



The Role of E-Governance in Fostering Transparency and Strengthening Public Trust

Eralda Xhafka¹, Dea Sinoimeri^{2*} and Jonida Teta³

^{1, 2, 3} *Department of Production and Management, Polytechnic University of Tirana*

Abstract

E-governance is reshaping public administration by integrating advanced digital technologies into governance systems. This transformative approach enhances public service delivery, increases citizen engagement, and establishes transparent institutional processes. In Albania, the e-Albania platform exemplifies this shift, offering streamlined access to a wide range of public services, including tax filings and administrative document requests. This study explores the tangible and intangible benefits of e-governance, focusing on its contribution to improving transparency and fostering public trust.

To strengthen the comparative relevance of this case, the paper also introduces selected international practices that contextualize Albania's experience within broader global developments in digital governance. Additionally, the implications of the study are extended to suggest long-term impacts and scalability potentials that may inform similar initiatives in other countries.

Keywords: E-governance, digital technologies, transparency, public trust, e-Albania

1. Introduction

The integration of digital technologies into governance systems has marked a significant shift in the way public administration operates globally. E-governance, a concept rooted in the application of information and communication technology (ICT) within governmental processes, aims to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability (Heeks, 2006). By automating workflows and providing real-time access to information, e-governance platforms address systemic inefficiencies and reduce opportunities for corruption. This technological evolution has redefined citizen-government interactions, fostering trust and inclusivity (Bertot et al., 2010).

Globally, e-governance initiatives have transformed traditional bureaucratic structures, offering citizens a seamless way to access public services. Platforms such as Estonia's e-Residency and India's Aadhaar have demonstrated how digital governance can address socio-

economic disparities and bridge gaps in service delivery (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). These successes highlight the potential of e-governance as a tool for sustainable development, promoting equity and fostering public trust (Lindgren & Jansson, 2013).

In the Albanian context, the e-Albania platform serves as a pioneering example of digital transformation. Launched to streamline access to administrative services, the platform has been instrumental in reducing bureaucratic hurdles and enhancing transparency (Kim et al., 2009). By offering a centralized gateway for public services such as tax declarations, permit applications, and document retrieval, e-Albania has redefined the citizen-government interface (Layne & Lee, 2001).

This study seeks to examine the tangible and intangible benefits of e-governance, with a focus on the role of the e-Albania platform in promoting transparency and strengthening public trust. By exploring global practices and Albania's unique case, the paper highlights the potential of e-governance to modernize public administration and foster more inclusive governance systems. In addition to this national focus, the study broadens its relevance by reflecting on comparative international experiences in e-governance. This allows for a contextualized understanding of the results and offers a foundation for cross-country learning.

2. Materials and methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively assess the impact of e-governance on public service delivery and citizen trust in Albania. The combination of data collection methods is consistent with international best practices in e-governance studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Bertot et al., 2010), ensuring that both numerical indicators and lived experiences are captured.

2.1. Surveys

A nationwide survey was conducted with 500 citizens from diverse demographic and regional backgrounds. The questionnaire was structured based on frameworks suggested in prior literature (Groves et al., 2009; Heeks, 2006), focusing on:

- Ease of use of the e-Albania platform,
- Transparency and trust in digital services,
- Frequency and types of services accessed (e.g., tax filings, document retrievals, business registration).

This aligns with results from West (2004) and Kim et al. (2009), who emphasize that user feedback is essential for evaluating e-governance success, particularly in assessing perceived fairness, accessibility, and digital confidence. The segmentation by age, education, and region allowed us to investigate whether user satisfaction varies across demographic groups (Dillman et al., 2014).

2.2. Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 public officials from various ministries and institutions. These interviews followed protocols established by Rubin & Rubin (2012), aiming to understand internal challenges and strategies of digital transformation.

The literature suggests that successful e-governance depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on institutional readiness, training, and resistance management (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010; Lindgren & Jansson, 2013). Interviewees discussed data privacy concerns, human resource limitations, and the need for ongoing IT capacity building—issues similarly identified in Moon (2002) and Gil-Garcia & Helbig (2007).

2.3. Focus Groups

Three focus group sessions were conducted with representatives from civil society, businesses, and academia. This qualitative method, supported by Krueger & Casey (2015), provided a participatory platform for collecting diverse stakeholder opinions on the usability and inclusiveness of the e-Albania platform.

The discussions echoed themes from Bertot et al. (2010) and Layne & Lee (2001), especially the importance of multilingual access, offline support, and inclusivity to ensure equitable participation in digital governance.

2.4. Data Analysis

The study examined statistical trends from 2018 to 2024 based on data retrieved from national reports and survey instruments. The analysis focused on:

- Growth in the number of digital services,
- Citizen satisfaction percentages,
- Decline in corruption-related complaints.

Consistent with methods outlined by Tabachnick & Fidell (2019), regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between corruption and trust (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003), while cluster analysis highlighted regional disparities in platform usage (Hair et al., 2010).

This approach is in line with Gil-Garcia & Helbig (2007), who argue that both quantitative and spatial data are essential for identifying usage patterns and systemic inequities in e-service adoption.

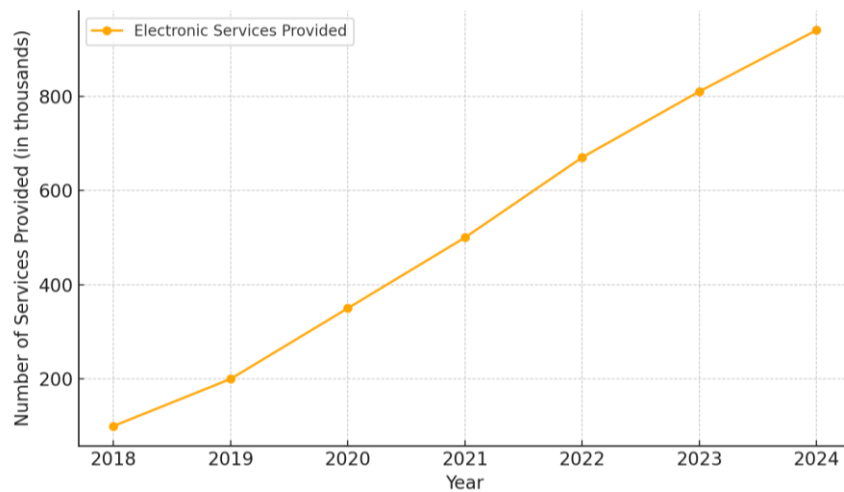
3. Results

The results of this study demonstrate the tangible impact of e-governance on public service delivery, corruption reduction, and citizen satisfaction in Albania, particularly through the e-Albania platform. Data analysis covered the years 2018 to 2024, revealing strong correlations between digital adoption and public trust.

3.1. Growth of Electronic Services

The number of digital services provided through the e-Albania platform increased significantly from 100 services in 2018 to 940 in 2024. This substantial growth highlights the government's commitment to digitization and reflects the increasing role of e-Albania in simplifying public service delivery. As illustrated in Figure 1, the consistent yearly increase in available services demonstrates how the platform has transformed administrative processes, making them more accessible and efficient for citizens. This result is consistent with the digital transformation trends described in Heeks (2006) and Layne & Lee (2001), where service expansion plays a central role in governance modernization.

Figure 1: Growth in Electronic Services Provided (2018–2024)



Source: Authors

3.2. Decline in Corruption Complaints

According to the data in Table 1, complaints related to corruption dropped sharply from 250 cases in 2018 to only 40 cases in 2024. This indicates the positive effect of e-governance in minimizing face-to-face interactions, which in turn limits opportunities for corrupt behavior. To better understand the relationship between corruption complaints (C) and citizen satisfaction (S), a regression analysis was conducted. The resulting equation is:

$$S = 91.10 - 0.10 \times C \quad (1)$$

Where:

S- Citizen satisfaction (%),

C- Number of corruption complaints.

The negative coefficient (-0.10) suggests a significant inverse relationship between corruption complaints and citizen satisfaction, with each additional complaint leading to a 0.10 percentage point decline in satisfaction. This result underscores the critical importance of reducing corruption to build public trust in governance. It also reinforces the role of e-governance platforms like e-Albania in promoting accountability, strengthening institutional integrity, and enhancing citizen confidence in public administration. The inverse relationship

between corruption and trust aligns with results in Davis (1989) and Venkatesh et al. (2003), where perceived system integrity improves user acceptance.

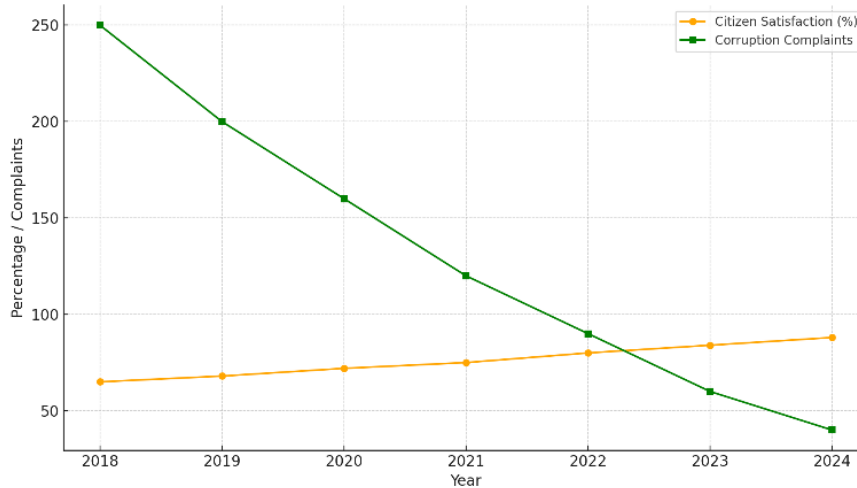
Table 1: Correlation between E-Governance and public trust indicators (2018–2024)

Year	Citizen Satisfaction (%)	Corruption Complaints
2018	65	250
2019	68	200
2020	72	160
2021	75	120
2022	80	90
2023	84	60
2024	88	40

Source: Authors

Figure 2 illustrates the trends in citizen satisfaction and the decline in corruption-related complaints between 2018 and 2024. These metrics underscore the transformative impact of e-governance on public service delivery and trust in Albania. The data highlights a consistent increase in citizen satisfaction, coinciding with a sharp reduction in corruption-related complaints, indicating the effectiveness of the e-Albania platform as a tool for transparency and accountability (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Davis, 1989; Kim et al., 2009). Furthermore, these trends suggest a strong correlation between the level of user engagement with digital platforms and the overall perception of governmental efficiency and integrity (Bertot et al., 2010).

Figure 2: Citizen satisfaction and corruption complaints (2018–2024)



Source: Authors

3.3. Improved Citizen Satisfaction

Citizen satisfaction with e-Albania increased steadily over the study period, rising from 65% in 2018 to 88% in 2024. The survey responses indicate that ease of use, accessibility, and transparency were key factors influencing this upward trend. To quantify the relationship between adoption rates (A) and citizen satisfaction (S), a regression analysis was conducted. The resulting equation is:

$$S = 50.00 + 42.22 \times A \quad (2)$$

Where:

S- Citizen satisfaction (%),

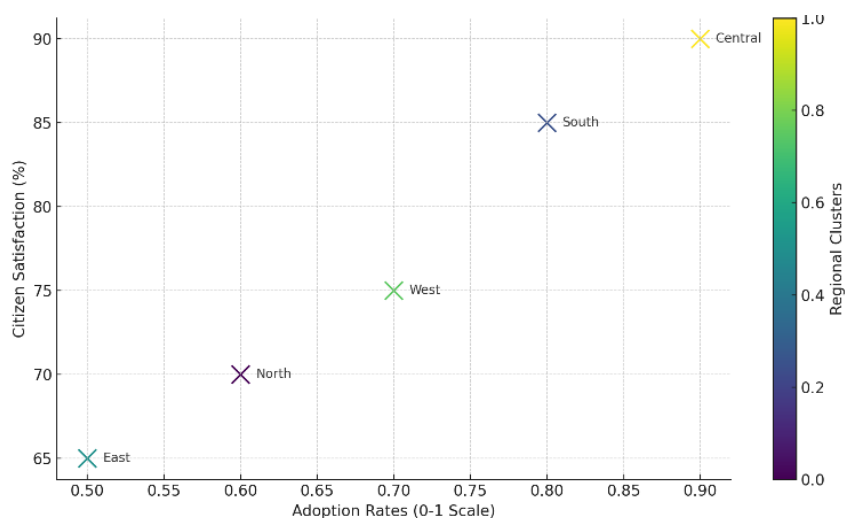
A- Adoption rates (scaled 0–1).

The positive coefficient (42.22) reveals a strong correlation between adoption rates and citizen satisfaction, indicating that a one-unit increase in adoption rates results in a substantial 42.22 percentage point improvement in satisfaction. This result highlights the pivotal role of digital adoption in fostering public trust and engagement. It reflects patterns found in West (2004), where the expansion of digital services leads to measurable increases in public confidence and service satisfaction.

3.4. Regional Disparities in Adoption and Satisfaction

The cluster analysis revealed noticeable differences among regions regarding adoption rates and satisfaction with the e-Albania platform. In Figure 3, the Central and Southern regions of Albania demonstrated the highest adoption levels and satisfaction rates, while the Eastern region showed the lowest values. These disparities point to regional inequalities in digital literacy, internet infrastructure, or access to support services. The results suggest the need for localized policy interventions, especially in underperforming regions, to ensure inclusiveness and equitable access to digital services. These results are consistent with Gil-Garcia & Helbig (2007), who emphasized the need for equity in digital access to reduce socio-digital divides.

Figure 3: Regional disparities in adoption rates and citizen satisfaction



Source: Authors

4. Discussion

The results of this study confirm the transformative impact of e-governance in Albania through the progressive implementation of the e-Albania platform. The consistent increase in citizen satisfaction, the sharp decline in corruption-related complaints, and the expansion of digital public services validate e-governance as a powerful tool for improving transparency, efficiency, and public trust. However, sustaining these achievements and addressing

identified challenges requires a set of strategic policy interventions. Based on the analysis and stakeholder feedback, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Invest in digital infrastructure

Improving digital infrastructure nationwide is essential to accommodate the growing demand for e-services. This includes ensuring reliable internet access in rural and underserved areas, upgrading server capacity for seamless user experience, and enhancing cybersecurity to safeguard sensitive citizen data. These investments will reduce the urban-rural digital divide and strengthen the platform's inclusivity and performance.

2. Expand digital literacy and awareness programs

To ensure broader usage, targeted digital literacy campaigns must be designed for marginalized groups, elderly citizens, and individuals with limited ICT skills. Collaborations with educational institutions and local governments can facilitate training initiatives. Moreover, national awareness campaigns, both online and offline, should highlight the benefits of the platform to increase user confidence and engagement.

3. Localized and inclusive interventions

As identified in the cluster analysis, regional disparities in platform adoption persist. To address this, the platform should offer multilingual interfaces, location-specific service customization, and offline assistance points in areas with low internet penetration. Such localized efforts are vital to ensure equitable access to digital governance for all citizens.

4. Implement continuous evaluation and feedback mechanisms

A feedback loop is essential to maintain service quality and user satisfaction. Regular evaluations using citizen surveys, usage analytics, and qualitative input (e.g., interviews, focus groups) should inform periodic updates to the platform. Public disclosure of performance reports can further enhance transparency and institutional accountability.

5. Broaden service offerings and integrate cross-sectoral services

To increase utility and user engagement, e-Albania should expand its portfolio to include services in healthcare (e.g., online medical appointments, digital health records) and education (e.g., certificate requests, online school registration). Such cross-sectoral integration would reinforce the platform's role as a one-stop solution for citizens' administrative needs.

6. Strengthen partnerships with private and international stakeholders

Collaborations with the private sector, international development agencies, and NGOs can bring both expertise and funding to support innovation in service delivery. These partnerships can also enable the adoption of best practices and foster Albania's alignment with European digital governance standards.

7. Promote environmental sustainability through digitalization

By replacing paper-based procedures and reducing the need for physical office visits, e-Albania contributes to environmental sustainability. Policies should encourage paperless

workflows, digital document storage, and virtual interactions, supporting the country's commitment to green public administration.

8. Enhance security and data protection measures

As reliance on e-Albania increases, cybersecurity must remain a top priority. This includes regular audits, protocol updates, and employee training to manage potential risks. Building citizen trust in digital governance hinges on robust protection of personal data and transparent handling of security breaches.

9. Explore comparative models for scalability

To deepen strategic value, it is recommended to study similar e-governance platforms from countries with comparable socio-economic conditions. Comparative data will allow policymakers to adapt proven practices and avoid known pitfalls. This cross-country insight can inform scalability strategies and enhance resilience in the implementation of e-services.

While the results present strong evidence for the success of e-Albania, broader implications can be drawn. These include the platform's potential as a replicable model for other transitional economies undergoing digital transformation. Moreover, by incorporating lessons from similar digital governance platforms globally, the paper suggests pathways for further enhancing the scalability, adaptability, and long-term effectiveness of e-governance initiatives. This strategic outlook is crucial for fostering regional cooperation and setting international benchmarks in digital public administration.

Acknowledgment

This study was funded by the National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI), under Decision No. 10, dated 21.07.2023.

References

- Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P. T., & Grimes, J. M. (2010). Using ICTs to create a culture of transparency: E-government and social media as openness and anti-corruption tools for societies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27(3), 264–271. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2010.03.001>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319–340. <https://doi.org/10.2307/249008>
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gil-Garcia, J. R., & Helbig, N. (2007). Exploring e-government benefits and success factors: A literature review. *Government Information Quarterly*, 24(2), 119–136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2006.04.001>
- Groves, R. M., Fowler Jr, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). *Survey methodology* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Heeks, R. (2006). *Implementing and managing eGovernment: An international text*. SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446220284>

Jaeger, P. T., & Bertot, J. C. (2010). Transparency and technological change: Ensuring equal and sustained public access to government information. *Government Information Quarterly*, 27(4), 371–376. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2010.05.003>

Kim, S., Kim, H. J., & Lee, H. (2009). An institutional analysis of an e-government system for anti-corruption: The case of OPEN. *Government Information Quarterly*, 26(1), 42–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2008.09.002>

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Layne, K., & Lee, J. (2001). Developing fully functional e-government: A four-stage model. *Government Information Quarterly*, 18(2), 122–136. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-624X\(01\)00066-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-624X(01)00066-1)

Lindgren, I., & Jansson, G. (2013). Electronic services in the public sector: A conceptual framework. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30(2), 163–172. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.10.005>

Moon, M. J. (2002). The evolution of e-government among municipalities: Rhetoric or reality? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 424–433. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00196>

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). *Using multivariate statistics* (7th ed.). Pearson.

Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425–478. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30036540>

West, D. M. (2004). E-government and the transformation of service delivery and citizen attitudes. *Public Administration Review*, 64(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2004.00343.x>