governance." Stollenwerk (2018) demonstrated that governance effectiveness becomes more evident when it is attributed to specific actors, strengthening the relationship between legitimacy and effectiveness.

Institutional legitimacy was highlighted by Lee and Ko (2020) as being a mediator for the relationship between policy acceptability and government-citizen interactions. If citizens recognize state legitimacy, then they have a greater predisposition towards the provision of the resources that are vital (Arif, 2024).

Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the state's capacity to govern better. Improving governance contributes to reducing the abuse of power and combating corruption. This is particularly important, especially considering the growing concerns about the state's legitimacy at the present time.

Studies confirmed that citizen participation is essential for enhancing policy legitimacy, supporting democracy, and encouraging responsive governance (Radwan, 2024). The results of Hypothesis H5 showed a positive effect of institutional legitimacy on public trust in government. The data clearly support this hypothesis ($p < 0.000$, $t = 5.934$, $\beta = 0.299$). Evidence has shown that institutional legitimacy is important in fostering public trust. It reflects people's belief that the government and its institutions exercise their authority responsibly and in accordance with accepted norms and values (Dilmuth and Gustafsson, 2023). Delmuth and Gustafsson's findings confirm that legitimacy acts as a cognitive barrier between governance performance and citizen trust. Mansour (2021) also noted that, in times of crisis, legitimacy influences public trust more than transparency alone.

If citizens regard the government and its structures as having legitimacy, then they have a greater inclination towards trusting them and collaborating with them (Tyler and Jackson, 2013). Perceived legitimacy related to government institutions is a key determinant for public trust in government (Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2015; Dellmuth and Gustafsson, 2023). The notion of institutional legitimacy signifies the conviction of the public that government and the organizations practice their authorities in ways that align with established standards and values. When government decisions are clear and fair, people feel more legitimate (Fisk and Cherney 2016). People also trust institutions more when their services are good and responsive.

There is a strong relationship between public trust in government and good governance, but this relationship is mediated by institutional legitimacy. Statistical analysis results showed that institutional legitimacy plays a significant role in this link ($p = 0.000$, $t = 5.866$, $\beta = 0.252$). Researchers such as Lee and Ko (2020) have also shown that legitimacy influences public acceptance of policies and the relationship between government and citizens. This means that institutional legitimacy is essential for building public trust and promoting effective governance. Elements of legitimacy include transparency, accountability, social trust, fairness, and efficient performance. These elements make institutions appear more credible, which increases citizens' trust and commitment to government decisions.

Although some studies in Jordan have examined people's satisfaction with e-government services (such as Al-Omari's 2022 study), few have focused on legitimacy as an important factor between governance and trust. This study provides new evidence that people's sense of fairness and policy alignment with public values help strengthen the impact of good governance on citizens' trust in institutions.

6. Conclusion

This study makes key theoretical contributions. It validates the concept of good governance in addressing social and political issues across cultures. By combining public trust, institutional legitimacy, and good governance in one framework, it offers new insights. It also addresses declining public trust in developing countries and enhances understanding of how good governance can rebuild that trust. Additionally, it advances the public administration concept by integrating institutional legitimacy into existing frameworks.

This study scrutinized the variables that influence public trust in government, providing officers and policymakers with information. When the government communicates with its constituents and makes decisions that are accountable and responsive, trust is improved. Good governance is necessary for long-term development in Jordan. Trust is increased by guaranteeing people's sharing and access to information. The findings prove that comprehensive, accountable governance is an essential factor of true improvement, which must rise above efficacy. Improved public trust in government institutions is not only a normative good—it also has direct and measurable economic implications. When citizens perceive public institutions as transparent, fair, and effective, their willingness to comply with fiscal obligations increases. In practical terms, this translates into higher rates of tax compliance and reduced levels of tax evasion, thereby improving domestic revenue mobilization without the need for increased tax rates.

7. The Research Limitations and Potential Future Directions

This paper has a few limitations: it emphasizes institutions of the Jordanian government, which restrict the generalizability of the results to other states or subdivisions. It is based on a quantitative approach, and mixed methodologies can be used in future studies to increase a good understanding

The study was limited to three governance attributes (transparency, accountability, and responsiveness), which may overlook other important factors such as the rule of law. The results were based on self-reported data from administrative employees, and it would be useful to use broader surveys or international comparisons in the future to better generalize the findings.

These findings underscore the critical role of transparent and accountable governance in fostering public trust, which, in turn, can enhance fiscal compliance and contribute to broader economic stability. When citizens perceive their government as fair and effective, they are more likely to support tax systems and comply with fiscal policies, reducing enforcement costs and improving revenue collection. Future research should explore the generalizability of these findings through cross-national comparisons, particularly in varying institutional and cultural contexts, to better understand how governance reforms can translate into tangible economic benefits across different political economies.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Good Governance

Transparency

1. The government provides timely access to information about its policies and activities.
2. Information about government budgets and expenditures is publicly available and easy to understand.
3. Decision-making processes in the government are clear and open to public scrutiny.
4. The government ensures that all stakeholders are informed about changes in policies or regulations.

Accountability

5. Government officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions.
6. There are effective mechanisms for citizens to report misconduct or corruption in government.
7. Public funds are monitored and audited to prevent misuse.
8. Government agencies provide regular reports on their performance to the public.

Responsiveness

9. The government actively seeks feedback from citizens on its services and policies.
10. Government institutions are committed to addressing public complaints and inquiries in a timely manner.
11. The government adapts its policies and services to meet changing public needs.
12. Local government offices are accessible and willing to assist citizens with their concerns.

Source: (Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2010).

Public Trust in Government

1. I trust the government to act in the public's best interest.
2. Government officials are honest in their dealings with citizens.
3. The government is effective in addressing societal challenges.
4. I have confidence in the government's ability to handle critical issues.
5. The government acts transparently in its decision-making.
6. I believe the government values the opinions and needs of its citizens.
7. The government provides public services competently and efficiently.
8. I trust the government to make decisions that benefit the majority of people.

Source (Taamneh., Abu haija, & Taamneh, 2023)

Institutional legitimacy

Moral Legitimacy

1. The institution's actions are guided by ethical principles.
2. The institution prioritizes the well-being of the public over self-interest.
3. The institution's policies align with the values and norms of society.
4. The institution is committed to fairness and equity in its operations.

Pragmatic Legitimacy

5. The institution provides valuable services that benefit the community.
6. The institution responds effectively to public concerns and needs.
7. The institution is transparent about its decisions and actions.
8. The institution demonstrates accountability to its stakeholders.

Cognitive Legitimacy

9. The purpose of the institution is clear and well-understood by the public.
10. The institution's role is considered essential for society.
11. The institution operates in a way that meets societal expectations.
12. The institution is perceived as competent and trustworthy in its field.

Source: (Suchman,1995)