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Effectiveness of the governance model in public management: A systematic review

Efectividad del modelo de gobernanza en la gestión pública: una revisión sistemática

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Abstract

Public administration has undergone significant evolution due to digitalization and the growing demand for a more engaged and demanding citizenry, which has spurred the adoption of more open and collaborative governance models. In this context, this study conducts a systematic literature review combined with a bibliometric analysis, with the aim of identifying the governance models currently used in contemporary public administration. To this end, the PRISMA method was applied, and databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus were consulted, focusing the search on the period between 2015 and 2025. After a rigorous selection process, a total of 19 relevant articles were analyzed. The results indicate a clear transition from traditional hierarchical structures to more horizontal, collaborative, and adaptive models. Furthermore, it is concluded that effective governance depends on the ability to adapt to profound technological changes, as well as on fostering social inclusion and citizen participation, with the ultimate goal of promoting social well-being. Thus, this study provides evidence that supports the need to make public administration more flexible and democratic in order to address contemporary challenges.

Keywords: public administration, governance, citizen participation.

Resumen

La gestión pública ha experimentado una evolución significativa debido a la digitalización y a la creciente demanda de una ciudadanía más involucrada y exigente, lo que ha impulsado la adopción de modelos de gobernanza más abiertos y colaborativos. En este contexto, el presente estudio lleva a cabo una revisión sistemática de la literatura combinada con un análisis bibliométrico, con el propósito de identificar los modelos de gobernanza vigentes en la gestión pública contemporánea. Para ello, se aplicó el método PRISMA y se

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consultaron bases de datos como Google Académico y Scopus, enfocando la búsqueda en el periodo comprendido entre 2015 y 2025. Tras un riguroso proceso de selección, se analizaron un total de 19 artículos relevantes. Los resultados indican una clara transición desde estructuras jerárquicas tradicionales hacia modelos más horizontales, colaborativos y adaptativos. Además, se concluye que una gobernanza efectiva depende de la capacidad de adaptarse a los profundos cambios tecnológicos, así como de fomentar la inclusión social y la participación ciudadana, con el objetivo último de promover el bienestar social. Así, este estudio aporta evidencia que respalda la necesidad de flexibilizar y democratizar la gestión pública para enfrentar los desafíos contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: gestión pública, gobernanza, participación ciudadana.

Introduction

The new public management, characterized by the transition from a traditional administrative logic to a market-oriented managerial approach, has prompted substantial transformations in procedures, operational chains, and interaction networks among public institutions (Grossi & Argento, 2022). This evolution has generated a constant tension between business logic and social interests, as well as facing limitations in the innovative capacities of the state apparatus (Thabit et al., 2025).

In this context, good governance plays a fundamental role in public management by enhancing decision-making through principles such as transparency, citizen participation, accountability, respect for the rule of law, professionalism, and the integration of technologies (Risna, 2023; Lawal et al., 2024). Its success depends on constant adaptation and innovation in response to changing social, economic, and technological demands (Meuleman, 2021; Ulnicane et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of technological tools not only optimizes administrative processes but also expands spaces for community participation in planning and decision-making (Di Vaio et al., 2021). This interaction contributes to strengthening efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the provision of public services, advancing toward a more democratic and citizen-centered governance (Birkstedt et al., 2023).

From a political-administrative perspective, public management involves state action that encompasses multiple sectors, where civil society plays a key role (Risna, 2023; Lawal et al., 2024). Within this framework, governance standards related to transparency, efficiency, and respect for the rule of law are highlighted (Zuiderwijk et al., 2021).

Moreover, governance, conceived as a dynamic and inclusive process, involves various actors in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies (Riski, 2025). Effective governance promotes mechanisms that benefit citizens, balance powers, and strengthen trust in institutions (Meuleman, 2021; Grossman & Slough, 2022).

Consequently, governance is configured as a strategic tool for the development of social power, allowing citizens to influence the direction of public decisions (Chang & Brewer, 2023). This opens the door to political, economic, and social transformations, provided there is effective articulation between the public, private, and social sectors (Haug et al., 2024).

However, one of the main current challenges lies in the limited capacity of various public managers to adopt innovative approaches in the administration of state resources (Verma, 2022). This situation can undermine the principles of good governance, especially in adverse contexts where institutional inefficiency affects legitimacy (Tomaževič et al., 2023).

Thus, it is crucial for countries to strengthen their governance structures in light of technological advancements and the growing complexity of public problems (Ferreira & Santos, 2025). Innovations drive significant changes in policy formulation, but they also require governance models to incorporate political dimensions to fully understand and improve public management practices (Filgueiras et al., 2023).

In this vein, the present study aims to identify the governance models applied in contemporary public management, as well as to analyze the determining factors for their application and the main challenges in this process.

Methodology

This article conducted a systematic review along with a bibliometric analysis, following the PRISMA method proposed by Mishra and Mishra (2023). To structure the analyzed database coherently and thematically, three research questions were formulated to guide the study's development and identify patterns, gaps, and trends in the specialized literature:

- What governance models have been applied in public management in recent years, and what are their main characteristics?

- What factors condition the success or failure of these models in public management contexts?
- What indicators are used to measure the effectiveness of these models in public management?

The search for information utilized the databases Google Scholar and Scopus, selected for their extensive coverage of relevant scientific literature in the field of public governance. Table 1 presents the keywords used along with Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT), as well as the advanced search criteria included.

Table 1
Systematic search of articles

Databases	Keywords	Search Results
Google Scholar	gobernanza publica AND gestión pública	560
	gobernanza pública AND ciudadanía AND tecnología	498
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("public governance" AND "public services") AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026	233
	TITLE-ABS-KEY (public governance AND technology AND innovation) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , "all")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English") OR LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "Spanish"))	601

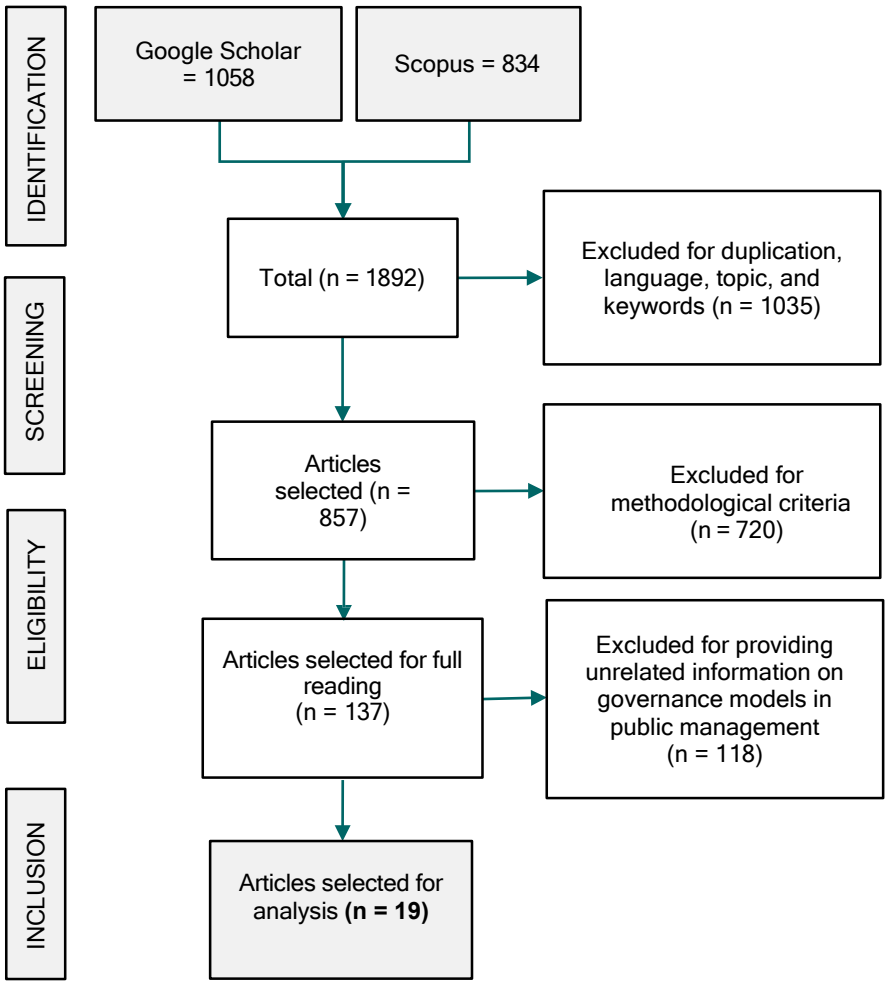
Additionally, a temporal range from 2015 to 2025 was established to ensure the inclusion of recent and diverse findings applicable to different areas of the public sector. The search prioritized articles in English and Spanish, given the abundance of pertinent information in both languages. To optimize results, thematic terms were identified in titles, abstracts, and keywords, discarding sources outside the central focus.

The search concentrated on scientific articles that included original studies, systematic reviews, literature reviews, and meta-analyses, considering qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods based on the richness and diversity of information they provide.

Studies that presented findings related to the application of public governance models, challenges in implementing measures, assessment of state performance in governance, and comparisons between different management models were selected.

To illustrate the selection process, a flow diagram was prepared according to the PRISMA guidelines (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram



The initial search strategy gathered a substantial amount of information, totaling 1,892 documents: 1,058 from the Google Scholar search engine and 834 from the Scopus database. This diversity reflects the multiple theoretical approaches to governance in public management, integrating sources with varied methodological bases and heterogeneous findings.

During the screening phase, rigorous technical and thematic filters were applied, significantly reducing the number of documents. The exclusion of 1,035 texts due to duplication, inappropriate language, or lack of correspondence with key terms highlighted a purification process aimed at preserving the relevance of the material without sacrificing conceptual diversity.

In the eligibility stage, out of the 857 pre-selected texts, 720 were discarded for not meeting methodological criteria, and an additional 118 were excluded for not directly addressing governance models in the public sector. This phase reaffirmed a careful and specialized selection criterion focused on maintaining coherence between the study object and the sources utilized.

Ultimately, the inclusion was finalized based on 19 articles, which, despite their limited number, constitute a refined and solid core of research. These studies provide, from different perspectives, a consistent and updated discussion on the practices and governance models applicable to public administration. In this process, quality was prioritized over quantity, favoring a deeper and more precise understanding of the analyzed phenomenon.

Results and discussion

Following the compilation of a significant number of results, Table 2 presents the selection of articles that support the analysis of public governance in its various dimensions. This collection includes research published in indexed journals, both international and regional, covering relevant themes such as governance models, technological application in public management, emerging challenges in the digital age, and citizen participation.

The following table summarizes the main characteristics of each study: authorship, title, publication journal, and methodology employed, highlighting the predominance of qualitative approaches and some studies utilizing mixed methods.

Table 2

Findings from selected articles

Author(s)	Title	Journal	Methodology
Alqooti (2020)	Public governance in the public sector: Literature review	International Journal of Business Ethics and Governance (IJBEG)	Qualitative
Bason & Austin (2021)	Design in the public sector: Toward a human centred model of public governance	Public Management Review	Qualitative
Blanco, A. (2024)	Public administration and governance in Colombia: Contributions for transparent management in a dialectical key	Administración & Desarrollo	Qualitative
Cárdenas et al. (2020)	New public management and governance: A comparison of two paradigms to address modern complex problems	Ciencia y Educación	Qualitative
Dandan, J. (2024)	The challenges and opportunities of public governance in the digital era	International Journal of Social Sciences and Public Administration	Qualitative
Falcão et al. (2017)	Business models in the public domain: the public governance canvas	Cuadernos EBAPE.BR	Qualitative
Giotitsas et al. (2020)	From private to public governance: The case for reconfiguring energy systems as commons	Energy Research & Social Science	Qualitative
Iacovino et al. (2017)	Public organizations between old public administration, new public management and public governance: The case of the Tuscany region	Public Organization Review	Qualitative
Idzi & Correa (2022)	Digital governance: Government strategies that impact public services	Global Public Policy and Governance	Qualitative
Jia et al. (2019)	Public governance, corporate governance, and firm innovation: An examination of state-owned enterprises	Academy of Management Journal	Mixed
Longo (2020)	Public governance for innovation	Revista del CLAD Reforma y Democracia	Qualitative
Massey & Johnston-Miller (2016)	Governance: Public governance to social innovation?	Policy & Politics	Qualitative
McMullin (2020)	Challenging the necessity of new public governance: Co-production by third sector organizations under different models of public management	Public Administration	Qualitative
Meijer et al. (2019)	Open governance: A new paradigm for understanding urban governance in an information age	Frontiers in Sustainable Cities	Qualitative

Mendoza et al. (2024)	Governance and the optimization of public expenditure: A literature review	Suma de Negocios	Qualitative
Mercado-Marrufo & Baylon-Salvador (2024)	Towards intelligent public governance from governability	European Public & Social Innovation Review	Qualitative
Prasad (2024)	Expanding practices of e-governance system in the contemporary world	Journey for Sustainable Development and Peace Journal	Qualitative
Rodríguez (2015)	Governance models for the delivery of public services through web 2.0 technologies: A political view in large Spanish municipalities	Social Science Computer Review	Mixed
Testi et al. (2025)	Exploring the potential of blockchain technology for citizen engagement in smart governance	Open Research Europe	Qualitative

Figure 2 presents the annual distribution of the selected articles, showing sustained production over a ten-year period. A lower number of publications is identified in 2015, 2016, 2021, 2022, and 2025, with only one article published in each of these years.

Conversely, 2017 and 2019 recorded two articles each year, reflecting a growing interest in governance during those periods. Finally, 2020 and 2024 stand out with five articles published each year, providing clear evidence of a significant increase in academic production on this topic. This growth reflects a sustained and increasing interest in research on public governance.

Figure 2

Year of publication of selected articles

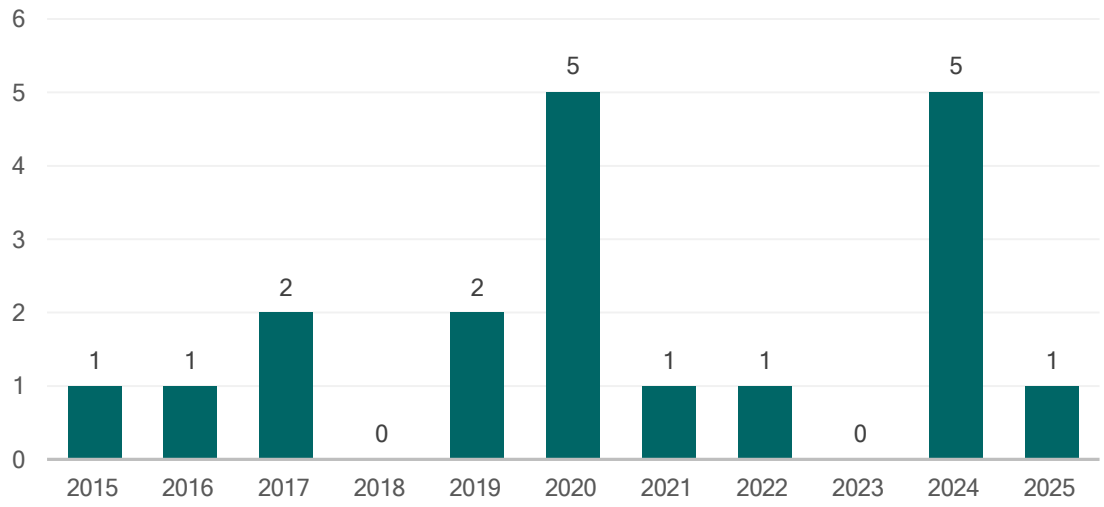
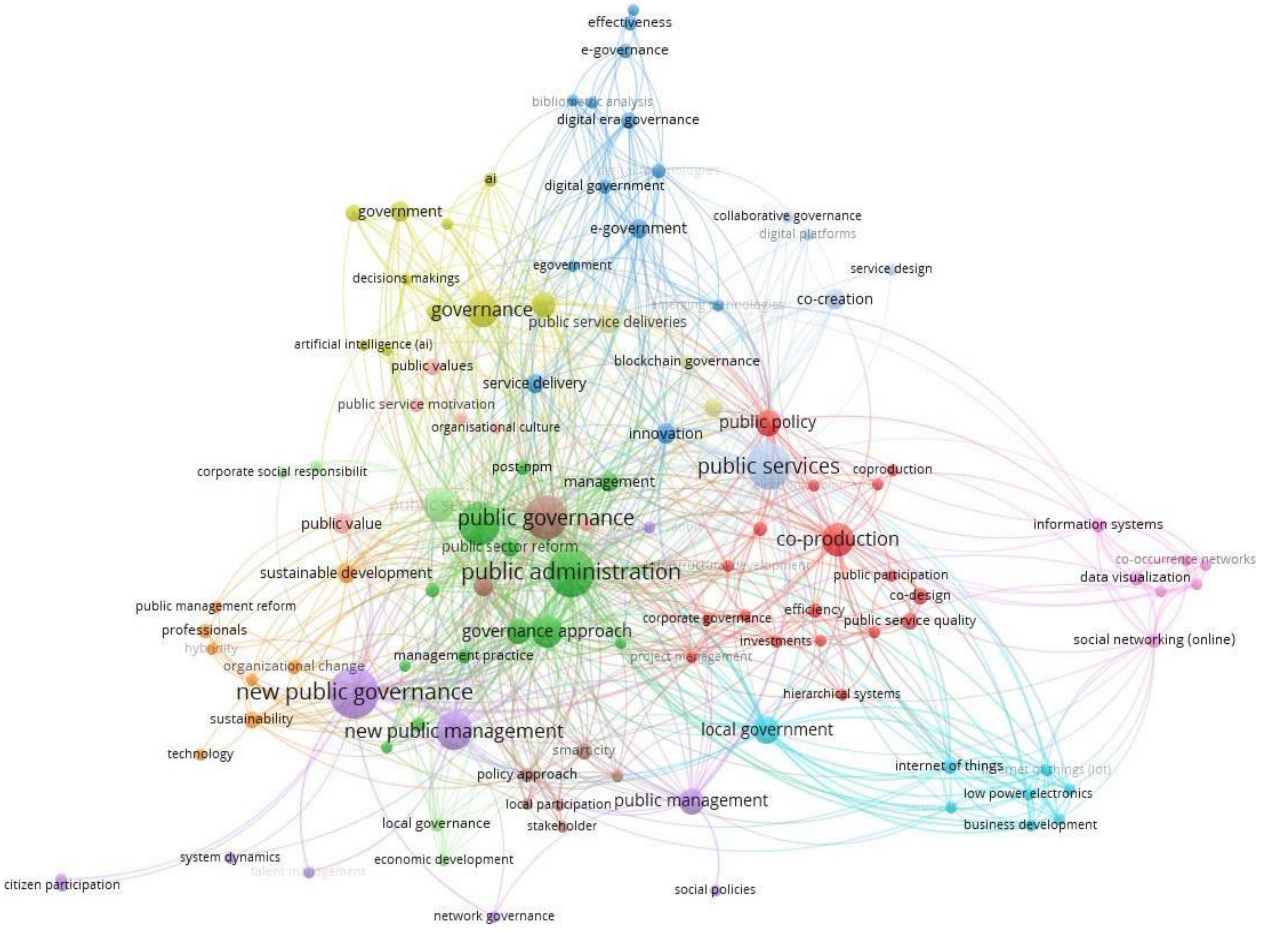


Figure 3 provides a bibliometric visualization created with VOSviewer, illustrating key terms related to public administration clustered according to their co-occurrence frequency. The green cluster highlights terms such as “public administration,” “public governance,” and “co-production,” which articulate various lines of research.

Additionally, the yellow cluster connects governance with emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, while the purple cluster groups concepts related to innovation, sustainability, and New Public Management. These groupings reflect the strong connection between public governance and technological advancement.

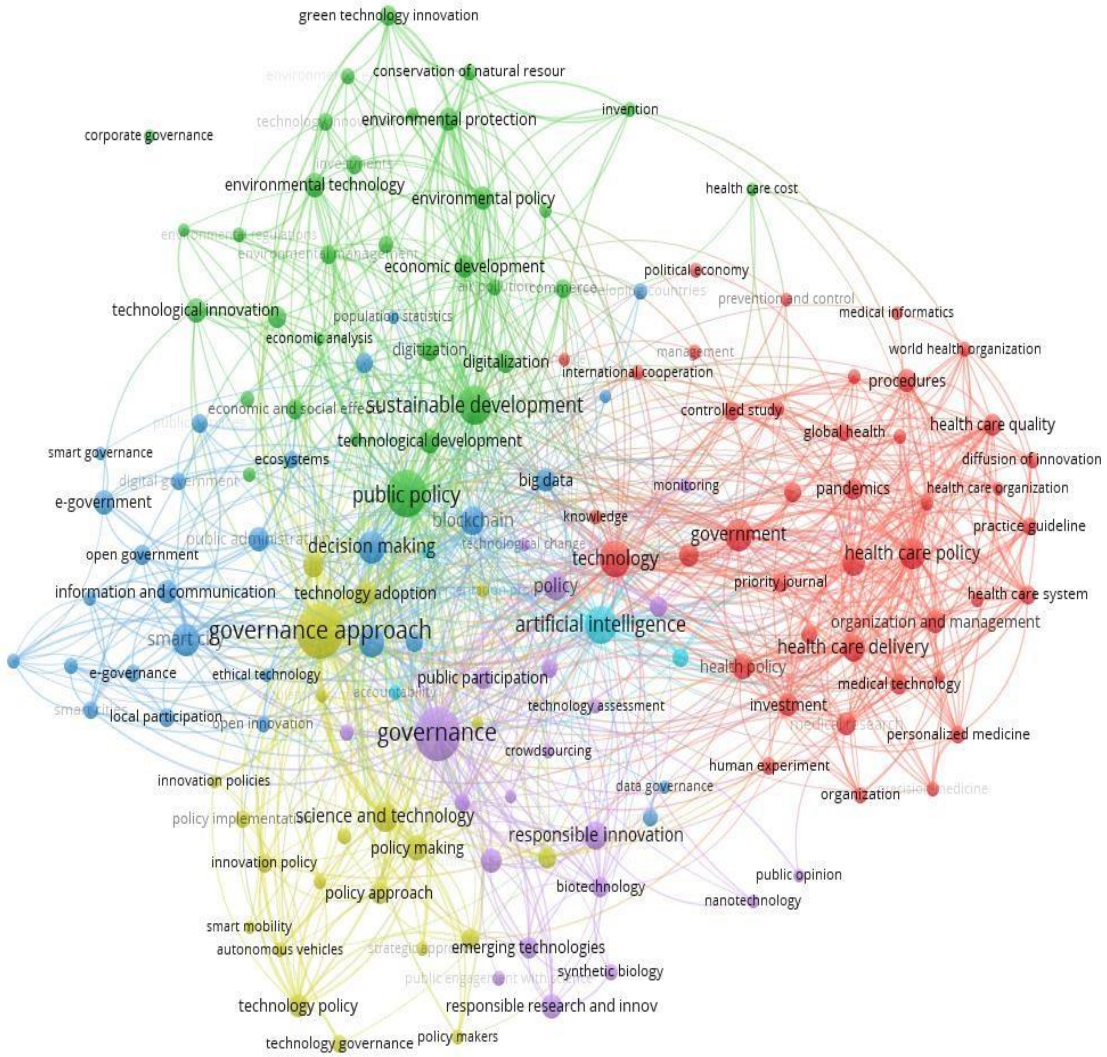
Figure 3

Co-occurrence map of key terms about public governance and innovation



In Figure 4, the visualization focuses on the interrelationship between governance, innovation, sustainability, and public policies. Several thematic clusters are highlighted; for instance, the blue cluster associates digital government and citizen participation with terms such as "e-government" and "smart governance." The yellow cluster emphasizes science and technology policies, featuring words like "technology policy" and "policy making." This bibliometric network reveals an interdisciplinary structure where innovation and sustainability emerge as central axes in the current debate.

Figure 4
Bibliometric visualization of approaches to technological governance and innovation



Moreover, governance manifests in the processes of negotiation and agreements among actors to achieve the intended objectives in public management (Rodríguez, 2015; Mendoza & Dávila, 2024). In this context, the early involvement of social actors and citizens is fundamental to strengthening democratic legitimacy, the quality of public policies, and innovative capacity (McMullin, 2020).

A strong critique is also posed against traditional management models. Cárdenas et al. (2020) argue that new public management (NPM) has subordinated the public interest to market logic. In contrast, it is emphasized that the most suitable governance model is one that incorporates democratic factors and the participation of diverse agents. Table 3 presents a contrast between these approaches.

Table 3
Contrast between new public management and public governance

Element	New Public Management (NPM)	Governance
Focus	Internal efficiency, control, accountability	Interaction, networks, legitimacy, collaboration

Relationship Among Actors	Contract, competition, outsourcing	Independence, cooperation, dynamic networks
Decision Model	Vertical, hierarchical, goal-oriented	Horizontal, negotiated, adaptive
Problem-Solving	Precise and technical	Emergent, constructed among multiple actors
Role of the State	Regulator and evaluator	Facilitator and articulator
Conditions for Success	Clear objectives, monitoring, contracts	Active participation, horizontal coordination

Source. Adapted from Cárdenas et al. (2020)

Innovative public governance models emerge, in contrast, as an alternative to reconfigure the relationship between the state and citizens, promoting networks of actors who dialogue, negotiate, and co-produce public value (Jia et al., 2019; Falcão et al., 2017). Thus, the challenge is not only technical but also political and cultural: it involves building institutional capacities that promote horizontality without losing strategic direction, while ensuring that this openness translates into legitimacy and effective results (Dandan, 2024; Bason & Austin, 2021).

To achieve this, governance must have a relational and institutional framework that ensures the autonomy of civil organizations and clearly defines who participates in the formulation and implementation of public policies, as well as the levels of collaboration among public and social actors (McMullin, 2019; Cárdenas et al., 2020). Strengthening this framework enhances inclusion and transparency while amplifying the impact of public spending.

Good governance, conceived as a strategy to strengthen institutional fabric, seeks to redistribute resources fairly and generate sustainable impacts in key areas such as health and education. The real challenge lies in going beyond rhetoric, institutionalizing effective mechanisms for participation, transparency, and oversight that transform citizens into active agents of development rather than passive recipients of policies (Bason & Austin, 2021; Idzi & Correa, 2022).

To achieve that impact, governance must transition towards a model based on common goods, overcoming managerial schemes centered on market logic and private property (Falcão et al., 2017; Cárdenas et al., 2020). Thus, the state ceases to be merely a market regulator to become a cooperative partner that fosters collaborative governance, provides public infrastructure, subsidizes community networks, and supports legal frameworks that favor decentralized production (Blanco, 2024; Alqooti, 2020).

This transition also implies reconfiguring the public management apparatus to facilitate horizontal, autonomous, and transparent decisions within communities, implementing mechanisms for the pre-distribution of wealth and equitable access to public resources. Furthermore, this approach promotes citizen participation in innovative measures (Giotitsas et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the digital governance model transcends the fragmented and individualistic business logic (Mendoza-Marrufo & Baylon-Salvador, 2024). This paradigm focuses on the reintegration of public services, institutional holism, and digital transformation, structured around an intelligent center with decentralized delivery, the use of big data, and predictive analytics for more flexible and efficient decision-making, integrated tax and social benefit systems, and an open government approach that ensures transparency and real-time access to state databases (Idzi & Correa, 2022; Jia et al., 2019).

This model is supported by information and communication technologies (ICT), conceived as strategic tools to improve the relationship between the state and citizens while fulfilling constitutional principles of speed, effectiveness, and economy (Blanco, 2024; Prasad, 2024). In this context, traditional public governance proves insufficient to meet current demands.

Consequently, an alternative paradigm is proposed: open governance. This model, characterized by massive and decentralized collaboration among citizens, NGOs, businesses, digital platforms, and governments, is particularly well-suited to the changes driven by intensive use of digital technologies (Meijer et al., 2019; Blanco, 2024; Cárdenas et al., 2020).

Additionally, it is noted for being an effective participatory model when it goes beyond mere citizen consultation to establish real and ongoing interaction between the governed and the governors (Dandan, 2024). The lack of this interactivity is directly related to low levels of satisfaction regarding public services, especially in rural areas (Mercado-Marrufo & Baylon-Salvador, 2024).

Furthermore, there is the exploratory governance model, based on transforming processes through the incorporation of experts and the continuous development of human intelligence. This model is founded on pillars

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such as public strategy, talent and intelligence, organizational structure, impact evaluation, open innovation, and advanced accountability (Longo, 2020).

Thus, a paradigmatic shift in public management is evident, where the state moves away from its rigid and controlled role to become a flexible organization oriented towards learning and focused on results that generate social impact. Each dimension reflects the need to adapt to a complex and ever-changing environment, where collaboration, collective intelligence, and experimentation are essential (Falcão et al., 2017; Massey & Johnston-Miller, 2016).

The emerging governance model places the user at the center, recognizing that public policies must directly respond to citizens' needs and expectations (Rodríguez, 2015; Testi et al., 2025). This implies creating bureaucratic structures that are more sensitive, adaptable, and aligned with collective goals to promote public management focused on service rather than mere compliance.

Finally, the advancement of science and technology demands dynamic regulatory frameworks that accompany their impact on social transformation. However, these frameworks often adjust slowly, hindering timely understanding of the changes generated (Dandan, 2024; Prasad, 2024). In this context, intelligent governance emerges as an innovative response to improve access to services through digital platforms; however, it faces significant challenges such as political disinterest, institutional resistance, and low technological appropriation by citizens (Mercado-Marrufo & Baylon-Salvador, 2024).

Conclusions

This systematic review demonstrates that public governance has evolved towards more collaborative, technological, and citizen-centered models, surpassing paradigms that focused exclusively on operational efficiency. The models identified in recent years—such as open, digital, exploratory, and user-oriented governance—share an emphasis on horizontality, inclusion, and adaptability as fundamental characteristics to address the complexities of the current context.

The analyzed studies highlight that factors such as effective leadership, citizen participation, organizational culture, and technological capacity are essential for the success of these models. In the absence of these elements, reforms tend to dilute or remain merely rhetorical, although progress is also identified in establishing criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of public governance.

Among the relevant indicators for measuring improvements in governance are the impact on public spending, citizen satisfaction levels, social equity, transparency, and innovation in services. However, limitations persist in their practical application, particularly in contexts facing institutional weaknesses or low technological development, which poses an ongoing challenge to consolidate more effective and sustainable governance models. Ultimately, the future of public governance depends on the capacity to innovate and adapt, with a genuine commitment to inclusive management that is aware of the rights and needs of citizens, in order to build more just, participatory, and resilient societies.

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