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The Influence of E-Government Service Quality on Public Trust: Evidence from the Surabaya Single Window

Prasetyo Hadi Susanto[1], Dini Hariyanti[2]
[1,2]Trisakti University, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Public trust is a critical condition for the sustainable use of e-government services, and service quality is widely regarded as one of its determinants. However, previous studies of the Surabaya Single Window (SSW) have focused on implementation, adoption, and user satisfaction, and have not positioned public trust as the main outcome of service quality. This study aims to examine the effect of e-government service quality, measured with eight dimensions of a Modified E-GovQual Model, on public trust in the SSW website. A quantitative explanatory survey was conducted online with 150 active SSW users in Surabaya, selected through purposive sampling, from November 2025 to February 2026. The eight dimensions were ease of use, reliability, trust in the system, information content and design, form functionality, visual quality, support, and overall experience, while public trust was measured through competence, benevolence, and integrity. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The eight dimensions jointly accounted for a very high share of the variance in public trust ($R^2 = 0.954$). Overall experience was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.798$; $f^2 = 0.964$), followed by reliability ($\beta = 0.213$; $p = 0.001$) and visual quality ($\beta = 0.152$; $p = 0.002$), whereas form functionality showed a negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.159$; $p = 0.012$). Ease of use, trust in the system, information content and design, and support were not significant predictors. These results must be interpreted with caution because discriminant validity was not established (HTMT values above 0.90 among several constructs), multicollinearity was severe (VIF up to 27.362), and common method bias was substantial (Harman's single factor = 70.04%). The findings therefore represent exploratory statistical associations rather than causal effects. The study contributes to the e-government literature by positioning public trust as the main outcome of service quality on a local-government platform and by exposing measurement problems in the Modified E-GovQual model. Practically, the results suggest that the Surabaya City Government prioritizes overall user experience, system reliability, visual quality, and simpler forms, pending validation of a revised measurement model.

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Corresponding Author:

Prasetyo Hadi Susanto
Trisakti University, Indonesia
Email: prasetyohadisusanto@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

Profound changes in almost all aspects of modern human life, whether in the economic, social, or governmental fields, are triggered by the development of information and communication technology (ICT). The digital revolution requires every institution to adapt quickly to a dynamic environment. In government, technology is no longer limited to an administrative tool but also functions as a catalyst for a paradigm shift in public service: the bureaucracy is expected to be agile, efficient, responsive, and accountable rather than slow, closed, and procedural. As the main public service provider, the government cannot escape the demands of a society that is increasingly critical of the performance of public institutions, and one widely used strategic innovation to answer these demands is the use of technology in public administration and service [1].

Presidential Instruction No. 3 of 2003 concerning the National Policy and Strategy for E-Government Development was issued as a concrete form of the Indonesian government's commitment to e-government. It directs the development of an integrated and sustainable digital service system and serves as a national guideline for government agencies at both the central and regional levels [2]. The regulation emphasizes digital transformation not merely as a means of efficiency but also as an effort to strengthen transparency, accountability, and the quality of public services. E-government covers various models of digital interaction between the government and stakeholders, including Government to Government (G2G), Government to Business (G2B), and Government to Citizen (G2C), and government digital service portals carry out a dual function as an information medium and an online service delivery tool [3].

The city of Surabaya is known as one of the pioneers of digital-based government in Indonesia. Since the early 2000s, the Surabaya City Government has consistently implemented technological innovations in public services, such as e-budgeting, e-procurement, and a digital-based licensing system as an important milestone toward efficient and transparent governance. One of the most prominent innovations is the Surabaya Single Window (SSW), an integrated system designed to manage licensing and public administration services digitally [4].

The success of e-government implementation, however, is not guaranteed by technological advancement alone. Public acceptance of digital systems such as SSW still faces obstacles, including limited digital literacy, access to technological infrastructure, technical system constraints, and concerns regarding data security and service reliability [5], [6]. Public trust plays a very important role because, without trust, reluctance to use government digital services tends to emerge [5], [7]. Trust is a main prerequisite for the public to be willing to interact with government digital systems, access information, and submit personal data through official online platforms [8]. Public trust is therefore treated in this study as a variable that strongly determines the sustainability and effectiveness of e-government service utilization, because adoption and participation tend to increase as trust increases [9], [10].

Previous research on SSW and related services shows a consistent pattern in which service quality and adoption have been studied, while trust has rarely been the central

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outcome. Kurniawan and Prabawati evaluated the implementation of SSW and showed how the digital system helps local governments simplify licensing procedures, increase service efficiency, and shorten the bureaucratic chain, but they did not quantitatively measure how service quality affects public trust [11]. Hamidah et al. examined risk perceptions and supporting conditions for the adoption of digital services, with trust not used as the main variable [6]. Rachman et al. found that service quality dimensions such as ease of use and system reliability influence public satisfaction, but trust was not integrated as a key variable in their model [12]. Studies of this kind build on technology acceptance frameworks [13] and focus on implementation, adoption, and satisfaction. What these studies establish is that digital systems improve procedural efficiency and that service quality is related to satisfaction. What remains unclear is whether, and through which service-quality dimensions, the quality of a local-government platform such as SSW is associated with public trust.

Service quality in this study is conceptualized through a Modified E-GovQual Model with eight dimensions. The model is adapted from the E-GovQual scale for assessing e-government service quality [3], with visual quality and overall experience treated as separate dimensions in addition to ease of use, reliability, trust in the system, information content and design, form functionality, and support. Ease of use refers to the effort required to navigate the system; reliability to the consistency and accuracy of the service; trust in the system to the perceived security and trustworthiness of the platform as a technical system; information content and design to the quality and presentation of information; form functionality to how well the electronic forms support the transaction; visual quality to the professionalism of the interface; support to the assistance available to users; and overall experience to the holistic evaluation of the sequence of interactions with the system. The distinction between trust in the system, which concerns the technical platform, and public trust, which concerns the government as service provider and is defined through competence (ability), benevolence, and integrity, rests on the trust literature [7], [14], [15]. Because overall experience may incorporate evaluations of the other dimensions, it may function more as a higher-level evaluation than as a completely independent parallel predictor. These conceptual boundaries are tested empirically in this study.

The research gap is therefore that previous SSW studies have not positioned public trust as the principal outcome and have not examined which dimensions of a multidimensional service-quality model are associated with it. The novelty of this study lies in testing all eight Modified E-GovQual dimensions simultaneously as predictors of public trust, using users of a local-government licensing platform as the object, and in reporting the measurement diagnostics that determine how far the results can be interpreted. The study aims to examine the effect of the eight dimensions of e-government service quality on public trust in the Surabaya Single Window. Reflecting the trust-formation argument that better service quality signals competence, benevolence, and integrity [7], [14], eight hypotheses were formulated, each stating that the dimension has a positive effect on public trust: H1, ease of use; H2, reliability; H3, trust in the system; H4, information content and design; H5, form functionality; H6, visual quality; H7, support; and H8, overall experience. In this study, effect refers to a statistical path coefficient in a cross-sectional model, not to proven

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causation. The findings are expected to contribute to the e-government and public trust literature and to provide input for the Surabaya City Government in delivering more responsive and trustworthy digital public services.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study used explanatory quantitative research to examine relationships among service-quality dimensions and public trust based on an existing theoretical framework [16], [17]. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was used to measure user perceptions systematically through a questionnaire, and the relationships among variables were analyzed with statistical models [18], [19]. Because the data were collected at one point in time through self-reports, the design supports conclusions about statistical associations and predictive relationships but cannot establish causality.

2.2 Research Object, Location, and Time

The object of the research was the Surabaya Single Window (SSW) website in Surabaya City. The research was conducted from November 2025 to February 2026.

2.3 Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The research population was all Surabaya City residents who had used the SSW service at least once in the last six months, which also served as the inclusion criterion. A purposive sampling technique was employed, resulting in a target sample of 150 respondents, following the guideline of a minimum sample size of 5 to 10 times the number of indicators for PLS-SEM analysis [20], [21]. The final analysis was based on 150 respondents. Because purposive sampling is a non-probability technique, the sample does not statistically represent all SSW users.

2.4 Data Sources and Data Collection

Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire survey using a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data were obtained through documentation studies of DINKOMINFO performance reports and relevant regional regulations.

2.5 Research Instruments and Variables

The independent variable, e-government service quality, was measured using a Modified E-GovQual Model consisting of eight dimensions: ease of use (EOU), reliability (REL), trust in the system (TRS), information content and design (ICD), form functionality (FFU), visual quality (VQ), support (SUP), and overall experience (OE) [3]. The dependent variable, public trust (PUB), was measured through four indicators developed from three main dimensions, namely competence, benevolence, and integrity [7], [14], [15]. Each indicator was developed into concrete statements in the questionnaire, tailored to the context of the SSW service.

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2.6 Validity and Reliability

The measurement model was evaluated using the following criteria: outer loadings above 0.70, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above 0.50 [22], and Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability above 0.70 for convergent validity and internal consistency reliability [21], [23]. Discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), with values above 0.90 indicating a lack of discriminant validity [24]. Collinearity in the structural model was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with values below 5 regarded as acceptable [21]. Harman's single-factor test was implemented to evaluate the potential for common method bias, with a first factor explaining more than 50% of the total variance indicating a problem [25].

2.7 Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4 software. The evaluation encompassed the measurement model (outer model) to test construct validity and reliability, and the structural model (inner model) to assess the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2) [26], and predictive relevance (Q^2). The Goodness of Fit (GoF) index is also reported for completeness, although it is not recommended as a model-fit criterion in PLS-SEM [27]. Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure with 5000 subsamples and a one-tailed test at a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$), based on path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and respondents completed the online questionnaire on their own initiative. The data were used for research purposes only and are reported in aggregate form, without information that identifies individual respondents.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the analysis of data from 150 SSW users, including respondent characteristics, descriptive statistics, measurement model evaluation, structural model results, and hypothesis testing. It is followed by a discussion that interprets the findings in light of the measurement diagnostics and previous studies.

3.1 Results

The research data were obtained from 150 users of the SSW website. The composition of respondents was dominated by males (67.3%), and the majority possessed a bachelor's degree (S1) (60.7%). Private sector employees constituted the largest occupational group (43.3%). Most respondents had adequate experience interacting with the system, having used the SSW website more than once in the last six months. Other characteristics, such as age, are not reported.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (n=150)

Variable/Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
Ease of Use (EOU)	4.1022	0.48841
Reliability (REL)	3.7689	0.645
Trust in the System (TRS)	3.9822	0.60175
Information Content & Design (ICD)	4.0867	0.55352
Form Functionality (FFU)	3.4933	0.71702
Visual Quality (VQ)	4.1778	0.45803
Support (SUP)	3.4089	0.79253
Overall Experience (OE)	3.9978	0.59515
Public Trust (PUB)	4.03	0.63187

Table 1 shows that all dimensions recorded an average score above 3.40 on the five-point scale. Visual Quality (VQ) obtained the highest average (4.18), indicating a high assessment of the SSW interface, while Support (SUP) recorded the lowest average (3.41) and the largest standard deviation (0.79), indicating the most varied assessment. Public Trust (PUB) had a mean of 4.03 (SD = 0.63), which indicates a generally high level of trust among respondents.

In the measurement model, all indicators had outer loading values above 0.70, and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct exceeded 0.50. Internal consistency reliability was high, with Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability of all constructs exceeding 0.70 (Table 2), so convergent validity and internal consistency reliability were fulfilled. Composite Reliability values above 0.95 for FFU (0.952), SUP (0.951), and PUB (0.961) may indicate redundancy among the items of those constructs [21].

Table 2. AVE, Cronbach's Alpha, and Composite Reliability Values

Construct	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
EOU	0.761	0.833	0.904
FFU	0.868	0.924	0.952
ICD	0.837	0.903	0.939
OE	0.811	0.883	0.928
PUB	0.861	0.946	0.961
REL	0.792	0.868	0.919
SUP	0.865	0.923	0.951
TRS	0.8	0.875	0.923
VQ	0.723	0.81	0.887

In contrast, discriminant validity was not established. As shown in Table 3, HTMT values exceeded the 0.90 threshold for many pairs of constructs, and several values exceeded 1.00, for example, EOU–ICD (1.080), EOU–OE (1.078), EOU–TRS (1.062), OE–PUB (1.060), and ICD–OE (1.056). The HTMT value between TRS and PUB was 0.997, which suggests that respondents did not empirically distinguish trust in the system from public trust. Thus, several service-quality dimensions, particularly EOU, ICD, OE, and TRS, overlap substantially and cannot be treated as empirically distinct constructs.

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Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	EOU	FFU	ICD	OE	PUB	REL	SUP	TRS	VQ
EOU									
FFU	0.898								
ICD	**1.080**	0.880							
OE	**1.078**	0.926	**1.056**						
PUB	**1.014**	0.858	**1.020**	**1.060**					
REL	0.937	**1.050**	0.970	0.982	0.932				
SUP	0.832	0.977	0.894	0.869	0.829	**1.004**			
TRS	**1.062**	0.954	**1.041**	**1.050**	0.997	1.020	0.906		
VQ	0.995	0.710	0.936	0.882	0.881	0.673	0.710	0.854	

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) test on the structural model showed that seven of the eight predictor constructs had VIF values above the threshold of 5 (Table 4), ranging from 8.689 to 27.362, which indicates severe structural collinearity. Only VQ (4.832) was acceptable. Under such collinearity, the individual path coefficients are unstable, and their sizes and signs should not be interpreted as independent effects.

Table 4. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Values - Inner Model

Predictor Construct	VIF (-> PUB)	Status
ICD	27.362	Very severe
REL	19.800	Very severe
FFU	18.218	Very severe
OE	14.283	Severe
EOU	12.343	Severe
TRS	11.181	Severe
SUP	8.689	Exceeds threshold
VQ	4.832	Acceptable

The eight service-quality dimensions simultaneously explained 95.4% of the variance in Public Trust (PUB), indicated by an R^2 value of 0.954. The Q^2 value of 0.811 for the Public Trust construct exceeded the threshold of 0, indicating predictive relevance, and the GoF index reached 0.881. These very high values should be read together with the collinearity and discriminant validity problems above and the common method bias reported below, because overlapping constructs and shared method variance can inflate explained variance.

Harman's single factor test showed that the first single factor explained 70.04% of the total variance, exceeding the 50% threshold and indicating substantial common method bias in the data [25].

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure (5000 subsamples, one-tailed test, $\alpha = 0.05$) for the eight hypotheses, each stating that a service-quality dimension has a positive effect on public trust.

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Table 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coeff. (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Conclusion
H1	EOU -> PUB	-0.154	1.441	0.075	Not Supported
H2	REL -> PUB	0.213	2.977	0.001	Supported
H3	TRS -> PUB	0.027	0.393	0.347	Not Supported
H4	ICD -> PUB	0.159	1.322	0.093	Not Supported
H5	FFU -> PUB	-0.159	2.259	0.012	Not Supported*
H6	VQ -> PUB	0.152	2.929	0.002	Supported
H7	SUP -> PUB	-0.035	0.627	0.265	Not Supported
H8	OE -> PUB	0.798	7.545	0.000	Supported

Three hypotheses were supported (H2, H6, H8), and five hypotheses were not supported (H1, H3, H4, H5, H7). The most dominant predictor was Overall Experience (OE), with the highest path coefficient (β = 0.798) and a large effect size (f^2 = 0.964) [26]. Reliability (REL) and Visual Quality (VQ) had positive and significant coefficients (β = 0.213 and β = 0.152). Form Functionality (FFU) had a statistically significant coefficient in the opposite direction to that hypothesized (β = -0.159, p = 0.012), so H5 was not supported; this is indicated by the asterisk in Table 5. Ease of Use (EOU), trust in the System (TRS), Information Content and Design (ICD), and Support (SUP) were not significant.

In summary, overall experience, reliability, and visual quality were positively associated with public trust, form functionality showed an unexpected negative coefficient, and the other four dimensions were not significant. Given the failed discriminant validity, severe collinearity, and substantial common method bias, these results are exploratory.

3.2 Discussion

The findings show that overall experience, reliability, and visual quality are the dimensions associated with public trust in the SSW website, while form functionality shows an unexpected negative coefficient and the other four dimensions are not significant. The very high R^2 (0.954) indicates that the service-quality dimensions are strongly related to public trust in this sample. However, the measurement diagnostics show that this strength partly reflects overlapping constructs and shared method variance, so the findings are interpreted below as associations in a self-reported, cross-sectional data set.

Overall Experience (OE) was the strongest predictor (β = 0.798). This is consistent with the view that public trust in the digital era builds up from users' holistic evaluations of the whole sequence of interactions with the system rather than from isolated features. However, OE may conceptually incorporate evaluations of usability, reliability,

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information, visual design, and support, and its HTMT values with EOU (1.078), ICD (1.056), and PUB (1.060) show that respondents did not clearly distinguish it from these constructs. The dominance of OE may therefore partly reflect this overlap and common method variance, and it should not be read as evidence that OE fully mediates the other dimensions, because no mediation analysis was performed.

Reliability (REL) had a positive and significant coefficient. Consistency, minimal technical errors, and system accuracy can be seen as signals of the government's technical competence, which is a component of trust [7], [14], [15]. Visual Quality (VQ) was also positively associated with public trust. Aesthetics may act as a credibility signal in digital interactions, as a professional and neat design can shape a positive perception of the institution's competence [14]. These explanations are plausible and consistent with the trust-building literature, but they were not tested directly in this study.

Ease of Use (EOU), trust in the System (TRS), Information Content and Design (ICD), and Support (SUP) were not significant, and these results have several possible explanations. Substantively, ease of use and good information may be regarded by users as a basic obligation of a government system, a hygiene factor whose presence is expected but does not by itself build additional trust, and support may be more situational, functioning as a recovery mechanism when technical problems occur. For TRS, the HTMT value of 0.997 with PUB indicates that the two constructs are not empirically separable in this data, so trust in the system and public trust may be measuring largely the same perception. Statistically, VIF values above 11 for EOU, ICD, and TRS can inflate standard errors and make real effects appear non-significant, so non-significance should not be interpreted as the absence of an effect.

Form Functionality (FFU) showed a significant negative coefficient, contrary to the hypothesis and to literature that generally treats functional, interactive forms as positive. One possible explanation, based on Cognitive Load Theory, is that complex digital forms increase mental load and user anxiety and thereby reduce trust [28]. However, FFU had a VIF of 18.218, and strong collinearity can produce coefficients with reversed signs that do not reflect the underlying bivariate relationship. This finding is therefore tentative, and it does not by itself refute the existing literature.

The findings have implications for theory, practice, and policy. Theoretically, the results show that the dimensions of the Modified E-GovQual Model overlap empirically, particularly EOU, ICD, OE, and TRS. Hence, the model needs refinement of its measurement and conceptual boundaries before the dimensions are treated as independent predictors, and they support positioning public trust as an outcome of service quality that deserves further testing. Practically, the associations suggest that the SSW managers consider a citizen-centric experience, consistent system reliability, a professional visual design, and simpler forms. At the policy level, recommendations should be proportional to the evidence. The data describe user perceptions at one time point and do not compare SSW with no SSW, trust before and after implementation, or alternative service models, so they cannot establish whether the SSW program itself causes higher public trust. The results are better used to guide improvements in service design than to justify a conclusion about the program as a whole.

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This study has several limitations. First, purposive (non-probability) sampling was used, so the findings cannot be generalized to all SSW users. Second, the study is limited to a single city and a single platform. Third, the cross-sectional design does not establish temporal order or causality. Fourth, all data are self-reported, and Harman's single-factor test indicated substantial common method bias (70.04%). Fifth, discriminant validity failed for several constructs, and sixth, severe structural multicollinearity affects the stability of the path coefficients. Future studies are recommended to validate a revised measurement model with clearer construct boundaries, assess discriminant validity with both HTMT and the Fornell-Larcker criterion [22], [24], and to use full collinearity assessment for common method bias [29]. They should use larger samples, different e-government platforms, probability-based or more diverse sampling, longitudinal designs, behavioral usage data, and multi-source measurement.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effect of e-government service quality, measured with eight dimensions, on public trust in the Surabaya Single Window. Among the eight dimensions, overall experience, reliability, and visual quality were positively associated with public trust; form functionality showed an unexpected negative coefficient, and ease of use, trust in the system, information content and design, and support were not significant. Theoretically, the study positions public trust as the main outcome of service quality on a local-government platform and shows that the dimensions of the Modified E-GovQual Model overlap empirically and require refinement. Practically, the results suggest that SSW development should prioritize a citizen-centric overall experience, consistent system reliability, a professional visual appearance, and simpler forms. These recommendations are directions for service improvement and are not proof that the SSW program itself produces public trust, because the data describe user perceptions at one time point.

The conclusions must be read in light of the study's limitations: non-probability purposive sampling, a single-city and single-platform context, a cross-sectional design, self-report data, substantial common method bias, failed discriminant validity, and severe structural multicollinearity. Future studies should validate a revised measurement model using larger samples, different e-government platforms, probability-based or more diverse sampling, longitudinal designs, behavioral usage data, and multi-source measurement.

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