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CAN AI-BASED PUBLIC SERVICES STRENGTHEN STATE ACCOUNTABILITY AND CITIZENS' TRUST IN UZBEKISTAN?

Kakhkhor Rakhmatov & Mukhammad Rakhmatov
University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED),
E-mail: qahhorrahmatov322@gmail.com ,
muhammadrahmatov005@gmail.com

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Abstract: This article examines how artificial-intelligence-enabled public services may affect administrative performance, government accountability and citizens' trust in Uzbekistan. It argues that digitisation and faster service delivery do not automatically generate institutional trust. Trust is more plausibly sustained when service quality is accompanied by procedural fairness, lawful data use, intelligible explanations, meaningful human review and effective remedies. The study combines documentary analysis, a comparative review of international governance standards and a conceptual policy framework. It analyses Uzbekistan's national AI strategy to 2030, the 2026 legal amendments governing AI use, the United Nations E-Government Survey, the World Bank's GovTech framework, OECD research on trust in public institutions, and UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. The article develops a three-part analytical model linking digital service quality, public-sector accountability and citizen trust. As no original survey or administrative microdata have been collected for this paper, its propositions are presented as hypotheses rather than established causal findings. The final section proposes a risk-based governance framework for Uzbekistan, including an AI-system register, impact assessments, human oversight, accessible appeals, independent audits and public reporting of measurable outcomes.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; digital government; public services; government accountability; citizen trust; institutional legitimacy; algorithmic governance; procedural fairness; Uzbekistan; public policy.

INTRODUCTION:

The digitalization of public administration is often assessed by speed, convenience and cost reduction. These are important outcomes, but they capture only part of the relationship between the state and the citizen. The real quality of a public service is measured not only by how easily a citizen can submit an application, but also by the lawfulness, consistency and explainability of the decision, and by the possibility of correcting an error when one occurs. When artificial intelligence (AI) systems are used for making recommendations, sorting documents, classifying appeals or allocating resources, political and legal questions arise alongside technical efficiency. For Uzbekistan, this issue has a specific political context. By Presidential Resolution No. PQ-358 of 14 October 2024, the Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence Technologies until 2030 was approved. It sets the goal of raising the share of AI-based services on the Unified Interactive Public Services Portal to 10 percent by 2030, with interim indicators of 1 percent for 2026, 3 percent for 2027, 5 percent for 2028 and 7

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

percent for 2029.[1] Quantitative targets have also been set for digital government infrastructure. According to an official statement of the Ministry of Digital Technologies dated 10 July 2026, Resolution No. PQ-257 of 8 July 2026 aims to digitalize at least 5,000 administrative functions of state bodies by the end of 2028 and to reduce the costs of developing and operating state information systems by at least 30 percent. The statement notes that from 1 January 2027 a single integrated digital platform is to be used for internal document circulation, decision approval and the delivery of public services, and that the Open API principle is to be introduced for data exchange between systems.[2] These policy goals raise an important question: under what conditions will digitalized and AI-enhanced public services be genuinely better for citizens, and under what conditions will they preserve citizens' ability to understand, verify and challenge the decisions of state bodies? If a citizen receives a negative decision on a pension, a permit, a registration or another administrative service, they must know what data and what rules the decision was based on. Otherwise, even if the system works quickly, the decision may be perceived as unfair or incomprehensible.

MAIN PART:

The main research question is as follows: how might AI-based public services in Uzbekistan affect the relationship between digital service quality, state accountability and citizens' trust? This question is broken down into three sub-questions. First, how should service quality be measured? Second, how can accountability for algorithmic decisions be ensured? Third, what is the difference between satisfaction with a service and institutional trust in the state? The scholarly contribution of the article does not lie in claiming that prior empirical research on Uzbekistan exists, but in combining three concepts that are often treated separately into a single analytical model. The model proposes that service quality may affect trust directly, but that this link may be strengthened or weakened through accountability, fairness, data privacy and the possibility of lodging a complaint.

Digital service quality means not merely that a service is available online, but the citizen's overall experience in searching for, understanding, submitting and completing it. Such quality can be analyzed along at least six dimensions: ease of use; timeliness of service delivery; accuracy of information; equal access for different groups; continuity of the process; and a mechanism for correcting errors or complaints. For example, if an application can be completed in three minutes but the citizen does not understand why it was rejected, it would be wrong to rate the service highly on speed alone. Likewise, an automated system may reduce staff workload, but if it uses incorrect or outdated data, erroneous decisions may multiply faster. Efficiency indicators such as speed and cost should therefore be measured together with indicators of fairness, accuracy and review.

The World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI) approach does not equate digital transformation in the public sector with the mere existence of a portal; it covers dimensions such as core government systems, service delivery, citizen engagement and a GovTech-enabling environment.

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[1] O'zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidenti. (2024, 14-oktabr). PQ–358-son qaror: "Sun'iy intellekt texnologiyalarini 2030-yilga qadar rivojlantirish strategiyasini tasdiqlash to'g'risida". LexUZ. https://lex.uz/uz/acts/-7158604

[2] O'zbekiston Respublikasi Raqamli texnologiyalar vazirligi. (2026, 10-iyul). "Raqamli hukumat" tizimini yanada rivojlantiriladi (2026-yil 8-iyuldagi PQ–257-son qaror haqida rasmiy axborot). https://gov.uz/oz/digital/news/view/190788

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
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World Bank material from 2022 reports Uzbekistan's overall GTMI score as 0.813; the figures in the report are index measures built on a specific methodology.[3] This distinction is politically important: infrastructure readiness is not an outcome, but an opportunity to achieve one. System integration may reduce repeated requests for data, but it does not automatically guarantee that the data are accurate, secure and lawfully used. Digital transformation should therefore be assessed not only by the number of digitalized services or the funds spent, but by the real value created for citizens.

State accountability means that a state body must explain the reasons for exercising its authority, that its decisions must be subject to review, and that it must answer for errors or violations of the law. This concept has at least three components: an obligation to provide information and explanation; the possibility of independent review of decisions; and a mechanism for correction or liability when deficiencies are found. Publishing information about a system is not enough if citizens have no effective way to change an erroneous decision. Algorithmic accountability means that when a state body uses an automated system, it does not shift responsibility onto the technology developer or the software model. The state body remains responsible for the legal consequences of the decision. This is especially important where the system influences decision-making but the reasons for the decision are not clear to the ordinary user. Not every citizen needs to understand the internal mathematical structure of an algorithm; however, the criteria applied to them, the main data used, the procedure for objecting and the possibility of human review must be understandable.

Another aspect of accountability is the clear allocation of tasks within the organization. Who developed the model, who manages the data, who approved the system, who monitors the results and who responds to a citizen's complaint? If answers to these questions are not defined in advance, institutional responsibility may remain unclear even though the technical system exists. For this reason, for every high-risk system, the responsible state body, the system owner, the data controller and an independent oversight mechanism should be documented. Citizens' trust in the state does not mean believing that the state always makes decisions in line with citizens' wishes. In a broader sense, it is the expectation that state institutions will exercise their powers reliably, fairly, lawfully and in the public interest. Satisfaction with a service may depend on a specific experience, such as the quick processing of a document. Institutional trust is broader: when a citizen disagrees with a decision, do they believe the process was lawful and that it is possible to object?

The OECD's 2024 survey on trust in public institutions was conducted in 30 OECD countries in October–November 2023. On average, 44 percent of respondents reported low or no trust in the national government, while 39 percent reported high or moderately high trust. At the same time, 66 percent of respondents who had recently used public administrative services said they were satisfied with them. These results do not allow conclusions about Uzbekistan's population, since the country is not among the 30 countries in the survey. However, they point to an important analytical distinction: satisfaction with everyday services and trust in the national government are not the same measure. The OECD analysis notes that satisfaction with public services, belief that data will be used for legitimate purposes, and perceptions of fair treatment of applications are linked to trust in civil servants and local

[3] World Bank. (2022). GovTech Maturity Index (GTMI) 2022 Update: Trends in Public Sector Digital Transformation. World Bank. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099035001132365997

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government.[4] Since the study is based on observational data, such a link cannot automatically be interpreted as a causal effect. Trust may influence how a service is evaluated, and service experience may also shape trust. From the standpoint of political science, this issue goes back to legitimacy. A citizen who disagrees with the substance of a state decision may still accept the institution as legitimate if the decision was made through a lawful procedure, was explained and can be appealed. Algorithmic public services must therefore ensure not only the correctness of outcomes but also the fairness of the decision-making process.

The article links three main variables. The first is digital service quality (SQ): ease of use, speed, accuracy, stability and equal access. The second is state accountability (SA): explanation, audit, complaint, human oversight and responsibility. The third is citizens' trust (CT): trust measured separately in administrative service bodies, civil servants and the national government. According to the model, a positive relationship between SQ and CT is possible, but this link is expected to vary with the level of SA. If a service is fast and convenient but the reasons for negative decisions are hidden, or the citizen cannot request a review, the link between service quality and trust may weaken. Conversely, if explanation and complaint mechanisms exist, acknowledging and correcting errors may strengthen the state's credibility. In addition, data privacy, digital literacy, internet access, language, accessibility for persons with disabilities, regional differences and prior trust in state institutions are important control factors. Ignoring them may lead to the experience of the groups that use digital services most being wrongly taken as the experience of the whole population.

The first strand reviews Uzbekistan's official documents on AI and digital government. The second analyzes open reports and standards of international organizations such as the UN, the World Bank, the OECD and UNESCO. The third combines the policy mechanisms emerging from these documents into a conceptual model and develops hypotheses that could be tested empirically in the future. To measure state accountability, one may track in how many negative decisions reasons were given, how many decisions were reviewed by a human, what share of appeals were upheld, how quickly errors were corrected after being identified, and whether system audit results were published. Citizens' trust should be measured separately through distinct questions: how much does the respondent trust the service agency, civil servants and the national government? Respondents' trust in fairness and in the use of their data can also be assessed through separate questions. These constructs, the possible indicators for measuring them and the data sources are summarized in the table below.

Uzbekistan's Resolution PQ-358 aims to develop the legal, technological and economic foundations for applying AI technologies in the social sphere and across sectors of the economy. Among the strategy's targets are raising the volume of AI-based software products and services to US$1.5 billion, raising the share of AI-based services on the Unified Interactive Public Services Portal to 10 percent, and placing Uzbekistan among the top 50 countries in the government AI readiness index. Such targets indicate political priorities and the direction in which resources are mobilized. For example, the number of services on the portal that use AI may grow while the rate at which users' problems are resolved remains unchanged. Target indicators should therefore be supplemented with

[4] OECD. (2024). OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9a20554b-en

HSR (LONDON),
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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

outcome indicators: successful completion of applications, wrongful rejections, equal access and appeal effectiveness. It is also important to interpret the 10 percent share in the strategy correctly. This indicator may depend on the total number of portal services or on a defined calculation method; therefore the monitoring methodology should be public, and it should be published which services are counted as "AI-based" and how the denominator is defined. Otherwise, comparing figures across different years becomes difficult.

The official information on Resolution PQ-257 of July 2026 states the goals of digitalizing at least 5,000 administrative functions by the end of 2028 and reducing information system costs by at least 30 percent. A single integrated platform is expected to strengthen common architecture, standards, reusable digital components and data exchange between systems. Integration may reduce state agencies' repeated requests for the same information and ease citizens' administrative burden. But if erroneous data from several databases is passed to a single platform, the error may be replicated on a larger scale. Therefore, alongside interoperability, the provenance, update time, accuracy and correction procedure of the data should also be recorded. Open API facilitates technical exchange, but it does not by itself guarantee that data exchange is lawful, purposeful and secure. The cost-reduction goal also raises several questions. How are the savings calculated? Are one-time development costs and long-term maintenance, cybersecurity, staff training and independent audit costs treated equally? Even if the platform lowers overall costs, interagency change management or user support costs may rise. Costs should therefore be calculated over the full life cycle. Law No. O'RQ-1115 of 21 January 2026 amended the Law "On Informatization" with provisions on the concept of AI and the grounds for its use. The law establishes that, in making legally significant decisions affecting a person's rights and freedoms, it is not permitted to rely solely on the conclusions of a system based on AI technologies. It also provides for administrative liability for unlawful processing of personal data using AI.[5]

This provision is directly connected to the article's central argument: in decisions affecting human rights, technology cannot replace ultimate responsibility. However, for the principle in the law to be effective in practice, "human oversight" must be ensured in substance. The official must have the authority, time, necessary information and ability to change the decision when reviewing the system's recommendation. If officials automatically approve algorithmic output, human involvement may remain merely formal. To turn the legal requirement into everyday practice, state bodies need to maintain a register of decisions in which AI participates, document the purpose and risk of each system, designate a responsible official and publish a route for review of negative decisions. This does not mean the text of the law prescribes such technical forms for every case; they are policy proposals aimed at strengthening the practical implementation of the norm.

AI systems may operate on large volumes of data. For this reason, the procedures for collecting, storing, combining and reusing personal data are important for citizens' trust. Uzbekistan has Law No. O'RQ-547 "On Personal Data" of 2 July 2019, and subsequent years have seen amendments to the

[5] O'zbekiston Respublikasi. (2026, 21-yanvar). O'RQ–1115-son Qonun: "Sun'iy intellektni qo'llash orqali yuzaga keladigan munosabatlarni tartibga solish munosabati bilan O'zbekiston Respublikasining ayrim qonun hujjatlariga qo'shimcha va o'zgartirishlar kiritish to'g'risida". LexUZ. https://lex.uz/uz/docs/-8008401

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legal regulation in this area.[6] In any practical project, the currently effective version of the law and the relevant secondary legislation should be checked separately. When a citizen provides data to the state, they should know for exactly which service the data will be used, on what basis it will be passed to other agencies and how erroneous data can be corrected. Data privacy is not merely a technical security issue; it also expresses a political attitude toward how the state uses its power over citizens. Without confidence that data will be used lawfully and stored securely, citizens may refrain from using services or provide inaccurate information, which could further reduce service quality. At the same time, equating privacy with an absolutely closed system is also wrong. Citizens may obtain information about a system's purpose, data categories, retention period, responsible agency and complaint mechanism without personal data itself being disclosed. Transparency and privacy are therefore not contradictory principles; they should be reconciled through properly designed governance.

Digital services may allow citizens to save time and travel costs, reduce dependence on working hours and cut the need to resubmit documents. Automation is likely to be most effective for simple, rule-based services where the consequences of error are low. For example, giving information on application status, explaining lists of required documents, routing an appeal to the appropriate department or answering mass inquiries can be supported by AI. However, measuring efficiency only by average service time hides a number of problems. Average time may fall while waiting times for complex applications lengthen. Overall satisfaction may be high while the service works poorly for users in rural areas with weak internet or low digital literacy. Results should therefore be analyzed not only as averages but also disaggregated by region, age, disability, language and service type. The reliability of the service is also important. If an AI assistant gives incorrect legal information or promises a user a benefit that does not exist, short-term convenience later turns into dissatisfaction. In public services, AI responses should therefore be linked to verified official sources, regularly updated, and designed to show users whether the information is official or auxiliary.

The fairness of a public service depends not only on the outcome but also on the process. When a citizen receives a rejection, it may be easier to accept if the criteria were clear in advance, were applied equally and the reasons for the decision were explained. Conversely, treating two applicants in the same situation differently, or leaving a decision unexplained, strengthens the perception of unfairness. AI systems may learn from historical data. If certain regions or social groups are underrepresented in historical data, the model may give incorrect recommendations for those groups. To test this in advance, data coverage, error rates and system outputs should be assessed across different groups. An overall accuracy figure is not enough here: even when overall accuracy is high, the rate of wrongful rejection for a particular group may be high. Procedural fairness does not mean disclosing all the technical details of an algorithm. Some systems may have limitations related to security, confidentiality or intellectual property. But the citizen should understand what decision was made about them, its main reasons and the path for review. The complexity of a system does not release a state body from the obligation to give an explanation.

Public services may work with citizens' identification, family status, income, address, health or

[6] O‘zbekiston Respublikasi. (2019, 2-iyul). O‘RQ–547-son Qonun: “Shaxsga doir ma’lumotlar to‘g‘risida”. LexUZ. https://lex.uz/

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

other personal data. Concerns that data may be misused, leaked or used beyond its purpose may affect citizens' use of digital services. The central question of trust here is: does the state use data however it wishes because it has the technological capacity, or does it observe lawful purposes and limits? The principle of data minimization, meaning not collecting data that is unnecessary for the service's purpose, helps reduce risk. Data exchanges should be logged, access rights restricted according to function, and security incidents recorded and procedures for handling them defined in advance. The privacy policy for citizens should be written in plain language and indicate a practical route for complaints or data correction. There is a delicate balance here. Excessive restriction of data use may complicate service integration, while uncontrolled sharing endangers privacy and civil rights. The task of policy is not to stop data use altogether, but to ensure a clear purpose, legal basis, necessity, proportionality and verifiable oversight.

One of the most important situations in which accountability is demonstrated is the moment the system makes an error. Any technical system may err; for political trust, creating a mechanism to detect and correct errors matters more than promising that errors will not occur. When a citizen faces incorrect information, misclassification or an incomprehensible rejection, they must know where to send their appeal, within what period they will receive a response and who is responsible for the final decision. It is not enough for a complaint mechanism to offer only an electronic form. Citizens should also be able to get help outside the system, for example by telephone, through a service center or by written appeal. Otherwise, precisely the person who cannot use the digital system may also be deprived of the opportunity to complain. The "digital-first" approach should therefore not be confused with a "digital-only" approach. The results of appeals are also useful for improving governance. If decisions of one type are overturned many times, this may indicate a systemic problem in staff qualifications, legal guidance, data quality or the algorithm. Strengthening accountability means analyzing complaints in aggregate and publishing corrective measures, rather than merely closing them as individual appeals.

AI should be viewed not as a tool that completely replaces civil servants but as one that supports their work. Staff should understand system outputs, know their limitations and have the authority to reject a recommendation when necessary. If staff do not have enough time or knowledge to check the model, "human oversight" in practice turns into superficial approval. Training for state bodies should not be limited to technical use. Staff should also be trained in data quality, algorithmic bias, explanation, privacy, complaint handling and human rights impact assessment. Moreover, if staff performance is measured only by speed, they may be incentivized to quickly automate complex cases. Evaluation of results should also take into account accuracy, fairness and the correct resolution of appeals.

The UN's 2024 E-Government Survey notes Uzbekistan's growth in e-government development. The UN's presentation material on Uzbekistan states that the country rose six places in the 2024 ranking and entered the "Very High EGDI" group, and that the number of e-services on the my.gov.uz portal grew from 370 in 2022 to 670.[7] These data show the coverage of digital services and

[7] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). (2024). UN E-Government Survey 2024: Accelerating Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development. United Nations. https://desapublications.un.org/publications/un-e-government-survey-2024

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

e-government potential. At the same time, an increase in the number of services does not directly show their quality or their effect on trust. The index itself measures components such as government online services, telecommunications infrastructure and human capital. Citizens' trust, by contrast, should be measured through separate surveys and institutional indicators. The UN index can therefore be used to explain the context of public services, but it cannot be presented as the article's main result.

The World Bank's GovTech approach views digital transformation in the public sector as a broader system. Alongside digital public services, core government systems, interaction with citizens and the institutional environment supporting reforms are also important. The lesson from this approach is that launching a new portal or an AI assistant cannot replace rethinking the entire governance process. If a service's internal process has redundant steps, moving it to digital form may preserve excess bureaucracy. If different agencies do not coordinate their data, the user keeps being redirected from one portal to another. The outcome of digital transformation therefore depends on the joint improvement of technology, organizational processes, staff capacity and accountability mechanisms.

The OECD's 2024 analysis identifies several drivers of trust: reliability, responsiveness, openness, integrity and fairness. The report shows that satisfaction with services and perceptions of lawful use of personal data are linked to trust in civil servants. This is not a direct result for Uzbekistan, but it is an important comparative basis for policy design. The OECD data also find links between certain factors related to trust in the national government, including confidence that the government makes evidence-based decisions and citizens' sense of having a voice in the political process, and trust. These observations raise a relevant question for algorithmic governance as well: the state may make decision-making more efficient with AI, but citizens must be able to know what evidence the decisions rest on and to voice their views.

UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted in 2021, emphasizes human rights impact assessment, audit, traceability, explainability and human oversight throughout the life cycle of AI systems. It stresses that the use of an AI system must not remove ultimate human responsibility, and that state bodies should introduce monitoring and external review mechanisms where necessary.[8] The practical meaning of this approach is to assess risk before launching a system and to keep monitoring it after launch. Passing an initial test does not mean the system works correctly under all conditions. Data, legislation, user behavior and the service process may change. Audit should therefore be organized as a continuous governance process, not a one-time certificate.

The OECD AI Principles were adopted in 2019 and updated in 2024 to reflect technological changes. They are an intergovernmental standard aimed at developing trustworthy AI systems that respect human rights and democratic values.[9] Applying these principles in national policy does not

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[8] UNESCO. (2021). Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence. UNESCO. https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

[9] OECD. (2024, 3 May). OECD updates AI Principles to stay abreast of rapid technological developments. OECD. https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2024/05/oecd-updates-ai-principles-to-stay-abreast-of-rapid-technological-developments.html

HSR (LONDON),
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mean halting technological innovation; the aim is to reconcile innovation with safety, transparency and accountability. The Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law was opened for signature on 5 September 2024 and was presented as the first legally binding international treaty in this field. [10]Regardless of Uzbekistan's legal status with respect to this instrument, the human rights, democratic oversight and rule-of-law issues raised in the convention provide comparative benchmarks for policy design. It would be incorrect, however, to substitute an international instrument for national law or to present it as automatically binding on Uzbekistan.

The sources reviewed support one general conclusion: digital governance is not merely technical infrastructure. It consists of data governance, human capacity, legal oversight, service quality and a system of communication with citizens. At the same time, directly transplanting the experience of different states would be wrong. Institutional structure, administrative practice, the legal environment and digital capacity vary across countries. A suitable solution for Uzbekistan should be developed by aligning international standards with national legislation and practical capacity.

The article's conceptual model puts forward three main hypotheses. These hypotheses are formulated on the basis of evidence in the existing literature:

H1: Higher quality of a digital public service will be positively associated with citizens' trust in the service-providing state body. This hypothesis assumes that users who rate satisfaction, speed, accuracy and ease of use more highly may also evaluate their experience more positively. However, this link may also be explained by people who already have high trust in the state rating the service positively. Therefore, prior trust, demographic characteristics and service type must be controlled for in the study.

H2: Explanation of the reasons for decisions, human review and the availability of an effective complaint route will strengthen the positive relationship between digital service quality and trust. This hypothesis tests that service speed alone is insufficient and that it matters whether the user feels entitled to challenge a decision. In statistical analysis, accountability may be modeled separately either as a moderator that strengthens the effect of service quality or as a mediator that explains the effect of service experience on trust; which model is appropriate depends on the theoretical basis and the data structure.

H3: Trust that the state body uses personal data lawfully and securely will be positively associated with citizens' willingness to use AI-based services and with trust in the relevant agency. Testing this hypothesis requires measuring privacy concerns, data awareness, digital literacy and service-use experience.

A two-stage design is proposed for empirical testing. In the first stage, a representative survey is conducted among citizens who have used services. The survey should cover strata by region, urban–rural location, age, gender, disability, education and level of internet use. The sample size is determined by a statistical calculation based on the expected effect, confidence interval, design effect and likelihood of non-response; fixing a specific number of respondents without such justification would be scientifically incorrect. In the second stage, the survey results may be linked to administrative indicators, in compliance with consent and privacy requirements. Examples include

[10] Council of Europe. (2024). The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. Council of Europe. https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/the-framework-convention-on-artificial-intelligence

HSR (LONDON),
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service completion time, application rejection, appeal outcomes and repeat appeals. If data linkage is not possible, non-identifying administrative statistics grouped by service type may be used. It is advisable to publish the research protocol in advance, pilot the survey questions and fix the analysis plan before seeing the results. For stronger causal inference, a quasi-experimental design may be considered for services introduced in stages. For example, if a new explanation and appeal mechanism is introduced at different times for the same type of service, before-and-after outcomes can be compared. However, such a design is reliable only when implementation timing, parallel reforms and differences between groups are properly accounted for. A simple before-and-after comparison alone does not prove a causal effect.

The survey can measure the following topics on a 0–10 or five-point response scale: how easy it was to use the service; whether the result was delivered within the expected time; whether the reasons for the decision were clear; whether you know that you can complain about an incorrect decision; how much you trust the state body to use your personal data lawfully; and how much you trust the service-providing agency. Questions should be written in neutral language, should not push toward a "right answer" and should allow respondents not to answer. Before aggregating survey results, the internal consistency of the items, the distinctness of the constructs and whether they function with the same meaning across different groups should be checked. For example, the question on "trust in the government" is not the same as trust in the local service center. If this distinction is not preserved, the analysis blends several types of attitudes into a single indicator.

The first recommendation is to establish a centralized register of AI systems used or piloted in state bodies. The register should indicate the system name, responsible agency, purpose, categories of data used, degree of influence on decisions, risk category, human oversight procedure and the channel for appeals. Some technical details may be restricted for security or privacy reasons, but general information relevant to citizens should be as open as possible. The value of a register is that it reduces the risk of AI systems being introduced haphazardly or covertly, facilitates internal audit and gives parliament, oversight bodies and the public an overall picture. To ensure the register does not become merely a list of software names, each entry should also show the update date, the responsible person and the system's status.

The second recommendation is to introduce proportionate requirements based on the likely impact and scale of harm of AI projects, instead of imposing the same requirements on all of them. A chatbot providing reference information and a system affecting entitlement to social benefits do not carry the same risk. High-risk systems should undergo legal, administrative, technical and social impact assessment before launch, error testing across different groups and independent expert review. The following questions could be mandatory in the assessment: which decision does the system influence; who is harmed if the decision is wrong; where do the data come from and how current are they; in which groups are errors likely to be more frequent; can a human change the system's recommendation; how can the reason for a decision be explained to the user; and is there an alternative service if the system fails? A short public version of the assessment findings and mitigation measures should be published.

The third recommendation is to develop a standard procedure for giving explanations in decisions affecting citizens' rights and interests. The explanation should state the legal basis of the decision, the material facts, the deficiencies identified in the application, the next steps and the route for appeal. If an AI system has been used, it is advisable to say so in clear terms. Human oversight

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
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should not be limited to an official clicking an electronic approval button. The official should be given the authority to view the relevant data, question the algorithm's conclusion, request additional evidence and, if necessary, change the decision. Organizations may monitor, in non-identifying form, the share of cases reviewed by a human and the results of those reviews.

The fourth recommendation is to establish a visible and functioning complaint route for every significant AI-based public service. Citizens should know which agency to contact, what evidence to provide, when they will receive a response and who will review the decision. Alongside the digital channel, alternatives such as telephone and in-person appeals should be retained. A rise in the number of complaints does not always mean the system has deteriorated; it may also reflect citizens becoming more aware of the right to appeal. The number of complaints should therefore be analyzed not on its own, but together with their type, review time, share upheld, recurrence rate and resolution of the identified problems.

The fifth recommendation is to introduce regular public reporting on AI-based services. Alongside the number of service users, reports may include completion time, technical outages, complaints, appeals, errors identified, implementation of audit recommendations and differences between groups. The indicator methodology should be published in advance, and any changes over time should be explained. Independent audit should review not only the technical functioning of the system but also data quality, legal compliance, risk of discrimination and complaint mechanisms. Audit results should be seen not as a means of punishing or discrediting a system, but as a mechanism for early problem detection and correction. It is important that the auditing party has no conflict of interest.

The sixth recommendation is to invest in the capacity of civil servants and users. Staff should receive regular training in critically assessing AI outputs, identifying errors, explaining decisions and protecting data. For citizens, simple guides, information in widely used languages, interfaces suitable for persons with disabilities and digital support services are needed. The expansion of digital services should not become a basis for ending offline assistance entirely. Some citizens may lack internet access, devices, digital identification or technical skills. The goal of equal access to public services requires preserving a practical choice between digital and traditional channels. Seeking help in using a service should not worsen a person's legal position.

The seventh recommendation is to link policy goals with outcome indicators. In addition to indicators such as the number of digitalized functions and cost reductions, indicators tracking service quality, fairness, accountability and trust should be introduced. These indicators should help agencies make real management decisions and should not be optimized merely to improve rankings or reports. The proposed monitoring table could cover the following indicators: median service completion time; share of successfully completed applications; share of applications returned for rework; time to respond to complaints; share of decisions changed as a result of appeals; data security incidents; implementation of independent audit recommendations; and gaps between groups in service quality. For each indicator, a clear definition, data source, responsible agency and publication frequency should be set.

Applying the policy recommendations to all services at once may create resource and capacity problems. A three-stage approach is therefore advisable. In the first stage, existing AI systems are registered, services are classified by risk and minimum legal requirements are set. In the second stage, impact assessment, explanation and appeal procedures are piloted in high-risk systems. In the third

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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

stage, effective mechanisms are scaled up based on the results of independent evaluation. At each stage, baseline indicators should be set and results published. For example, a statement that "complaints fell by 20 percent" can be interpreted correctly only if the ability to complain, the number of users and the recording method have not changed. The assessment of results should therefore also present the context around the indicators and data limitations.

The article's main theoretical argument is that introducing AI in public services creates an opportunity to increase efficiency but does not automatically create trust. Technology may reduce some costs of service delivery, analyze large volumes of data and speed up routine tasks. But trust in the state is determined not only by the speed of the result; it also depends on how state powers are applied, how decisions are explained and how errors are corrected. There is an important distinction among three dimensions here. Digital service quality expresses the user's experience of going through a service. State accountability determines who is responsible for a decision and how it can be reviewed and corrected. Citizens' trust is a broader expectation formed on the basis of this experience and the conduct of institutions. Merging all three dimensions into a single indicator may misdirect policy. If state bodies focus only on the number of services, the degree of automation or cost reduction, high-impact errors and inequalities between groups may be overlooked. Conversely, if overly complex requirements are imposed on every small AI application, useful innovation may slow down. A risk-based approach is therefore important: requirements should be proportionate to the system's impact on citizens' rights, the severity of the decision's consequences and the possibility of correcting an error. From a governance perspective, it is dangerous to view trust as an indicator that can simply be "increased" through state communication.

The durability of trust depends on practical experience, a fair process, integrity and the state's ability to acknowledge its own mistakes. If citizens are promised that the system is safe and fair, but real complaints are not reviewed, communication may deepen suspicion rather than increase trust. AI governance in public services must therefore pursue two goals together: improving administrative efficiency and preserving democratic and legal accountability. These two goals are not rivals. Properly organized human oversight and audit can help detect errors early and also improve service quality. A complaint mechanism gives citizens protection and also gives the state data for studying problems in service delivery. However, the mechanisms proposed in this article require empirical testing. International evidence does not guarantee identical results in Uzbekistan's context. Institutional trust is also linked to historical experience, economic conditions, political participation, the media environment and other factors. In analyzing the link between AI-based services and trust, the service experience therefore cannot be separated from the broader institutional context.

Conclusion:

This article analyzed how AI-based public services in Uzbekistan might change the relationship among digital service quality, state accountability and citizens' trust. Official policy documents show that the country has set specific goals for developing AI and digital government. Resolution PQ-358 sets the goal of increasing the share of AI-based public services, while the official information on Resolution PQ-257 notes goals of digitalizing state functions and reducing information system costs. Law No. O'RQ-1115 of 2026 establishes the principle that legally significant decisions affecting human rights and freedoms may not be made relying solely on AI conclusions. The central conclusion of the analysis is that technological modernization and institutional trust are not equivalent

HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
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http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

concepts. The growth of e-services, faster processes and reduced costs are important, but they do not by themselves prove that citizens' trust in the state has increased. Trust may be influenced not only by the accuracy and convenience of the service but also by the explanation of decision reasons, lawful use of data, fair treatment, independent audit, human oversight and an effective possibility to complain.

The article proposed three testable hypotheses: a positive relationship between service quality and trust in the agency; accountability mechanisms strengthening this relationship; and trust in lawful data use being associated with willingness to use digital services. These hypotheses should be tested in the future through representative surveys, administrative data and, where possible, a quasi-experimental design. Since this article did not conduct a new survey or causal analysis on Uzbekistan, the hypotheses are not presented as confirmed results. Politically, seven directions were proposed for Uzbekistan: an open register of AI systems; risk-based impact assessment; understandable decision explanations and meaningful human oversight; effective complaint and appeal mechanisms; independent audit and public reporting; strengthening civil servants' capacity and digital inclusion; and a monitoring system that jointly tracks service quality, accountability and trust.

The measure of success of AI in public administration is not only how fast the state apparatus works. The key question is whether citizens can understand how decisions affecting them are made, whether they are able to correct an error when one occurs and whether the state body answers for the exercise of its authority. If digital transformation can give practical answers to these questions, it can move beyond technological renewal and become a tool for strengthening the state's accountability to its citizens.

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