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The Role of Trust and The Digital Divide: A Moderated Mediation Model for Sustainable E-Government

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ABSTRACT

E-government initiatives have transformed the dynamic between policymakers, the government, and citizens, becoming a vital component in safeguarding the resilience of democracy through sustainable and effective governance. Despite the prevalent digital divide and the extensive exploration of its various facets in the existing literature and studies, limited attention has been given to a holistic assessment of e-government service quality and its empirical relationships. This article explores the correlation between e-government service quality and intention of use with the aim of formulating and validating a moderated mediation model. Emphasizing the perspective of the digital divide, the study underscores the importance of sustaining future democracies. The research findings reveal that trust serves as a complete mediator in the relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intention. Moreover, the study indicates that the digital divide, along with sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, and education, can attenuate the impact of e-government service quality on behavioral intention. These insights are of practical significance for both academics and policymakers, providing valuable guidance for enhancing e-government initiatives and fostering democratic sustainability.

Keywords: Digital Divide, Sustainable E-Government, Mediation Model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990s, in addition to tangible services, governments have increasingly encountered and adopted intangible services that meet user needs in a democracy [1]. Considerable financial resources have been allocated by many governments to electronic government (e-government) services. However, despite these government efforts, the real outcomes are relatively minor. In developing countries, for example, political, social, and economic barriers frequently prevent or limit access to such benefits [2]. Such results were unexpected, given that e-governance initially offered only potential benefits since it was believed that the implementation of e-government could promote administrative reforms in which information technologies could reduce costs, enhance service quality, and maximize the efficacy of government policies [3]. Pérez-Morote emphasized that despite the benefits associated with e-government, specific segments of the public keep rejecting or even worrying about e-government applications [4]. For instance, the service objectives outlined in an original framework may not fully apply in a web-enabled environment [5], causing utilization issues [6]. In addition, Al-Hujran et al. contended that failed e-government projects remain a tangible occurrence, ranging from partial failures to complete rejections [7]. These failures negatively affect end-user trust as they often stem from a failure to address real business needs. Hence, trust becomes an essential aspect of the success of e-government strategies because it motivates users or citizens who have encountered these systems to advocate for them to their peers. Some scholars argue that in order to successfully

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implement e-government services, governments must comprehend the factors that affect the trust that citizens and other government agencies have in e-government [8].

Moreover, although the ultimate success of e-government depends on the willingness and trust of citizens to use it [9], the procedure by which this occurs is also greatly impacted by the quality of the e-government service, given the complexity of trust. As the main barrier to e-government adoption, the current literature focuses on the impacts of technological technical aspects and government reputation on citizens' trust during the adoption phase [10]. Limited attention has been devoted to the role of trust and the digital divide in e-government. Consequently, since service quality is another potential influence on behavioral intention, it is also critical to investigate the relationship between these factors.

To foster a better understanding of the ways in which trust acts as a mediator, further research could be conducted to identify potential factors that may interact to improve behavioral intention, as well as ascertain the resource allocation priorities that are influenced by e-government service quality. In this paper, the following research questions (RQs) were addressed:

RQ1: How does the service quality of e-government affect behavioral intention?
RQ2: How does trust mediate the relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intention?
RQ3: What potential factors would weaken the positive direct connection between e-government service quality and behavioral intention?

1.1 Theoretical Background

A better performance in service quality in the e-government field leads to cost-effective services and a competitive advantage. E-government is supported by four main pillars: people, processes, technology, and resources [11]. As the World Bank Group noted, e-government efforts serve various purposes, including increased connections with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, and more efficient government management [12]. In the last decade, more government sectors have introduced e-services that have a growing impact on the lives of the general public. The extent of information technology, the accessibility of internet services [13], and the rapid expansion of technological innovation have caused a significant revolution [14] in the way users engage with and contribute to government policy and decision-making procedures. While the trend is encouraging, overall e-government development has not gained major momentum in the last two years [15]. To ensure the development of e-government and the positive behavioral intentions of users, it is essential to conduct a review of potential factors that influence service quality, along with the realignment of service focus and resource allocation.

Research on the digital divide has been conducted at different levels, including household, international, and global, as well as at different geographic levels [16]. The "digital divide" concept was coined in 1995 by Grey Andrew Pole, a journalist with the New York Times. Scholars have since defined it in various ways. Sanders and Scanlon emphasized the diverse array of services offered via the Internet and the potential implications for equity when certain population segments cannot access these services [17]. Deursen examined various aspects of the Internet user experience, including access inequality, usage diversity, knowledge of search strategies, quality of technical connections and social support, as well as the ability to assess information quality [18], and the digital divide was identified as being composed of two major barriers: access to and familiarity with technologies [19]. According to Van Dijk, the digital divide refers to the gaps in access to advanced internet-based technology applications between individuals with access to these resources and those without [20]. This gap creates social and economic inequality between different groups [21]. The collective digital capacities of a community affect the motivations and objectives behind the adoption of e-government. This, in turn, can either hinder

or improve the ability of e-government to empower citizens. Hence, the current authors argue that the digital divide will have an adverse effect on the relationship between the quality of e-government services and the behavioral intentions of citizens.

The term "trust" has emerged in conjunction with the evolution of human and social interaction over the past fifty years [10]. Sociologists claim that trust is a fundamental characteristic affecting individuals and social groups [22]. Culture, ethnicity, and religious affiliation are thus significant determinants of trust [23]. In sociology, trust is based on individual and societal perspectives [24]. The individual level is comparable to how psychologists view it. Conversely, the societal level refers to the psychological condition of an overall group. Trust is therefore regarded as a vital component of relationships as it demonstrates how individuals interact and foster constructive connections [10].

1.2 Research Gaps and Conceptual Model

Based on previous contributions in the literature and the research gaps, the authors conduct a review of potential factors influencing e-government service quality and behavioral intention, as well as a realignment of the research focus. The authors propose that additional potentially influential factors mediate the relationship between these two variables. Therefore, an investigation was initiated into the idea of third-variable effects in order to better comprehend the procedure by which an independent variable (IV) exerts an impact on a dependent variable (DV) through the mediational hypothesis. The hypothesis-testing method being considered entails the separation of the causal relationship between the independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) into two separate routes [25]. The quality of e-government services and behavioral intentions are directly connected, as represented by the pathway from the IV to the DV. The second pathway establishes a connection between the IV and the DV by means of a mediator, which indicates an indirect impact (trust). Moreover, the presence of an indirect or mediated impact suggests the IV is responsible for influencing the mediator, which then influences the DV [26].

Additionally, from a research perspective, fewer studies have evaluated the four constructs (variables) simultaneously in the context of e-government. By incorporating mediators and moderators, the focus of this study was expanded beyond a simple analysis of the relationship between two variables, thereby offering a more comprehensive depiction of the actual situation. These variables must be considered when studying complex correlational or causal relationships between variables. A moderating variable influences the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables, whereas a mediating variable indicates the process by which the two variables have a relationship.

Therefore, in an attempt to contribute to the current literature, the researchers designed and tested a moderated mediation model in which both the direct and indirect connections between e-government service quality and behavioral intention were first mediated by trust and then moderated by the digital divide. The conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

The path diagrams that illustrate a model incorporating both a single mediator and a single moderator are presented in Figure 1. This conceptual model assumed that the quality of e-government services, representing the independent variable, would affect trust, which was developed as a mediating variable. Furthermore, trust was hypothesized to subsequently influence users' behavioral intentions, indicating the ultimate outcome of concern. The mediation model proposes that a linear causal path interconnects a set of variables, whereas each variable within the model exerts an influence on the after-effect variables along the route.

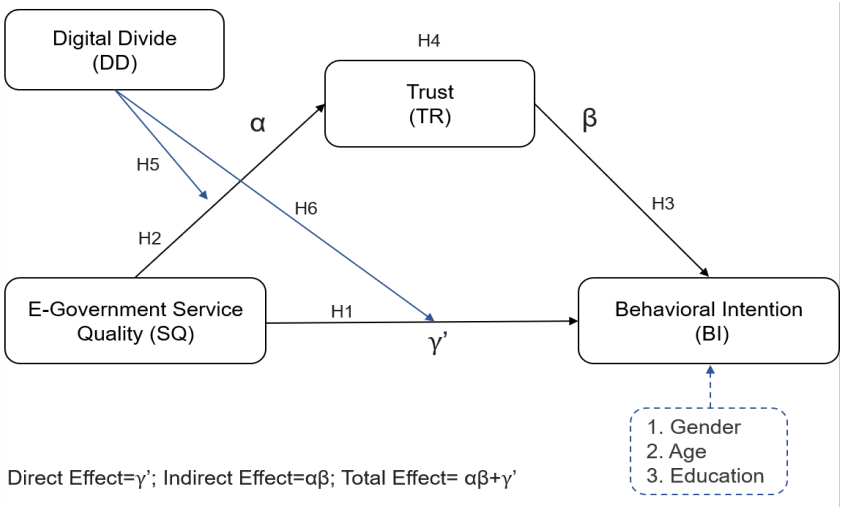

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model Path Diagrams.

1.3 Hypothesis

A user evaluation of e-government service quality involves comparing the services they receive to the service expectations of the system [27]. Service quality is determined by a system's capacity to offer the services that users require to complete government transactions in a timely manner. The response duration of an e-government system to user inquiries is encompassed within this quality dimension [28]. To date, numerous studies have applied, replicated, or altered elements of service quality when assessing the effects of service quality on user attitudes and behavior in the contexts of manufacturing or service sectors [29]. Thus, two hypotheses were developed in light of previous research:

H1: Users' behavioral intentions are positively influenced by the quality of e-government services.

By properly meeting user expectations, the service quality of e-government can enhance users' perceptions of the competence of the service provider (government) and the medium (internet) [30]. Given the limitations of face-to-face engagement with public service providers in e-government settings [31], the quality of services assumes an essential role in affecting users' trust.

H2: Trust has a positive relationship with e-government service quality.

Furthermore, the establishment of trust in e-government serves to reduce the perceived levels of risk and uncertainty that are commonly associated with online interactions and transactions. Trust is crucial in assuring users that the government will not engage in opportunistic behaviors by using its venerable position in governmental transactions to disadvantage the users [32]. Thus, trust may reduce the negative impacts of perceived risks and uncertainties, which can significantly affect the use of e-government systems. In contrast to behavioral intention explaining the degree to which users formulate conscious plans to demonstrate specified behaviors to engage in or not engage in a particular activity [33], here, behavioral intention is considered to be the possibility that users will decide to use e-government systems in the future to fulfill their requirements. Behavioral intention is significantly influenced by the internal assessment outcomes a user has derived from previous system use [34]. This idea has been confirmed by substantial empirical evidence from previous work on information systems [33]. Consequently, a hypothesis was formulated based on prior studies:

H3: Trust positively influences the behavioral intentions of users.

Behavioral intentions are frequently associated with a user's preference for using the services their service provider offers. This inclination is demonstrated through the user's tendency to recommend, intention to repurchase, propensity to deliver positive word of mouth, user loyalty, and user retention [35]. Meanwhile, unfavorable behavioral intentions are typically linked to negative user reactions, including but not limited to transfers and complaints [36]. This finding suggests that behavioral intention impacts the relationship between consumer trust and service quality. Many scholars believe that service quality, user satisfaction or user trust, and behavioral intentions are closely interconnected constructs within an organizational model of service quality [37]. As an example, users will be deeply impressed by the ability of a service provider to effectively incorporate tangible reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy into the execution of their daily tasks [38]. Consequently, this could lead to more positive intentions to act. As a result, a hypothesis was developed in accordance with previous research:

H4: The relationship between e-government service quality and users' behavioral intentions is positive, with trust serving as a mediating factor.

As stated earlier, inequalities in access to and the possible use of e-government between various demographic groups concern many governments and represent an immense challenge. The new technological tools of e-government might only benefit certain population segments. The diffusion of innovation theory is well supported by the importance of socio-demographic profiles in e-government use as an explanatory factor [39]. The digital divide in the realm of e-government comprises two components: the barrier to access and the social divide [40]. More precisely, the former is composed of three sub-dimensions: e-service accessibility, the quality of e-service access, and the skills required for e-service usage [41]. Conversely, the social divide can be delineated into three sub-dimensions: e-service awareness, social support, and e-service culture [42]. However, socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and the digital divide are heavily influenced by factors like income levels, job positions, geographic locations, and physical capabilities [43]. As a result, some researchers have underscored the significance of researching the digital divide across various countries [44]. Ebbers stressed the necessity for additional research to examine the impact of various aspects of the digital divide on the use of e-government in developing countries [45]. Following this, two hypotheses were formulated in alignment with past studies:

H5: The moderation of the relationship between e-government service quality and trust is mediated by the digital divide. As the impacts of these levels grow, the positive correlation between them weakens.

H6: The positive relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intentions is moderated by the digital divide; this relationship becomes weaker as the levels increase.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main goal of this research endeavor was to develop a framework that would facilitate a thorough understanding of the relationship between the quality of e-government services and behavioral intention. In this regard, gender, age, and education were control variables, while trust and the digital divide served as mediators and moderators, respectively. The research examined how users perceived the influence of e-government service quality's influence on their behavioral intentions. Therefore, the selection of the target sample had to be consistent with the research design to increase the constructs' validity and reliability.

2.1 Research Sample and Data Collection

The study participants were between 18 and 65 years old and recruited from Shenzhen, China. The demographic characteristics of the sample of respondents are detailed in Table 1. All respondents were required to complete an online survey. A response rate of 85.39% was achieved for this study, comprising 304 valid responses obtained from a distribution of 356 questionnaires. The Likert scale employed in this research was a five-point scale, in which a rating of 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and a rating of 5 indicated "strongly agree." All the constructs examined in the study were assessed, and the respondents were asked to give their perspectives on the digital divide in relation to behavioral intention, service quality in e-government, and trust.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondent Sample.

No.	Characteristics	Category	N=304	(%)
1	Gender	Male	146	48
		Female	158	52
2	Age	18-35	114	38
		36-50	129	42
		51-65	61	20
3	Education	High school	34	11
		Vocational degree	63	21
		Bachelor's degree	127	42
		Master's degree and above	80	26

2.2 Measurement

The service quality component of the questionnaire used in this research was evaluated by adapting five previously used items [46]. To gather the participants' perspectives on the impact and quality of service in e-government, the items were designed accordingly. Five items from a prior study [46] were used to determine the degree and potential impact of the participants' trust in e-government services. The items employed to assess the digital divide were derived from a prior study conducted by Almajali [47]. Meanwhile, five items selected from a prior study [33] were employed to assess behavioral intention with regard to the use of new technologies.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data collected for this study were analyzed using both SPSS and AMOS. Owing to its multiple recent advancements, the use of SPSS for multiple regression analysis has gained recognition as a highly innovative alternative to conventional analytical methods. The variables encompassed confirmatory analysis, non-linear impacts, as well as mediating and moderating effects [48] Furthermore, AMOS was employed specifically to conduct confirmatory factor analysis, with the aim of estimating the measurement model for all the variables examined in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Common Method Variance

According to the findings of certain researchers, a self-reporting bias could be introduced when employing a common source, rater, or reviewer, which consists of one resource supplying both the independent and dependent variables [49]. Put more simply, in this research, the responses could be influenced to different extents by both positive and negative views of the subject matter.

Consequently, assessing the extent to which such biases exist was the reason for testing this study's common method variance (CMV).

The Harman single-factor technique was employed to estimate the CMV in this research [50]. Exploratory factor analysis [51] is employed in this context, in which a single factor represents every variable. Common method bias may exist if the result indicates that a recently introduced common latent factor explains over 50% of the variance. The number of fixed factors was one when the principal components method was used to extract them. In accordance with the findings, common method bias did not affect this research because the variance explanation rate for the first factor was 37.8%, which was below the critical threshold of 50%.

3.2 Model for Measuring

3.2.1 Skewness and Kurtosis: Data Distribution Testing

Skewness and kurtosis measures are employed to assess the *compliance* of indicators with normality assumptions [52]. Both factors play a role in determining whether a curve displays a normal or abnormal shape, enabling further examination through the use of descriptive statistics. To maintain the normality of a distribution, the acceptable ranges for skewness and kurtosis are -3 to +3 and -10 to +10, respectively [52]. The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the skewness and kurtosis values were both within an acceptable range. The skewness values span from 0.116 to 1.337, and the kurtosis values range from 0.895 to 1.454. As a consequence, the distribution could be regarded as normal.

3.2.2 Validity and Reliability of Variable Measurement

To enhance the evaluation of reliability and the validity of the variable measurements, it was ascertained that the factor loadings for each item were above 0.70. To ascertain convergent validity, the minimum AVE threshold should be set at 0.5 [53]. This is done by measuring the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable. To measure composite reliability (CR), each variable was assessed. Greater composite reliability implies a higher level of reliability, with a proposed minimum threshold of 0.7 [53]. The results indicated in Table 2 show that the factor loadings displayed a range of values spanning from 0.731 to 0.978. Furthermore, the AVE values revealed a range of 0.634 to 0.776, whereas the CR values showed a range of 0.823 to 0.924. The findings of this research prove that the items used in the study showed great levels of reliability, suggesting that the variables under consideration had been consistently and reliably measured.

Table 2: Validity and Reliability Evaluations.

Variable	Items	Convergent Validity		Internal Consistency Reliability		Normal distribution	
		(λ) ≥0.70	AVE>0.50	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	CR>0.70	Skewness	Kurtosis
SQ	SQ1	0.898	0.776	0.961	0.924	-0.625	-1.454
	SQ2	0.932				-0.799	-1.201
	SQ3	0.929				-0.812	-1.129
	SQ4	0.890				-0.621	-0.895
	SQ5	0.897				-0.632	-0.937
TR	TR1	0.812	0.634	0.912	0.864	0.432	1.128
	TR2	0.843				0.857	1.005
	TR3	0.851				0.898	0.141
	TR4	0.881				0.892	0.901
	TR5	0.902				0.912	0.927
DD	DD1	0.761	0.678	0.879	0.857	-1.337	1.213
	DD2	0.802				-1.198	-0.934
	DD3	0.795				-1.304	-0.918
	DD4	0.833				-1.136	-0.912
	DD5	0.874				-0.980	-0.916
BI	BI1	0.778	0.690	0.854	0.823	0.265	-0.985
	BI2	0.832				0.293	-1.364
	BI3	0.900				-0.116	-1.352
	BI4	0.811				0.312	-1.423
	BI5	0.817				0.307	-1.309

3.2.3 Descriptive Statistics, Pearson Correlation Coefficient, and Discriminant Validity

The Fornell and Larcker criterion is generally acknowledged to be the most common approach for evaluating the discriminant validity of measurement models. In accordance with this criterion, the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for a given construct must surpass the correlation coefficient of any other construct. The fundamental aim of this study was to assess the extent to which measurement models can effectively differentiate between different constructs [54]. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each variable exceeded the Pearson correlation coefficients observed with the rest of the variables. This might suggest that the variables display good discriminant validity. It is essential to emphasize that the variance inflation factors (VIFs) examined in the research stayed below a certain threshold of 10, suggesting there were no signs of multicollinearity issues in the dataset.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics, Correlation, and Discriminant Validity.

VAR	M	SD	SQ	TR	DD	BI	GEN	AGE	EDU
SQ	3.780	1.264	**0.734**						
TR	3.795	0.996	0.699**	**0.875**					
DD	2.933	1.442	0.643**	0.538**	**0.728**				
BI	3.452	1.573	0.767**	0.667**	0.708**	**0.887**			
GEN	1.202	0.874	0.437**	0.239**	0.304**	0.502**	1		
AGE	1.603	0.775	0.093	0.464**	0.231**	-0.088	0.484**	1	
EDU	2.682	0.878	0.082	0.089	0.255**	0.132**	0.420**	0.077	1

[a] The diagonal elements, which are highlighted in bold, represent the square roots of the AVE values.

[b] The correlations between the variables are presented below the diagonal.

c The statistical significance levels used in this study are denoted as *p < 0.05 and **p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

The descriptive statistics, data reliability, and correlations between the variables are displayed in Table 3. Based on the mean (M) value of 3.780 and the standard deviation (SD) of 1.264, it was found that the respondents believed that there is a relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intention. The M value for trust is 3.795, and the SD is 0.996, suggesting that many respondents considered that trust affects behavioral intention. With respect to behavioral intention, the M value is 3.452, and the SD is 1.573. This indicates that the respondents strongly agreed with the belief that users' behavioral intentions are influenced by service quality and trust. E-government service quality and behavioral intention were revealed to have a positive relationship, with a correlation of (r=0.767 **; p< 0.01).

3.3 Hypotheses Testing

3.3.1 Direct Effects and Mediation Model Testing.

Hayes' PROCESS 4 macro-model was used to evaluate hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H4. The findings from H1 (β =0.437, p = 0.000, 95% CI excludes zero, 0.279 to 0.367) supported the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the quality of e-government services and behavioral intention. In particular, the findings indicate that the quality of service positively and statistically significantly influences the behavioral intentions of users. The relationship between the quality of e-government services and trust was therefore proven, as proposed in regard to H2 (β =0.843, p = 0.000, 95% CI =0.336, 0.187). The outcomes showed that e-government service quality significantly positively impacts trust. A notable positive relationship was also observed between trust and behavioral intention (β =0.446, p = 0.000, 95% CI =0.324, 0.047). The bootstrap method is widely used in mediation analysis due to its robustness and positive attributes [55]. Employing 5,000 bootstrap resamples led to the mediation analysis producing the most robust outcome. It was determined that all three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) were supported. By proving a positive indirect relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intention via trust (β =0.285, 95% CI =0.221, 0.133), H4 could also be validated.

Table 4: Assessing the Direct and Mediation Effects Within the Variables.

Model		β	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI	R2
				95% CI (Bootstrap)				
1	Mediator variable							
	SQ	0.843	0.045	8.937	0.000	0.336	0.187	0.442
2	DV: BI							
	SQ	0.437	0.088	7.902	0.000	0.279	0.367	0.618
	TR	0.446	0.102	7.213	0.000	0.324	0.047	
The indirect effect of SQ on BI is mediated via TR (bootstrapping methods)		0.285	0.067			0.221	0.133	

3.3.2 *Testing the Model for Moderation.*

The relationship between e-government service quality and trust (H5), as well as the relationship between e-government service quality and behavioral intention (H6), were examined using the PROCESS macro (model 8), with gender, age, and level of education as confounded variables. The results are presented in Table 5.

Even when demographic variables were controlled for, the observed correlation ($\beta = -0.114$, $p \leq 0.000$) between the quality of e-government services and the digital divide had a significant impact on trust. H5, which proposes that the digital divide moderates the positive correlations, was supported by this finding. As the digital divide expanded, the significance of the negative correlation became larger, according to the results from the analysis of the conditional direct impact of e-government service quality ($\beta = -0.589$, $p \leq 0.000$). In contrast, when the digital divide was low, the correlation analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship ($\beta = -0.645$, $p \geq 0.05$). H5 was further supported by these findings. Behavioral intention proved to be significantly influenced by the digital divide and the quality of e-government services ($\beta = -0.094$, $p \leq 0.001$). As evidenced by the stronger correlation ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$) observed under the conditions of a low digital divide, the results concerning the conditional direct effect supported H6. In contrast, a significant digital divide was linked with a weakened correlation ($\beta = 0.056$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Table 5: Assessment of the Moderation Model.

Model			β	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI	R2
					Bootstrap 95% CI				
1	Mediator variable								0.455
	SQ		-0.612	-0.077	-11.223	0.000	-0.723	-0.509	
	DD		-0.124	-0.086	4.256	0.001	-0.087	-0.045	
	SQ, DD (interaction)		-0.114	0.042	-5.6743	0.000	-0.309	-0.083	
	Control variable	GEN	-0.429	0.072	-6.923	0.000	-0.643	-0.512	
		AGE	0.204	0.054	10.787	0.000	0.312	0.311	
		EDU	0.307	0.079	4.241	0.001	0.132	0.298	
					The conditional direct effect of SQ on TR				
	DD (-1SD)		0.645	0.047	10.945	0.512	-0.302	0.317	
	DD (+1SD)		-0.589	-0.033	-15.972	0.000	-0.071	-0.229	
2	Dependent variable: BI								0.286
	SQ		0.276	0.037	5.147	0.001	0.343	0.436	
	TR		0.113	0.048	4.968	0.000	0.321	0.386	
	DD		-0.508	-0.072	-9.694	0.001	-0.665	-0.424	
	SQ, DD (interaction)		0.094	0.093	3.724	0.001	0.163	0.214	
	Control variable	GEN	-0.523	0.126	-4.912	0.000	-0.727	-0.309	
		AGE	-0.189	0.049	-4.145	0.000	-0.254	-0.092	
		EDU	0.501	0.071	7.721	0.000	0.469	0.759	
					The conditional direct effect of SQ on BI				
	DD (-1SD)		0.215	0.076	3.871	0.001	0.331	0.487	
	DD (+1SD)		0.056	0.062	2.197	0.001	0.186	0.332	
					Bootstrapped indirect effects result (via TR)				
	Index of moderated mediation		-0.031	-0.002			-0.006	-0.023	
					The conditional indirect effect of SQ on BI (via TR)				
	DD (-1SD)		0.319	0.027			0.169	0.079	
	DD (+1SD)		0.289	0.052			0.089	0.083	

4. CONCLUSION

Although service quality is often emphasized, it is evident that conducting comprehensive analysis and research would facilitate the growth of sustainability for city government and e-democracy. By incorporating trust as a mediator and the digital divide as a moderator, the focus of this study was expanded beyond a simple analysis of the relationship between two variables - e-government service quality and behavioral intention - thereby offering a more comprehensive depiction of the actual situation.

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of trust and the digital divide as mediators and moderators in affecting users' behavioral intentions. The initial phase of the research involved examining the direct relationship between the quality of e-government services and users' behavioral intentions. Trust was subsequently identified as a mediating variable in the relationship between the IV and the DV; further analysis was conducted of the direct and indirect relationships among the IV, the mediator, and the DV. The results showed a significant direct association between these variables, with trust fully mediating the relationship.

This indicates that trust plays a significant role in mediating the relationship between the quality of e-government services and users' behavioral intentions.

Moreover, the expansion of cities in conjunction with the growth of the digital divide has been followed by certain barriers, which explains why the digital divide was deployed as a moderator in this study. Furthermore, this study reveals that the digital divide, along with sociodemographic factors such as gender, age, and education, can attenuate the impact of e-government service quality on behavioral intention. In accordance with the prior research, e-government services must be designed in a way that combines accessibility, responsiveness, ease of use, transparency, and robust safety features for usage management. Hence, government leaders should undertake measures to reduce the barriers arising from the digital divide. The results of this research contribute by advancing the understanding of both theoretical and practical aspects of e-government services and users' behavioral intents. A full understanding of this phenomenon is of the utmost value as it plays a critical role in formulating effective policies and facilitating the widespread acceptance and long-term sustainability of e-government services.

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