

Artificial Intelligence Governance in Smart Government: Trend and Insight of Digital Inclusion, Transparency, and Public Service Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) governance has become important in smart government, but its thematic development remains fragmented. This study asks which sources and documents shape the field, which themes dominate, and which relationships remain underdeveloped. Scopus was searched for terms related to AI governance, smart government, transparency, trust, digital inclusion, and public service transformation. After PRISMA-style screening, 124 English-language journal articles published between 2005 and 2025 were analyzed using VOSviewer and RStudio-Biblioshiny for descriptive bibliometrics, thematic mapping, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. The corpus grew annually by 22.51%, with Government Information Quarterly as the leading source. Digital inclusion, smart cities, generative AI, citizen engagement, public service delivery, and digital governance emerged as prominent themes, whereas explainable AI, privacy, cybersecurity, and human-centered design remained peripheral. The study maps thematic relationships and identifies research gaps rather than proposing a conceptual model. Findings are limited by the exclusive use of Scopus, English-language publications, and journal articles.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence governance, Digital government, Public value, Smart government.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) governance has become an increasingly relevant concern in smart government as public institutions adopt algorithmic systems, digital platforms, data dashboards, and automated decision-making tools to support public service delivery. These technologies may improve administrative efficiency, information processing, and responsiveness, but they also raise questions concerning transparency, accountability, public trust, and equitable access to digital services. The growing number of publications addressing these issues suggests that AI governance in the public sector is a rapidly expanding and still-developing field rather than a fully mature area of scholarship. Within the corpus examined in this study, research is concentrated around e-government, open government, transparency, digital transformation, citizen engagement, and public service innovation.

The intellectual development of this field builds on several established strands of digital government research. Early adoption studies demonstrated that perceived ease of use, compatibility, innovation, and trust influence citizens' willingness to use e-government services (Carter & Bélanger, 2005). Subsequent studies examined how government websites and digitally transformed administrative systems shape civic engagement and citizen-government relationships (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2012; Mahmood et al., 2019; Mahmood et al., 2020). Another strand linked government transparency and social media use to

participation, responsiveness, accountability, and public trust (Arshad & Khurram, 2020; Bonsón et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2018; Song & Lee, 2016). More recent scholarship has extended these discussions to platform governance, smart government, smart cities, and public-sector data dashboards, emphasizing how data, technology, services, institutions, and citizens interact in the creation of public value (Anthopoulos et al., 2021; Janowski et al., 2018; Matheus et al., 2020).

Despite this progression, the literature remains conceptually dispersed across e-government adoption, social media, open government, digital transformation, platform governance, automated decision-making, and emerging responsible AI concerns. Automated public-service decisions may improve efficiency but can also create tensions involving transparency, professional judgment, accountability, and citizen trust (Ranerup & Henriksen, 2019). Evidence further suggests that the introduction of ethical design measures does not automatically generate citizen trust in government AI systems (Kleizen et al., 2023). However, issues such as explainable AI, privacy, cybersecurity, and human-centered design have not yet become as strongly integrated into the literature as transparency, trust, citizen engagement, and digital inclusion. Their position should therefore be understood as an emerging research direction rather than as an already consolidated foundation of smart government scholarship.

This fragmentation creates a need for a bibliometric analysis that clarifies the field's publication profile, influential sources and documents, dominant themes, and underdeveloped thematic relationships. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the main bibliometric characteristics and leading publication sources of research on AI governance in smart government?
- RQ2. Which documents have had the greatest citation influence, and what intellectual foundations do they represent?
- RQ3. Which themes and keyword clusters dominate the literature, and which topics remain peripheral or underdeveloped?
- RQ4. What thematic relationships and research gaps emerge among AI governance, transparency, trust, digital inclusion, and public service transformation?

To answer these questions, the study analyzes English-language Scopus journal articles published between 2005 and 2025 using descriptive bibliometrics, citation analysis, thematic mapping, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Rather than proposing a new conceptual framework, taxonomy, or theoretical model, the study provides a structured mapping of the literature and identifies relationships among established digital government themes and emerging responsible AI concerns. Its contribution is therefore primarily descriptive and relational: it clarifies how the field is organized, identifies areas receiving sustained scholarly attention, and highlights topics requiring stronger integration in future research.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The Methods section describes database search, screening criteria, data selection, and bibliometric procedures. The Results and Discussions section presents the general characteristics of the corpus, leading publication sources, influential documents, thematic structure, and keyword co-occurrence network. The Conclusion summarizes the main findings, acknowledges the study's limitations, and outlines

future research directions concerning AI governance, transparency, digital inclusion, public accountability, and smart government transformation.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Design and Search Strategy

This study employed bibliometric analysis to examine publication development, influential sources and documents, thematic structures, and research gaps in artificial intelligence governance within smart government. The procedures addressed the four research questions presented in the Introduction. Scopus was selected as the sole database because it provides standardized bibliographic, citation, authorship, and keyword metadata.

The search covered titles, abstracts, and keywords using the following query:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ((“artificial intelligence” OR “generative AI” OR “responsible AI” OR “trustworthy AI” OR “explainable AI”) AND (“smart government” OR “digital government” OR “e-government” OR “open government”) AND (governance OR transparency OR trust OR “digital inclusion” OR “citizen engagement” OR “public service”))*

No subject-area restriction was applied. The initial results were screened by publication year, source type, and language. The 2005–2025 period was selected because 2005 represented the earliest publication year in the eligible corpus, whereas 2025 was the latest complete publication year. Citation values reflect the Scopus data available on the recorded extraction date.

2.2. Eligibility and Metadata Screening

The search identified 422 records. Duplicate checking using DOI, Scopus EID, and document title found no duplicates. Six records outside the 2005–2025 period were excluded, leaving 416 records for metadata eligibility assessment. A further 269 records were excluded because they were not published in journal sources, and 23 non-English records were removed. The final dataset comprised 124 English-language journal publications.

Eligibility was assessed using titles, abstracts, keywords, publication years, languages, document types, and source types. The study did not retrieve or appraise 416 full-text documents. Bibliographic completeness and topical relevance were treated as dataset eligibility criteria rather than methodological quality assessment. The selection process was documented through a metadata-based PRISMA flow diagram.

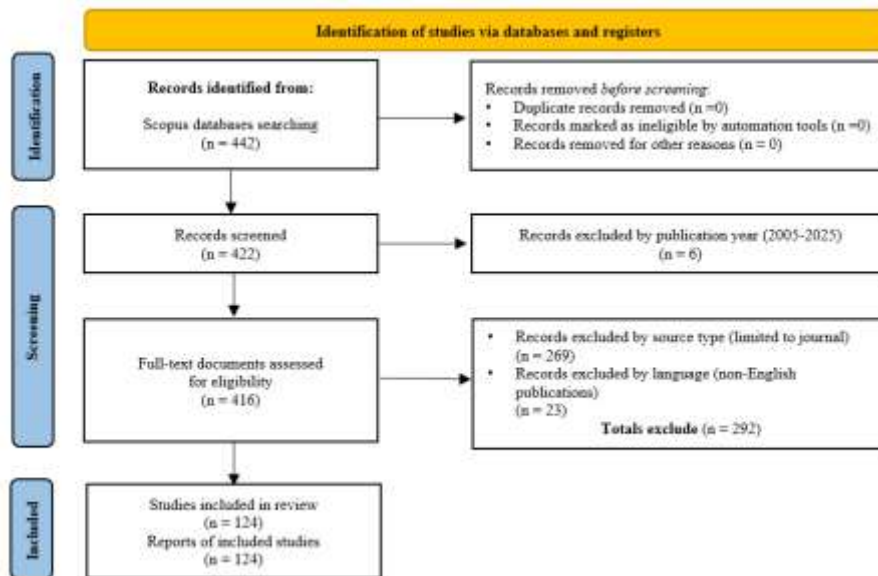


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

2.3. Data Processing and Analysis

The Scopus CSV file, including cited references, was processed using Biblioshiny in Bibliometrix 4.3.0 and VOSviewer 1.6.20. Descriptive analysis covered annual growth, sources, documents, citations, references, authorship, collaboration, and source productivity.

Keywords were converted to lowercase and standardized for spelling, singular–plural forms, abbreviations, hyphenation, and synonyms. A thesaurus merged equivalent terms, including “AI” with “artificial intelligence” and “e-government” with “electronic government.” The thematic map used author keywords with a minimum frequency of two. Co-occurrence analysis applied full counting, association-strength normalization, a minimum occurrence threshold of two, a clustering resolution of 1.00, and a minimum cluster size of two. After cleaning and threshold application, 72 terms were retained and organized into 11 clusters. Node size represented keyword frequency, link strength indicated co-occurrence intensity, and cluster membership represented thematic proximity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1. General characteristics and main data sources

The dataset comprises 124 documents published between 2005 and 2025 across 95 journal sources. The annual growth rate of 22.51% indicates increasing scholarly attention to artificial intelligence governance and smart government. However, the combination of rapid growth and a relatively limited number of publications is more appropriately interpreted as evidence of an expanding and still-developing research field rather than a mature body of scholarship.

The corpus contains 7,444 cited references, 379 Keywords Plus terms, and 470 author keywords. These values indicate that the publications employ a broad range of terms and

address varied topics, but the keyword counts alone do not demonstrate conceptual density or theoretical integration. The dataset includes 365 authors, 23 single-authored documents, and an average of 2.99 co-authors per document. International co-authorship accounts for 23.39% of the corpus, suggesting that collaboration is common, although international collaboration remains limited to fewer than one-quarter of the included documents.

Table 1. Main Information About Data

Description	Results
Timespan	2005:2025
Sources (Journals)	95
Documents	124
Annual Growth Rate %	22,51
Document Average Age	3,56
Average citations per doc	47,98
References	7444
Keywords Plus (ID)	379
Author's Keywords (DE)	470
Authors	365
Authors of single-authored docs	23
Single-authored docs	23
Co-Authors per Doc	2,99
International co-authorships %	23,39

Table 1 presents the main descriptive indicators of the bibliometric dataset. For consistency, decimal values should be formatted using decimal points throughout the table and narrative, including 22.51 for annual growth, 3.56 for average document age, 47.98 for average citations per document, 2.99 for co-authors per document, and 23.39% for international co-authorship.

These descriptive indicators provide an overview of publication volume, authorship, collaboration, references, and keyword availability. They do not independently demonstrate the intellectual maturity, methodological quality, or conceptual coherence of the field. In addition, because the analysis does not separately examine author, institutional, country, or collaboration networks, the results should not be used to identify geographic leadership or institutional dominance.

Table 2 lists the journals that published the largest number of documents in the corpus. Government Information Quarterly contributed nine documents, representing 7.26% of the dataset. Public Policy and Administration and Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy each contributed four documents or 3.23%, while Administrative Sciences contributed three documents or 2.42%. The remaining listed sources each published two documents.

Table 2. Most Relevant Sources

Sources	Articles	Percentage
Government Information Quarterly	9	7.26%
Public Policy and Administration	4	3.23%
Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy	4	3.23%
Administrative Sciences	3	2.42%
Applied Sciences (Switzerland)	2	1.61%
Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology	2	1.61%
Ejournal of Edemocracy and Open Government	2	1.61%
European Journal of Innovation Management	2	1.61%
Information (Switzerland)	2	1.61%
Innovation Journal	2	1.61%

Although the original caption uses the term “Most Relevant Sources,” the indicator reported is publication productivity rather than relevance. The table therefore identifies the most productive journal sources in the included dataset. Publication count does not directly measure journal quality, citation influence, topical relevance, or scholarly impact.

The distribution of publications across public administration, information systems, innovation management, applied sciences, and digital-democracy journals suggests that AI governance and smart government are discussed in multiple disciplinary settings. Nevertheless, the presence of different journal categories does not by itself establish strong interdisciplinary integration. More detailed citation, bibliographic-coupling, or cross-disciplinary analyses would be required to assess the extent of knowledge exchange among these areas.

3.2. Document Citation Profile

Citation analysis was used to identify the documents receiving the highest citation counts within the included Scopus corpus. Citation values are time-sensitive and should be interpreted as the values recorded in the exported dataset rather than as permanent indicators. Because the original dataset documentation did not retain an exact citation-extraction date, the reported citation totals cannot be reproduced precisely at a later date.

Carter and Bélanger (2005) received the highest citation count, with 1,868 citations, followed by Bonsón et al. (2012) with 766 citations and Khosravi et al. (2022) with 675 citations. Other highly cited documents address smart-city dashboards, government social media, public trust, human-centered explainable AI, platform governance, automated decision-making, and civic engagement. These publications indicate that the corpus draws from several adjacent research traditions, including e-government adoption, municipal transparency, citizen engagement, data-driven accountability, and explainable AI.

Table 3. Most Cited Documents

Authors	Issued Discuss	Findings	Citation
(Carter & Bélanger, 2005)	Citizen adoption of e-government services	Ease of use, compatibility, and trustworthiness strongly influence citizens' intention to use e-government services.	1868
(Bonsón et al., 2012)	Social media and municipal transparency	Local governments use social media to improve transparency, but real dialogue and e-participation remain limited.	766
(Khosravi et al., 2022)	Explainable AI and human-centered design	XAI supports fairness, accountability, transparency, and ethics by improving stakeholder understanding of AI-supported decisions.	675
(Matheus et al., 2020)	Data dashboards for smart city accountability	Dashboards can improve transparency and accountability, but require data quality, governance, and citizen interpretation mechanisms.	300
(Song & Lee, 2016)	Government social media, transparency, and trust	Government social media use improves perceived transparency, which positively affects public trust in government.	266
(Schoonderwoerd et al., 2021)	Human-centered explainable AI design	Human-centered XAI requires user involvement, explanation requirements, and design patterns for better decision-support adoption.	205
(Arshad & Khurram, 2020)	Social media and online political participation	Quality government information on social media increases transparency and trust,	153

Authors	Issued Discuss	Findings	Citation
		influencing citizens' online political participation.	
(Janowski et al., 2018)	Platform governance and citizen-administration relationships	Platform governance reshapes citizen-administration relationships by connecting data, services, technology, and people for public value.	134
(Ranerup & Henriksen, 2019)	Automated decision-making in public services	Automation improves efficiency and accountability, but creates tensions involving transparency, professional judgment, and citizen trust.	124
(Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2012)	E-government and civic engagement	ICT supports e-government adoption and civic engagement, but organizational adoption mediates citizen-government relationship outcomes.	115

Table 3 should be interpreted as a citation ranking of documents within the selected corpus. Citation metadata alone cannot establish the substantive findings, theoretical contribution, or methodological quality of each study. Consequently, the statements presented in the “Findings” column should be understood as summaries derived from examining the publications’ titles, abstracts, or available content rather than from citation counts. The unclear column heading “Issued Discuss” should be replaced with a clearer term such as “Study Focus.”

Several highly cited publications examine explainable AI in education, clinical decision-support systems, or autonomous technologies rather than smart government directly. Their inclusion suggests that the search strategy captured research addressing broader responsible-AI and human-centered-design concepts. These studies may provide transferable perspectives, but their presence also indicates that the corpus is not exclusively composed of public-administration research. Therefore, the highly cited documents should not be described as the definitive intellectual foundations of AI governance in smart government.

The citation profile instead shows which documents received substantial scholarly attention within the selected dataset and which neighboring research traditions are represented. It does not demonstrate causal intellectual influence or establish that future AI-governance research must follow a particular theoretical direction.

3.3. Intellectual and Conceptual Structure of the Topic

Figure 2 presents the thematic structure generated from the cleaned keyword data using the analytical settings reported in the revised Methods. The thematic map positions themes

according to centrality and density. Centrality represents the relative connection of a theme to the broader network, whereas density reflects the internal development of the theme.

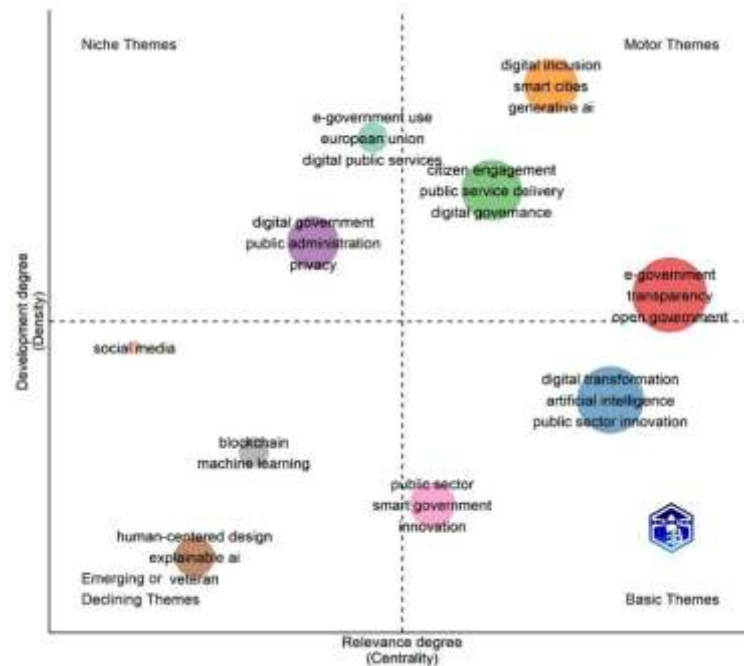


Figure 2. Thematic Map

Digital inclusion, smart cities, and generative AI are located in the upper-right area of the map, indicating comparatively high centrality and density under the selected parameters. Citizen engagement, public service delivery, and digital governance are positioned near the motor-theme quadrant but closer to the quadrant boundaries. These themes should therefore not be treated as having identical levels of development or relevance.

E-government, transparency, and open government occupy relatively central positions, although their lower density places them closer to basic or transversal themes. Digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and public-sector innovation also appear in the basic-theme quadrant, indicating that they are connected to the broader literature but remain comparatively less internally developed within this dataset.

Human-centered design and explainable AI appear in the emerging or declining quadrant. This positioning indicates weaker centrality and density relative to the more prominent themes included in the map. It does not establish that these topics are unimportant or declining across the broader international literature. Rather, it suggests that their integration into the smart-government corpus examined here remains limited.

The map should be interpreted as a relative representation of keyword relationships. Claims that the identified themes constitute the “most active knowledge base” would require additional evidence, such as theme-level document frequencies, publication growth, or longitudinal thematic-evolution analysis. Figure 2 should also be enlarged and exported at high resolution so that the theme labels and quadrant positions can be read clearly.

3.4. Keyword Co-occurrence Network and Research Gaps

Figure 3 displays the keyword co-occurrence network after keyword cleaning and application of the occurrence threshold. The analysis retained 72 keyword items, which were organized into 11 clusters according to their co-occurrence relationships.

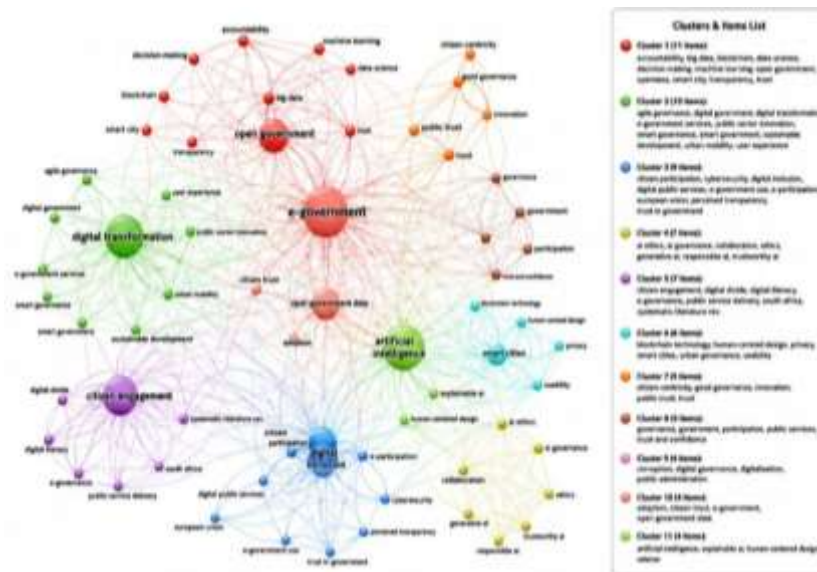


Figure 3. Co-occurrence Network: 72 Items (11 Clusters)

The largest and most visible nodes include e-government, digital transformation, citizen engagement, artificial intelligence, transparency, trust, digital inclusion, and smart cities. Their positions indicate that the corpus is primarily organized around digital-government adoption, public engagement, institutional transparency, public trust, and service transformation.

Explainable AI, cybersecurity, privacy, and human-centered design appear as smaller or less strongly connected nodes. Under the reported counting, normalization, threshold, and clustering settings, this pattern suggests that these topics are less integrated with the larger digital-government and transparency clusters. However, the term “peripheral” should be used cautiously because network position is influenced by keyword selection, data cleaning, occurrence thresholds, normalization, and cluster configuration.

The network indicates an underexplored relationship between established transparency–trust research and emerging responsible-AI concerns. Government communication and transparency studies primarily examine how information availability, presentation, and responsiveness affect citizen perceptions. AI governance introduces additional questions concerning how automated decisions are generated, explained, contested, reviewed, and corrected. These relationships create opportunities for future public-administration and digital-government research examining algorithmic accountability, digital literacy, inclusive design, privacy protection, cybersecurity, institutional capacity, and citizen rights.

These findings represent descriptive thematic mapping rather than a new framework, taxonomy, or causal model. To strengthen reproducibility, a supplementary table should report

the occurrence frequency, total link strength, and cluster membership of all 72 keywords. Figure 3 should also be enlarged, while the cluster legend should be presented separately to improve the readability of smaller nodes and labels.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric literature review mapped the intellectual landscape of AI governance for smart government using 124 Scopus-indexed documents published between 2005 and 2025. The findings show that the field is expanding rapidly and is anchored by Government Information Quarterly, e-government adoption, transparency, open government, citizen engagement, and public trust. The most influential documents demonstrate that the knowledge base has moved from citizen adoption and social media transparency toward data dashboards, platform governance, automated decision-making, and explainable AI.

The main contribution of this review is the identification of a conceptual bridge between established digital government research and emerging responsible AI governance. The thematic map reveals motor themes around digital inclusion, smart cities, generative AI, citizen engagement, public service delivery, digital governance, e-government, transparency, and open government. The co-occurrence network further shows that explainable AI, human-centered design, privacy, and cybersecurity remain less integrated with the dominant trust and transparency clusters.

The study is limited by its reliance on a single Scopus dataset and on bibliometric indicators available in the supplied CSV. Future studies should expand the database coverage, compare Scopus results with Web of Science or IEEE Xplore, and conduct qualitative content analysis of the most influential clusters. The most promising future direction is to examine how trustworthy AI, digital inclusion, and public accountability can be jointly designed in smart government systems.

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