Future of Work and Digital Management Journal

Article type:
Original Research

Article history:
Received 07 May 2025
Revised 27 June 2025
Accepted 12 August 2025
Published online 01 September 2025

Factor Analysis of the Components of Managers' Soft Governance in Government Organizations

Masoumeh. Yousefi Ghasabsaraei[1], Masoud. Yousefzadeh[2*], Mohammad Reza. Bagherzadeh[1]

1 Department of Public Administration, QaS.C., Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr, Iran
2 Department of Educational Sciences, QaS.C., Islamic Azad University, Qaemshahr, Iran

Corresponding author email address:
2140919890@iau.ir

How to cite this article:
Yousefi Ghasabsaraei, M., Yousefzadeh, M., & Bagherzadeh, M. R., (2025). Factor Analysis of the Components of Managers' Soft Governance in Government Organizations. *Future of Work and Digital Management Journal, 3*(3), 1-19.
https://doi.org/10.61838/fwdmj.335

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to design and explain a model of managers' soft governance in government organizations. In terms of its methodological nature, the present study employed a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches. The statistical sample in the qualitative phase consisted of 30 experts and specialists in the field of public administration, while the quantitative phase included 382 managers and employees of government organizations. In the qualitative phase, theoretical literature review and structured interviews with experts selected through snowball sampling were used to analyze the data and identify the relevant factors. In the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was first distributed using nonprobability sampling, and the required data were collected. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using confirmatory factor analysis and PLS software to evaluate the model. Accordingly, eight dimensions of soft governance were identified: perceived support, organizational justice, trust, participation, organizational learning, communication, ethical leadership, and humility. The relationships among these dimensions were subsequently determined through statistical analysis.

Keywords: Soft Governance, Government Organizations, Iran

Introduction

Contemporary public organizations operate in an environment characterized by institutional complexity, increasing stakeholder expectations, rapid technological change, knowledge intensity, interorganizational interdependence, and growing demands for transparency, accountability, participation, and responsiveness. Under such conditions, traditional governance mechanisms based predominantly on formal authority, hierarchical control, legal mandates, sanctions, and standardized administrative procedures may no longer be sufficient to ensure organizational effectiveness. Although formal rules and coercive mechanisms remain indispensable to public administration, the effective coordination of organizational actors increasingly depends on complementary mechanisms such as trust, persuasion, shared norms, participation, communication, organizational learning, ethical leadership, and voluntary commitment. This development has contributed to growing scholarly interest in the concept of **soft governance**, which emphasizes the capacity to coordinate behavior and achieve collective objectives through relational, normative, cognitive, and participatory mechanisms rather than relying exclusively on command-and-control arrangements. Soft governance therefore represents an important extension of conventional governance thinking by recognizing that managerial influence can be exercised through legitimacy, cooperation, knowledge, values, and interpersonal relationships as well as through formal power [1-3].

The distinction between hard and soft forms of governance is fundamental to understanding this shift. Hard governance is generally associated with binding laws, formal regulations, hierarchical authority, contractual obligations, monitoring systems, and enforceable sanctions, whereas soft governance relies more heavily on guidelines, shared expectations, voluntary standards, negotiation, persuasion, networks, benchmarking, and social or professional norms. Nevertheless, these two modes should not necessarily be regarded as mutually exclusive. In practice, organizations and institutional systems often combine hard and soft mechanisms to regulate behavior and coordinate activities. The literature on soft law and governance demonstrates that nonbinding arrangements can exercise substantial influence despite lacking the formal enforceability traditionally associated with law or administrative authority [4, 5]. Indeed, unofficial rules and guidelines may produce significant practical consequences because organizational actors perceive them as legitimate, appropriate, professionally expected, or strategically advantageous. Brandsen et al. demonstrated the inherently ambiguous but consequential status of such unofficial governance arrangements, showing that apparently “soft” instruments may create behavioral effects comparable to those of formal requirements [6]. More recently, historical analyses of large projects have further emphasized that effective governance commonly depends on configurations of both hard and soft mechanisms rather than the isolated application of either mode [7].

The relevance of soft governance is especially apparent in complex public-sector settings, where multiple actors with different professional identities, institutional responsibilities, interests, and sources of authority must cooperate in accomplishing collective goals. Government organizations cannot rely exclusively on managerial orders because many organizational outcomes require discretionary effort, information exchange, professional judgment, collaboration, and acceptance by employees. Soft governance can facilitate such coordination by cultivating conditions in which individuals willingly align their behavior with organizational objectives. Experiences of European governance illustrate how coordination may occur through consensus-building, policy learning, benchmarking, mutual adjustment, and other noncoercive instruments. Research on European governance has shown that soft modes of coordination can become institutionalized as meaningful mechanisms through which policy priorities are communicated and organizational or national practices are shaped [8]. In educational governance, for example, soft power and consensus-oriented coordination have been used to influence national and organizational priorities without necessarily replacing formal authority [9]. Earlier work on European learning spaces similarly demonstrated how information exchange, comparison, networking, and mutual learning can function as soft governance technologies capable of shaping institutional behavior across organizational and national boundaries [10].

At the organizational level, soft governance is closely associated with the management of intangible resources and relational processes. Unlike traditional administrative approaches that emphasize structures, procedures, and positional authority, soft governance recognizes that organizational performance also depends on employees’ perceptions, social relationships, emotional experiences, knowledge-sharing behavior, and willingness to cooperate. This perspective is consistent with the broader concept of organizational soft power, according to which organizations influence stakeholders not simply through material resources or formal authority but also through credibility, values, reputation, relationships, and attractive organizational practices. Research has shown that emotions themselves can function as organizational soft power because emotional dynamics influence identification, relationships, commitment, and collective action [11]. Similarly, organizational soft power has been linked to human resource management, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable performance, suggesting that organizations can enhance long-term effectiveness through practices that generate commitment and legitimacy rather than merely imposing compliance [12]. The application of soft-power reasoning to open knowledge also demonstrates how influence may be generated through openness, intellectual exchange, accessibility, and relationship-building, further highlighting the importance of noncoercive resources in contemporary organizations [13].

One particularly important domain of soft governance concerns knowledge and organizational learning. Government organizations are increasingly knowledge-intensive institutions in which effective decision-making depends on the acquisition, transfer, integration, and use of information distributed across individuals and organizational units. Consequently, governance mechanisms must not only regulate formal responsibilities but also create conditions conducive to voluntary knowledge sharing. Foss et al. argued that knowledge-sharing behavior should be examined through multiple levels of analysis and emphasized the importance of governance mechanisms in facilitating or constraining the exchange of organizational knowledge [14]. This issue is particularly salient in the public sector, where organizational characteristics, departmental boundaries, professional specialization, and bureaucratic structures can significantly influence interdepartmental knowledge sharing [15]. Research on knowledge governance has similarly highlighted the relationship between governance arrangements and organizational or project performance, indicating that the management of knowledge flows is not merely a technical issue but also a governance concern [16]. From a systems perspective, organizational knowledge governance encompasses interconnected dimensions that influence the creation, exchange, utilization, and institutionalization of knowledge [17]. Accordingly, organizational learning can be regarded as an essential dimension of soft governance because learning depends substantially on empowerment, communication, experimentation, teamwork, knowledge transfer, and shared understanding rather than formal authority alone.

Soft governance is also strongly associated with the quality of leadership and interpersonal relationships. In contemporary organizations, managerial effectiveness increasingly depends on leaders' ability to build trust, facilitate participation, empower employees, communicate meaning, demonstrate fairness, and establish ethical legitimacy. Leadership practices based exclusively on control may produce formal compliance without creating genuine commitment. Conversely, leadership approaches that emphasize empowerment and mentoring can strengthen employee agency and encourage individuals to contribute beyond narrowly prescribed job requirements [18]. Cultural and social foundations also shape the meaning and effectiveness of leadership, demonstrating that governance practices must be interpreted within the relational and institutional contexts in which managers and employees interact [19]. Ethical leadership is particularly relevant to soft governance because employees' acceptance of managerial influence depends partly on perceptions of fairness, integrity, ethical guidance, responsible power sharing, and consistency between managerial discourse and behavior. Furthermore, employee emotional intelligence can contribute to citizenship behavior and job performance by improving interpersonal interactions and employees' capacity to understand and regulate workplace relationships [20]. These findings support the view that soft governance involves not only institutional arrangements but also the micro-level behavioral processes through which managers create cooperation and voluntary alignment.

Trust, organizational justice, perceived organizational support, and participation constitute additional relational foundations of soft governance. Trust reduces the need for extensive monitoring because actors who perceive managers and colleagues as honest, competent, consistent, and open are more willing to accept vulnerability and cooperate. Organizational justice similarly affects whether managerial decisions and organizational procedures are interpreted as legitimate. When employees perceive distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, they are more likely to regard organizational authority as fair and worthy of voluntary support. Perceived support can reinforce these processes by communicating that the organization values employee contributions and is attentive to their interests, thereby strengthening reciprocal commitment. Participation additionally transforms employees from passive recipients of managerial decisions into active contributors to organizational governance through consultation, joint decision-making, self-management, and acceptance of responsibility. These relational mechanisms are particularly important in public organizations, where formal bureaucratic structures must coexist with professional autonomy and where implementation frequently depends on employee discretion. Broader studies of the future of governance likewise indicate movement toward more adaptive, participatory, networked, knowledge-based, and responsive approaches, increasing the strategic importance of these softer coordination mechanisms [21].

Communication is another central mechanism through which soft governance is enacted. Formal structures may specify authority relationships, but managers cannot generate meaningful coordination unless organizational members have access to timely, accurate, complete, and relevant information and receive appropriate feedback. Communication enables employees to understand expectations, interpret organizational priorities, resolve ambiguities, exchange knowledge, and coordinate interdependent activities. More importantly, communication provides the medium through which trust, ethical guidance, support, learning, and participation become operational realities rather than abstract organizational values. Technological developments have expanded the importance of information transparency and accessibility in governance. For example, research on government open-data platforms indicates that public-sector information infrastructures can influence organizational behavior and broader governance outcomes by increasing access to information and creating new accountability and stakeholder pressures [22]. Similarly, emerging governance challenges associated with artificial intelligence have stimulated the development of soft-law programs based on voluntary standards, principles, guidelines, and cooperative mechanisms, demonstrating the continued relevance of flexible and information-intensive governance arrangements in rapidly changing environments [23].

Humility represents another increasingly relevant managerial quality within a soft governance framework. Managerial humility involves the willingness to reassess one’s own assumptions, acknowledge personal limitations, recognize the strengths and contributions of others, learn from employees, and remain open to new ideas and feedback. These characteristics are particularly important in knowledge-intensive and uncertain environments because managers cannot reasonably assume that hierarchical position provides exclusive access to expertise. Humility therefore complements participation and organizational learning by reducing status barriers and legitimizing upward communication. It also reinforces ethical leadership because leaders who acknowledge limitations and value subordinate contributions are more likely to be perceived as authentic and respectful. Such relational qualities can make governance more adaptive by shifting managerial practice from unilateral direction toward interaction, dialogue, and collective problem-solving. This orientation corresponds with recent theoretical developments suggesting that soft governance can play a central role in designing organizations expected to pursue multiple purposes simultaneously. In dual-purpose organizations, soft governance mechanisms can help reconcile competing objectives by influencing interpretation, commitment, and coordination without requiring rigid structural separation or excessive formalization [24].

These considerations are especially relevant to government organizations because public managers operate under conditions of multiple accountability, political and administrative constraints, diverse stakeholder expectations, formalized procedures, and limited flexibility in the use of conventional material incentives. In such environments, managers frequently need to obtain cooperation through legitimacy, communication, professional respect, trust, learning, and shared purpose. Soft governance therefore does not imply the abandonment of regulation or formal accountability; rather, it concerns the managerial mechanisms that complement formal governance and improve its effectiveness. The coexistence of hard and soft governance can be understood as a continuum in which formal mechanisms provide institutional stability while relational mechanisms create adaptability and voluntary cooperation. Evidence from governance research increasingly supports this integrative perspective, indicating that soft mechanisms can influence organizational conduct even when formal authority remains structurally dominant [5, 7]. Consequently, identifying the specific organizational dimensions through which managers enact soft governance is important both theoretically and practically.

Despite the growing literature, several conceptual gaps remain. Much of the existing research has examined soft governance at macro-level, supranational, regulatory, policy, or interorganizational levels, particularly in relation to soft law, European governance, unofficial guidelines, education policy, and emerging technologies [4, 6, 9, 23]. Other studies have investigated particular organizational mechanisms—such as knowledge sharing, soft power, leadership, knowledge governance, or open information—without integrating them into a multidimensional managerial model of soft governance [11, 13, 14, 16]. Although soft technologies have been recognized as essential instruments for effective governance and soft governance has been introduced as an important alternative or complement to conventional administrative mechanisms, empirical clarification of its managerial components within government organizations remains limited [1, 2]. Moreover, while government soft power has been conceptually associated with functions of governance, further research is required to translate this broad concept into empirically measurable organizational dimensions [3]. Establishing such dimensions is essential for moving from general conceptual discussions toward a validated model that can guide managerial assessment and organizational development.

Accordingly, the present study conceptualizes managers' soft governance as a multidimensional organizational phenomenon incorporating perceived support, organizational justice, trust, participation, organizational learning, communication, ethical leadership, and humility. These dimensions collectively represent mechanisms through which managers can influence employees and coordinate organizational action without depending solely on formal coercion. Examining these dimensions together provides an opportunity to integrate structural, behavioral, relational, ethical, and knowledge-oriented perspectives on governance. Such an integrated model is particularly valuable in government organizations, where formal bureaucracy remains necessary but must increasingly be complemented by flexible mechanisms capable of fostering cooperation, knowledge exchange, responsiveness, legitimacy, and employee engagement. By empirically examining the factor structure of these components, the study can contribute to the conceptual development of soft governance while offering public managers a more systematic basis for understanding the noncoercive mechanisms available for directing and coordinating organizational behavior.

Therefore, the aim of the present study was to identify, validate, and empirically explain the components of managers' soft governance and to develop a factor-analytic model of soft governance in government organizations.

Methodology

In terms of purpose, the present study was applied research, and with respect to the nature of the data, it was classified as mixed-methods research. Using a sequential exploratory strategy, the study sought to explain a soft governance model for government organizations. The first phase began with a qualitative approach, in which experts were recruited to identify the relevant components. Participants were required to meet three key criteria: having an academic background in public administration, organizational behavior, or public policy; having at least five years of managerial or research experience related to governance; and having the willingness and availability to participate in interviews and share their lived experiences. Accordingly, participants were selected through snowball sampling until theoretical saturation was achieved, resulting in a final qualitative sample of 30 experts. To enhance the credibility and transferability of the findings from this phase, member checking and intra-coder agreement assessment were employed to ensure the validity of the identified dimensions, including perceived support, organizational justice, trust, participation, organizational learning, communication, ethical leadership, and humility.

In the second phase, the study adopted a quantitative approach to test the conceptual model and determine the effect coefficients among the components. The statistical population of this phase consisted of employees of government organizations. Based on Cochran's formula for finite populations, the final sample size was determined to be 382 participants. Data were collected using nonprobability convenience sampling, and a researcher-developed questionnaire derived from the findings of the qualitative phase was employed as the research instrument. The validity and reliability of the instrument were rigorously assessed using convergent validity through average variance extracted (AVE), discriminant validity based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability (CR). Given the exploratory nature of the study and the need to emphasize the model's predictive capability, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed using SmartPLS software. Finally, after assessing model fit at both the measurement and structural levels, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to ensure the absence of common method bias (CMB), thereby establishing the robustness of the findings against potential validity threats.

Findings and Results

To develop the soft governance model, the researchers attempted to identify clear and measurable indicators for the study constructs. Accordingly, through a review of the literature and searches among previous articles and studies relating to each of the main constructs, the components were first identified, followed by their corresponding indicators. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Dimensions of the Initial Conceptual Model of the Study

No.	Component	Indicator	Source
1	Organizational justice dimensions	Procedural justice; distributive justice; interactional justice	Niehoff & Moorman (1993)
2	Trust	Honesty; competence; consistency; loyalty; openness; concern	Shelton (2002); Robbins (2006)
3	Participation	Information sharing; consultation; joint decision-making; self-management; acceptance of responsibility	Gillies (1983)
4	Ethical leadership	People orientation; fairness; power sharing; concern for sustainability; ethical guidance; role clarification	Kalshoven et al. (2011)
5	Perceived support	Commitment; planning; actions; evaluation	Eisenberger et al. (1986); Hopkins (2006)
6	Humility	Willingness to engage in self-review; appreciation of others' strengths; appreciation of subordinates' contributions; willingness to learn; openness to new ideas and feedback	Owens et al. (2013)

7	Organizational learning	Clarity of mission and goals; empowerment; experimentation; knowledge transfer; teamwork and group problem-solving	Goh & Richards (1997)
8	Communication	Timely information; appropriate information; accurate information; complete information; rapid information; feedback	Pourrashidi (2010)

In the next step, the Delphi technique was employed to validate the identified indicators. The Delphi technique is one of the methods used to acquire collective knowledge. At this stage, structured expert interviews were conducted with 30 academic experts and government managers, who were asked to indicate the importance of each identified indicator in relation to soft governance. Data obtained from the structured interviews were analyzed using a mean-score test to identify the indicators approved by the experts. Based on the results, five indicators with mean scores below 3 were eliminated, and 35 indicators were consequently retained. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of the Mean-Score Test

Component	Indicator	Mean Score	Result	Component	Indicator	Mean Score	Result	Component	Indicator	Mean Score	Result
Perceived support	Commitment	3.74	Retained	Participation	Information sharing	3.24	Retained	Communication	Accurate information	3.19	Retained
	Planning	3.36	Retained		Consultation	4.78	Retained		Complete information	3.97	Retained
	Actions	3.07	Retained		Joint decision-making	4.21	Retained		Rapid information	4.63	Retained
	Evaluation	3.40	Retained		Self-management	4.14	Retained		Feedback	4.06	Retained
Organizational justice	Procedural justice	3.67	Retained		Acceptance of responsibility	3.93	Retained	Organizational learning	Clarity of mission and goals	4.44	Retained
	Distributive justice	3.79	Retained	Ethical leadership	People orientation	3.85	Retained		Empowerment	4.25	Retained
	Interactional justice	3.81	Retained		Fairness	4.98	Retained		Experimentation	2.35	Eliminated
Trust	Honesty	4.53	Retained		Power sharing	4.55	Retained		Knowledge transfer	4.83	Retained
	Competence	3.48	Retained		Concern for sustainability	3.21	Retained		Teamwork and group problem-solving	3.61	Retained
	Consistency	3.22	Retained		Ethical guidance	3.56	Retained	Humility	Willingness to engage in self-review	4.11	Retained
	Loyalty	2.86	Eliminated		Role clarification	4.09	Retained		Appreciation of others’ strengths	4.32	Retained
	Openness	3.44	Retained	Communication	Timely information	4.37	Retained		Appreciation of subordinates’ contributions	4.28	Retained
	Concern	2.79	Eliminated		Appropriate information	2.94	Eliminated		Willingness to learn	2.76	Eliminated
									Openness to new ideas and feedback	3.41	Retained

Following validation of the identified indicators, quantitative analysis was employed in the next stage to develop the soft governance model for government organizations. Accordingly, the questionnaire was distributed among the sample comprising 382 managers, experts, and employees of government organizations across the country. The data collected from the study sample were used for statistical analyses and model estimation using SPSS and SmartPLS. Table 3 presents the descriptive findings.

Table 3

Descriptive Findings

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Age	Frequency	Percentage	Education	Frequency	Percentage	Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Female	128	33.50	Under 30	45	11.78	High school diploma/associate degree	8	2.09	Less than 10 years	54	14.13
Male	245	64.13	30–40	176	46.07	Bachelor's degree	183	47.90	10–20 years	191	50.00
No response	9	2.35	41–50	107	28.01	Master's degree	177	46.33	21–30 years	125	32.72
Total	382	100	Over 50	45	11.78	Doctoral degree	5	1.30	More than 30 years	3	0.78
			No response	9	2.35	No response	9	2.35	No response	9	2.35
			Total	382	100	Total	382	100	Total	382	100

To explain the relationships among the variables, the normality of the variables was initially examined using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. In this test, when the significance level obtained from the analysis is greater than the alpha level of 0.05, the data are considered normally distributed. As shown in Table 4, the significance levels for all study variables were greater than 0.05; therefore, the collected data for the study variables were considered normally distributed.

Table 4

Normality Test for the Study Variables

Variable	Test Statistic	Significance Level	Result	Variable	Test Statistic	Significance Level	Result
Perceived support	0.087	0.123	Normal	Ethical leadership	0.302	0.081	Normal
Organizational justice	0.183	0.341	Normal	Communication	0.125	0.153	Normal
Trust	0.193	0.214	Normal	Organizational learning	0.328	0.330	Normal
Participation	0.053	0.566	Normal	Humility	0.291	0.288	Normal

Furthermore, because all data were collected using a single questionnaire, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess common method bias (CMB) and ensure that such bias did not threaten the validity of the findings. Based on the results of this test, the variance explained by the first factor was 25%. Because this value was below the 50% threshold commonly used to indicate common method bias, it was concluded that common method bias was not present in the study data and that the subsequent analytical results were not subject to serious methodological bias. Accordingly, confirmatory factor analysis was performed separately for each dimension of soft governance. At this stage, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in two steps. First-order factor analysis was performed to determine whether the selected indicators demonstrated adequate accuracy in measuring their respective constructs. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted to determine whether the latent factors measured through the components and observed variables were themselves influenced by a more fundamental underlying latent variable at a higher level (Mohsenin & Esfidani, 2014). The factor analysis results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Results of First-Order Factor Analysis

Indicator	Item	Factor Loading	t-value	Result	Indicator	Item	Factor Loading	t-value	Result	Indicator	Item	Factor Loading	t-value	Result
Commitment	Q1	0.685	16.789	Retained	Information sharing	Q31	0.398	0.741	Eliminated	Accurate information	Q60	0.711	17.137	Retained
	Q2	0.678	18.649	Retained		Q32	0.305	0.643	Eliminated		Q61	0.736	23.718	Retained
Planning	Q3	0.636	13.687	Retained	Consultation	Q33	0.464	16.282	Retained	Complete information	Q62	0.592	14.967	Retained
	Q4	0.737	16.743	Retained		Q34	0.407	9.580	Retained		Q63	0.602	33.435	Retained
Actions	Q5	0.649	21.474	Retained	Joint decision-making	Q35	0.440	23.605	Retained	Rapid information	Q64	0.397	1.162	Eliminated
	Q6	0.587	23.741	Retained		Q36	0.654	18.752	Retained		Q65	0.167	0.892	Eliminated
Evaluation	Q7	0.631	17.720	Retained	Self-management	Q37	0.694	13.790	Retained	Feedback	Q66	0.693	5.013	Retained
	Q8	0.729	15.542	Retained		Q38	0.723	22.227	Retained		Q67	0.722	9.119	Retained
Procedural justice	Q9	0.589	19.558	Retained	Acceptance of responsibility	Q39	0.734	11.354	Retained	Clarity of mission and goals	Q68	0.524	8.258	Retained
	Q10	0.581	10.253	Retained		Q40	0.484	8.905	Retained		Q69	0.513	14.194	Retained
	Q11	0.738	18.594	Retained	People orientation	Q41	0.349	1.013	Eliminated	Empowerment	Q70	0.443	7.057	Retained
	Q12	0.535	17.923	Retained		Q42	0.437	16.548	Retained		Q71	0.423	6.320	Retained
Distributive justice	Q13	0.789	16.457	Retained		Q43	0.457	17.204	Retained	Knowledge transfer	Q72	0.415	4.257	Retained
	Q14	0.635	25.071	Retained		Q44	0.410	20.026	Retained		Q73	0.674	3.801	Retained
	Q15	0.626	15.534	Retained	Fairness	Q45	0.338	1.609	Eliminated	Teamwork and group problem-solving	Q74	0.682	22.693	Retained
	Q16	0.840	17.720	Retained		Q46	0.659	16.076	Retained		Q75	0.677	15.530	Retained
Interactional justice	Q17	0.517	14.536	Retained		Q47	0.614	2.054	Retained	Willingness to engage in self-review	Q76	0.802	28.257	Retained
	Q18	0.637	18.641	Retained	Power sharing	Q48	0.546	11.370	Retained		Q77	0.771	42.992	Retained
	Q19	0.742	16.587	Retained		Q49	0.613	16.638	Retained		Q78	0.752	39.261	Retained
	Q20	0.763	19.521	Retained	Concern for sustainability	Q50	0.504	10.553	Retained	Appreciation of others' strengths	Q79	0.825	8.119	Retained
Honesty	Q21	0.651	14.703	Retained		Q51	0.522	16.056	Retained		Q80	0.818	12.475	Retained
	Q22	0.617	16.369	Retained	Ethical guidance	Q52	0.356	1.059	Eliminated		Q81	0.721	16.352	Retained
	Q23	0.884	13.611	Retained		Q53	0.507	14.437	Retained	Appreciation of subordinates' contributions	Q82	0.804	9.541	Retained
Competence	Q24	0.696	15.066	Retained		Q54	0.534	2.989	Retained		Q83	0.717	8.751	Retained
	Q25	0.725	23.567	Retained	Role clarification	Q55	0.420	16.839	Retained		Q84	0.728	10.515	Retained
Consistency	Q26	0.707	19.190	Retained		Q56	0.642	10.148	Retained	Openness to new ideas and feedback	Q85	0.709	25.542	Retained
	Q27	0.609	13.841	Retained		Q57	0.764	14.685	Retained		Q86	0.687	31.316	Retained
Openness	Q28	0.580	11.448	Retained	Timely information	Q58	0.494	19.635	Retained		Q87	0.653	16.964	Retained
	Q29	0.582	9.435	Retained		Q59	0.542	9.790	Retained					
	Q30	0.575	8.916	Retained										

The factor analysis results indicated that all indicators associated with the dimensions of perceived support, organizational justice, trust, organizational learning, and humility had t-values greater than 1.96 and factor loadings greater than 0.40 and were therefore considered appropriate indicators for measurement. However, items Q31 and Q32, which measured the information-sharing construct within the participation dimension; items Q41, Q45, and Q52 within the ethical leadership dimension; and items Q64 and Q65, which measured the rapid-information construct within the communication dimension, did not meet the required criteria and were therefore considered unsuitable indicators for model measurement. Consequently, these constructs/items were removed from the analysis. The results of the second-order factor analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Results of Second-Order Factor Analysis

Component	Indicator	Factor Loading	t-value	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	R^2	Higher-Order AVE	Higher-Order Composite Reliability
Perceived support	Commitment	0.827	26.347	0.880	0.841	0.678	0.756	0.848	0.957
	Planning	0.825	31.453	0.941	0.930	0.643	0.867		
	Actions	0.867	39.594	0.823	0.870	0.538	0.775		
	Evaluation	0.851	25.741	0.815	0.798	0.593	0.831		
Trust	Honesty	0.621	14.524	0.725	0.844	0.645	0.743	0.851	0.866
	Competence	0.625	15.541	0.766	0.742	0.688	0.632		
	Consistency	0.682	16.125	0.731	0.821	0.747	0.719		
	Openness	0.634	15.618	0.749	0.769	0.826	0.836		
Participation	Consultation	0.469	19.863	0.776	0.792	0.632	0.715	0.784	0.840
	Joint decision-making	0.539	25.780	0.717	0.875	0.713	0.785		
	Self-management	0.705	17.878	0.854	0.878	0.775	0.676		
	Acceptance of responsibility	0.717	28.687	0.812	0.829	0.676	0.795		
Communication	Timely information	0.509	18.998	0.727	0.787	0.702	0.841	0.792	0.892
	Accurate information	0.766	24.354	0.851	0.864	0.789	0.769		
	Complete information	0.674	23.342	0.811	0.895	0.816	0.887		
	Feedback	0.548	11.743	0.808	0.781	0.695	0.733		
Ethical leadership	People orientation	0.557	25.313	0.786	0.835	0.573	0.749	0.773	0.921
	Fairness	0.786	21.031	0.807	0.885	0.649	0.833		
	Power sharing	0.584	17.518	0.736	0.758	0.729	0.723		
	Concern for sustainability	0.519	19.253	0.745	0.867	0.626	0.809		
	Ethical guidance	0.629	29.863	0.824	0.883	0.619	0.687		
	Role clarification	0.758	22.712	0.763	0.788	0.734	0.690		
Organizational justice	Procedural justice	0.653	12.519	0.802	0.866	0.609	0.624	0.806	0.874
	Distributive justice	0.513	23.417	0.743	0.826	0.725	0.712		
	Interactional justice	0.716	17.552	0.784	0.805	0.547	0.876		
Organizational learning	Clarity of mission and goals	0.671	11.251	0.891	0.943	0.772	0.684	0.811	0.898
	Empowerment	0.425	9.814	0.872	0.906	0.564	0.702		
	Knowledge transfer	0.599	6.616	0.833	0.889	0.583	0.859		
	Teamwork and group problem-solving	0.728	18.896	0.905	0.913	0.667	0.788		
Humility	Willingness to engage in self-review	0.782	31.652	0.893	0.902	0.672	0.781	0.802	0.879
	Appreciation of others' strengths	0.806	20.716	0.852	0.918	0.757	0.863		
	Appreciation of subordinates' contributions	0.749	18.632	0.908	0.876	0.796	0.844		
	Openness to new ideas and feedback	0.753	27.616	0.813	0.948	0.833	0.697		

As shown in Table 6, all factor loadings in the second-order factor analysis met the desired standard criterion. Furthermore, the t-statistic corresponding to each factor loading exceeded the critical value of 1.96 at the 95% confidence level, confirming their statistical significance. The composite reliability (CR) values indicated adequate internal consistency of the constructs, while the AVE values exceeded the threshold of 0.50, confirming the convergent validity of the model. In addition, the coefficients of determination (R^2) for the latent constructs indicated an acceptable explanatory power of the model. Following confirmation of the measurement model, supplementary indices were examined to assess structural model fit and predictive power, as reported in Table 7. The results indicated an SRMR value of 0.02, which was below the threshold of 0.08 and therefore confirmed an acceptable fit of the structural model. Furthermore, the Q^2 value was greater than zero, indicating adequate predictive relevance of the model.

Table 7

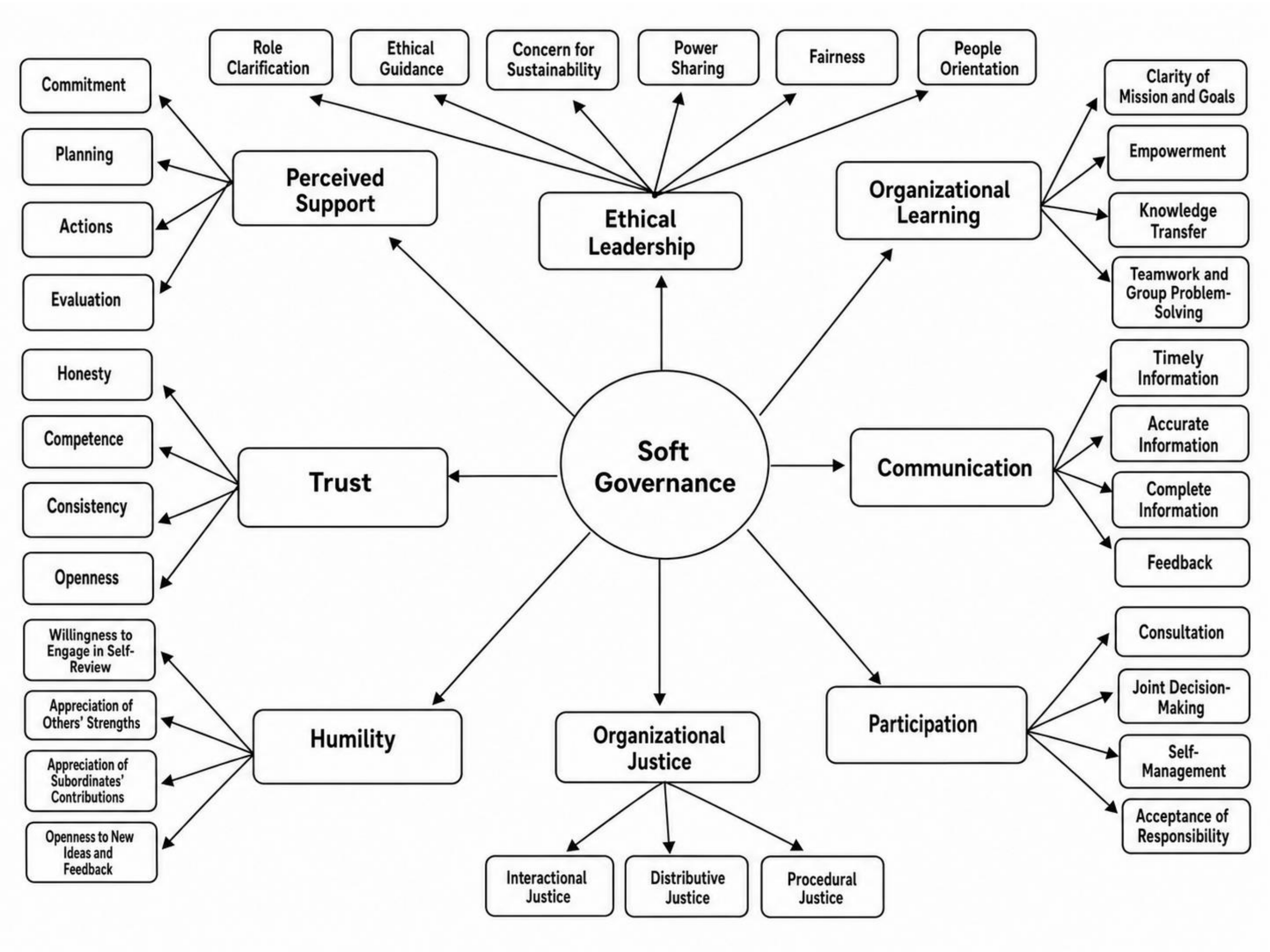
Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Interpretation
Mean R^2	0.773	Satisfactory explanatory power
Mean Q^2	0.40	Adequate predictive power of the model
SRMR	0.02	Acceptable model fit

Based on the results presented in the preceding tables, the model of managers' soft governance in government organizations can be presented as illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 1

Soft Governance Model in Government Organizations



Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to identify and validate the components of managers' soft governance in government organizations and to develop an empirically supported factor structure for this construct. The findings demonstrated that soft governance is a multidimensional phenomenon comprising eight principal dimensions: perceived support, organizational justice, trust, participation, organizational learning, communication, ethical leadership, and humility. The qualitative phase initially identified a broader set of indicators, which were subsequently evaluated by experts through the Delphi process. Five indicators with mean scores below the predetermined criterion were eliminated, leaving 35 indicators for quantitative assessment. The subsequent first- and second-order confirmatory factor analyses provided empirical support for the proposed multidimensional structure. At the first-order level, the majority of questionnaire items demonstrated acceptable factor loadings and significant t-values, whereas items related to information sharing, rapid information, and several items within ethical leadership were removed because they did not meet the required measurement criteria. At the second-order level, all retained components demonstrated significant relationships with their corresponding higher-order dimensions. Composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted values provided evidence of satisfactory reliability and convergent validity. Moreover, the mean R^2 of 0.773 indicated substantial explanatory power, the mean Q^2 of 0.40 demonstrated predictive relevance, and the SRMR value of 0.02 supported the overall adequacy of the structural model. Collectively, these findings indicate that soft governance within government organizations can be meaningfully represented through a coherent combination of relational, ethical, informational, participatory, and learning-oriented managerial mechanisms.

The identification of these eight dimensions supports the broader conceptual argument that effective governance cannot be reduced to formal rules, coercive authority, and hierarchical control. Soft governance operates through less coercive but nevertheless influential mechanisms that shape organizational behavior through legitimacy, shared expectations, relationships, information, and voluntary commitment. This interpretation is consistent with the distinction between hard and soft governance emphasized in the governance literature. Soft arrangements may lack the binding force of formal rules, yet they can substantially influence behavior because organizational members perceive them as legitimate, appropriate, or normatively compelling [5, 6]. The present findings therefore reinforce the view that soft governance should not be interpreted as weak governance. Rather, it represents an alternative and complementary mode of coordination capable of producing meaningful organizational consequences. This interpretation also corresponds with the argument that soft law and nonbinding governance mechanisms have increasingly become important instruments of contemporary institutional coordination [4]. More recent analyses similarly indicate that complex organizations and large projects commonly depend on combinations of formal and informal governance mechanisms, with soft governance enabling flexibility, adaptation, and coordination where highly formalized mechanisms alone may prove insufficient [7]. The eight-dimensional model developed in the present study therefore provides an organizational-level representation of these broader governance principles.

Perceived support emerged as a central dimension of managers' soft governance and was represented by commitment, planning, actions, and evaluation. This finding suggests that employees' perceptions of managerial and organizational support are not formed exclusively through expressions of concern but also through observable managerial commitments, purposeful planning, concrete supportive actions, and continuous evaluation. Within a soft governance framework, perceived support can promote voluntary cooperation by signaling that employees are valued participants in organizational processes rather than merely subjects of hierarchical control. Such a mechanism can strengthen reciprocity and encourage employees to align their behavior with organizational objectives. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature on organizational soft power, in which noncoercive influence is generated through attractive organizational practices, supportive human resource systems, and responsible relationships with organizational stakeholders [12]. Aromaa et al. likewise demonstrated that emotional and relational processes can function as forms of organizational soft power, showing that managerial influence is partly generated through affective and interpersonal experiences rather than formal authority alone [11]. The finding regarding perceived support therefore highlights the relational foundation of soft governance and suggests that managers' capacity to generate commitment may depend substantially on whether employees experience managerial practices as supportive and dependable.

Trust was another confirmed dimension and was represented by honesty, competence, consistency, and openness. The validation of these components indicates that trust in public-sector managers depends on both moral and performance-related judgments. Employees must not only perceive managers as honest but also regard them as competent, predictable in their behavior, and sufficiently open in organizational interactions. Trust is particularly important in soft governance because noncoercive coordination requires employees to accept managerial influence without constant monitoring or enforcement. Where trust is high, employees are more likely to share knowledge, cooperate across boundaries, and assume responsibility for organizational outcomes. The importance of trust is consistent with studies of knowledge governance, which demonstrate that effective knowledge sharing cannot be produced solely through technical systems or formal procedures; instead, it depends on governance arrangements that support interaction and voluntary exchange [14]. This is especially relevant in public organizations, where interdepartmental knowledge sharing is influenced by organizational characteristics, coordination mechanisms, and relational conditions [15]. The current results are also compatible with research showing that knowledge governance mechanisms influence organizational and project performance by shaping how organizational members exchange and utilize knowledge [16]. Accordingly, trust may be understood as a foundational condition through which other soft governance mechanisms become operational.

Organizational justice was confirmed through procedural, distributive, and interactional justice, indicating that employees' perceptions of fairness constitute another important basis of soft governance. This result is theoretically significant because the legitimacy of managerial influence is likely to depend on whether employees believe that decisions are made through fair procedures, outcomes are allocated fairly, and interpersonal interactions are respectful and appropriate. Soft governance relies less on coercion than traditional command-based administration and therefore requires stronger perceptions of legitimacy. Fairness can provide this legitimacy by making managerial decisions more acceptable even when those decisions do not fully correspond with individual preferences. The strong role of justice in the proposed model can also be interpreted alongside contemporary governance approaches that emphasize consensus, legitimacy, and acceptance rather than unilateral control. Studies of soft governance in European institutional settings show that coordination can be achieved through processes of consensus formation, mutual adjustment, and shared expectations rather than direct legal compulsion [8, 9]. Similar arguments have been made in studies of soft governance in learning environments, where institutional influence is exercised through standards, comparison, communication, and socially accepted frameworks [10]. The present findings extend these ideas to the organizational level by suggesting that perceptions of justice are among the mechanisms through which managers obtain legitimate acceptance of their influence.

Participation also emerged as an important dimension, with consultation, joint decision-making, self-management, and acceptance of responsibility receiving empirical support. Information sharing, however, was eliminated during first-order factor analysis because its two associated items failed to meet the required statistical criteria. The retained participation structure suggests that soft governance involves more than providing employees with information; rather, employees must be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to decision-making, exercise autonomy, and accept responsibility for outcomes. This distinction is important because passive access to information does not necessarily constitute genuine participation. The findings imply that participatory governance becomes meaningful when employees can influence decisions and assume an active role in organizational processes. This interpretation is aligned with contemporary approaches that conceptualize governance as increasingly adaptive, participatory, and network-oriented [21]. It also corresponds with empowerment-oriented leadership perspectives, which emphasize that effective leaders create conditions in which organizational members can exercise agency, develop capabilities, and accept greater responsibility [18]. Recent theoretical work on dual-purpose organizations similarly suggests that soft governance is particularly useful where managers must coordinate multiple goals and heterogeneous interests without relying excessively on rigid hierarchical mechanisms [24]. Participation may therefore function as a mechanism through which employees become active contributors to governance rather than merely recipients of administrative decisions.

The confirmation of organizational learning as a dimension of soft governance further demonstrates that contemporary governance is inseparable from organizational knowledge processes. The retained components included clarity of mission and goals, empowerment, knowledge transfer, and teamwork and group problem-solving, while experimentation was removed during the expert-validation stage. These findings suggest that organizational learning in public-sector soft governance is primarily associated with shared direction, employee empowerment, systematic knowledge exchange, and collective problem-solving. Knowledge governance research provides strong conceptual support for this finding. Foss et al. emphasized that knowledge sharing requires specific governance mechanisms at multiple levels of analysis and that organizational arrangements can either facilitate or inhibit the willingness and ability of employees to exchange knowledge [14]. Similarly, Feizollahi et al. conceptualized organizational knowledge governance from a systems perspective, indicating that knowledge processes must be considered as interconnected components rather than isolated activities [17]. Research in public organizations has also shown that organizational structures and characteristics influence interdepartmental knowledge exchange [15]. Thus, organizational learning represents a particularly important soft governance mechanism because learning depends largely on cooperation, openness, empowerment, and collective interpretation rather than direct administrative control.

Communication was confirmed through timely information, accurate information, complete information, and feedback, whereas rapid information was removed because its associated items failed to demonstrate adequate measurement properties. This pattern is noteworthy because it suggests that communication effectiveness in soft governance depends more on informational quality and responsiveness than on speed alone. Timely information is conceptually different from merely rapid information: timely communication implies that information is delivered when it is useful and relevant for decision-making, while speed without accuracy or completeness may not enhance governance quality. The retained communication components therefore emphasize reliability, adequacy, and feedback. This interpretation is compatible with contemporary governance developments in which openness and information accessibility have become critical mechanisms of accountability and stakeholder engagement. Research on government open-data platforms has demonstrated that greater information openness can influence organizational behavior and corporate sustainability-related outcomes by enhancing transparency and external scrutiny [22]. Bell similarly emphasized the role of openness and knowledge accessibility as forms of soft power capable of shaping relationships and institutional influence [13]. Furthermore, the growing use of soft-law mechanisms in fields characterized by rapid technological change, such as artificial intelligence governance, illustrates how principles, guidance, information exchange, and voluntary standards can coordinate behavior where rigid regulation may not adapt sufficiently quickly [23]. Communication therefore appears to function as both an independent dimension of soft governance and an enabling mechanism for the operation of other dimensions.

Ethical leadership was another central dimension, incorporating people orientation, fairness, power sharing, concern for sustainability, ethical guidance, and role clarification. Although several individual items within people orientation, fairness, and ethical guidance were eliminated at the first-order level, the corresponding constructs remained statistically supported by their retained indicators and demonstrated significant second-order loadings. This finding highlights the multidimensional character of ethical managerial influence. Soft governance depends not only on managers' technical competence but also on whether they demonstrate concern for people, distribute power responsibly, behave fairly, provide ethical direction, and clarify employees' responsibilities. Ethical leadership may be especially influential in government organizations because public managers must reconcile organizational performance requirements with public values, accountability, and expectations of integrity. Research on leadership has emphasized the importance of cultural and social contexts in shaping effective leadership practices and the legitimacy of managerial influence [19]. Likewise, studies of servant and empowering leadership highlight mentorship and empowerment as mechanisms through which leaders can stimulate stronger organizational contributions [18]. The present results also correspond with evidence that employees' emotional and relational capabilities influence organizational citizenship behavior and job performance, indicating that effective managerial relationships involve social and emotional processes that extend beyond formal job requirements [20]. Ethical leadership can consequently be viewed as a major behavioral channel through which soft governance is enacted.

Humility was validated through willingness to engage in self-review, appreciation of others' strengths, appreciation of subordinates' contributions, and openness to new ideas and feedback. The initial indicator of willingness to learn was eliminated during the expert-validation stage, yet the retained components collectively indicate a strong learning-oriented and relational character. Managerial humility may be especially relevant to soft governance because it reduces the social distance created by hierarchy and signals that authority does not imply infallibility. Managers who acknowledge the strengths and contributions of employees and remain receptive to feedback can facilitate upward communication, knowledge exchange, participation, and psychological ownership. This interpretation also helps explain why humility is conceptually linked to organizational learning, trust, and ethical leadership within the broader model. The growing emphasis on soft technologies in governance reflects a similar recognition that managerial effectiveness depends on behavioral and relational mechanisms in addition to formal institutional structures [2]. The conceptualization of governmental soft power likewise emphasizes influence generated through attraction, legitimacy, cooperation, and noncoercive capacities [3]. In this sense, humility should not be interpreted as managerial weakness; rather, it can increase influence by enhancing openness and interpersonal credibility.

At the model level, the strong reliability, validity, explanatory power, predictive relevance, and structural fit indices provide support for treating soft governance as a higher-order organizational construct rather than as a collection of unrelated managerial practices. The mean R^2 value of 0.773 suggests that the proposed model possesses substantial explanatory capacity, while the Q^2 value of 0.40 confirms meaningful predictive relevance. The SRMR value of 0.02 further indicates a very satisfactory structural fit. These findings reinforce the argument that soft governance involves an integrated configuration of relational and organizational mechanisms. The results are consistent with Torabi's conceptualization of soft governance as a meaningful governance approach and with studies emphasizing the role of soft technologies in enhancing governance effectiveness [1, 2]. They also support the broader proposition that the distinction between hard and soft governance should not be understood as a choice between mutually exclusive alternatives. Rather, soft mechanisms may complement formal structures and enhance their adaptability, legitimacy, and effectiveness [5, 7]. This integrative interpretation is particularly important in public administration, where formal authority remains essential but is increasingly insufficient for managing knowledge-intensive, interconnected, and rapidly changing organizational environments.

Overall, the findings contribute to the existing literature by translating the broad concept of soft governance into a measurable managerial model specifically applicable to government organizations. Previous studies have examined soft governance primarily in the contexts of unofficial guidelines, European governance, soft law, policy coordination, knowledge governance, emerging technologies, and organizational soft power [4, 6, 8, 13]. The present model integrates these disparate perspectives at the organizational level and suggests that managers' soft governance is expressed through a combination of support, fairness, trust, participation, learning, communication, ethics, and humility. Such an interpretation is also compatible with the increasing importance of flexible governance systems capable of coordinating actors under conditions of multiple objectives and complex stakeholder relationships [24]. The model therefore contributes by showing that noncoercive governance in government organizations is not an abstract managerial orientation but a structured set of observable and measurable practices. The validated dimensions provide a conceptual basis for assessing how public managers generate voluntary cooperation, improve knowledge exchange, reinforce legitimacy, and complement formal administrative mechanisms.

The present study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the quantitative data were collected through a self-report questionnaire, which may be affected by respondents' subjective perceptions, social desirability, or response tendencies despite the statistical assessment of common method bias. Second, convenience sampling was used in the quantitative phase, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to all government organizations and administrative contexts. Third, the cross-sectional design captures employees' perceptions at a single point in time and therefore cannot demonstrate how soft governance develops or changes over time. Fourth, the proposed model was examined within government organizations in one national and institutional context; consequently, cultural, political, administrative, and organizational characteristics may have influenced the relative importance of its components. Finally, although the model demonstrated satisfactory measurement and structural properties, the study primarily examined the internal structure of soft governance rather than its causal effects on organizational outcomes such as performance, innovation, organizational commitment, employee well-being, or public-service quality.

Future studies should replicate the proposed model using probability sampling and larger samples drawn from different government sectors, administrative levels, regions, and national contexts to assess its generalizability and measurement invariance. Longitudinal designs could examine whether soft governance practices remain stable over time and whether changes in managerial behavior produce corresponding changes in employee attitudes and organizational outcomes. Researchers could also compare public, private, nonprofit, and hybrid organizations to determine whether the relative importance of the eight dimensions varies across institutional environments. Further studies should test antecedents and consequences of soft governance by examining variables such as organizational culture, administrative structure, digitalization, managerial competence, innovation, employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, knowledge sharing, service quality, and organizational performance. Multilevel designs may also distinguish manager-level, team-level, and organizational-level effects. Finally, qualitative research could explore why particular indicators, such as information sharing, rapid information, experimentation, and willingness to learn, were not retained in the present model and whether their relevance changes across different organizational conditions.

Government organizations can use the validated dimensions of soft governance as a diagnostic framework for managerial development and organizational improvement. Managers should strengthen perceived support through credible commitments, systematic planning, visible supportive actions, and continuous evaluation; build trust through honesty, competence, consistency, and openness; and enhance organizational justice by ensuring fair procedures, equitable outcomes, and respectful interpersonal treatment. Participation should be encouraged through consultation, joint decision-making, self-management, and meaningful responsibility rather than symbolic involvement. Organizations should also invest in timely and accurate communication, feedback systems, knowledge transfer, teamwork, and empowerment. Leadership-development programs should explicitly address ethical guidance, fairness, responsible power sharing, role clarification, and concern for people and organizational sustainability. Finally, humility should be treated as a managerial capability by encouraging leaders to review their own assumptions, recognize employees' strengths, acknowledge subordinate contributions, and remain receptive to new ideas and feedback. Taken together, these practices can complement formal administrative controls and create a governance environment based on legitimacy, cooperation, learning, responsibility, and voluntary commitment.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Written consent was obtained from all participants in the study.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

References

[1] A. Torabi, "Soft Governance: What It Is, Why It Matters, and How It Works," presented at the First National Conference on Governance, 2019.

[2] M. Jalal and E. Mosleh, "Soft Technologies as Essential Tools for Effective Governance," presented at the First Conference on Governance and Public Policy, 2017.

[3] J. Chen and L. Sun, "Research on Soft Power in Government Governance—The Definition and Performances of Function Analysis," *Management Science and Research,* vol. 5, no. 1, 2016.

[4] A. Peters, "Soft Law as a New Mode of Governance," in *The Dynamics of Change in EU Governance*: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011.

[5] M. Maggetti, "Hard and Soft Governance," in *Research Methods in European Union Studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015, pp. 252-265.

[6] T. Brandsen, M. Boogers, and P. Tops, "Soft Governance, Hard Consequences: The Ambiguous Status of Unofficial Guidelines," *Public Administration Review,* vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 546-553, 2006, doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00615.x.

[7] M. C. Giorgino and F. Barnabè, "Hard and Soft Governance Mechanisms for Large Projects: A Historical Perspective," *Journal of Management History,* vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 285-313, 2025, doi: 10.1108/JMH-01-2024-0008.

[8] V. Serohin, "European Governance as an Institute of Constitutional Law of the European Union," *The Journal of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series Law,* no. 33, pp. 28-43, 2022, doi: 10.26565/2075-1834-2022-33-03.

[9] K. Eeva, "Governing through Consensus? The European Semester, Soft Power and Education Governance in the EU," *European Educational Research Journal,* vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 178-197, 2024, doi: 10.1177/14749041211055601.

[10] M. Lawn, "Soft Governance and the Learning Spaces of Europe," *Comparative European Politics,* vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 272-288, 2006, doi: 10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110081.

[11] E. Aromaa, P. Eriksson, T. Montonen, and A. J. Mills, "Emotion as Soft Power in Organisations," *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance,* vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 341-357, 2020, doi: 10.1108/JOEPP-08-2019-0085.

[12] B. S. Patil and M. S. R. Priya, "The Synergy of Human Resource Management, Corporate Social Responsibility as an Organizational Soft Power and Sustainable Performance," in *Global Perspectives on Soft Power Management in Business*: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2023, pp. 389-413.

[13] E. C. Bell, "Open Knowledge through Soft Power, Diplomacy, and the Library: A Theoretical Analysis and Critique," *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication,* vol. 12, no. 2, 2025, doi: 10.31274/jlsc.18276.

[14] N. J. Foss, K. Husted, and S. Michailova, "Governing Knowledge Sharing in Organizations: Levels of Analysis, Governance Mechanisms, and Research Directions," *Journal of Management Studies,* vol. 47, no. 3, pp. 455-482, 2010, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2009.00870.x.

[15] A. Willem and M. Buelens, "Knowledge Sharing in Public Sector Organizations: The Effect of Organizational Characteristics on Interdepartmental Knowledge Sharing," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 581-606, 2007, doi: 10.1093/jopart/mul021.

[16] N. Danaei, M. Namdarzadegan, and R. Zare, "Identifying Factors Affecting the Relationship between Knowledge Governance and Project Performance," *Science and Technology Policy Letters,* vol. 10, no. 3, 2020.

[17] Y. Feizollahi, A. Norouzi, and M. Keshtkar Haranki, "Presenting a Conceptual Model of the Dimensions and Components of Organizational Knowledge Governance Based on a Systems Approach," *Journal of Strategic Management of Organizational Knowledge,* vol. 6, no. 23, 2023.

[18] G. L. Peyton and D. B. Ross, "Servant and Shepherd Leadership in Higher Education: Empowerment and Mentorship," in *Key Factors and Use Cases of Servant Leadership Driving Organizational Performance*: IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2022, pp. 272-292.

[19] R. Normand, L. Moos, M. Liu, and P. Tulowitzki, "An International Comparison of Cultural and Social Foundations of Educational Leadership," in *The Cultural and Social Foundations of Educational Leadership: An International Comparison*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021, pp. 3-21.

[20] S. H. Liao, D. C. Hu, and Y. C. Huang, "Employee Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Citizen Behavior and Job Performance: A Moderated Mediation Model Investigation," *Employee Relations: The International Journal,* vol. 44, no. 5, pp. 1109-1126, 2022, doi: 10.1108/ER-11-2020-0506.

[21] A. Nasr Esfahani and H. Najafi Rastaghi, "Approaches and Drivers Affecting the Future of Governance," Islamic Parliament Research Center, 2023.

[22] R. Xu and C. Xu, "How Government Open Data Platforms Affect Corporate ESG Performance," *Sustainability,* vol. 17, no. 21, p. 9768, 2025, doi: 10.3390/su17219768.

[23] C. I. Gutierrez and G. E. Marchant, "A Global Perspective of Soft Law Programs for the Governance of Artificial Intelligence," SSRN, 2021. [Online]. Available: https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3855171

[24] A. Szerb, I. Kivleniece, and V. A. Aggarwal, "Designing Dual-Purpose Organizations: The Role of Soft Governance," *Academy of Management Review,* no. ja, pp. amr-2023, 2026, doi: 10.5465/amr.2023.0226.