

Role of Perceived Religious Values to Facilitate Predictors of Public Trust in Government: The Case of a Muslim-Majority Culture

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Abstract: Grounded in good governance theory, this research investigated the direct and indirect relationships of Perceived Transparency (PT) and Perceived Responsiveness (PR) with the Overall Public Trust in Government (OPTIG) in the presence of Perceived E-Governance Effectiveness (PEGE) and Perceived Religious Value (PRV) as a mediator. Using a quantitative field survey approach, data were obtained from 511 respondents from Medan and Banjarmasin, Indonesia. Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS3 software. Results showed that PT, PR, PEGE, and PRV positively influenced OPTIG. Also, the mediatory roles of the PEGE and PRV were significant, revealing the importance of the government's use of information and communication technology and religious scholars' positive role in developing and enhancing the public's trust in the government.

Keywords: overall public trust in government, perceived transparency, perceived responsiveness, perceived religious value, perceived e-governance effectiveness.

Government has many key responsibilities, including policymaking, good governance, upholding the rule of law, and protecting its people's democratic rights (Galle et al., 2020). Especially in today's digital age of social media and globalization, governments are expected to maintain transparency, responsiveness, and overall effectiveness while devising and implementing policies. Citizens expect honesty, legitimacy, and responsiveness from their governments (Welch et al., 2005). Mansoor (2021b) state that public trust in government refers to the level of confidence that citizens have in their government to 'do the right thing, act appropriately and honestly on behalf of the public and also Beshi and Kaur (2020b) mention that public trust is also a measure of people's overall satisfaction with the policymakers.

As administrators have authority and access to various resources, transparency plays a vital role in determining public trust in government (Porumbescu, 2017). Transparency deals with governments' utilization of funds in decision-making (Sadeghi et al., 2018). Citizens perceive the government as fair and justice, which performs its duties according to the interests of the citizens and openly shares information with their citizens using various digital media channels (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). Very few studies have focused on perceived transparency and how it influences overall public trust in government. Hence, this research explored direct and indirect mechanisms through which perceived transparency is linked to public trust.

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Another aspect leading to trust in the government is how well and timely it responds to their queries (Miller, 2015). Each country has its own set of challenges, some existing and some arising due to changes in economic, social, cultural, and religious values, which poses government pressure to deal with them by assuring the people to make policies to resolve their problems (Van Craen & Skogan, 2015). Moreover, perceived responsiveness depicts the ability and desire of government representatives to respond to important matters to influence the public (Bratton, 2012). It includes consulting the people, communicating with them, and building an interpersonal relationships leading to trust-building among the masses and the government (Linde & Peters, 2020). Responsiveness is also critical because governments that fail to fulfill the people's demands or resolve the issues on time create an environment of uncertainty, and people lose interest in such governments (Hartanto et al., 2021; Mansoor, 2021a).

In addition, technology and ICTs have widely transformed how governments interact and communicate with people. Due to the advent of smart technologies, digital apps, and wireless networks such as the Internet connecting people around the world, governments are replacing single stand-alone systems with mobile technologies leading to m-governance and e-governance (Kolsaker & Lee-Kelley, 2008). Pre-requisite e-governance in any country requires a minimum level of e-connectivity, human capital, and technological infrastructure (Beshi & Kaur, 2020a). These ensure the efficient and effective delivery of public services, bridge the gap between authorities and the masses, and allow citizens to participate in democratic processes, strengthening their trust in government (Beshi & Kaur, 2020b). The scarcity of investigation in the e-governance and public trust domain motivated this research to explore the mediated and direct mechanism of e-governance effectiveness between predictors and the public trust relationship.

Moreover, claims have been made that national institutions influence public preferences and structure patterns of social division (Baazeem, 2020). One such aspect is religion's role in instilling faith, social practices, and reason for bringing harmony among people (Galle et al., 2020). Moreover, as Zeng et al. (2020) stated, religious values reflect beliefs and practices to bind believers of a particular religion together. Various religious states are built worldwide based on religious principles and incorporate religion in governing people (Zeng et al., 2020). Especially in Islamic countries like Indonesia, religion's role is considerable in governing every walk of life, including law enforcement, the justice system, education, health, and even trade and business (Kuipers et al., 2020).

Likewise, Pluskett (2020) revealed that Christianity plays an essential role in establishing public trust in government in the American context. This research revealed that those who believe in religious values are more inclined to listen to government officials' statements in light of religious teachings regarding life matters. Simultaneously, in Turkey, with 99% Muslims, religion has historically played a complex and multifaceted role in shaping the citizens' trust in the government. As a country with a rich Islamic heritage, religion holds significant cultural and social influence, contributing to the nation's identity. Throughout its history, Turkey has experienced periods of secularization and attempts to balance the influence of religion in public life (Çokgezen, 2022).

The government's approach to religion has been critical in building trust among citizens. On the one hand, secular principles have been enshrined in the constitution, emphasizing the separation of religion and state to ensure equal treatment of all citizens regardless of their beliefs. On the other hand, the government has allowed religious freedom, supporting the practice of Islam and recognizing its role in the lives of many citizens (Yilmaz et al., 2023). The Turkish government's willingness to work collaboratively with religious organizations and address the population's religious needs has been instrumental in cultivating trust (Zhang, 2022). Likewise,

some other studies also showed that followers have high regard and respect for their religious teachings, hence incorporating religion in governing the issues of their state can help to earn governments an increased level of trust from their people (Al Hajjaji, 2020; Khaksari et al., 2014; Ringim, 2014).

The use of technology, ICT, and Social Network Sites (SNS) to communicate, respond and interact with people to share useful religious information to influence public opinions is a recent phenomenon applied in practice by various governments to win public trust. This was observed during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis when religious actors, authorities, and institutions were activated, and e-governance portals and SNS were used to motivate and control people through religious values and information. Using religious values via technology to improve public service through e-governance can increase public trust (Kuipers et al., 2020). Safeguarding religious rights and incorporating religious values in the governance system to earn public trust in government is vital to investigate. As per the extensive literature review, such studies are rare, incorporating religious elements in e-governance and public trust literature. Thus, current research attempts to make a major advance by bridging this gap to incorporate perceived religious value construct as a mediating mechanism between e-governance effectiveness and public trust in government.

Furthermore, the current study is grounded in the good governance theory, which demonstrates the significance of responsible and transparent management to gain the trust of the masses in the political and government entities (Beshi & Kaur, 2020b). This suggests that the government feels a sense of responsibility and accountability towards their citizens by presenting transparent information and ease of access to that information. It also implies that governments should respect the people's rights by utilizing perceived religious values to achieve a higher level of trust. Hence, the main objectives of the current study are to:

- Examine the direct influence of Perceived Transparency (PT) and Perceived Responsiveness (PR), Perceived E-Governance Effectiveness (PEGE), and Perceived Religious Value (PRV) with Overall Public Trust in Government (OPTIG);
- Examine the direct influence of PT and PR on PEGE;
- Examine the impact of PEGE on PRV;
- Investigate the mediating role of PEGE between the association of PT and PR with OPTIG; and
- Investigate the mediating role of PRV in the association of PEGE with OPTIG.

Literature Review

Perceived Transparency, Perceived Responsiveness with Overall Public Trust in Government

Perceived Transparency has been considered a critical element for responsible governments (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). Transparency is related to providing information to the public regarding government functioning performance and major decisions taken at various government levels (Sridhar et al., 2020). Transparency also reflects open information from government bodies and presents that government representatives perform their duties according to the legal requirements increasing the level of trust among the public (Nedal & Alcoriza, 2018). In connection with that, various media channels, press, and social media networks express their views and emphasize the significance of providing information access to the people (Moreno-Albarracín et al., 2020).

There are a few nations where a new public management style has been introduced to communicate the transparent functioning of the government to the public (Song & Lee, 2016). Trust reflects honesty, balance, and competence; thus, when people are guided about government decisions and have access to important data regarding funds and resources used by government authorities, the perception of government transparency increases (Porumbescu, 2017). Transparency can also be related to allowing the public to know about the processes that lead to certain decisions in the public's best interest, reflecting good governance strategies. Therefore, transparency perceived by the public is expected to increase public trust in government. Thus, we hypothesize that;

H1a: Perceived transparency is positively associated with overall public trust in government.

Good governance represents the idea of interactive and inclusive government to communicate with the citizens at regional and national levels (Speer, 2012). Van Craen and Skogan (2015) argued that various prevailing issues faced by the people must be dealt with timely by the government representatives, which can be done by communicating the point of view in the cabinet, senate, or media or passing laws to protect and safeguard rights of people. Perceived responsiveness reflects the willingness of the government to deal with the citizens' requests and handle their complaints effectively (Linde & Peters, 2020). In addition, government responsiveness has been linked with efficient feedback, attention, and interaction with the public to enhance the public perception of government responsiveness dissatisfaction (Qiaoan & Teets, 2020). Multiple past and recent studies advocate that government responsiveness is the key to gaining public trust in government (Minard, 2015; Speer, 2012; Vigoda, 2002; Yamamori, 2019). Hence, grounded in good governance theory and based on the literature review, responsiveness perceived by the public may increase public trust in government. Hence, we propose that;

H1b: Perceived responsiveness is positively associated with overall public trust in government.

Perceived transparency, Perceived Responsiveness with Perceived E-governance Effectiveness

Governments can be transparent by conducting fair elections, giving freedom of speech, timely interacting with citizens, using technology for transparent record management and access, and enabling authorities and others to view and submit the most up-to-date record files efficiently (Hong, 2014). E-governance is linked to modernizing traditional systems by including web interactivity and transparency (Jun et al., 2014). Simultaneously the availability of information about the political and social systems and the degree of instant feedback from the government has been linked with the transparency of the government officials/institutions (Sridhar et al., 2020). Thus, e-governance effectiveness is based on web interactivity with citizens and exhibiting transparency and access to information through various ICTs, including SMS, websites, emails, helplines, etc. (Welch & Hinnant, 2003). Moreover, Thakur et al. (2014) demonstrated that transparency is facilitated through ICT, which helps governments maintain the record, provide accessibility, and address citizens' complaints more effectively, depicting good governance evidence. Therefore, e-governance effectiveness may depend on transparency perceived by the public. Thus, we propose that;

H2a: Perceived transparency is positively associated with perceived e-governance effectiveness.

The degree to which an individual believes that the government has responded to his/her query through online channels or SNS has been responded quickly and appropriately reflects perceived responsiveness in e-governance (Minard, 2015). Moreover, perceived responsiveness is key to dealing with policy issues, important decisions, handling public concerns, and resolving their problems (Pandey & Suri, 2020). Although governments make laws and policies to ensure society's smooth functioning and regulate authorities to protect public rights, many issues arise related to a country's economic, social, and cultural backgrounds, which must be addressed differently to cater to these unique needs (Gracia & Arino, 2015). Thus, governments must reflect a sense of responsibility to fulfill the groups' and individuals' needs (Linde & Peters, 2020). The key to achieving these objectives is incorporating technology for governing citizens. Technology makes government representatives more accessible and accountable to citizens (Ciborra & Navarra, 2005). Viewed through good governance theory, governments must design strategies, programs, and activities considering citizens' expectations based on their variations and resources. These may include public participation programs, citizen education and awareness campaigns, social welfare programs, infrastructure development, environmental conservation and sustainability efforts, technology, digitalization projects, anti-corruption measures and cultural and heritage preservation. Therefore, e-governance effectiveness may depend on responsiveness perceived by public. Thus, we propose that;

H2b: Perceived responsiveness is positively associated with perceived e-governance effectiveness.

Perceived Religious Value, Perceived E-governance Effectiveness, and Overall Public Trust in Government

In this era of information and communication technology, public perceptions of e-governance effectiveness are linked with the use of ICT while formulating spotting, and governing policies, particularly for the welfare of the people (Vaidya, 2020). Further, e-governance supports government functions and improves public services (Pina et al., 2007) and increases interactivity between government officials and citizens and helps to bridge the power distance between authorities (Pandey & Suri, 2020). An e-governance network includes data report, multi-media, and automation, besides web and Internet use to support government-related functions (Sawatsuk et al., 2018). Public trust is based on accessibility and interactivity with authorities in administrative matters (Galle et al., 2020). Therefore, e-governance gives governments a massive edge in carrying out their functions and reaching citizens effectively and efficiently, leading to increased public trust in government. Moreover, good governance theory postulates that good governance is established based on the fair and timely display of information to the public, which is possible through various digital channels effectively and efficiently. Thus, we propose that;

H3: Perceived e-governance effectiveness is positively associated with overall public trust in government.

Religion plays a vital role in shaping a country's norms and values. It gives a sense of stability and profoundness in uncertain times by devising society's way of living and governing laws (Noor, 2008). Moreover, perceived religious values influence beliefs and practices that govern people's actions (Zeng et al., 2020) and deal with human rights, norms, religious events and

gatherings, social rules, behavior, and cultural sensitivity. Especially for Muslim countries, Islam plays a vital role in all walks of life, including education, health, trade, business, government, etc. (DeFranza et al., 2020). Moreover, Islam has distinguished rights for everyone, including women, parents, children, neighbors, minorities, citizens, servants, and even animals (Khaksari et al., 2014).

With the advent of technology, many Muslim countries incorporate religious values and teachings into their official websites and mobile apps to facilitate religion's role in governing citizens (Fadilurrahman et al., 2020). For example, Indonesia has launched the Indonesian Islamic Economic Masterplan 2019-2024 to support Indonesia as the world's leading Islamic economy, depicting religion's importance in Muslims' lives (Mirchandani et al., 2018). The government can use religious laws and regulations to govern through ICTs, which increases public faith in government (Baazeem, 2020). Hence, religious information and values shared with the public by using technology and ICT increase the influence of government and policymakers on the public (Kuipers et al., 2020). This increased influence results in efficient and effective e-governance by the government. However, evidence is scarce in the literature depicting the association between perceived religious values and e-governance effectiveness. Nonetheless, effective and efficient e-governance practices may help the government foster increased religious values perceived by the public. Therefore, based on limited literature support and arguments, we propose that;

H4: There is a positive association of Perceived e-governance with Perceived religious value.

Islam has positioned laws, including Shariah and Sunnah, in light of the teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H); every Muslim is required to follow them (Ringim, 2014). Governments in Muslim-majority areas must respect and implement these laws to guarantee a smooth and prosperous society's functioning. Various Muslim countries practice several Islamic laws to govern their citizens and use these laws for policymaking (Huda & Hussin, 2010). The government can use religious laws and regulations to govern through ICTs, which increases public faith in government (Baazeem, 2020). Moreover, Pluskett (2020) revealed that Christianity is essential in establishing public trust in the American government. The author demonstrated that those who believe in religious values are more inclined to listen to government officials' statements in light of religious teachings regarding essential matters and trust in their governments to resolve their issues.

Studies have shown that followers have high regard and respect for their religious teachings, so incorporating religion in governing the issues of their state can help to earn governments an increased level of trust from their people (Al Hajjaji, 2020; Khaksari et al., 2014; Ringim, 2014). Because trust is related to belief and confidence, which can be increased by considering religious teachings and faith (Pal & Tok, 2019), perceived religious value may increase overall public trust in government. Hence, we propose that;

H5: Perceived religious value is positively associated with overall public trust in government.

The Mediating Role of Perceived E-governance Effectiveness

E-governance effectiveness is vital in smoothly running a country's affairs using technology (Kalsi & Kiran, 2015). Moreover, e-governance helps authorities be more transparent and accountable to their citizens due to records available on databases and websites (Jun et al., 2014). Perceived transparency is also linked to decreased corruption and malpractices of authorities due to open information to the public (Kim & Marlow, 2016). Moreover, a good governance

framework also suggests that perceived transparency and public trust in government are positively related (Moreno-Albarracín et al., 2020). At the same time, technology helps the public to access important official information. Hence, effective e-governance can transmit increased transparency to the public, leading to increased public trust in government. Thus, we propose that;

H6a: The association between perceived transparency and overall public trust in government is mediated by perceived e-governance effectiveness.

E-governance is related to being more interactive and responsive to citizens using Internet-based strategies to include citizens in the policy process (Pandey & Suri, 2020). Moreover, e-governance can help manage people in a modern age more conveniently and effectively by communicating timely and accurate information to the masses (Vaidya, 2020). In contrast, the mere provision of feedback does not reflect the government's responsiveness. Instead, it is based on implementing the policies and dealing with public needs due to regular interactions with the citizens (Minard, 2015). Hence, governments can come closer to the public with the help of e-governance channels and accelerate the intensity of solving people's issues. In addition, citizens' trust is influenced by the actions of the governments in response to public issues and complaints (Song & Lee, 2016). Technology can improve public service by generating speedy responses due to one-click systems provided through online databases and web-based interactivity. Thus, e-governance practices can efficiently communicate and increase government officials' responsiveness to the public, leading to increased overall public trust in government. Hence e-governance effectiveness may be an underlying mechanism through which perceived responsiveness is linked to people's trust in government. Therefore, we propose that;

H6b: Perceived e-governance effectiveness mediates the association between perceived responsiveness and overall public trust in government.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Religious Value

Religion can be a binding force that unites people in times of conflict and uncertainty and makes them believe in something not materialistic (Khaksari et al., 2014). It adds discipline and harmony to people's lives (Zeng et al., 2020). Moreover, religion proposes that the law of nature governs humans. A higher power controls and monitors us; therefore, religion requires accountability from those bestowed by power (Ledbetter & Finn, 2018). Baazeem (2020) argued that religious values in gaining public trust are essential due to strong dominance and regard for these values. As citizens expect their government to be legitimate, honest, and responsible, public trust plays an important role because the intensity of citizens' trust and confidence level in their government representatives reflects their trust level (Gracia & Arino, 2015).

Moreover, another recent study conducted by Pluskett (2020) revealed that those who believe in religious values are more inclined to listen to government officials' statements in light of religious teachings regarding essential matters and trust in their governments. Similarly, multiple studies showed that followers have high regard and respect for their religious teachings; hence incorporating religion in governing the issues of their state can help to earn governments an increased level of trust from their people (Al Hajjaji, 2020; Khaksari et al., 2014; Ringim, 2014).

E-governance relates to administrating policies governing people using technology (Andrews, 2008). It also involves the public's active engagement and word-of-mouth, as ICT operates on this phenomenon where citizens can share, post, and comment on various issues (Kuru,

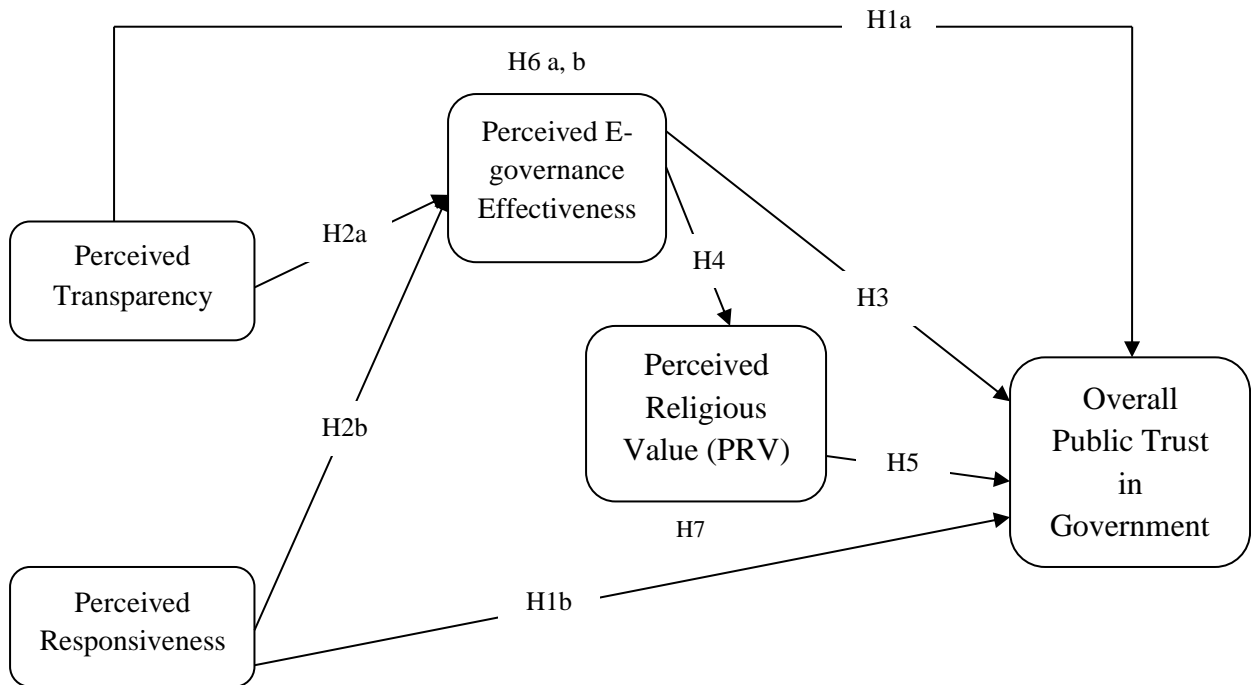
2009). Hence, using religious values via technology to improve public service through e-governance can increase public trust (Kuipers et al., 2020). The government can use religious laws and regulations to govern through ICTs, which increases public faith in government (Baazeem, 2020). Therefore, we propose that;

H7: The association between perceived e-governance effectiveness and overall public trust in government is mediated by Perceived religious value.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework of the study. This comprehensive study delves into the intricate dynamics of public trust in government by exploring a unique set of factors. It examines the direct influence of Perceived Transparency (PT) and Perceived Responsiveness (PR) in shaping citizens’ perceptions of E-Governance Effectiveness (PEGE) and Perceived Religious Value (PRV). Understanding the interplay between PT, PR, PEGE, and PRV is crucial in unraveling their collective impact on Overall Public Trust in Government (OPTIG). Furthermore, the research delves into the intriguing mediating roles of PEGE and PRV. By investigating how PEGE mediates the relationship between PT and PR with OPTIG and how PRV influences the association of PEGE with OPTIG, this study aims to provide novel insights into the complex dynamics that underlie citizens’ trust in their government (Hartanto et al., 2021; Mansoor, 2021b).

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework of the Study



Research Methodology

The current study utilized a quantitative research approach with the survey methodology to disperse a 41-item questionnaire in Medan and Banjarmasin, Indonesia, after the approval of the ethical committee of the researchers' university, i.e., research institutions and community service (LPPM) Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU), Medan, Indonesia. Previously, studies available in the literature have empirically tested some hypothesized linkages established in the current study in different contexts (Beshi & Kaur, 2020b; Purwanto et al., 2020). Data collectors help gather the data. A team of 10 members, including the authors, collected the desired number of responses for the study; all the non-authors were trained by researchers about this job and were paid for their work hourly. Different lower administrative units and multiple locations in both cities were approached to collect data.

All the data collectors had a detailed conversation with the citizens to know their knowledge about the government's initiatives from time to time and brief them regarding collecting the data. It was important to know about the citizens' educational background and their level of understanding of the survey language. Researchers adapted all the study items from the existing studies with well-reported reliabilities. Hence, they used the original English version of the scale rather than translating it into the local language because English is a commonly spoken and understood language in Indonesian educational institutions. Hence, no issues of lack of understanding of the questionnaire were identified. In addition, the citizens' consent and willingness to participate in the survey were also obtained before handing over the survey. The respondents were also assured about their responses' anonymity. They were collecting their responses just for research purposes. Seven hundred and fifty surveys distributed from February 1, 2022, until April 15, 2022 to the citizens of Medan and Banjarmasin cities. Researchers received 537 responses after two months of survey distribution. All the responses were further critically screened, and researchers found 26 questionnaires with incomplete values or unengaged patterns not included in the further analysis. Hence, the final data set included 511 responses.

Measures of the Study

A survey comprising 41 items was distributed among the participants (Appendix A). Researchers adapted a 5-item scale by Park and Blenkinsopp (2011) to measure overall public trust in government. A 4-item scale by Park and Blenkinsopp (2011) was used to measure perceived transparency, and, a 5-item scale that Vigoda-Gadot and Yuval (2003) developed was used to assess the perceived responsiveness of the citizens. In addition, a 12-item scale was adapted from Reddick (2009) to measure the responses of perceived governance effectiveness. Perceived religious value was assessed using a 15-item scale by Huber and Huber (2012). All the responses were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1= *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

Respondents' Characteristics

The respondents' demographic characteristics revealed that 63.9% were males, and the 36.1% were females. In terms of age, the respondents fell into various age brackets, i.e., 20-30 years (55.4%), 31-40 years (34.4%), and above 50 years of age (10.2%). Respondence were also diverse in terms of qualification, i.e., graduates (57.1%), undergraduates (22.9%), and postgraduates (20%). In addition, most respondents had an income group of either low (33.4%) or middle (46.1%). In contrast, only 20.5% of respondents belong to the upper-middle and upper class.

Data Analysis and Results

SmartPLS 3.3 software was used to analyze data using the measurement and structural model to investigate the proposed links. Before the main analysis, an examined revealed that respondents' education and age positively impacted their overall public trust in government. Hence, the education and gender of the respondents were controlled to avoid their impacts on the dependent variables.

Analysis of the Measurement Model

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to calculate the psychometric properties of the majors in the current study. To establish the reliabilities of the constructs, Cronbach's α (CA) and composite reliability (CR.) were assessed (Henseler et al., 2015; Mansoor, 2021a). Table 1 shows that all reflective measures, i.e., CA > 0.70 and CR values, reflect that the measures used to assess the study constructs were reliable. However, three items of perceived religious value, i.e., PRV3, PRV7, and PRV10, had factor loadings of less than 0.5; therefore, these three items were excluded while performing the main structural model as per the guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2012). The factor loadings of all other indicator variables and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were in the suggested ranges, establishing the convergent validity of the study constructs.

Table 1

Validity and Reliability

Constructs/indicators	Factor Loadings					AVE	CR	Cronbach's α
	1	2	3	4	5			
Perceived Transparency						0.563	0.837	0.801
PT1	0.656							
PT2	0.735							
PT3	0.771							
PT4	0.829							
Perceived Responsiveness						0.536	0.852	0.833
PR1		0.716						
PR2		0.706						
PR3		0.776						
PR4		0.710						
PR5		0.749						
Perceived E-Governance Effectiveness						0.577	0.916	0.821
PEGE1			0.749					
PEGE2			0.781					
PEGE3			0.786					
PEGE4			0.702					
PEGE5			0.791					
PEGE6			0.780					
PEGE7			0.729					

PEGE8	0.756			
PEGE9	0.780			
PEGE10	0.732			
PEGE11	0.702			
PEGE12	0.747			
Perceived Religious Value		0.544	0.905	0.793
PRV1	0.686			
PRV2	0.698			
PRV4	0.769			
PRV5	0.781			
PRV6	0.699			
PRV8	0.782			
PRV9	0.734			
PRV11	0.744			
PRV12	0.712			
PRV13	0.735			
PRV14	0.791			
PRV15	0.736			
Overall Public Trust in Government		0.549	0.858	0.786
OPTIG1	0.737			
OPTIG2	0.797			
OPTIG3	0.761			
OPTIG4	0.688			
OPTIG5	0.716			

Note. C.R. = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was determined to measure discriminate validity (Henseler et al., 2015; Noor et al., 2022). According to the predefined range, the HTMT ratio value should be less than 0.9. Table 2 shows that the HTMT ratio of all constructs was less than 0.9.

Table 2

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

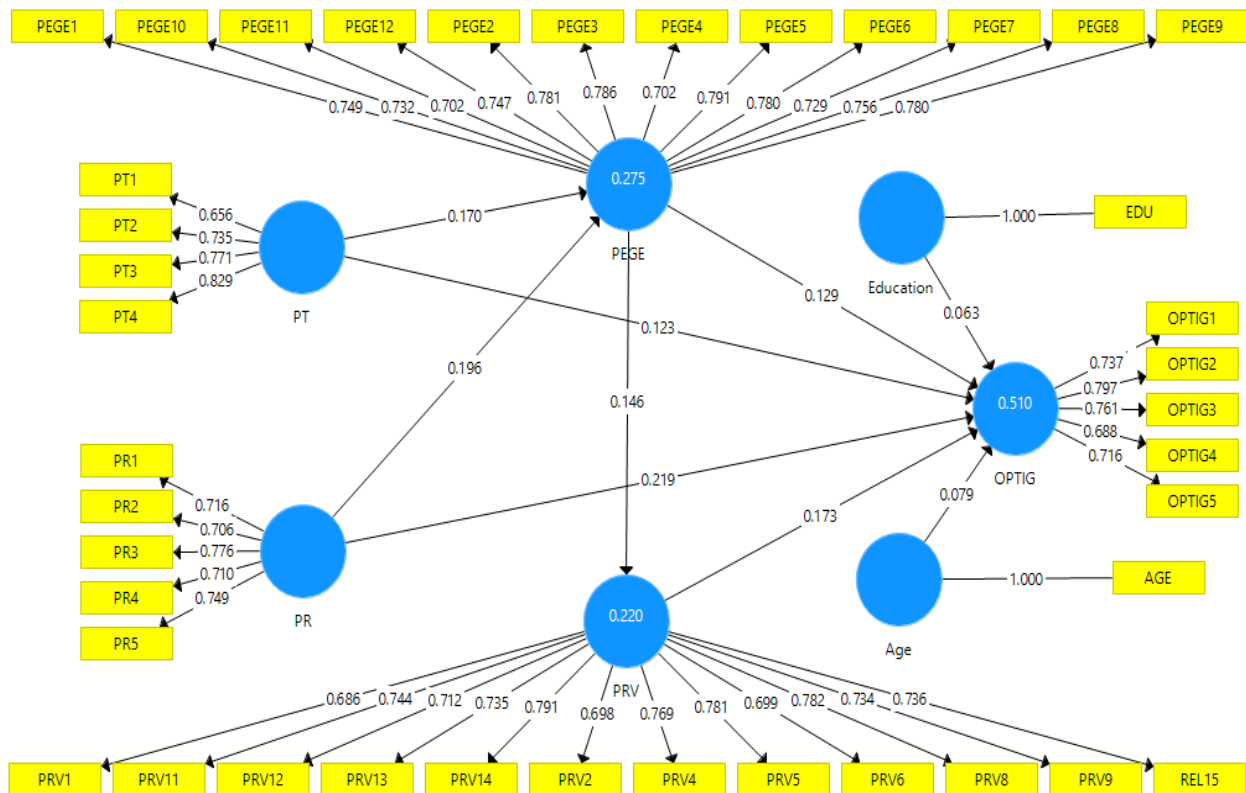
Constructs	Mean	STD	1	2	3	4	5
PT	3.86	0.86	0.750				
PR	4.23	0.42	0.341	0.732			
PEGE	4.01	0.36	0.357	0.438	0.759		
PRV	4.09	0.31	0.534	0.501	0.423	0.737	
OPTIG	3.97	0.67	0.452	0.422	0.415	0.509	0.740

Note. The square roots of AVEs of the constructs are shown in bold in diagonal. OPTIG= Overall Public Trust in Government.; PT= Perceived Transparency; PR= Perceived Responsiveness; PRV= Perceived Religious Value; PEGE= Perceived E-Governance Effectiveness.

Analysis of the Structural Model

The bootstrapping technique using 500 subsamples was utilized to assess the hypothesized linkages. Furthermore, t-values, p-value, and β -coefficients were assessed to confirm the hypothesized associations. The Coefficient of Determination (R^2) was checked to assess the change in dependent variables' values due to the impacts of independent constructs. The R^2 values had a 51% variance in overall public trust in government based on all the direct and indirect associations, reflecting a good model fit. R^2 for perceived e-governance effectiveness was 27.5%, and 22% for perceived religious value.

Figure 2
Full Measurement Model



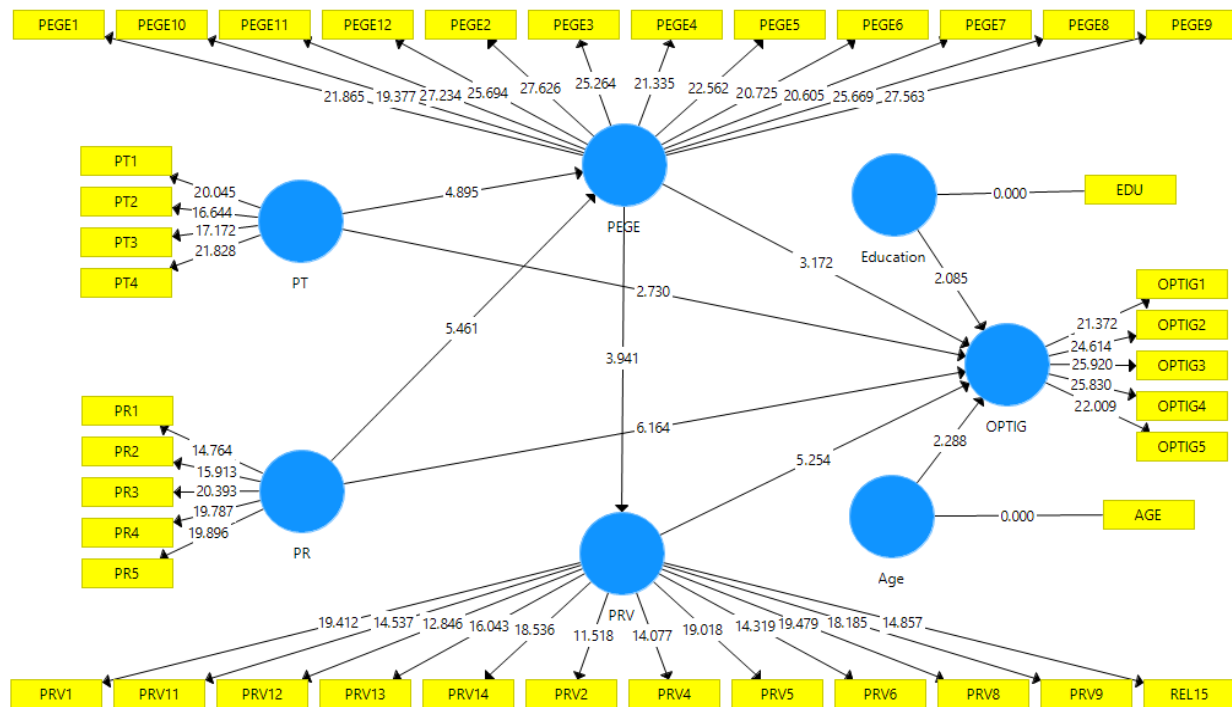
Direct and Mediation Hypothesis

As shown in Table 3, the results reflect that: *PT* ($\beta = .123^*$, $t=2.730$), *PR* ($\beta = .219^{***}$, $t=6.164$), *PEGE* ($\beta = .129^{**}$, $t=3.172$), and *PRV* ($\beta = .173^{***}$, $t=5.254$) were positively and significantly related to *OPTIG*. Likewise, *PT* ($\beta = .170^{***}$, $t=4.895$) and *PR* ($\beta = .196^{***}$, $t=5.461$) were positively related to *PEGE*. In addition, a significant positive association of *PEGE* ($\beta = .146^{**}$, $t=3.941$) with *PRV* was observed. Therefore, hypotheses H1a, b, H2a, b, H3, and H4 were supported. Table 3 presents a detailed summary of the results showing that all the mediation hypotheses were supported.

Table 3
Hypothesis Testing Results

	Hypotheses	Std. Beta	t-Value	p-values	Supported
H _{1a}	PT → OPTIG	0.123	2.730	0.013	Yes
H _{1b}	PR → OPTIG	0.219	6.164	0.000	Yes
H _{2a}	PT → PEGE	0.170	4.895	0.000	Yes
H _{2b}	PR → PEGE	0.196	5.461	0.000	Yes
H ₃	PEGE → OPTIG	0.129	3.172	0.007	Yes
H ₄	PEGE → PRV	0.146	3.941	0.003	Yes
H ₅	PRV → OPTIG	0.173	5.254	0.000	Yes
H _{6a}	PT → PEGE → OPTIG	0.113	2.439	0.016	Yes
H _{6b}	PR → PEGE → OPTIG	0.127	3.113	0.009	Yes
H ₇	PEGE → PRV → OPTIG	0.131	3.617	0.000	Yes

Figure 3
Full Structural Model



Discussion

The results revealed that citizens’ perceptions of government transparency significantly impacted public trust in government. Along the same line, Porumbescu (2017) also reported that when citizens have access to available information regarding all the essential matters, their perception that government is transparent and fair towards the public enhances; therefore, they depict more trust in government. Moreover, the results showed that the public’s perception of government responsiveness was positively associated with their overall trust in government. These

results are similar to the findings of Beshi and Kaur (2020b) that government officials should prioritize the people's issues to resolve them on time utilizing various digital platforms. This way, citizens can believe that government representatives value them and take their problems seriously to present valuable solutions.

In the recent COVID-19 pandemic crisis, management units were launched by the Indonesian government, where loans were distributed among people in need, and medical facilities were provided free of cost along with strict enforcement of the lockdowns (Olivia et al., 2020). Overall, a timely and effective response, including SOPs, disseminating information to control the virus among the masses, and getting timely and adequate medical facilities were effective responsiveness initiatives from the governments, leading to a higher level of public trust in government.

In addition, perceived e-governance effectiveness was also found to be leading to increased public trust in government as it enhances the government's ability to respond quickly and timely and also enhances the government's ability to reach a large number of masses to convey critical information (Purwanto et al., 2020). Moreover, the perceived religious value was positively related to overall public trust in government. It is evident from the literature that religion always plays a vital role in altering public opinion regarding government officials' work based on many grounds (DeFranza et al., 2020). Thus, when government officials consider religious teachings in performing their duties based on fair and efficient principles, they gain public trust at large. The use of religious values and information through SNS, E-governance, and other religious channels to govern the public resulted in enhanced public trust levels in government. This is in line with the notion by Kuipers et al. (2020), suggesting effectiveness of governance gains public trust.

Finally, the results supported the mediating role of perceived e-governance effectiveness between transparent and responsive governments and overall public trust in governments. These results reflect the importance of ICT use in government channels to gain public trust. These results advance the existing literature and call for future research. Likewise, the results demonstrated the underlying mechanism of perceived religious value. This further reflects the significance of religious values to augment the impact of the government's use of ICT in developing and enhancing public trust in government. The government can use religious laws and regulations to govern through ICTs, which increases public faith in government (Pluskett (2020). There are many countries under religious democracies. Indonesia is one of them. Hence, as a Muslim-majority country, it uses Islam to govern its public and allows for other religions' free practices (DeFranza et al., 2020). Beliefs and values influence people; therefore, religion can play a vital role for governments, as people have high regard and respect for these religious guidelines.

Theoretical Implications

The current study's theoretical contributions are manifold. It is a unique study in this research domain that considers the essential elements of good governance theory to check public trust in government. In addition, the current study contributes towards validating the good governance theory in the context of the government's use of information and communication technology and gaining the trust of their citizens. Moreover, the study is significant in suggesting that along with the developed nations, developing nations should also pay attention to the government's use of e-governance channels to bridge the distance between the governments and the citizens to inform them regarding their every move and gain their confidence. Moreover, this research helps present a comprehensive framework to gather the government's e-governance utilization, public administration, and religious values incorporated by religious scholars to work together to gain

public trust in government officials/institutions. Hence, governments should focus on technology-oriented solutions to communicate with their citizens and address their concerns to generate overall prosperity in the country. Integrating multiple constructs has opened new avenues of theoretical advancement for future research. Furthermore, this research made an advancement by integrating the construct of perceived religious value (PRV) and elaborating on its importance in achieving public trust. Thus, future scholars working on public trust may also look for other religious theories and concepts which may help government officials win public trust in the emerging e-governance scenario of the pre-and post-COVID-19 era.

Practical Implications

The current study results suggest that, while being responsive and transparent in their actions and decisions, governments should show the responsibility to devise strategies in the citizens' best interest. This way, the public can feel confident in their government representatives and follow their instructions in times of crisis. Moreover, government entities should focus on making responsible and timely decisions and communicating with their people to gain their confidence and trust for the smooth functioning of important matters and the nation's prosperity. When citizens believe in and trust in their government, they follow the rules and regulations and obey the laws and regulations, resulting in a peaceful society. Furthermore, as the study results show, perceived religious value can play an essential role in gaining trust from the public and implementing policies; therefore, religious democracies should incorporate religious laws and guidelines to achieve desired outcomes (DeFranza et al., 2020).

This study also suggests that perceived e-governance effectiveness can play a critical role in gaining trust; therefore, policies should be devised regarding the use of ICT and government applications by the public, especially in days of crises or natural disasters, to keep in touch with the masses to make them feel calm and relax to deal with uncertain situation continuously.

The current study was conducted in the developing nation of Indonesia that has faced many ups and downs and sustainably managed the different situations, particularly during the dire situations of the COVID-19 pandemic and getting out of it successfully with the support of the public. Hence, it provides insights for the governments of developing countries and countries governed by religious majorities and how they can utilize perceived religious values to achieve public trust. The integrated use of ICT and social media to communicate important decisions backed by religious support is another central policy insight for policymakers, politicians, and government officials to apply in the future effectively and positively shape public perceptions about government entities by creating a higher level of trust.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study tried to cover in detail the factors leading to overall public trust in government, a few limitations still need to be pointed out. First, the current study followed a cross-sectional research design where all the constructs were measured at one point in time. In the future, time-lagged or longitudinal studies can be conducted to establish better causality of critical constructs like trust in government. Second, a mixed-method technique applying qualitative and quantitative approaches could be utilized to understand better the explored and unexplored associations for building the public's trust in government. Finally, researchers could create a Google survey to disseminate to the general public via different social media channels to have more

respondents from different parts of the country to derive generalized results to measure e-governance effectiveness.

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