NATIONAL PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS: HOW DOES TRANSPARENCY INFLUENCE PERFORMANCE?

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ABSTRACT

Transparency *is a key focus of research concerning* ***National Public Establishments (NPEs)****, even if its relationship with* ***performance*** *stays a debate subject within the scientific literature. In fact, existing studies offer mixed conclusions : some highlight significant performance improvements associated with increased transparency, while others do not manage to demonstrate a strong correlation. It is important to underline that this relationship is inherently complex, and it transcends simple direct causality. Multiple variables* ***contextual****,* ***organizational****, and stakeholder-related play a substantial role in shaping how transparency influences the operational* ***efficiency*** *of NPEs. Besides, transparency particularly serves as a significant mechanism in sectors which are vulnerable to* ***corruption*** *and power abuse. In this context,* ***Financial Control*** *assumes a major role by promoting the responsible allocation and use of public funds, while also fostering* ***good governance****. Such proactive approach avoids illegal exploitation and misappropriation, thereby guaranting that benefits are distributed fairly and equitably across the population. As a consequence, transparency can be a powerful driver for improving NPEs performance if it is applied with careful attention to organizational and contextual specificities. Each NPE must implement robust budgeting and expenditure control mechanisms to ensure resources the efficient and effective use of allocated resources. Ultimately, decisions to enhance* ***financial transparency*** *should be taken into consideration by a thorough assessment of each institution's unique characteristics, potential advantages, and possible constraints.*

Key words: *Transparency, Performance, Efficiency, Control, Good Governance, National Public Establishments*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the current globalized economic context characterized by rapid change and increased demands for accountability, the **governance** of **National Public Establishments (NPEs)** has become a strategic priority. It is central not only to ensuring the institutions' performance and sustainability but also to maximizing their contribution to the public interest. This article explores the complex and multidimensional relationship between public sector governance and institutional **performance**, both financial and non-financial. This study also draws upon a comprehensive and critical review of the existing scholarly literature to examine how governance principles and practices affect the effectiveness of NPEs.

The the **interest of this topic** lays on several dimensions. **Academically and personally**, this study enables a deeper understanding of institutional dynamics and contributes meaningfully to the existing body of literature on public sector management. **Socially**, enhancing the governance of NPEs is necessary to the broader community. A transparent and efficient management of public resources is essential for fostering citizen trust, mitigating inequality, and supporting balanced socio-economic development (Mabillard V., 2019). From a **research perspective**, the inconsistent findings across prior studies on the link between transparency and institutional performance highlight the need for a more thorough investigation of moderating and mediating factors, which advances the theoretical and empirical discourse in public governance and management.

This study is guided by the following research question : **How does transparency, as a key element of governance, influence the performance of National Public Establishments, and what contextual, organizational, and stakeholder-related factors shape this influence ?**

Here are three primary objectives to help answer the problematique:
Firstly, to examine the role of transparency in strengthening accountability and preventing corruption and abuse of power within NPEs.

Secondly, to identify and analyze the institutional, organizational, and stakeholder-driven factors that determine the effectiveness of transparency in improving institutional performance.
And thirdly, to explore the mechanisms through which financial transparency can rebuild public trust and reinforce the legitimacy of National Public Establishments.

The **methodology** adopted for this study consists of a systematic review of the scientific literature, supplemented if applicable, as the article goes on by qualitative analysis of relevant case studies. In order to construct a robust conceptual framework, this study will draw on public publications, reports from international organizations, and public policy documents. The analysis will focus on dimensions concerning financial transparency, accountability, and the influence of institutional environments on the performance of NPEs.

The **expected contributions** of this study are multifaceted. To start, it aims at proposing a refined conceptual model that clarifies the nuances of the relationship between transparency and institutional performance. To continue, it also seeks to identify best practices in transparent governance and generate actionable recommendations for policymakers. To end, this research should help fill certain gaps in the literature by granting an integrated perspective on the challenges and opportunities that transparency presents for the public sector.

The manuscript is structured as follows: The first section outlines the conceptual framework for understanding governance and performance in NPEs. This is followed by a critical review of the literature on transparency and performance, with a focus on moderating factors. Lastly, the manuscript concludes with a discussion of practical implications and future research directions.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The mission of National Public Establishments (NPEs) is inherently connected with the public interest, placing them at the heart of both civic and political attention. Their decisions and actions directly influence the societal well-being, and their legitimacy is largely determined by their capacity to meet public needs effectively reassuring transparency, integrity, and accountability of public funds.

2.1 Definition and Key Features of National Public Establishments (NPEs)

NPEs form a distinct category of entities within the state's institutional and economic framework. They play a pivotal role in executing public policy. Legally, NPEs are generally defined as **public law** entities possessing some administrative and financial autonomy, yet remaining under the supervision of the central government or a territorial authority (Smith, 2018). Even though such autonomy is limited, it grants the NPEs some operational flexibility necessary to fulfill their **specific public service missions**.

Actually, these NPEs are created with precise objectives most often related to the provision of essential services including education, healthcare, transportation, or culture, the management of public infrastructure, or the regulation of key strategic sectors (Durand & Dubois, 2020). Their existence is justified by the need to perform functions that the private market is unableto fulfill efficiently or equitably, owing to either market failures or social equity concerns.

Accordingly, NPEs differ fundamentally from private enterprises differences that significantly affect their governance and performance evaluation. First, while private firms are predominantly driven by profit maximization for shareholders, NPIs pursue **multiple objectives** that go beyond financial profitability (Jones & Baker, 2019). Their missions frequently include delivering public value, ensuring territorial and social equity, fostering inclusive development, and safeguarding environmental sustainability. This makes it more difficult to weigh the various objectives and evaluate how successful they are.
Second, the **public oversight** that is applied to NPEs is more strict and multifaceted than their private-sector counterparts. Not only does it include financial and budgetary controls but also legal and regulatory compliance to ensure alignment according to the goals set by supervisory authorities (Martin & Dupont, 2021). This oversight is designed to guarantee that public resources are handled with responsibility and the public interest takes precedence over all other considerations.

2.2 Public Governance Concepts Applied to National Public Establishments (NPEs)

According to the public context, governance refers to the set of processes through which public authorities manage shared affairs and exercise power this includes interactions among the state, the private sector, and civil society (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1997). More precisely, the concept of **"good governance"** refers to an ideal model that public institutions aim to achieve characterized by **transparency**, **efficiency**, **accountability**, and **inclusiveness** (World Bank, 1992). Governance is not solely about the exercise of authority, but also about the manner how that authority is practiced emphasising on **legitimacy**, **participatory decision-making**, and **adherence to the rule of law**. This widened approach is especially relevant for National Public Establishments (NPEs), whose core mission is to serve the public interest, and whose legitimacy rely on aligning with these principles.
The pillars of good governance which are essential for enhancing the performance of NPEs are multifaceted and interdependent. Firstly, **transparency** entails easy and understandable access to information concerning the decisions, operations, and performance of public entities, thereby fostering trust and reducing opportunities for corruption (Kaufmann et al., 1999).

Secondly, **Accountability** means that NPEs and their leadership are held responsible for their actions and the use of public resources. This includes monitoring systems and enforcement mechanisms in cases of misconduct or poor performance (Schedler et al., 1999).
Thirdly, **Participation** refers to engaging citizens and stakeholders in the decision-making process, thereby increasing the legitimacy of public action and ensuring services align with societal needs (Pierre & Peters, 2000).
Fourth, **Rule of Law** warrants that NPEs operate within fair, consistently applied legal frameworks, enhancing predictability and legal certainty (UNESCAP, 2009).
Lastly, **Equality** promotes equal access to public services and opportunities, ensuring fairness, non-discrimination, and social justice in public policy outcomes.

In order to apply these principles effectively, NPEs rely on the combination of **internal and external governance mechanisms**. Internally, the **Board of Directors** plays a central role. Generally composed of government officials, independent experts, and occasionally civil society representatives, the board sets strategic directions, oversees executive leadership, and approves financial statements (World Bank, 2014). The Board must ensure the decisions align with the public mission and are made as referred to the good governance principles.

Furthermore, internal control systems and codes of conduct are also significant in maintaining integrity and operational efficiency. (OECD, 2015). Externally, NPEs operates under the supervision of a parent ministry or public authority are subject to oversight by a **supervisory ministry** or **public authority**, which exercises that their actions comply with national laws and align with government objectives.

Audits either internal or external notably national audit offices or independent bodies are vital tools for assessing the regularity, compliance, and performance of NPEs (International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions [INTOSAI], 2013). A well-balanced combination of these governance mechanisms is critical for navigating the complex obligations of NPIs and ensuring their effective contribution to public welfare.

2.3 Performance Measurement of NPEs

Measuring the **performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs)** is a complex endeavor that extends well beyond simple financial indicators, given the multifaceted nature of their missions. Contrary to private entities where performance is often measured primarily by profit maximization NPEs must balance financial sustainability with their public service obligations and broader public interests (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

Though not exclusive, **financial performance** remains a crucial dimension. It is commonly evaluated through indicators such as **spending efficiency**, which assesses the relationship between resources invested and outcomes achieved, and **budget management**, which considers the ability to adher to budget forecasts and optimize the use of public funds (OECD, 2017).

Specific financial ratios can also be employed to evaluate the financial health, solvency, and self-financing capacity of NPEs, by respecting constraints set by government oversight. However, a thorough assessment of performance must integrate **non-financial performance** dimensions that better reflect NPEs' societal impact contributions. These dimensions include : **service quality**, which examines how well services meet user expectations in terms of accessibility, reliability, and responsiveness (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This is frequently measured through satisfaction surveys and service quality audits.
Achievement of public mission objectives, which involves evaluating whether NPE effectively fulfills the purposes for which it was created, such as facilitating access to education, healthcare, cultural and economic development (Bouckaert & Van Dooren, 2003). This requires mission-specific performance indicators.
Stakeholder satisfaction, which goes beyond direct users to encompass citizens, institutional partners, employees, and civil society, whose perception on NPEs' activities are essential to their legitimacy and sustainability (Freeman, 1984).
Social and environmental impact, which assesses the positive or negative consequences of NPEs' operations on communities and the environment, with particular attention to sustainable development, social equity, and resource conservation (Schaltegger & Wagner, 2006).
Operational efficiency, which relates to NPEs' ability to deliver goods or services while minimizing resource waste, optimizing internal processes, and fostering innovation in work methods (Hood, 1995).

Nevertheless, **performance measurement in the public sector** meets **considerable challenges**. First, the multiplicity and sometimes conflicting objectives complicate the creation of synthetic, universally accepted indicators. Second, the intangible nature of many public services and the lack of market pricing make valuation difficult. Third, the difficulty to isolate the direct effects of NPEs' actions from external political, economic, or social influences can bias the analysis. Lastly, resistance to change and insufficient reliable data present a hinderance to robust and relevant performance of NPEs (Moynihan, 2008). These challenges underscore the necessity for a holistic and context-aware approach to adequately assess the contributions of NPEs to society.

2.4 Transparency as a Fundamental Governance Pillar

In the context of effective public governance, **transparency** is a fundamental pillar, particularly vital for National Public Establishments (NPEs). Transparency is a complex concept that extends beyond simple information disclosure. On one side, it demands easy and **proactive access to relevant information**, allowing citizens and stakeholders to understand the actions and decisions of public bodies (Hood, 2006). On the other side, it requires clarity in **decision-making**, i.e. the ability for the public to follow the reasoning and motivations behind political and administrative choices, as well as to comprehend the processes leading to those decisions (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch, 2012). Extensive but not comprehensible information cannot actually fulfill the true purpose of transparency.

Transparency appears in several **forms**, each reinforcing overall accountability. **Financial transparency** is undoubtedly the most recognized, involving the regular and detailed publication of budgets, expenditures, revenues, and audit reports (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002). It aims at ensuring responsible and efficient use of public funds. **Operational transparency** refers to the disclosure of working methods, internal procedures, and performance results of NPEs, permitting the evaluation of their effectiveness and compliance (Heald, 2006). Finally, **decision-making transparency** encompasses making public the decision processes, meeting agendas, minutes, and strategic justifications publicly available, thereby strengthening understanding and legitimacy of NPEs' actions (Roberts, 2006).

Transparency plays a crucial role for NPEs for several reasons. First, it acts as a robust **safeguard against corruption and abuse of power** (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). By exposing financial flows, contracts, and decision-making procedures, transparency creates an environment where fraud and fund misappropriation are more difficult to conceal, deterring illicit behavior. Second, transparency is a key factor for **legitimazing** NPEs by demonstrating their commitment to openness and accountability which builds credibility and reinforces their authority to manage public resources (Suchman, 1995). At th end, transparency is indispensable for building and **sustaining public trust** in state institutions. When citizens understand how their taxes are spent and how decisions are made, they are more likely to trust public administration and support its initiatives a fundamental basis for social stability and active civic participation (Rawls, 1971). To sum up, transparency is not just a sound management practice ; it is a sine qua non condition for democratic and effective governance of NPEs.

3. CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSPARENCY AND PERFORMANCE IN NATIONAL PUBLIC ESTABLISHMENTS (NPEs)

Understanding the link between transparency and the performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs) is a well-explored yet complex area of study, however the findings are often nuanced. This section delves into the theoretical bases of this relationship, evaluates empirical research that either supports or questions the positive effects of transparency, and clarifies moderating factors that complicate its interpretation.

3.1 Theoretical Foundations of the Transparency-Performance Link

Several theoretical perspectives offer insights into the relationship between transparency and NPE performance.
First, **agency theory**, originally developed by Jensen and Meckling (1976) for private enterprises, is extensively applied to the public sector. It describes a relationship between a principal (the State or citizens) and an agent (managers and NPEs), where the agent's interests may diverge from those of the principal. Central to this theory is the issue of **information asymmetry** because the agents have more knowledge about their actions than principals do. As a consequence, transparency acts as a vital mechanism to reduce this asymmetry, allowing principals to better monitor and assess agents' behavior, align interests, improve performance, and mitigate opportunistic actions (Eisenhardt, 1989 ; Mitnick, 1980).

Second, **legitimacy theory** (Suchman, 1995) suggests that organizations strive to conform to socially constructed norms, values, and beliefs in order to secure support and recognition from their environment. For NPEs, transparency is an essential strategy to establish and sustain legitimacy with citizens and stakeholders. By openly sharing information about their activities, governance, and results, NPEs signal their commitment to responsibility and good management, thereby enhancing their reputation and effectiveness.

Third, **stakeholder theory** (Freeman, 1984) widens the perspective by considering that organizational performance depends not only on owners (the State) but also on the organization's ability to meet the expectations of all stakeholders affected by or influencing its objectives (citizens, employees, suppliers, civil society, etc.). Transparency presents a means to enable NPEs to communicate openly with these diverse groups, manage their expectations, and build trust which can lead to stronger support, fewer conflicts, and ultimately better overall performance (Jones & Wicks, 1999).

Finally, **institutional theory** (Meyer & Rowan, 1977 ; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) focuses on the impact of the institutional environment on organizations. It argues that organizations adopt practices like transparency not only for technical efficiency but also to comply with normative and cognitive pressures from their environment. Consequently, transparency practices within NPEs may be driven by institutional pressures laws, regulations, and societal expectations aimed at reinforcing legitimacy and social acceptance, rather than a direct pursuit performance (Scott, 2008). These pressures can result in transparency practices that are not always directly improving performance but are crucial for the institution's continued existence.

Despite their differences, these theories collectively emphasize the multifaceted importance transparency in the operation and evaluation of NPEs.

3.2 Studies confirming a Positive Effect of Transparency on Performance

A significant number of empirical studies have highlighted the beneficial impact of transparency on the performance of public organizations, including National Public Establishments (NPEs). These studies reveal several mechanisms through which transparency delivers advantages.

Firstly, transparency is closely associated with **improved accountability** (Moynihan, 2008). By making information accessible, NPEs face greater public scrutiny, which encourages their leaders to act more responsibly and ethically, anticipating sanctions in case of mismanagement or corruption. For instance, research on budget transparency indicates that detailed publication of public expanditures can reduce corruption and enhance the efficiency of resource allocation (Bellver & Kaufmann, 2005).

Secondly, transparency enhances **investment attractiveness** and access to funding. NPEs recognized for their transparency and sound governance are often perceived as lower-risk by lenders and international investors, resulting in more favorable financing terms and an increased ability to carry out large-scale projects (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2001).

Thirdly, greater transparency is associated with better **resource optimization** and **enhanced operational efficiency**. When performance information reaches the publics, NPEs are encouraged to detect inefficiencies, optimize procedures, and increase productivity to maintain a strong reputation (Hood, 2006). Additionally, access to public data can drive both internal and external innovation, allowing external parties to propose solutions or analyze information to generate improvements (Janssen & Van den Hoven, 2015).

These positive outcomes are particularly pronounced under **enabling conditions**. These include a strong institutional framework with effective enforcement of laws, an engaged civil society capable of interpreting and utilizing disclosed information, and an culture of accountability within the public administration itself (Kaufmann et al., 1999). Without such conditions, transparency alone is unlikely to produce the anticipated benefits.

3.3 Studies Indicating a Null or Mixed Effect of Transparency

Despite strong theoretical arguments and empirical evidence supporting transparency, another strand of research points to its limitations sometimes finding no significant impact, or even negative effects, on the performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs). This diversity of outcomes necessitates an examination of the factors behind these mixed results.

One explanation involves the **costs tied to transparency**. Collecting, processing, publishing, and maintaining transparent information demands considerable financial and human resources, which can burden NPEs with limited budgets (Fung et al., 2007). When these costs surpass the benefits, the overall impact on performance may be negligible or adverse.

Furthermore, some studies identify "**window dressing**" or "symbolic transparency" (Ball, 2009), where NPEs technically fulfill transparency requirements by releasing large quantities of information that are often unclear, hard to interpret, or lacking meaningful content. In such cases, the goal is not true accountability but merely creating an appearance of compliance without genuine improvements in governance or performance.

In addition, stakeholders' limited ability to **absorb information poses another challenge**. Even when relevant data is available, citizens, media, and civil society organizations may lack the skills, time, or interest needed to effectively analyzethis information and hold institutions accountable. This phenomenon of "information overload" can obscure important insights, weakening transparency's intended impact (Hood, 2006).

Finally, transparency can sometimes produce unintended **negative effects**. For instance, revealing sensitive data may complicate strategic negotiations, expose competitive weaknesses (particularly for NPEs engaged in commercial activities), or cause unwarranted public alarm if information is misunderstood (Etzioni, 2010). These cases highlight the complexity of applying transparency principles uniformly without considering the specific context.

3.4 Moderating Factors Influencing the Transparency-Performance Relationship

The analysis of mixed results indicates that the link between transparency and the performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs) is not straightforward but is significantly **shaped by various moderating factors**. These factors spanning contextual, organizational, and stakeholder dimensions determine whether and how transparency leads to improved performance.

Contextual and Institutional Factors:

- A robust **rule of law**, an independent and **effective judiciary**, and **credible anti-corruption** measures are essential foundations (Kaufmann et al., 1999). Transparency is more likely to have a positive impact in an environment where disclosed information can be used to hold people accountable and where violations are sanctioned. In weak institutional contexts, transparency alone may have little effect.

- Countries with more developed economies and democratic political systems usually possess stronger institutional frameworks and more robust civic capacities, which facilitate the adoption and success of transparency practices (Holmberg & Rothstein, 2019).
- A dynamic civil society, active non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and a free, investigative media are key actors to transform information into pressures accountability (Florini, 2007). They act as watchdogs to analyze, publicize, and critique information publicly.
- The presence of clear laws for information access, rigorous accounting and auditing norms, and effective enforcement mechanisms are necessary to formalize and uphold tranparency requirements (Fox, 2007).

Organizational Factors Specific to NPEs:

- An internal culture that promotes openness, integrity, and accountability, supported by dedicated **leadership**, strongly facilitates effective transparency. On the other hand, cultures marked by secrecy or lack of responsibility can hinder transparency initiatives (Schein, 2017).
- The ability of NPEs to be transparent depends on their resources. This includes **skilled personnel** to collect and manage data, robust **information systems**, and **technical expertise** to interpret and present information clearly (Bertot et al., 2010).
- **Corruption** and **abuse of power** risks vary across sectors. **NPEs in high-risk sectors** such as extractive industries or public infrastructure procurement may gain disproportionately greater benefits from transparency than those in lower-risk areas (Transparency International, 2017).
- Larger or more complex NPEs often face challenges in maintaining comprehensive transparency due to dispersed information and multiple layers of decision-making, necessitating more sophisticated transparency strategies (PwC, 2015).

Stakeholder-Related Factors:

- The demand for transparency and the ability of citizens to monitor institutions are crucial. An informed and engaged public can transform transparency from mere information disclosure into active accountability demands (Scharpf, 1999).
- Stakeholders play a vital role by scrutinizing disclosed information, exposing shortcomings, and advocating reforms, thereby amplifying transparency's influence (Fox, 2007).
- Independent audit institutions (such as Supreme Audit Institutions) and parliaments act as crucial enablers of transparency and accountability by translating financial information into political action and policy reforms (INTOSAI, 2013).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of transparency as a driver of enhanced performance in NPEs is not automatic. It depends on a complex interaction of contextual, organizational, and stakeholder-related factors that shape the capacity for meaningful action.

3.5 Summary of Contributions and Limitations in the Literature

An extensive review of the scientific literature on the relationship between transparency and the performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs) reveals both siggnificant agreements and notable divergences. In terms of consensus, it is widely recognized that transparency whether financial, operational, or related to decision-making is a cornerstone of good public governance (World Bank, 1992 ; UNDP, 1997). There is general consensus that transparency can potentially enhance accountability within NPIs, reduce corruption and abuse of power, and ultimately strengthen public trust in these institutions (Kaufmann et al., 1999 ; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Agency theory, legitimacy theory, and stakeholder theory converge in explaining the mechanisms through which transparency can positively influence performance by reducing information asymmetry and reinforcing organizational legitimacy (Eisenhardt, 1989 ; Freeman, 1984 ; Suchman, 1995). However, **divergences** are clearly reflected in the empirical findings, which do not always show a direct and unambiguous impact of transparency on performance. This inconsistency suggests that the relationship is not linear but strongly contingent on moderating factors (Heald, 2006).

Furthermore, research emphasizes that a simple information disclosure is not enough. The effectiveness of transparency depends greatly on the strength of the surrounding institutions (such as the rule of law and judicial system), the ability of stakeholders to interpret and utilize the information, the organizational culture of NPEs, and the engagement level of civil society (Fox, 2007 ; Hood, 2006). On top of that, transparency's costs or the practice of "symbolic transparency" can limit or even negate its expected benefits (Fung et al., 2007 ; Ball, 2009).

This critical review also identifies several **important gaps for future research**. First, although many moderating factors have been identified, few studies have systematically explored the interactions among these factors and their combined effect on the transparency-performance relationship in specific NPE contexts. It would be relevant to analyze how the absence or weakness of certain moderating factors (such as an inactive civil society or a weak regulatory framework) can undermine transparency efforts, even when the initial intentions are good. Second, the literature often lacks large-scale, in-depth empirical studies, especially in developing countries or emerging economies, where institutional and governance challenges are particularly acute and NPEs play a dominant role. Contextual and comparative analyses could provide valuable insights into specificities and effective levers for these environments. Lastly, while financial transparency is relatively well studied, the research on the impact of non-financial forms of transparency such as operational or decision-making transparency on NPE performance remains underexplored, offering promising directions for future inquiry.

4. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This section seeks to synthesize the main insights from the literature review, highlight practical implications for the governance of National Public Establishments (NPEs), and identify directions for future research.

4.1 Summary of Key Findings

The literature review uncovers a complex reality regarding the relationship between transparency and the performance of NPEs. There is clear agreement that transparency is a cornerstone of good governance, valued for its role in enhancing accountability, curbing corruption, and building public trust (Kaufmann et al., 1999 ; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Moreover, theoretical frameworks such as agency theory, legitimacy theory, and stakeholder theory support this view by explaining how transparency can reduce information asymmetry, strengthen organizational legitimacy, and better align stakeholder interests (Eisenhardt, 1989 ; Freeman, 1984 ; Suchman, 1995).

Nevertheless, **empirical findings** present considerable **divergences**, demonstrating that the link between transparency and performance is neither simple nor direct. To add, the effectiveness of transparency is significantly influenced by several **moderating factors**, including the robustness of institutional frameworks (e.g., rule of law, judiciary), the level of socio-political development, stakeholders' ability to comprehend and utilize disclosed information, and the internal culture of NPEs (Fox, 2007 ; Hood, 2006).

Moreover, limitations related to the costs of transparency or to superficial forms of transparency can undermine its potential benefits (Fung et al., 2007). Therefore, transparency should not be viewed as a universal solution but rather as a potent instrument whose impact depends critically on the context of its application and the manner in which it is managed.

4.2 Practical Implications for the Governance of National Public Establishments (NPEs)

The insights gained from this literature review point to several key practical implications for improving the governance and performance of NPEs.

For **policymakers**, it is essential to recognize that passing transparency laws alone is insufficient. Real impact depends on building and reinforcing a strong institutional framework, marked by an effective **rule of law**, an independent judiciary, and credible anti-corruption systems (Kaufmann et al., 1999). Public policies should focus on creating conditions that enable transparency to function effectively as a tool for accountability and organizational improvement.

Leaders within NPEs have a critical role in transforming transparency principles into tangible, effective actions. This begins with **cultivating an organizational culture that values transparency and accountability**. Strong leadership that emphasizes ethics and openness is vital to framing transparency not as a constraint, but as a value-added asset (Schein, 2017).

Simultaneously, **strategic investment in information systems and skills** are necessary to ensure the reliable, relevant, and understandable collection, processing, and dissemination of information (Bertot et al., 2010). It is also crucial to **adopt transparency practices to each NPE's** specific context taking into account its mission, sectoral risks (such as corruption vulnerability), and organizational size rather than applying uniform solutions. Additionally, **establishing rigorous budgeting and oversight procedures** is essential to guarantee the efficient and effective use of public resources.

For **civil society**, including the media and non-governmental organizations, they play a vital role in **monitoring and promoting transparency**. By analyzing and sharing public information, they can apply constructive pressure on NPEs, demand accountability, and help ensure transparency leads to meaningful responsibility (Fox, 2007 ; Florini, 2007).

4.3 Limitations of the Current Study

It is important to recognize the **limitations of this current study**, which primarily depends on a systematic review of existing literature. As a result, the findings rely heavily on the **quality and availability of existing studies**. Besides, conclusions drawn from the interpretation and synthesis of secondary sources may overlook subtle nuances of the phenomena or specificities of less-documented contexts.

Furthermore, the **lack of original empirical analysis** restricts the ability to directly test hypotheses within a specific framework or to provide newl, context-specific evidence. This approach also does not capture temporal changes or the complex interactions among variables in real-world, contemporary environments.

4.4 Future Research Directions

Limitations open naturally several promising points for future research that could enrich our understanding of governance and performance in NPEs.
One key direction is to undertake **empirical studies**, whether **quantitative, qualitative, or comparative case studies**. Quantitative research could analyze large data on transparency and performance across a large sample of NPEs to statistically assess the impact of identified moderating factors. Qualitative studies, involving in-depth interviews and document analysis, would reveal the complex processes through which transparency is implemented and perceived in specific organizational settings. Comparative case studies would allow for the exploration of similarities and differences in transparency effectiveness among various NPEs or countries.

Further **investigation into new moderating or mediating factors**, which have been underexplored in the existing literature, would also be valuable. This might include the impact of digital technologies on transparency, the role of collaborative networks among NPEs, or the impact of external shocks (such as economic or health crises) on transparency and performance dynamics.

Additionally, a **research focusing on transparency's effects within specific geographic or sectoral contexts** is highly encouraged. For example, an in-depth **study of Madagascar**, as highlighted in the initial document concerning audit and control of Administrative Public Establishments, could offer important insights into the specific challenges and opportunities in that country. Such work would contextualize governance and transparency concepts within particular institutional and socio-economic environments.

Finally, **expanding the scope of research beyond traditional financial performance** indicators would be beneficial. Future studies could explore how transparency influences **innovation in NPEs**, their crisis **resilience**, and ongoing **improvements in public service quality**. These efforts could contribute to developing more comprehensive performance evaluation frameworks for NPIs, aligning them more closely with the public interest.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this article has aimed to examine the complex and multifaceted relationship between transparency and the performance of National Public Establishments (NPEs). Our primary **focus** was to understand how transparency, as a fundamental element of governance, impacts NPE performance, while identifying the contextual, organizational, and stakeholder-related factors that influence this dynamic. Through a critical review of the literature, we have highlighted **several important insights**.

It has been established that transparency is a fundamental pillar of good public governance, capable of enhancing accountability, preventing corruption, and building public trust (Kaufmann et al., 1999 ; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Agency theory, legitimacy theory, and stakeholder theory offer valuable frameworks to explain the mechanisms involved (Eisenhardt, 1989 ; Freeman, 1984; Suchman, 1995).

Nevertheless, it is vital to emphasize that **transparency is not a universal solution**, and its effectiveness cannot be taken for granted. Empirical evidence frequently reveals mixed outcomes, underscoring that the impact transparency is highly contingent upon **specific contextual factors**. These factors include the strength and quality of the institutional environment (such as the rule of law and judicial independence), the ability of civil society to serve as a counterbalance, the resources and organizational culture of NPEs, as well as the unique characteristics of their missions and environments (Fox, 2007; Hood, 2006). Merely disclosing information without a supportive institutional framework or stakeholders equipped to utilize that information is unlikely to lead to meaningful improvements in performance. In contrast, well-designed and contextualized transparency can transform information into effective tools for driving change, efficiency, and legitimacy.

In the end, ensuring sustainable performance in NPEs, in service of the public interest, demands a **comprehensive governance approach**. Transparency must be embedded within a governance ecosystem that includes robust institutions, functional accountability mechanisms, engaged citizen participation, and a supportive organizational culture. It is only through the integration of these factors that public enterprises can truly leverage the potential of transparency to enhance governance, build legitimacy, and maximize their socio-economic impact.

Future research should continue to explore these complex relationships to provide policymakers with the insights needed to develop governance strategies that are both effective and appropriately adapted to their specific contexts.

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