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**ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT APPLICATION AND TRUST  
TOWARDS GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION: A REVIEW**

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***Abstract***

Public sector trust is usually deliberated as one of the significant elements for a country to become a developed nation. It is important for the government to earn sufficient level of trust from the citizen especially in democratic countries in order to carry-out their functions effectively. Nevertheless, previous researches have demonstrated that there was a declining trend in trust towards public administration over the years. In this case, the effort of implementing e-government is said to be able to create a positive change in trust towards the government's management as it is capable to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the government services and its delivery to the citizen. Studies have also proven that the changes in government efforts, such as the implementation of e-government initiatives, correspond to the increase of public trust towards the government. Thus, this paper attempts to review related literatures on public trust towards government and its association with the application of electronic government in its delivery of services to the public.

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**Keywords:** Public trust; e-government, e-service delivery; Public sector.



## 1. Introduction

Trust is an important factor to ensure the smooth and manageable administration of the public sector. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer (1998) termed trust as a psychological state comprised of the intention to accept vulnerability based on hopes of the positive behaviour or intentions of another's. Ba & Pavlou (2002), on the other hand, have acknowledged trust as the subjective assessment of one individual to another individual who will perform in particular actions according to his expectations in the environment that is categorized by uncertainty. Similarly, Smith (2010) elaborated trust as the relationship where the citizen believes that their top administration is able to deliver the public need flawlessly. There are several importance of trust as described by Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010); Crawshaw and Brodbeck (2011); Sharkie (2009); Cremer, Dijke and Bos (2006); Erturk (2006), and Appelbaum et al., (2004). They have discussed that high level of trust could assist the performance of the private sector. According to their judgement, a high trust level will indirectly escalate collaboration with leaders, ease leaders to influence subordinate to accept their decisions, playing extra-role behaviours in workplace, having low intention to leave, belief in the information given, loyalty to the leader, commitment in doing work and satisfaction with the job given.

The same analogy of having high level of trust among staff towards the top management results in high performance of private sector can also be applicable to the public sector. This is due to the fact that governments may not be able to deliver their service well with the low level of trust (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2010). Having low level of trust may become one of the key factors for the citizen to lose their confidence towards decisions and actions made by the government, as mentioned by Fukuyama (1995), trust is the key for the government to administrate the country properly. According to Levi (1998) and Nye & Zelikov (1997), the government itself may acknowledge problems and issues to decide and implement their agendas as the public may refuse to follow the decision made normally in the form of regulation, policy or program. Great level of trust would support the government to play its role effectively than those with less public trust (Chen & Shi, 2001). In addition, Yang and Holzer (2006), and Fjeldstad (2004) revealed, having a high level of trust from the public will profit the government in executing the enacted policies, doing their directive action, imposing and collecting tax as well as the redistributing of income. Similarly, Atkinson and Butcher (2003) also recommended that creating and retaining a trustworthy relationship is essential as it is usually interrelated with effectiveness and organizational performance as well as to make sure the success of the programs that will be implemented (Zeleti, 2011; Warkentin, Gefen, Pavlou, & Rose, 2002).

## 2. Problem Statement

It is unfortunate to note that the level of public trust towards governments has been decreasing over the years (Morgeson, VanAmburg & Mithas, 2011; Welch, Hinnant, & Moon, 2005; Banister & Connolly, 2011). This upsetting trend of public trust occurred since 1960s particularly in the democratic governance such as Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain and many more (Nye, Zelikow, & King, 1997; Blind Peri, 2007). In this case, a similar trend has also been reported in Asian countries such as South Korea and China. Japan and Malaysia also joined the bandwagon witnessing the reduction of citizen's trust level towards government administration (Edelman.com, 2012). Various factors have been identified as the reason to the weakening in public level of trust in governments. The split between the public expectation and their perception towards the performance of the government, economic

performance, the power of mass media, political scandals and the failure of policy implementation are among the leading contributors to the public trust deterioration (Nye, 1997; Peter, 1999).

In addition, Yildiz & Saylam (2013) also noted that government progress and the influence of mass media are among the leading causes in the decline of citizen's trust especially in democratic countries. Not to forget, the performance of government agencies would influence citizen's trust or distrust of their respective government (North, 1998). In this case, the performance of government can be referred to the quality or perception of quality of services delivered by the government such as showing conditions of public amenities such as schools and public transport, public health services, street cleanliness and recreational services, country economic growth, the unemployment rate, the rate of inflation and the strength of the government (Miller & Listhaug, 1999; Norris, 1999; Lawrence, 1997). Besides, the moralities and ethics embraced by the government when providing various services to its society such as fairness in delivering the services, time taken to respond to the need of the public, the competency in handling arising issues, credibility, security and access are also elements under this category (Glaser, Denhardt & Grubbs, 1997).

However, Van Ryzin & Charbonneau (2010) agreed that an unbiased government, equal provision of services to the public, respecting the needs of the citizen and honest job performance are principles and values that could affect the performance of the government. Along with the various factors mentioned earlier, economic and political performances are also acknowledged as vigorous factors that reflects the public level of trust towards the government (Huaxing Liu, 2015). In this case, public trust towards the government might decline if they are dissatisfied with the economic performance demonstrated by the government (Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000) while from the political perspective, the degree of corruption, the openness and responsiveness demonstrated by politicians and officials while carrying out their duties in delivering the necessary services to the public are among the features that could determine the public level of trust towards the government (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003; Rose & Pettersen, 1999).

Thus, for the purpose of increasing the level of trust in public administration, the implementation of e-government is said able to improve the citizen trust as it can increase the interaction with the public at large and increase bilateral communication through effective feedback (Tolbert & Mossberger, 2006; Carter & Belanger, 2005) as it increase the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and connectivity that can help to build public's trust especially in democratic institutions of government (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; West, 2004; Zhao, Scavarda & Waxin 2012).

### **3. Research Questions**

Is there a positive relationship between e-government implementation and the level of trust towards public administration?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to give a brief review about the linkage between e-government and trust towards the government administration.

## 5. Research Methods

The information of this conceptual paper is collected from the secondary sources such as journal and books. It includes studies done in the past and statistics from the other sources like Edelman.com.

## 6. Findings

It is interesting to realize that practicing new governmental style and encouraging citizen participation in electronic government or e-government can help to improve citizen's trust towards government and public administration (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012; Carter & Belanger, 2005). According to Bannister and Connolly (2011), not only will trust in government administration increase with the usage of e-government, but e-government usage may also increase public trust level in government administration. E-government can be described as the use of new information and communication technologies by public administration (OECD, 2002). It is the use of new technologies especially the internet by the government in offering its services to the citizen, businesses and other government agencies (Seifert & Relyea, 2004). Similarly, Wyld (2004), viewed at e-government as the use of electronic processes that enable citizens, government and businesses to communicate by interchanging information but also in running its activities and operations. Carter and Belanger (2005) and Tolbert & Mossberger (2006) proposed e-government as a new style of administration that could become a significant method to improve citizen's trust and perception towards the government. To support, Van de Walle, Roosbroek and Bouckaert (2008) suggested that the public would have less trust in the government if the government itself did not fully grasp the idea and implementation of e-government. Thus, trust in government and e-government seems to have a connection.

Previous studies have found that higher level of trust in government is strongly related to more intensive e-government service (Belanger & Carter 2008; Beldad, Van der Geest, de Jong, & Steehouder 2012; Furlong, 2005; Parent et al., 2005; Tolbert, & Mossberger 2006; Welch, Hinnant, & Moon 2005; West 2004). In this situation, Zhao et al., (2012) added that the employment of e-government would be able to bring positive changes in government administration such as increase the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and connectivity which can help build public trust towards the government especially in democratic institutions. Carter and Belanger (2005); Gilbert, Balestrini and Litteboy (2004); Parent, Vandebek and Gemino (2005); Welch, Hinnant and Moon (2005) also testified that higher levels of citizen trust has a strong connection with the intensive e-government usage. In other words, those who are satisfied with the e-government services tend to trust governments even more. Brown (1999) and Anderson (1999) considered e-government as a great instrument to increase government efficiency and service delivery which has a positive effect on trust in government (Harris & Goode, 2004; Hwang & Kim, 2007; Che-Wee, Tan, Benbasat & Cenfetelli, 2008; Belanche & Casalo, 2015). To shed some light, Table 1 illustrated a summary of previous studies highlighting the relationship between e-government and public trust towards the government.

**Table 01.** Summary of Previous Studies Highlighting the Relationship between E-Government and Public Trust Towards the Government

Article	Objective	Respondents	Variables	Findings
Rebuilding public trust in government administration through e-government actions. Belanche & Casalo (2015)	To know whether the e-government initiatives could be engaged to increase trust in Public Administration.	Data was collected via web survey from the Spaniards who use e-service provided by the Spanish government in year 2014.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. E-Service quality</li> <li>2. Public Administration Communication (PAC)</li> <li>3. Attitude of the citizen</li> <li>4. Trust in the public administration</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive relationship of e-service quality and trust in Public Administration.</li> <li>2. Public Administration Communication does not have a positive direct effect on citizen trust in the public administration.</li> <li>3. Public Administration Communication has a strong positive effect when they are consistent with citizen's attitude toward e-government. Thus this result proposes that public administration messages promoting e-government is a great indication to build trust for those citizens with a favourable attitude toward e-government.</li> </ol>
Trust and risk in e-government adoption Belanger & Carter (2008)	To analyse the impact of trust and risk perceptions on individual's willingness to use e-government services.	Surveys were distributed to 243 citizens from different setting which are community concert and undergraduate class at south-eastern university in United States.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Web use intention</li> <li>2. Trust of the Internet</li> <li>3. Trust of the government</li> <li>4. Disposition to trust</li> <li>5. Perceived risk</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trust of the internet and trust of the government influence positively the intention to use.</li> <li>2. Disposition to trust influence positively, the trust of the Internet and trust of the government.</li> <li>3. Trust of the government lessens the perceived risk of using e-government services.</li> <li>4. Higher levels of perceived risk did not cut intention to use.</li> <li>5. Trust of the Internet did not affect risk perceptions.</li> </ol>
A cue or two and I'll trust you: Determinants of trust in government organizations in terms of their processing and usage of citizens personal information disclosed online. Beldad, van der Geest, de Jong & Steehouder (2011)	To identify the determinants of people's trust in government organizations in term of their processing and usage of citizens' personal data.	Online survey were carried-out on 2500 respondents residing in one of the municipalities in the Netherlands. However, a total of 1156 respondents completed the survey.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Propensity to trust</li> <li>2. Organizational reputation</li> <li>3. Quality of previous online transaction experience</li> <li>4. Perceived website quality</li> <li>5. Perceived website security</li> <li>6. Confidence in privacy statement</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Result exposed that Internet user's confidence in online privacy statements is vital determinant of their trust in governments in term of how they use and process citizen's personal data.</li> <li>2. The quality of their previous online government transactions and the positive reputation of government organizations play as a key roles in shaping their trust in government organization for respondents who previously have an experience with e-government.</li> <li>3. The quality of a government website did not influence trust in government organization in term of how they process and use citizen personal data.</li> </ol>
The utilization of e-government services: citizen trust, innovation and acceptance factors. Carter & Belanger (2005)	To formulate a parsimonious and comprehensive model of factors that influence citizen adoption of e-government initiatives.	A set of questionnaires were circulated to 106 citizens between the ages of 14 to 83 years old at a community concert.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Perceived Usefulness</li> <li>2. Perceived ease of use</li> <li>3. Image</li> <li>4. Relative Advantage</li> <li>5. Compatibility</li> <li>6. Trust of Internet</li> <li>7. Trust of state government</li> <li>8. Use intentions.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If the service is easy to use, the citizen intentions to use a state e-government service will increase.</li> <li>2. There is an association between high levels of perceived compatibility and intention to adopt state e-government initiatives.</li> <li>3. There is a positive linkage between higher levels of perceived trustworthiness and citizens' intention to use a state e-government service.</li> <li>4. Higher levels of perceived image do not directly affect citizens' intention to use state government services online.</li> <li>5. Higher levels of perceived relative advantage do not directly affect</li> </ol>

				citizen intention to use state e-government services.
Building citizen trust through e-government Parent, Vandebeek & Gemino (2005).	To identify which online initiatives have succeeded in increasing trust and external political efficacy in voters.	Internet-based survey was conducted to 199 Canadian voters from 5 May to 10 June, 2003.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal political self-efficacy</li> <li>2. Service quality</li> <li>3. External political self-efficacy</li> <li>4. Political trust</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual's political efficacy influences the level of trust in government.</li> <li>2. Individual's internal political efficacy effect the external political self-efficacy.</li> <li>3. The quality of internet operation is influenced the citizen trust toward the government.</li> <li>4. The quality of the internet transaction did not influence the individual's external political efficacy.</li> </ol>
Linking Citizen Satisfaction with e-government and Trust in Government Welch, Hinnant & Moon (2005)	To investigate how internet use, citizen satisfaction with e-government and citizen trust in government are interrelated.	The data was collected between 12 and 19 November 2001 from 806 adults including an over sample of 155 Internet users through telephone by a random dialled number. A survey data from Council of Excellence in Government in US were obtained prior random dialled number take place.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trust in government</li> <li>2. Government web site use</li> <li>3. Overall e-government satisfaction</li> <li>4. Government web site satisfaction</li> <li>5. Internet use</li> <li>6. Satisfaction with government</li> <li>7. Transaction satisfaction</li> <li>8. Transparency satisfaction</li> <li>9. Interactivity satisfaction</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level of Internet use is strongly related with the government Web site use.</li> <li>2. Government Web site use is positively linked with e-government satisfaction and that e-government satisfaction is positively associated with trust in government.</li> <li>3. Citizen generally satisfied with the provision of information electronically although dissatisfaction exists on the transaction and interactivity of Web sites.</li> </ol>

## 7. Conclusion

Public trust towards government is a central element in ensuring the government's stability in politics. Although trust can be defined differently by many scholars encompassing various vital elements, it is necessary for the government to be trusted by their citizens, especially for countries that practice a democratic system. Gaining trust from their citizens is important in order to ensure that the government is able to implement the planned agendas and programme successfully. With the absence of trust, government could foresee public resistance in terms of rebels, demonstrations and alike. In worse cases, lack of trust might also lead the country to face unexpected occasion such as etc.

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