

# E-Government Services Quality and Trust in Government Organizations: The Mediating Roles of Perceived Transparency

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study examines how the quality of electronic government (e-government) services and citizens' perceptions of transparency shape trust in public institutions. To analyze these relationships, the research draws on three theoretical perspectives: the Expectation-Confirmation Model, the Information Systems Success Model, and Social Exchange Theory.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 385 citizens with prior experience using e-government platforms. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS. Measurement reliability and validity were confirmed through confirmatory factor analysis, and common method bias was checked using Harman's single-factor test.

**Findings:** The results indicate that the quality of e-government services is positively related to trust in government organizations ( $\beta = 0.44, p < 0.001$ ). E-government service quality is positively linked to perceived transparency ( $\beta = 0.83, p < 0.001$ ). Perceived transparency has positive effects on trust in government organizations ( $\beta = 0.38, p < 0.001$ ). Perceived transparency mediates the relationship between e-government service quality and trust in government organizations ( $\beta = 0.32, p < 0.001$ ). All proposed hypotheses were supported, underscoring transparency as a central link between service quality and trust in digital governance.

**Originality/value:** By integrating three complementary theoretical models, this research provides a broader explanation of how citizen trust develops in digital government contexts. The findings highlight the critical mediating role of transparency, offering both theoretical contributions and practical guidance for policymakers seeking to foster trust through reliable and transparent e-government service delivery.

**Categories:** Social systems (economies, governments, industry), Sustainable entrepreneurship

**Keywords:** e-government, service quality, perceived transparency, trust, mediation

## Introduction

The rapid spread of digital technologies has transformed how millions of citizens engage with public institutions each year, yet this expansion has surfaced a critical governance challenge: despite substantial investments in e-government infrastructures, citizens continue to question whether these platforms operate transparently, securely, and reliably. Growing concerns over data protection, opaque procedures, and inconsistent service performance threaten confidence

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although e-government services improve accessibility and administrative efficiency, the mechanisms through which service quality fosters trust particularly via perceived transparency remain inadequately understood (Ouattara and Van Der Meer, 2023). A broad stream of research confirms that high levels of service quality information accuracy, usability, responsiveness, and system reliability enhance satisfaction and shape trust-building processes. Studies grounded in the DeLone and McLean IS Success Model consistently show that system and information quality predict user satisfaction and intention to continue using digital public services (Alkrajji and Ameen, 2021) (Li and Shang, 2020). Other scholars highlight the importance of institutional factors such as participation opportunities, openness, and political stability in strengthening trust (Van and Migchelbrink, 2020). Increasingly, empirical evidence demonstrates that transparency is central to these dynamics: when governments communicate clearly, openly share information, and articulate decision processes, trust improves significantly (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013) (Nasution, 2025). Recent studies further show that digital transparency enhances perceptions of fairness, accountability, and institutional integrity (Porumbescu, 2017). Yet, how transparency functions as a mediating psychological mechanism remains insufficiently explored. Despite growing interest, the literature reveals several gaps. Many studies treat service quality, transparency, and trust as independent constructs, overlooking how user perceptions evolve cognitively as they interpret quality signals in digital environments (Ashkanani et al., 2024). Others rely heavily on cross-sectional data that fail to capture temporal changes in trust (Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies, 2017). Little work integrates transparency into established theoretical models, leaving uncertainty about how quality-driven perceptions translate into trust. This study addresses these deficiencies by testing a model grounded in the IS Success Model and trust theory, positioning perceived transparency as the mechanism through which e-government service quality influences trust (Trabucchi et al., 2023). This research offers value for scholars by clarifying under-examined causal pathways, for practitioners by identifying design principles that enhance user confidence, and for policymakers by providing evidence to improve digital accountability and citizen-state relations (Ziaja et al., 2024). The purpose of this quantitative survey study is to test a model that relates e-government service quality (independent variable) to citizen trust in government (dependent variable), while assessing perceived transparency as a mediating variable among adult users of national digital government platforms. Service quality will be defined as citizens' evaluations of reliability, usability, responsiveness, and information clarity; trust will be defined as confidence in governmental integrity and competence; and perceived transparency will be defined as judgments regarding the openness, clarity, and accessibility of governmental processes (Arias and Maçada, 2018). In this study, the three theoretical perspectives serve complementary rather than overlapping roles. The Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) provides the experiential context by explaining how citizens evaluate e-government services based on prior expectations and subsequent performance. The Information Systems Success Model (ISSM) operationalizes this evaluation through measurable dimensions of service, system, and information quality. Social Exchange Theory (SET) explains how perceptions of transparency arising from these quality assessments reduce uncertainty and perceived risk, thereby fostering trust. This structured integration avoids theoretical redundancy and enables a clearer explanation of the cognitive and relational mechanisms linking service quality to trust. In the context of public administration, e-government initiatives are increasingly viewed as instruments for promoting good governance by enhancing transparency, citizen participation, and accountability in public service delivery.

## **Theoretical framework and hypothesis development**

### *E-government Services Quality and Trust in Government Organizations*

Enhancing the quality of e-government platforms is a central driver of public trust in government institutions. The ECM helps explain this dynamic. Citizens approach online systems with initial expectations about efficiency, usability, and reliability. When their experiences meet or surpass these expectations, satisfaction grows, which in turn reinforces trust in the government agency delivering the service (Maulan and Fitriani, 2025). In contrast, negative experiences such as system breakdowns, delays, or inaccurate content undermine expectations, leading to dissatisfaction and weakening confidence in government (Asamoah, 2025). Trust is further shaped by specific service dimensions. Information quality accuracy, completeness, and relevance of data plays a particularly influential role. When online portals provide timely and reliable information, citizens perceive the government as credible and dependable, which strengthens trust (Chan et al., 2021). Similarly, system quality, reflected in technical reliability, security safeguards, and user-friendliness, directly impacts the citizen experience. A secure, intuitive, and stable system reduces uncertainty and reinforces perceptions of competence (Vilar and Žumer, 2008). Additionally, service interaction quality, which includes responsiveness, empathy,

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and support mechanisms, enhances user confidence by signaling attentiveness and accountability on the part of government agencies. The iterative nature of ECM also suggests that repeated positive encounters with e-government services gradually transform satisfaction into a more enduring form of institutional trust (Janssen et al., 2017). In this way, effective service quality does more than deliver convenience, it lays the foundation for a sustained relationship of trust between governments and their citizens, which is vital for long-term governance legitimacy and civic engagement (Stald, 2024).

H1. E-government Services Quality is positively related to Trust in Government Organizations

#### *E-government Services Quality and Perceived Transparency*

The quality of e-government services has a significant influence on how citizens perceive the transparency of government operations. This connection can be better understood using the Information Systems Success Model (ISSM) (DeLone and McLean, 2003). According to this model, an information system's success depends on three dimensions, information quality, system quality, and service quality, which shape user satisfaction and the benefits derived from the system. In the context of e-government, these qualities directly affect how citizens access, interpret, and evaluate government processes, which in turn informs their sense of transparency. When e-government platforms provide high-quality information accurate, complete, and up to date citizens are more likely to view government institutions as open and accountable (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024). Clear and accessible information fosters a perception of honesty and openness, whereas outdated or incomplete data may lead to suspicion, regardless of actual government intentions (Al Hujran et al., 2013). Beyond content, system quality and service quality also shape transparency perceptions. A reliable and user-friendly platform that processes requests efficiently signals procedural clarity and accountability (Rajala and Jalonen, 2025). Likewise, responsive support services and timely updates create confidence in the government's operational integrity. Such experiences provide citizens with visibility into administrative processes, reduce uncertainty, and strengthen their sense of openness. Therefore, transparency is not achieved solely through policy declarations but also through the practical experience of interacting with well-functioning e-government platforms. High service quality through accurate information, robust systems, and responsive services enables citizens to perceive the government as transparent and trustworthy (Janssen et al., 2017). Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H2. E-government Services Quality is positively linked to Perceived Transparency

#### *Perceived Transparency and Trust in Government Organizations*

Transparency is widely acknowledged as a fundamental element in strengthening citizens' trust in government institutions. This relationship is well explained through Social Exchange Theory (SET), which posits that individuals engage in relationships when the perceived benefits outweigh the potential risks or costs. In public governance, when citizens perceive government actions and decisions as open and accessible, they recognize transparency as a benefit promoting accountability and reducing uncertainty. This perception makes them more willing to place trust in government authorities (Li et al., 2025). Different aspects of transparency contribute uniquely to trust. Informational transparency, achieved through the disclosure of public records, policies, and financial data, allows citizens to evaluate government actions and hold officials accountable, thereby strengthening confidence in institutional integrity (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024). Procedural transparency, which emphasizes fairness and clarity in service delivery and decision-making, reassures citizens that processes are impartial and reliable. When people understand how services are provided or how policies are developed, the likelihood of arbitrary or biased behavior appears lower, enhancing trust (Al Hujran et al., 2013). Finally, decisional transparency regarding the rationale behind government policies and outcomes provides legitimacy and predictability, which further supports trust in governance (Vilar and Žumer, 2008). In contrast, when transparency is lacking through hidden procedures, restricted information, or vague explanations of decisions citizens are more likely to experience uncertainty, skepticism, and diminished confidence in government. According to SET, this situation reflects an unfavorable cost-benefit exchange, where the perceived risks and costs of engagement outweigh the potential gains. Over time, this imbalance can lead to disengagement and the erosion of trust (Rajala and Jalonen, 2025). Thus, fostering transparency is not only a matter of good governance practices but also a prerequisite for sustaining long-term trust in government organizations, particularly in digital governance environments. Based on the above, we hypothesized that:

H3. Perceived Transparency has positive effects on Trust in Government Organizations

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### *The Mediating Effect of Perceived Transparency*

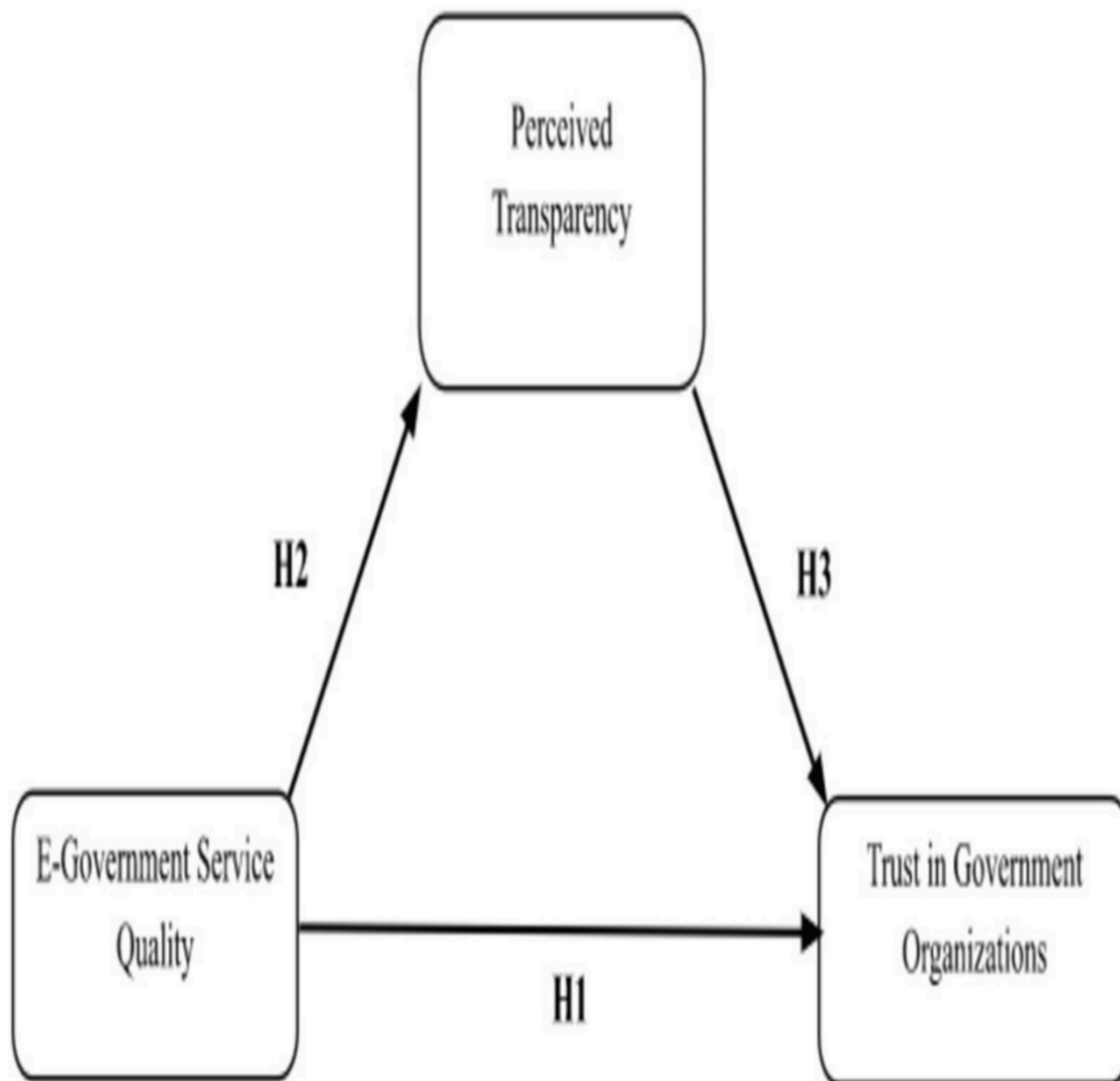
The influence of e-government service quality on citizen trust is not exclusively direct; it also operates through citizens' perceptions of transparency. To understand this relationship more fully, three theoretical perspectives - Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM), Information Systems Success Model (ISSM), and Social Exchange Theory (SET) - can be integrated. Together, these frameworks explain how the technical and experiential aspects of e-government platforms shape perceptions of openness, which then translate into trust. According to ECM, citizens approach e-government systems with expectations about usability, efficiency, and reliability. When actual service delivery meets or exceeds these expectations, satisfaction is achieved, which subsequently shapes positive perceptions of transparency. For example, streamlined applications and accessible information can affirm expectations of efficiency and openness (Luo et al., 2024). The ISSM expands this by showing how service quality dimensions directly influence perceptions of transparency. Accurate and comprehensive information enhances informational openness, while reliable systems and supportive service functions contribute to procedural and operational clarity (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024), (Al Hujran et al., 2013), and (Janssen et al., 2017). Citizens interpret these qualities as evidence that the government is accountable and forthcoming, reinforcing their view of transparency. Finally, SET explains how transparency transforms into trust. When citizens perceive that government information, processes, and decisions are openly communicated, the risks and uncertainties of engaging with the government are reduced. At the same time, the benefits such as being well-informed and feeling empowered become more salient. This favorable exchange fosters a willingness to depend on government actions, which lies at the heart of trust (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013) (Rajala and Jalonen, 2025). In sum, this study conceptualizes perceived transparency as the central psychological mechanism through which e-government service quality influences trust in government organizations. Rather than treating transparency as a parallel outcome or antecedent, the model positions e-government service quality as the exogenous construct that shapes citizens' perceptions of transparency, which in turn affects trust. This directional logic reflects the digital governance process, whereby citizens first interact with service attributes such as system reliability, information accuracy, and procedural clarity before forming transparency judgments that inform trust evaluations (Porumbescu, 2016). Accordingly, the model specifies unidirectional paths from e-government service quality to perceived transparency and from perceived transparency to trust in government organizations. This structure aligns with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that transparency reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, thereby enabling trust formation, and with the Information Systems Success Model, which explains how service quality perceptions precede evaluative outcomes (Song and Lee, 2015). The revised conceptualization clarifies that mediation occurs through perceived transparency, rather than through transparency, resolving ambiguity in earlier model representations. Figure 7 illustrates the research model.

H4. Perceived Transparency mediates the Relationship between E-government Services Quality and Trust in Government Organizations

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**FIGURE 1: Research Model**

Source (s): Author's own work

## Research Method

### Research design

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional survey approach to explore the relationships among e-government service quality, perceived transparency, and trust in public organizations. Such a design is suitable for examining hypothesized links between abstract constructs in a defined population at one point in time, allowing efficient data collection for testing theoretical models and mediation effects (Ma et al., 2024).

### Participants and data collection

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The study targeted citizens with prior experience using e-government services in Ghana, a country that has made substantial investments in digital public service platforms such as Ghana.Gov, digital addressing systems, and mobile-based government services. Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to collect data from citizens who had direct experience using e-government services in Ghana. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the research objective required responses from individuals who had interacted with digital government platforms and were therefore capable of evaluating e-government service quality, perceived transparency, and trust in government organizations (Jopang et al., 2024). Data were collected through online distribution channels to intentionally target users with the necessary digital access and literacy to engage with e-government services. While this approach limits statistical generalization to the entire Ghanaian population, it ensures that the data accurately reflect the perceptions of the actual user base of e-government systems, which is the population of theoretical interest in this study. Similar purposive approaches have been widely adopted in prior e-government and information systems research, where the phenomenon under investigation is contingent upon prior system usage. Consequently, the sampling approach captures the perceptions of the actual user base of e-government services rather than potential or non-users (Adeel et al., 2023). The final sample consisted of 385 valid responses. This sample size satisfies established recommendations for Structural Equation Modeling, exceeding the minimum threshold required for reliable parameter estimation in covariance-based SEM. In addition, the sample size aligns with the Cochran formula for large populations at a 95% confidence level, supporting the adequacy of the data for model testing and hypothesis evaluation (Sung and Lee, 2025).

### Measures

All constructs were measured using validated scales from prior research to guarantee both reliability and content validity.

**E-government Service Quality:** Assessed using the scale developed by Papadomichelaki and Mentzas (Papadomichelaki and Mentzas, 2012), which covers information quality, system quality, and service quality across 17 items. An example item is: "The government website is customized to individual users' needs." The scale demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.98$ ). Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

**Perceived Transparency:** Measured with a five-item scale adapted from Dapko (Dapko, 2012), which evaluates citizens' perceptions of governmental openness and accountability. A sample item is: "Government programs and plans are carried out transparently." Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.97. Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

**Trust in Government Organizations:** Measured using six items derived from trust scales in public administration research (Mansoor, 2021). The focus was on service dependability and the honesty of officials. An example statement is: "Public authorities in government are sincere." The scale had high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.93$ ), with responses captured on a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix).

**Control Variables:** Age, gender, and educational level were included to account for demographic effects. Age was treated as a continuous variable, gender coded as binary (1 = male, 2 = female), education categorized according to the highest qualification attained, frequency of use, specific platforms ever used (multiple-choice selection of common national platforms) and purpose of using the e-government platform.

### Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using AMOS (SPSS version 22) with structural equation modeling (SEM). The procedure followed several steps to ensure accuracy and validity: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to establish convergent and discriminant validity. Following Hair et al. (Hair et al., 2014), convergent validity was confirmed as factor loadings exceeded 0.70, average variance extracted (AVE) values were above 0.50, and construct reliability (CR) surpassed 0.70. Discriminant validity was verified using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio, with all values below the 0.90 threshold (Henseler et al., 2015). Fit indices showed an excellent model fit:  $\chi^2/df < 3$ , CFI and TLI  $> 0.90$ , and RMSEA and SRMR  $< 0.08$ . Procedural remedies were applied during data collection, such as ensuring anonymity and separating measures of independent and dependent variables. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test indicated that no single factor explained more than 50% of the variance, suggesting CMB was not a significant issue (Podsakoff et al., 2003). SEM

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was then applied to estimate direct and indirect effects. Paths from service quality to transparency and trust, as well as from transparency to trust, were analyzed. The mediating role of perceived transparency was tested using bootstrapping with bias-corrected confidence intervals (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Control variables were included, but none had significant effects on trust, leaving the hypothesized relationships stable.

## Results And Discussion

This section presents the findings from the descriptive statistics, measurement model assessment, and structural model analysis.

### Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and the inter-correlations among the three main constructs: E-Government Service Quality (EGSQ), Perceived Transparency (PT), and Trust in Government Organizations (TGO). The average score for EGSQ was 75.96 (SD = 26.17), PT averaged 19.84 (SD = 7.56), and TGO had a mean of 17.62 (SD = 5.19). All three variables were positively and significantly correlated at  $p < 0.001$ . In particular, service quality demonstrated strong correlations with both perceived transparency ( $r = 0.826$ ) and trust ( $r = 0.749$ ), while perceived transparency also correlated positively with trust ( $r = 0.740$ ). These associations provide preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships.

| Variables                                  | Mean  | SD    | 1      | 2      | 3 |
|--|-------|-------|--------|--------|---|
| 1. E-Government Service Quality (EGSQ)     | 75.96 | 26.17 | -      |        |   |
| 2. Perceived Transparency (PT)             | 19.84 | 7.56  | 0.826* | -      |   |
| 3. Trust in Government Organizations (TGO) | 17.62 | 5.19  | 0.749* | 0.740* | - |

**TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

Note: \* $p < 0.00$  (2-tailed). SD = Standard Deviation. Source (s): Authors' own work

### Measurement model assessment

To verify the reliability and validity of the measurement model, a CFA was conducted. The results, summarized in Table 2, showed that factor loadings ranged between 0.66 and 0.85, surpassing the recommended minimum of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2014). Internal consistency was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.98 (EGSQ), 0.97 (PT), and 0.93 (TGO). CR values also exceeded the 0.70 threshold (EGSQ = 0.95; PT = 0.93; TGO = 0.90), while AVE values were all above 0.50 (EGSQ = 0.54; PT = 0.62; TGO = 0.55), confirming convergent validity. Although the correlation between E-Government Service Quality and Perceived Transparency is relatively high, discriminant validity was confirmed using the HTMT criterion, with values below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The strong association likely reflects the nature of digital governance environments, where transparency is often embedded within service quality attributes such as information accuracy, system reliability, and process clarity. From a user perspective, transparent processes may be interpreted as an inherent indicator of service quality rather than a completely independent construct. This conceptual closeness supports the partial mediation observed in the model and aligns with prior research emphasizing "transparency by design" in digital public services.

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| Variables   | Factor Loadings | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | CR   | AVE  |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|------|------|
| 1. E-Government Service Quality<br>(17 items)     | 0.66–0.80       | 0.98                | 0.95 | 0.54 |
| 2. Perceived Transparency (7 items)               | 0.70–0.85       | 0.97                | 0.93 | 0.62 |
| 3. Trust in Government Organizations<br>(6 items) | 0.69–0.78       | 0.93                | 0.90 | 0.55 |

**TABLE 2: Factor Loadings, Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , CR, and AVE scores**

Note: CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Source (s): Authors' own work

| Variables | EGSQ | PT   | TGO |
|-----------|------|------|-----|
| EGSQ      |      |      |     |
| PT        | 0.80 |      |     |
| TGO       | 0.78 | 0.62 |     |

**TABLE 3: HTMT Ratios**

Note: EGSQ = E-Government Service Quality, PT = Perceived Transparency, TGO = Trust in Government Organizations. Source (s): Authors' own work

Discriminant validity was assessed using the HTMT (Table 3). All HTMT estimates were below 0.90, indicating clear distinctions among the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015). Specifically, HTMT values were 0.80 (EGSQ-PT), 0.78 (EGSQ-TGO), and 0.62 (PT-TGO). Model fit indicators for the CFA confirmed that the measurement model adequately represented the data.

#### Structural model assessment

The overall fit of the structural model was evaluated using several goodness-of-fit indices, as summarized in Table 4. The model demonstrated an excellent fit to the data, with the  $\chi^2/df$  ratio at 2.88, which is below the recommended value of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2014). Other fit indices also met or exceeded their respective thresholds: CFI = 0.96 (recommended > 0.90), TLI = 0.97 (recommended > 0.90), RMSEA = 0.06 (recommended < 0.08), PNFI = 0.75 (recommended > 0.60), and SRMR = 0.08 (recommended < 0.10). These results indicate that the proposed structural model adequately represents the relationships among the latent variables.

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| Fit Indices                              | $\chi^2/df$ | CFI   | TLI   | RMSEA  | PNFI  | SRMR   |
|--|-------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| Recommended value<br>(Hair et al., 2014) | < 3         | >0.90 | >0.90 | < 0.08 | >0.60 | < 0.10 |
| Our structural model                     | 2.88        | 0.96  | 0.97  | 0.06   | 0.75  | 0.08   |

**TABLE 4: Model Fit Indices**

Source (s): Authors' own work. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker–Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; PNFI = Parsimony Normed Fit Index; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

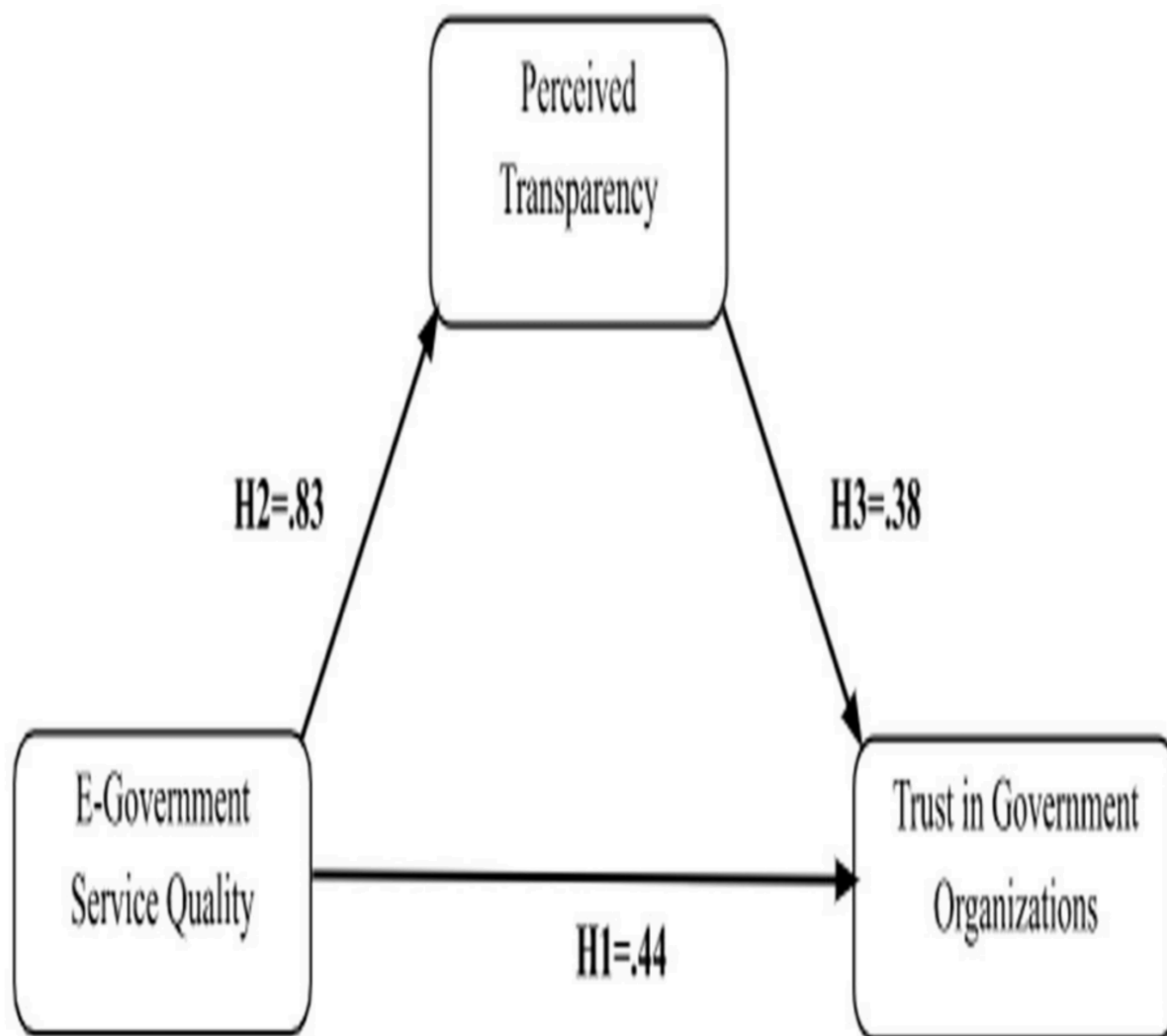
### Hypothesis testing

The structural model was evaluated using several goodness-of-fit measures, all of which demonstrated satisfactory fit. Path analysis revealed the following key relationships: EGSQ had a strong positive effect on TGO ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming H1. EGSQ significantly influenced PT ( $\beta = 0.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), supporting H2. Table 5 summarizes the hypothesis testing results. PT positively affected TGO ( $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), validating H3. Bootstrap analysis confirmed that PT significantly mediated partially the relationship between EGSQ and TGO, supporting H4. The indirect pathway demonstrated statistical significance, establishing transparency as a critical mechanism linking service quality with trust. Control variables (age, gender, education) were included in the model but showed no significant effects on trust ( $p > 0.05$ ), and their inclusion did not improve overall model fit.

The mediation analysis confirms that perceived transparency plays a significant partial mediating role in the relationship between e-government service quality and trust in government organizations. The direct effect of service quality on trust remains significant after the inclusion of perceived transparency, while the indirect effect through transparency is also statistically significant (Alsarraf et al., 2022). This pattern indicates that service quality influences trust both directly and indirectly by shaping citizens' transparency perceptions. Figure 2 shows the direct and mediating effects. These findings suggest that while functional and technical service attributes directly enhance trust, a substantial portion of this effect operates through citizens' interpretation of service openness, clarity, and accountability. The results therefore support a revised understanding of mediation, in which transparency acts as the primary interpretive pathway rather than as an independent or competing outcome variable.

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**FIGURE 2: Direct and Mediating Effects**

Source (s): Authors' own work

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| Hypothesis | Path                         | B    | SE   | p-value | Decision |
|------------|------------------------------|------|------|---------|----------|
| H1         | EGSQ → TGO (Direct)          | 0.44 | 0.01 | 0.000   | Accept   |
| H2         | EGSQ → PT                    | 0.83 | 0.01 | 0.000   | Accept   |
| H3         | PT → TGO                     | 0.38 | 0.04 | 0.000   | Accept   |
| H4         | EGSQ → TGO (Indirect via PT) | 0.32 | 0.05 | 0.000   | Accept   |

**TABLE 5: Hypothesis Testing Results**

Note: EGSQ = E-Government Service Quality, PT = Perceived Transparency, TGO = Trust in Government Organizations. Source (s): Authors' own work

## Discussion

Findings of this research highlight the critical importance of the quality of service provided by the e-government in creating trust among government institutions. Even though the correlation between e-government service quality, on the one hand, and perceived transparency, on the other hand, is quite significant ( $r = 0.826$ ), further diagnostics will prove that multicollinearity does not put the validity of the model at risk. The HTMT ratio was used to determine discriminant validity, and the results were all less than the recommended ratio of 0.90. Substantively, the robust relationship signifies the digital governance situation that is becoming more transparent in its service design attributes like information accuracy, system reliability, and procedural clarity (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). In the eyes of the citizen, transparent processes have usually been viewed as an inseparable part of service quality as opposed to a completely separable structure. This so-called transparency by design effect explains the observed overlap and still provides the theoretical distinction and the partial mediating position of perceived transparency (Lee et al., 2024). The large positive impact of service quality on trust (0.44, 0.001) substantiates previous studies that credible, effective and convenient e-government systems positively impact the desire of citizens to rely on the government (Maulan and Fitriani, 2025) (Stald, 2024). This conclusion closely fits the ECM proposing that the satisfaction of users caused by the fulfillment of their expectations or exceeding them results in the development of higher levels of trust and the further use of the system (Janssen et al., 2017). On the other hand, dissatisfaction in the form of poor usability, delays or technical breakdown destroys confidence when expectations are not fulfilled (Asamoah, 2025). It is also revealed that there is a strong relationship between the quality of service and perceived transparency (0.83,  $p = 0.001$ ). The result is congruent with the ISSM, which states that the quality of information, systems, and services influences the perceptions of openness and responsiveness (DeLone and McLean, 2003) (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024). As an example, the presence of correct and updated information, efficient systems, and responsive support are all indicators of accountability of the government, hence perceptions of transparency are more likely to rise (Al Hujran et al., 2013) (Rajala and Jalonen, 2025). In this regard, being transparent is not an incidental outcome of the delivery of services but the direct result of how citizens experience e-government platforms. Notably, the findings further indicate that, trust has a strong relationship with transparency alone (0.32,  $p < 0.001$ ). This confirms the assumption of the SET according to which people tend to invest more in relationships when the benefits (e.g., access to information, reduced uncertainty, accountability) exceed the risks (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013) (Li et al., 2025). Openness lessens informational disparity, lowers the feelings of opportunism, and ensures that people are satisfied with the government acting in a fair and just manner (Vilar and Žumer, 2008) (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024). This finding therefore supports the previous research that finds transparency as one of the best predictors of institutional trust in digital governance situations (Van De Walle and Migchelbrink, 2020) (Nasution, 2025). The mediation analysis also shows that transparency is an important process that connects service quality and trust. This finding aids in the body of literature by elucidating the indirect route that has

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been ignored in most cases. Although other researchers have studied either the direct effects of service quality (Chan et al., 2021) (Luo et al., 2024) or transparency (Ashkanani et al., 2024) (Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies, 2017) individually on trust, this article empirically demonstrates the interaction effect, indicating that the positive effect of service quality on trust possibly will not be achieved in the absence of transparency. That is, trust is not created only by technical efficiency, but it requires citizens to be able to view and comprehend the processes within the government. The theoretical contribution of this study is also that it combines ECM, ISSM, and SET into one explanatory theory.

These models have been mostly used separately in previous research to explain satisfaction, adoption, or trust (Stald, 2024) (Al Hujran et al., 2013), whereas the combination of them in the study has yielded a more detailed insight into the process of trust development in digital governance. This kind of integration contributes to the development of the theoretical discussion by making cognitive, technical as well as relational factors find their place into a single model.

#### Theoretical implications

The current study is based on the existing literature concerning the issue of digital governance that explains how perceived transparency determines the relationship between trust and the quality of services. These constructs were already analyzed independently (Chan et al., 2021) (Ashkanani et al., 2024), and it is this fact that this study integrates them into one structure. The complication of the ECM and SET, and the ISSM can be used to demonstrate that the integration of technical, cognitive, and relational factors can guarantee citizen trust in e-government (Stald, 2024) (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2013). This integration is an elaboration of the theory in a sense that it discloses that transparency is not necessarily a passive by-product of service satisfaction, but a dynamic process that transforms service satisfaction into institutional trust. Besides, it provides empirical evidence within the framework of a developing country within which research was not conducted in comparison with developed economies (Ouattara and Van Der Meer, 2023). This broadens the digital governance literature and highlights the importance of placing theoretical models in different sociopolitical settings.

#### Practical implications

To practitioners, the results highlight the significance of ensuring that the e-government platforms should be designed beyond their technical capabilities. The quality of services in terms of correct information, safe systems, and attentive support is a prerequisite (Papadomichelaki and Mentzas, 2012). Nevertheless, this is not enough to instill a sense of trust without apparent transparency mechanisms. Some practical suggestions are: Enhancing information access: to ensure access to transparent, timely, and complete policy, budget, and service outcome data (Elayn Aldroubi and Yusof, 2024). Improving reliability and usability of the system, so that citizens can perform their tasks without any unwarranted complexity or technical failures (Vilar and Žumer, 2008). Creating supportive services that respond fast, including chatbots, call centers, and online helpdesks, which enhance the sense of accountability (Chan et al., 2021). Integrating transparency attributes such as real time tracking of services, decisions justification as well as feedback capabilities within e-government systems. These actions show procedural fairness and support confidence among the masses (Al Hujran et al., 2013). Governments can also build a more trust-based relationship with citizens by ensuring low-cost, transparency, and service quality at the same time, and this facilitates adoption and long-term use of digital services (Li and Shang, 2020) (Siwi and Nawawi, 2023).

#### Policy implications

From a policy perspective, the results emphasize that digital transformation strategies must treat transparency as a governance priority, not just a technological add-on. Policymakers should develop frameworks that institutionalize transparency by mandating open data practices, performance reporting, and citizen participation in decision-making processes (Nasution, 2025). Furthermore, investment in e-government should be accompanied by capacity-building programs that train public officials in digital service delivery and transparent communication. Policies that ensure data privacy and security protections are also essential, as trust can be easily undermined by concerns over misuse of personal information (Ouattara and Van Der Meer, 2023). Finally, embedding transparency into regulatory and accountability structures ensures that governments are not only delivering efficient services but also demonstrating openness and fairness. This dual emphasis on quality and transparency strengthens democratic legitimacy and resilience, particularly in

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contexts where trust in government is fragile. From a public policy perspective, these findings reinforce the role of e-government as a governance tool capable of strengthening citizen engagement and transparency in the delivery of public goods and services.

#### Limitations and future research

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between e-government service quality, transparency, and trust, several avenues remain for further exploration. This study used a cross-sectional survey, which limits causal inference. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental approaches to track how trust evolves over time and to better establish cause-and-effect relationships (Grimmelikhuijsen and Knies, 2017). This would provide stronger evidence of how service quality and transparency contribute to sustainable trust in government. The current findings are based on citizens within a single national context. Comparative studies across countries with different political systems, cultural norms, and levels of digital maturity could reveal whether the observed relationships hold universally or vary by context (Ouattara and Van Der Meer, 2023). Such research could also test whether transparency plays a more central role in societies with historically lower levels of institutional trust. Although this study focused on service quality and perceived transparency, other factors such as data security, privacy concerns, digital literacy, and political culture may also significantly shape citizen trust in e-government (Vilar and Žumer, 2008) (Ouattara and Van Der Meer, 2023). Future studies could integrate these variables into expanded models to provide a more comprehensive understanding of trust formation. Beyond passive service use, citizen participation such as providing feedback, engaging in co-design of services, or interacting through social media may strengthen perceptions of transparency and trust (Van De Walle and Migchelbrink, 2020) (Chan et al., 2021). Future research should examine how active engagement channels influence these relationships. While quantitative methods are effective for testing hypotheses, qualitative approaches such as interviews, focus groups, or case studies could capture the nuanced perceptions and experiences of citizens. A mixed methods design would provide richer insights into how transparency is interpreted and valued in different communities (Ashkanani et al., 2024). Trust in government may differ depending on the type of service such as healthcare, taxation, or social welfare. Future studies could explore sectoral differences to determine whether transparency and service quality exert varying levels of influence on trust across different domains of e-government. Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to infer causality among the examined constructs. Although the theoretical framework supports the proposed directional relationships, future studies could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how perceptions of service quality, transparency, and trust evolve over time (Taufiqurokhman et al., 2024). Second, Despite its contributions, this study has limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of purposive sampling restricts the generalizability of the findings beyond citizens who actively use e-government services. The sample primarily represents digitally active or digital-native users rather than the broader population, including individuals affected by digital access constraints. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as reflecting trust formation among current users of e-government services, rather than potential users or non-users (Hall and Owens, 2011). Future research could employ stratified or probability-based sampling approaches to include rural populations, digitally marginalized groups, and citizens with limited exposure to online government services. Finally, the strong association between service quality and perceived transparency suggests that these constructs may be closely intertwined in digital governance contexts. Future studies may further explore this relationship by refining measurement models, introducing additional mediators such as perceived accountability or data security, or employing qualitative methods to better capture how citizens cognitively distinguish service quality from transparency.

## Conclusions

This paper examined a complex relationship between e-government service quality, perceived transparency, and trust by citizens in government organizations. The main assumption that we tested was that perceived transparency functions as a crucial mediator, or connection, between service quality and trust. To evaluate this, we have come up with a thorough theoretical framework, which combines three existing models, which are the ECM, the ISSM, and the SET. This model was empirically tested by us on the basis of the sample of 385 citizens. The results indicated all the hypothesized relationships and were good evidence in support of the theoretical framework proposed. These findings substantiate the idea that a high level of e-government services directly results in the development of trust in government organizations, in

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accordance with the ECM assumption that when people have positive experiences, they become satisfied and trust both the government and its partner companies. Moreover, the research conclusively proved that the quality of e-government services has a considerable positive impact on the perceived transparency of citizens and such a correlation is reinforced by the ISSM, which emphasizes the importance of the quality features of information systems in influencing the perceptions of transparency and accountability by users. More importantly, the study revealed the important mediating position played by perceived transparency, which implies that the positive influence of the quality of e-government services on trust is greatly mediated by the cognitive evaluation of transparency by citizens. This mediation is aligned with SET, where perceived risks and uncertainties decrease with transparency and enhances the benefits of interaction between the citizens and the government, which creates trust. Hypothetically, the research will contribute the understanding of the formation of trust in digital governance by merging and empirically proving the synergistic interaction of ECM, ISSM, and SET. It has an even more subtle model that explains the dynamics by which improvements in technology in the delivery of services to the populace of a country translate into an increase in trust by the citizens. In practice, the findings are important in providing governments around the world with valuable recommendations. To build and maintain trust in the digital era, the government must not only invest in technically effective and easy to use e-government systems, but must also design the services in a way that could give the illusion of maximum transparency. Governments can be successful in establishing a platform of trust with their citizens by making sure that e-services are able to communicate clearly, have easily available information and comprehensible processes. Although this research study makes meaningful contributions, the cross-sectional nature of the study should be considered in future longitudinal studies to determine causal relationships more conclusively. It is also possible that future research studies may go into even more settings and cultural effects, which may drive these relationships which will only enhance the comprehension about trust in digital public administration. However, this study can offer credible support that the e-government service quality is a potent trigger for perceived transparency, which, in its turn, can be seen as a cornerstone of the citizen trust in the government organizations. All in all, the paper has shown that e-government service quality and transparency are crucial governance tools that help in responsible governance and good service delivery to the people in the digital age.

## Appendices

E-Government Services Quality and Trust in Government Organizations: The Mediating Roles of Perceived Transparency

Dear Participant,

I am an MPhil Public Administration final year candidate at the University for Development Studies, School of Business, in the Department of Public and Health Services Administration. I am conducting research on E-government service quality and trust in government organizations in Ghana, focusing on the role of digital literacy and transparency. This questionnaire is designed to gather your perceptions and experiences related to the use of E-government services and your trust in government organizations. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential and used for academic purposes only. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Your honest and thoughtful answers are greatly appreciated and will contribute significantly to our understanding of these important issues in Ghana.

Contact: umsadiq02063322912@gmail.com or 0206332291

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Question

Response Options

Your Answer

1. Age

18-24 years  25-34 years  35-44 years  45-54 years  55-64 years

2. Gender

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Male  Female

3. Education Level

No formal education  Below Bachelor's Degree  Bachelor's Degree  Master's Degree  Doctoral Degree

4. Have you ever used any of the E-government platforms?

Yes  No

5. Which e-government platforms have you used?

Ghana.gov  GhanaPay  Business Regulatory Reforms app  GhanaPostGPS  ECG Power/GWCL App  Mobile Banking App  Mobile Network App

6. Purpose of E-Government Platform used

Transaction/Financial services  Seek Information online  Application services  Easy access to services  Access location online

SECTION B: E-GOVERNMENT SERVICE QUALITY (Papadomichelaki and Mentzas, 2012).

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Choose the response that best reflects your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree

Website Usability and Information Quality

Statement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

This e-government site's structure is clear and easy to follow

This e-government site's search engine is effective

This e-government site's site map is well organized

This e-government site is well customized to individual users' needs

The information displayed in this e-government site is appropriately detailed

The information displayed in this e-government site is fresh

Information about field's completion in this e-government site is enough

Security and Privacy

Statement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Acquisition of username and password in this e-government site is secure

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**How to cite this article:**

□□□□□□

Only necessary personal data are provided for authentication on this e-government site

□□□□□□

Data provided by users in this e-government site are archived securely

□□□□□□

Data provided in this e-government site are used only for the reason submitted

□□□□□□

System Performance and Reliability

Statement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Forms in this e-government site are downloaded in short time

□□□□□□

This e-government site is available and accessible whenever you need it

□□□□□□

This e-government site performs the service successfully upon first request

□□□□□□

This e-government site provides services in time

□□□□□□

E-government site's pages are downloaded quickly enough

□□□□□□

This e-government site works properly with your default browser

□□□□□□

SECTION C: TRUST IN GOVERNMENT ([Mansoor, 2021](#)).

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Choose the response that best reflects your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement

1 2 3 4 5

Public authorities in the government are acting in the interest of the public

□□□□□

Public authorities in the government are capable

□□□□□

Public authorities in the government carry out their duties effectively

□□□□□

Public authorities in the government are sincere

□□□□□

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Public authorities in the government are honest

SECTION D: TRANSPARENCY (Dapko, 2012).

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Choose the response that best reflects your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neutral, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree

Statement

1 2 3 4 5 6

The government plan and program are implemented transparently

The entire process of the government is transparently disclosed

The public can clearly see the progress and situations of the government administration

The government discloses sufficient information to the public about its performance

The government ensures proper usage of its budget in an authorized manner

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Your responses will contribute valuable insights to understanding e-government service quality and trust in Ghana.

## Additional Information

### Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

**Concept and design:** Umar Sadiq, Yussif Mohammed Alhassan, Iddrisu Issah

**Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data:** Umar Sadiq, Yussif Mohammed Alhassan, Iddrisu Issah

**Drafting of the manuscript:** Umar Sadiq, Yussif Mohammed Alhassan, Iddrisu Issah

**Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content:** Umar Sadiq, Yussif Mohammed Alhassan, Iddrisu Issah

**Supervision:** Yussif Mohammed Alhassan, Iddrisu Issah

### Disclosures

**Human subjects:** Consent was obtained or waived by all participants in this study. The Administrator UDS IRB Secretariat University for Development Studies issued approval (UDSIRB540). **Animal subjects:** All authors have confirmed that this study did not involve animal subjects or tissue. **Conflicts of interest:** In compliance with the ICMJE uniform disclosure form, all authors declare the following: **Payment/services info:** All authors have declared that no financial support was received from any organization for the submitted work. **Financial relationships:** All authors have declared that they

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