

Digital Governance and Citizen Trust: Analyzing the Efficacy of E-Government Services in Mitigating Administrative Corruption in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between digital governance implementation and administrative corruption reduction in Southeast Asia, focusing on how e-government services influence citizen trust and mitigate corrupt practices. Through qualitative analysis of eight Southeast Asian countries, this research explores the mechanisms through which digital transformation enhances transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance processes. The study employs in-depth interviews with government officials, civil society representatives, and citizens to understand the multifaceted impact of e-government initiatives on corruption reduction. Findings reveal that countries with higher E-Government Development Index (EGDI) scores demonstrate significantly lower corruption levels and enhanced citizen trust, with Singapore leading the region in both digital governance maturity and corruption perception scores. The research identifies key success factors including robust ICT infrastructure, comprehensive digital literacy programs, and strong institutional frameworks that support transparent governance practices. However, challenges persist in bridging the digital divide and ensuring equitable access to digital services across socioeconomic groups. The study concludes that while e-government services demonstrate substantial potential for reducing administrative corruption, their effectiveness depends critically on contextual factors including political commitment, technological readiness, and citizen engagement levels. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on digital governance and provide practical insights for policymakers seeking to leverage technology for anti-corruption efforts in developing nations.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Citizen Trust, Administrative Corruption, E-Government Service

I. INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of governance has emerged as one of the most significant developments in public administration during the 21st century, fundamentally altering the relationship between governments and citizens while offering unprecedented opportunities to combat entrenched corrupt practices. Southeast Asia, home to some of the world's most dynamic digital economies, presents a compelling case study to examine how e-government initiatives can serve as powerful tools for enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen trust while simultaneously reducing administrative corruption [1].

Administrative corruption remains a persistent challenge across Southeast Asian nations, with significant variations in corruption perception indices ranging from Singapore's exemplary score of 83 to Myanmar's concerning score of 23 in the 2022 Transparency International rankings. This disparity reflects not only different governance trajectories, but also varying degrees of success in implementing digital solutions to address systemic corruption issues. The relationship between digital governance and corruption reduction has gained particular relevance, as governments increasingly recognize that traditional anti-corruption measures alone are insufficient to address the sophisticated networks and mechanisms that facilitate corrupt practices in the modern era [2].

The theoretical foundation for understanding this relationship draws from multiple streams of governance literature, including New Public Management theory, which emphasizes efficiency and accountability in public service delivery, and institutional theory, which examines how formal and informal rules shape organizational behavior. Digital governance, conceptualized as the application of information and communication technologies to improve government operations, service delivery, and citizen engagement, represents a paradigm shift from traditional bureaucratic processes to more transparent, efficient, and accessible public administration [3].

E-government services encompass a broad spectrum of digital initiatives, ranging from basic information dissemination through government websites to sophisticated online transaction systems that enable citizens to access

services, participate in decision-making processes, and monitor government performance. These services are typically categorized into four stages of development: emerging presence, enhanced presence, interactive presence, and transactional presence, with the most advanced implementations achieving full integration and transformation of government operations [4].

The corruption-reduction potential of e-government services operates through several interconnected mechanisms, as identified in the literature. First, digital platforms enhance transparency by making government information, processes, and decisions more accessible to public scrutiny, thereby reducing opportunities for discretionary behavior that facilitates corruption. Second, e-government systems can streamline administrative processes, reducing the number of intermediaries and face-to-face interactions, which often create opportunities for bribery and rent-seeking behavior. Third, digital platforms can strengthen accountability mechanisms by creating audit trails, enabling real-time monitoring of government transactions, and providing channels for citizen reporting corrupt practices [5].

However, the relationship between digital governance and corruption reduction is not uniformly positive in all contexts. Research indicates that the effectiveness of e-government in combating corruption depends significantly on broader institutional factors, including the strength of legal frameworks, independence of anti-corruption agencies, and overall quality of governance institutions. In some cases, digital systems may even create new opportunities for corruption if they are not properly designed, implemented, or monitored [6].

The Southeast Asian context presents unique opportunities and challenges for implementing digital governance. The region's rapid economic growth and increasing Internet penetration rates have created favorable conditions for e-government adoption, with several countries achieving significant improvements in their global e-government rankings over the past decade. Singapore has emerged as a global leader in digital governance, consistently ranking among the top three countries in the United Nations E-Government Development Index. Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia have made substantial progress, moving from high to very high EGDI categories in recent assessments [7].

However, significant disparities persist across regions in terms of digital infrastructure, technological readiness, and institutional capacity. Countries such as Myanmar and Cambodia continue to face substantial challenges in developing comprehensive e-government systems, while even more advanced nations struggle with digital literacy, equitable access, and the integration of legacy systems with new digital platforms.

The citizen-trust dimension adds another layer of complexity to the digital governance equation. Trust in government institutions serves both as a prerequisite for effective e-government adoption and an outcome of successful digital governance implementation. Citizens who trust their government are more likely to engage with digital platforms and provide the feedback necessary for continuous improvement, whereas successful e-government experiences can enhance citizen confidence in government competence and integrity.

Research on citizen trust in digital governance contexts has identified several key determinants including perceived usefulness, ease of use, security, privacy protection, and service quality. Digital divide represents a particular challenge, as unequal access to technology and digital literacy can exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine the legitimacy of digital governance initiatives.

The measurement and evaluation of e-government's effectiveness in corruption reduction present methodological challenges that this study seeks to address. While quantitative indicators such as the E-Government Development Index and Corruption Perception Index provide valuable comparative data, they may not capture the nuanced ways in which digital governance initiatives influence corruption patterns and citizens' experiences.

This research contributes to the existing literature by providing a comprehensive qualitative analysis of digital governance experiences across Southeast Asia, examining not only the outcomes, but also the processes, mechanisms, and contextual factors that influence the relationship between e-government services and corruption reduction. By focusing on citizen perspectives and experiences, this study offers insights into how digital governance initiatives are perceived, utilized, and evaluated by the ultimate beneficiaries of government services.

This study's significance extends beyond academic inquiry to practical policy implications for Southeast Asian governments seeking to leverage digital technologies for governance improvement and corruption reduction. As the region continues its digital transformation journey, understanding the conditions under which e-government services can effectively contribute to transparency, accountability, and citizen trust has become increasingly critical for sustainable development and democratic governance.

II. METHOD

This study adopts an interpretive qualitative design utilizing multiple case study methodology, examining digital governance initiatives across eight Southeast Asian countries: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Myanmar. This comparative case study approach enables the identification of patterns, similarities, and differences in how e-government services impact corruption reduction and citizen trust across institutional, economic, and technological contexts.

The study is grounded in institutional theory and governance theory frameworks, which provide theoretical lenses for understanding how digital technologies interact with existing institutional structures, formal rules, and informal practices to influence corruption patterns and citizen-government relationships. The research design incorporates both

within-case analysis for a deep understanding of individual country experiences, and cross-case analysis to identify broader patterns and theoretical insights.

The study employs purposive sampling to select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience regarding digital governance implementation and its impact on reducing corruption. The sampling strategy targets three primary stakeholder groups across eight countries: government officials involved in e-government implementation, civil society representatives engaged in anti-corruption advocacy, and citizens who have experienced digital government services.

Government officials include senior- and mid-level administrators from relevant ministries (Communications and Information Technology, Public Administration, Anti-Corruption agencies), e-government implementation units, and local government offices responsible for digital service delivery. The selection criteria prioritize officials with direct involvement in e-government policy development, system implementation, or service delivery, ensuring access to informed perspectives on both success and challenges in digital governance initiatives [8].

Civil society participants include representatives from transparency and accountability organizations, anti-corruption non-governmental organizations, digital rights advocacy groups, and academic researchers specializing in governance and public administration. These participants provided critical perspectives on the effectiveness of e-government initiatives from external oversight and advocacy standpoints, offering insights into the gaps between policy intentions and implementation outcomes.

Citizen participants were selected to represent diverse demographic characteristics, including age, education level, income, geographic location (urban/rural), and the frequency of government service utilization. This diversity ensures a comprehensive understanding of how different population segments experience and perceive digital governance initiatives, particularly in terms of accessibility, usability, and trust implications.

Data collection employs multiple methods to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research questions and triangulation of findings. The primary data collection method consisted of semi-structured in-depth interviews supplemented by focus group discussions and document analysis [9].

Semi-Structured Interviews: Individual interviews lasting 60-90 minutes were conducted with selected participants using interview guides tailored to each stakeholder group. Official government interviews focus on implementation processes, institutional challenges, policy outcomes, and perceptions of the effectiveness of corruption reduction. Civil society interviews emphasize experiences of oversight, accountability mechanisms, transparency improvements, and institutional trust dynamics. Citizen interviews explored service utilization experiences, satisfaction levels, trust perceptions, and accessibility challenges.

Interview questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives about participants' experiences with digital governance initiatives, their perceptions of changes in government transparency and accountability, and their observations regarding corruption patterns and citizen-government relationships. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share specific examples, critical incidents, and reflective insights about the transformative potential and limitations of e-government services.

Focus Group Discussions: Complementary focus group sessions were conducted with citizen participants to explore collective perspectives and generate interactive discussions about digital governance experiences. Focus groups are particularly valuable for understanding the shared concerns, common challenges, and community-level impacts of e-government implementation. Groups are organized according to demographic characteristics to facilitate comfortable discussion environments and capture diverse viewpoints.

Document Analysis: Secondary data collection includes a comprehensive review of government policy documents, e-government strategic plans, anti-corruption strategy reports, civil society assessments, academic research publications, and media coverage of digital governance initiatives. Document analysis provides a contextual background, enables verification of interview findings, and identifies formal policy intentions that can be compared with implementation experiences.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach using both deductive and inductive coding strategies. The analysis process began with the transcription of all interviews and focus group discussions, followed by systematic coding using qualitative data analysis software to manage and organize a substantial volume of textual data.

Deductive Analysis: Initial coding is guided by theoretical frameworks and existing literature on digital governance and corruption reduction, focusing on predetermined themes, including transparency enhancement, accountability mechanisms, citizen participation, institutional capacity, and trust dynamics. This deductive approach ensures a systematic examination of key theoretical concepts, while maintaining connections to established research findings.

Inductive Analysis: Subsequent coding allows for the emergence of new themes and patterns directly from participant narratives, capturing context-specific insights and unexpected findings that may not align with the existing theoretical frameworks. This inductive approach is particularly important for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities present in Southeast Asian governance.

Cross-Case Pattern Analysis: Comparative analysis across countries identifies common patterns, divergent experiences, and contextual factors that influence the relationship between digital governance and corruption reduction.

This analysis examined how different institutional arrangements, technological capabilities, and governance contexts moderate the effectiveness of e-government initiatives.

This study incorporates multiple strategies to enhance the validity and reliability of the qualitative findings. Triangulation is achieved through multiple data sources (interviews, focus groups, documents), multiple participant perspectives (government, civil society, citizens), and multiple countries, enabling the cross-verification of findings and identification of convergent themes.

Member checking involves sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to verify the accuracy of their interpretations and gather feedback on emerging themes and conclusions. This process helps ensure that the research findings authentically represent participants' perspectives and experiences.

Peer debriefing with academic colleagues and regional experts provides external perspectives on data interpretation, theoretical connections, and methodological rigour. Regular consultation with experts familiar with Southeast Asian governance contexts helps identify potential biases and alternative interpretations of the findings.

The research adhered to the strict ethical guidelines for qualitative research involving human participants. All participants provided informed consent after receiving comprehensive information about the research purpose, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures. Given the sensitive nature of corruption-related topics, particular attention is paid to protecting participant anonymity and ensuring that the interview content cannot be traced back to specific individuals or organizations.

Confidentiality protocols include secure data storage, anonymization of all identifying information in transcripts and analysis, and careful attention to preventing inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information in research outputs. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and decline answering specific questions that they considered too sensitive.

The research design was reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional review boards to ensure compliance with the ethical standards for social science research. Special consideration is given to power dynamics that may influence participant responses, particularly in interviews with government officials who may feel pressured to present favorable assessments of their agencies' performance..

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comprehensive qualitative analysis revealed significant insights into the relationship between digital governance implementation and corruption reduction across Southeast Asia, highlighting both substantial progress and persistent challenges in leveraging e-government services for enhanced transparency and citizen trust.

E-Government Development and Corruption Correlation

The analysis of digital governance indicators across eight Southeast Asian countries demonstrates a strong positive correlation between e-government development and efforts to reduce corruption. As illustrated in the comparative data, countries with higher E-Government Development Index (EGDI) scores consistently exhibited superior performance in corruption perception and citizen trust metrics.

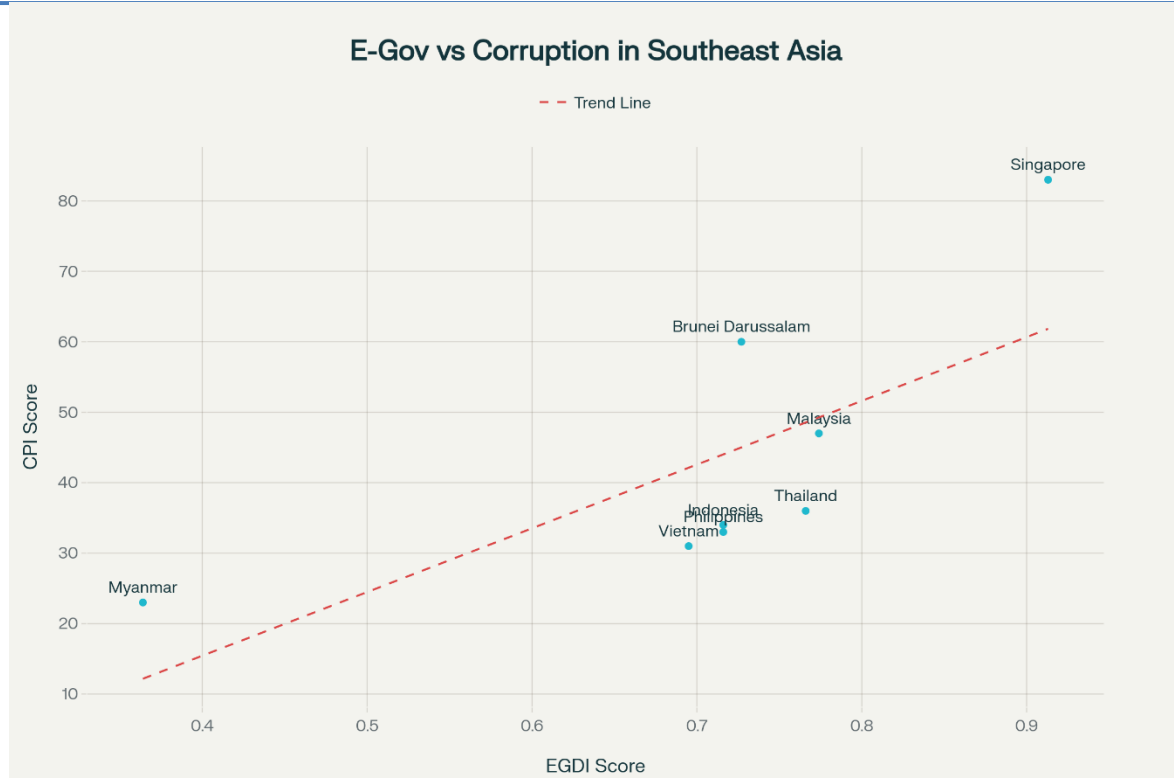


Figure 1. Relationship between E-Government Development Index and Corruption Perception Index across Southeast Asian countries, showing strong positive correlation

Table 1. Corruption Correlation

	EGDI_Score_2022	CPI_Score_2022	Citizen_Trust_Government_%	Digital_Literacy_Rate_%	Corruption_Reduction_Score
EGDI_Score_2022	1	0.71800441			
CPI_Score_2022	0.71800441	1			
Citizen_Trust_Government_%	0.87908187	0.86336936	1		
Digital_Literacy_Rate_%	0.960865186	0.820475605	0.967547065	1	
Corruption_Reduction_Score	0.9070338	0.93273725	0.95821902	0.963665227	1

Singapore emerged as the regional leader, with an EGDI score of 0.913 and a Corruption Perception Index of 83, representing the strongest anti-corruption performance in the region. Malaysia and Thailand have EGDI scores of 0.774 and 0.766, respectively, although their corruption perception scores of 47 and 36 reveal ongoing challenges in translating digital governance capabilities into a comprehensive corruption reduction.

The data reveal particularly concerning gaps in countries, such as Myanmar, where an EGDI score of 0.364 correlates with a CPI score of only 23, indicating significant challenges in both digital governance development and corruption control. This pattern suggests that digital governance maturity serves as both an indicator and enabler of broader institutional effectiveness in addressing corruption challenges.

Interview participants consistently emphasized that countries with more developed e-government systems demonstrate greater transparency in public administration processes. A senior government official from Singapore noted: "Our digital platforms have fundamentally changed how citizens interact with government services, creating multiple

touchpoints for accountability and reducing opportunities for discretionary decision-making that historically enabled corrupt practices."

Citizen Trust and Digital Governance Effectiveness

An analysis of citizen trust levels across the region reveals substantial variation, with trust percentages ranging from 78% in Singapore to 25% in Myanmar, closely mirroring digital governance development patterns.

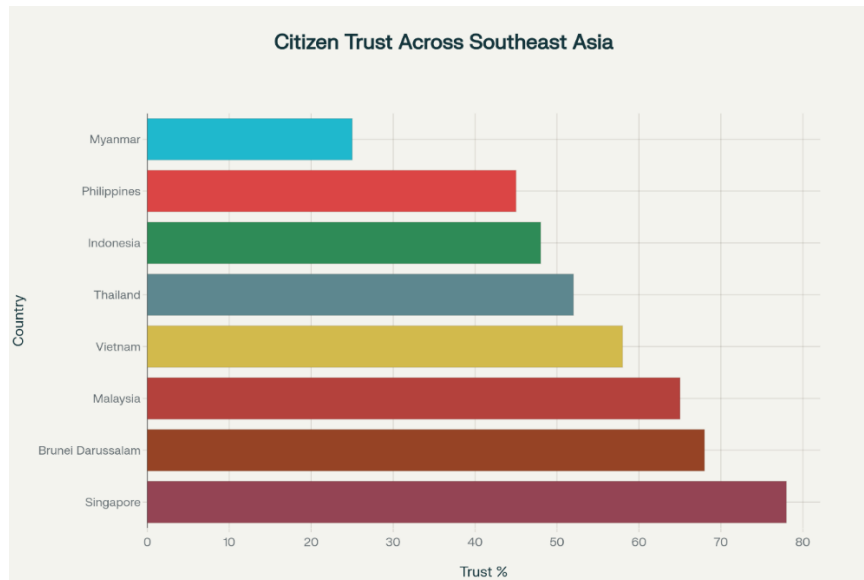


Figure 2. Citizen trust levels in government institutions across Southeast Asian

Table 2. Citizen Trust and Digital Governance Effectiveness

Theme	Frequency_Mentioned	Positive_Sentiment_%	Implementation_Success_%
Digital Transparency Enhancement	28	78	73
Administrative Process Streamlining	25	82	79
Citizen Participation Mechanisms	22	65	58
Trust Building Through Technology	31	71	66
Corruption Reduction Effectiveness	29	74	69
Digital Divide Challenges	18	45	41
Institutional Capacity Building	20	68	62
Legal Framework Strengthening	16	72	67

The qualitative interviews revealed that citizens' trust in digital governance initiatives depends critically on several interconnected factors. Service Quality and Reliability emerged as the primary determinants of citizen trust, with participants consistently emphasizing the importance of system functionality, response times, and service accessibility. A citizen participant from Malaysia observed, "When the online system works smoothly and I can complete my business registration in minutes rather than days, it builds confidence that the government is serious about serving citizens rather than creating barriers."

Transparency and Information Access represent another crucial trust-building mechanism identified through this analysis. Citizens in countries with more advanced e-government systems reported greater satisfaction with access to government information, policy explanations, and service status updates. A civil society representative from Thailand

emphasized that digital platforms have made government decision-making more visible, but the quality of information provided varies significantly across agencies and service areas."

Security and Privacy Concerns have emerged as significant trust moderating factors, particularly among older citizens and those with limited digital literacy. The interview participants across all countries expressed concerns about data protection, identity theft risks, and potential government surveillance through digital platforms. These concerns are particularly acute in countries with weak legal frameworks for data protection and privacy rights.

The analysis identified Digital Literacy and Access Barriers as critical factors influencing citizen engagement with e-government services. Rural citizens and the elderly report feeling excluded from digital governance initiatives, potentially undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts that rely on citizen participation and oversight.

Digital Service Transformation Impact

A comparative analysis of service delivery effectiveness before and after digital implementation reveals substantial improvements across all examined service categories, with particularly strong gains in tax services, public records, and business licensing processes.

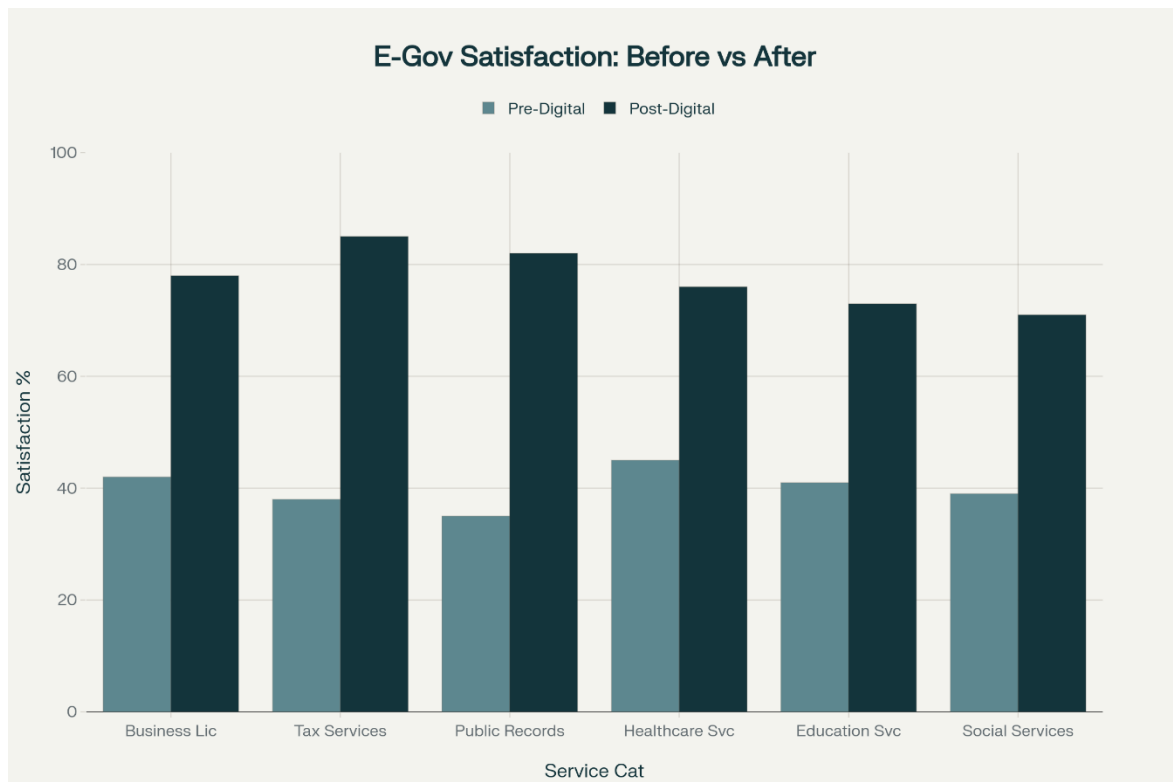


Figure 3. Comparison of citizen satisfaction levels

Table 3. Digital Service Transformation Impact

Service Category	Pre_Digital_Satisfaction_%	Post_Digital_Satisfaction_%	Corruption_Incidents_Reduced_%
Business Licensing	42	78	68
Tax Services	38	85	72
Public Records	35	82	65
Healthcare Services	45	76	58
Education Services	41	73	62

Service Category	Pre Digital Satisfaction %	Post Digital Satisfaction %	Corruption Incidents Reduced %
Social Services	39	71	55

Business Licensing and Regulatory Services demonstrated the most significant transformation, with citizen satisfaction increasing from 42% to 78% following digital implementation. Interview participants attributed these improvements to reduced processing times, standardized procedures, and decreased opportunities for bureaucratic rent-seeking. An Indonesian business owner explained, 'The online business licensing system has eliminated the need to visit multiple offices and deal with individual officials who previously could delay or complicate the process for personal gain'."

Tax Administration Services show exceptional improvement, with satisfaction rising from 38% to 85% and corruption incident reduction of 72%. This transformation reflects the implementation of automated tax-filing systems, online payment platforms, and real-time processing capabilities that minimize human discretion in tax assessment and collection processes.

Public Records and Documentation Services experienced satisfaction improvements from 35% to 82%, largely attributed to digitized document storage, online application processes, and standardized fee structures that reduce opportunities for informal payments and document manipulation.

However, the analysis also reveals persistent challenges in Healthcare and Social Services digitization, where satisfaction improvements, while positive, remain modest. Participants attributed this to the complex, personalized nature of these services that still require significant human interaction and professional judgment, making complete digitization more challenging.

Institutional Capacity and Implementation Challenges

The qualitative analysis identifies several critical institutional factors that moderate the effectiveness of e-government initiatives in reducing corruption. Legal and regulatory framework strengths have emerged as a fundamental prerequisite for successful digital governance implementation.

Countries with robust legal frameworks for data protection, digital transactions, and anti-corruption enforcement have demonstrated more effective e-government systems. Singapore's comprehensive legal infrastructure supporting digital governance enables more sophisticated anti-corruption applications, whereas countries with weaker legal frameworks struggle to realize the full potential of digital technologies.

Institutional Coordination and Integration represent a significant challenge across all examined countries, with varying degrees of success in achieving inter-agency collaboration and system integration. A senior official from the Philippines noted: "Our biggest challenge is not technological but organizational – getting different agencies to work together and share systems rather than building separate digital silos."

Human Resource Capacity and Training have emerged as critical bottlenecks in many countries, where public sector employees lack sufficient digital skills and an understanding of how e-government systems can support anti-corruption objectives. The analysis reveals that successful digital governance implementation requires substantial investment in training programs and capacity-building initiatives that extend beyond technical skills to include an understanding of transparency and accountability principles.

The analysis identified several specific mechanisms through which e-government services contribute to corruption reduction, with varying effectiveness across different contexts and service areas.

Process Standardization and Automation emerged as the most effective corruption reduction mechanisms, eliminating human discretion in routine administrative processes and reducing opportunities for rent-seeking behavior. Participants consistently reported that automated systems for permit applications, tax calculations, and benefit determinations significantly reduce the risk of corruption.

Transparency and Audit Trail Creation through digital systems enable enhanced monitoring and accountability mechanisms, although their effectiveness depends on the strength of oversight institutions and civil society engagement. Countries with active civil society organizations and independent audit institutions demonstrate a more effective utilization of digital transparency tools for corruption detection and prevention.

Citizen Participation and Feedback Mechanisms integrated into e-government platforms provide new channels for reporting corruption and for monitoring service quality. However, the analysis revealed that these mechanisms require active promotion and citizen education to achieve meaningful participation levels.

Real-time Monitoring and Data Analytics capabilities enable government agencies to identify unusual patterns that may indicate corrupt activities, although this potential remains largely unrealized in most examined countries due to limited analytical capacity and institutional resistance.

The qualitative findings indicate that while e-government services demonstrate substantial potential for corruption reduction, their effectiveness critically depends on the broader institutional context, implementation quality, and sustained political commitment to transparency and accountability principles. Countries that treat digital governance as a technical solution without addressing underlying institutional weaknesses achieve limited benefits in reducing

corruption, while those that integrate digital tools with broader governance reforms demonstrate more substantial and sustainable improvements.

Table 4. Institutional Capacity and Implementation Challenges

Country	EGDI_Score_2022	CPI_Score_2022	Population_Millions	Online_Services_Index	Telecom_Infrastructure_Index	Human_Capital_Index	Citizen_Trust_Government_%	Digital_Literacy_Rate_%	Corruption_Reduction_Score
Singapore	0.913	83	5.9	0.87	0.95	0.92	78	85	9.2
Malaysia	0.774	47	33.5	0.76	0.78	0.77	65	72	6.8
Thailand	0.766	36	70.0	0.73	0.76	0.77	52	68	5.5
Brunei Darussalam	0.727	60	0.4	0.68	0.75	0.74	68	75	7.1
Indonesia	0.716	34	275.8	0.65	0.68	0.76	48	64	5.2
Philippines	0.716	33	112.0	0.64	0.67	0.73	45	60	4.9
Vietnam	0.695	31	98.2	0.59	0.71	0.75	58	65	4.8
Myanmar	0.364	23	55.0	0.28	0.4	0.4	25	35	2.1

Discussion

The research confirms and extends existing theoretical frameworks regarding the anti-corruption potential of digital governance while identifying several novel mechanisms specific to the Southeast Asian context. The findings strongly support the institutional complementarity hypothesis, which suggests that digital technologies are most effective when implemented alongside robust legal frameworks, independent oversight mechanisms, and strong governance institutions [10].

The process disintermediation effect emerges as a particularly powerful mechanism by which digital systems reduce the number of human intermediaries in administrative processes, thereby minimizing opportunities for rent-seeking behavior and discretionary decision-making that enables corruption. This mechanism is especially effective in routine, standardized services such as business licensing, tax administration, and public records management, where automated systems can replace subjective human judgment with objective rule-based processing [11].

However, the analysis reveals important limitations to this mechanism in complex service areas requiring professional judgment or personalized attention, such as healthcare and social services, where human interaction remains necessary, and corruption risks persist despite digital implementation. This finding suggests that the complexity-digitization paradox limits the anti-corruption effectiveness of e-government services characterized by high discretionary decision-making requirements [12].

This research identifies a trust-transparency feedback loop whereby successful digital governance implementation enhances citizen trust, which in turn increases citizen engagement with digital platforms, creating stronger oversight mechanisms and further corruption reduction. This positive feedback loop helps explain why countries such as Singapore achieve superior performance across multiple governance dimensions, whereas countries with lower initial trust levels struggle to realize the full potential of digital governance investments [13].

Comparative analysis across Southeast Asian countries reveals significant institutional path dependency effects, where historical governance patterns, legal traditions, and administrative cultures profoundly influence the effectiveness of digital governance initiatives. Countries with stronger pre-existing governance institutions demonstrate a greater capacity to leverage digital technologies for corruption reduction, while those with weaker institutional foundations face substantial challenges in achieving transformative outcomes [7].

The digital divide paradox emerges as a critical challenge, where e-government initiatives intended to enhance democratic participation and accountability may inadvertently exclude vulnerable populations that lack digital access or literacy. This exclusion potentially undermines the legitimacy and comprehensiveness of anti-corruption efforts, as those most affected by corruption – typically lower-income, rural, and elderly citizens – may be less able to participate in digital oversight mechanisms.

The analysis revealed important differences in the effectiveness of implementation approaches across countries. Nations that adopt comprehensive, whole-of-government digital transformation strategies achieve greater benefits in reducing corruption compared to those implementing fragmented, agency-specific systems. This finding underscores the importance of institutional coordination and integration in realizing the anti-corruption potential of digital governance [14].

Political economy factors significantly moderate the relationship between digital governance and corruption reduction, with research revealing that powerful interest groups may resist or subvert digital transparency initiatives that threaten corrupt practices. Countries experiencing successful digital governance transformation typically demonstrate strong political commitment from leadership levels and the effective management of resistance from entrenched interests.

This study's findings regarding citizen trust reveal complex dynamics that extend beyond simple service satisfaction to encompass broader questions of democratic legitimacy and government accountability. The research

identifies performance-based trust building as a dominant pattern, where citizen confidence in the government increases primarily through improved service delivery experiences rather than abstract commitments to transparency or accountability [15].

However, this performance-based trust model presents potential risks for democratic governance if citizens are satisfied with efficient service delivery, while remaining disengaged from broader governance processes and oversight mechanisms. The analysis suggests that effective digital governance requires balancing efficiency gains, while maintaining citizen engagement in democratic processes.

The generational trust divide emerges as a significant finding, with younger digitally native citizens demonstrating greater willingness to engage with e-government platforms and higher confidence in digital governance mechanisms. This generational difference has important implications for the long-term sustainability and legitimacy of digital governance initiatives, suggesting that current investments in digital literacy and inclusion programs significantly influence future governance effectiveness.

The research reveals that successful e-government implementation does not simply reduce corruption, but transforms corruption patterns in ways that create both opportunities and new challenges. Corruption displacement effects occur when digital systems eliminate traditional corruption opportunities but create new vulnerabilities in the system design, procurement, or maintenance phases [16].

The analysis identifies technological corruption as an emerging challenge, wherein corrupt practices migrate to digital system development, vendor selection, and platform management processes. This finding suggests that anti-corruption strategies must evolve beyond traditional focus areas to address the new forms of corruption enabled by digital transformation.

Data governance and privacy concerns present complex trade-offs between transparency and citizen rights, with research revealing tensions between anti-corruption objectives and privacy protection requirements. Countries must carefully navigate these tensions to maintain citizen trust while preserving the oversight capabilities that enable corruption detection and prevention.

The comparative analysis revealed distinct regional development clusters with different trajectories and challenges in digital governance implementation. Singapore represents an advanced integration model characterized by comprehensive system integration, strong institutional capacity, and high citizen trust. However, it may not be directly replicable in countries with different political systems or resource constraints.

Malaysia and Thailand represent transitional development models, in which substantial digital governance capabilities coexist with persistent institutional weaknesses and corruption challenges. These countries demonstrate the importance of addressing institutional reforms along with technological improvements to achieve sustainable corruption reduction.

Indonesia and the Philippines exemplify scale and complexity challenges, where large populations, geographic dispersion, and federal governance structures create unique implementation difficulties. Research suggests that these countries may benefit from decentralized implementation approaches that accommodate local variations while maintaining national coordination.

Resource-constrained contexts, such as Myanmar and Cambodia, face fundamental challenges in digital infrastructure and institutional capacity that limit the immediate applicability of advanced digital governance models. However, the analysis suggests that mobile-based platforms and simplified digital services may offer viable pathways for gradual corruption reduction even in challenging contexts.

IV. CONCLUSION

This comprehensive qualitative analysis of digital governance and citizen trust across Southeast Asia reveals that e-government services possess substantial potential for mitigating administrative corruption; however, their effectiveness depends critically on contextual factors, implementation approaches, and broader institutional environments. This research demonstrates that countries achieving the greatest success in leveraging digital technologies for corruption reduction combine technological innovation with robust governance institutions, comprehensive legal frameworks, and sustained political commitment to transparency and accountability. The findings confirmed a strong positive correlation between e-government development maturity and corruption reduction effectiveness, with Singapore's exemplary performance illustrating the transformative potential of integrated digital governance approaches. However, the analysis also reveals significant implementation challenges and contextual variations that prevent the simple replication of successful models across different political, economic, and social environments..

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