

Measuring Trust in Higher Education Evaluation Systems: Methods and Indicators

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to systematically examine methods for determining the level of trust in the evaluation of higher education systems. It seeks to clarify the conceptual meaning of trust, identify key indicators, and assess trust across different stakeholder groups, including students, academic staff, parents, and employers.

Research methodology: A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative data. Sociological surveys and statistical analyses were conducted to evaluate the clarity, fairness, transparency, and practical relevance of evaluation processes. Trust indicators were normalized, weighted through expert assessment, and aggregated into an integrated trust index. Structural and component-based analyses were performed to capture multidimensional aspects of trust.

Results: Findings indicate that both quantitative and qualitative indicators influence trust levels, with qualitative factors slightly outweighing quantitative measures. Graduate employment rates and academic staff competence were major quantitative determinants, while transparency and clarity of evaluation processes were critical qualitative factors. Differences in trust levels across stakeholder groups highlight the necessity of tailored strategies for building trust.

Conclusions: Trust is a multidimensional construct critical to the legitimacy and effectiveness of higher education evaluation. Integrating structural indicators into a comprehensive assessment framework enhances the objectivity, transparency, and social acceptance of evaluation outcomes.

Limitations: The study is limited by its focus on specific stakeholder groups and cross-sectional survey design, which may not capture dynamic changes in trust over time.

Contribution: This research provides a robust methodological framework for assessing trust in higher education evaluation, offering practical guidance for policymakers and administrators to enhance evaluation credibility and social legitimacy.

Keywords: Education Quality, Evaluation, Higher Education System, Integrated Index, Level Of Trust, Sociological Survey, Statistical Analysis, Stakeholders, Trust Indicators.

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1. Introduction

The evaluation of the higher education system constitutes one of the central directions of contemporary education policy (Kromydas, 2017). Through evaluation mechanisms, the quality of education, institutional performance, and graduate competitiveness are assessed. However, the extent to which evaluation outcomes are perceived as credible by society directly affects the overall effectiveness of the education system (Nazaretsky, Mejia-Domenzain, Swamy, Frej, & Käser, 2025; Sacre et al., 2023). Consequently, the need arises not only to rely on quantitative performance indicators but also to identify

and assess the level of trust formed toward the evaluation process itself ([Niedlich, Kallfaß, Pohle, & Bormann, 2021](#)).

The level of trust reflects society's acceptance of the higher education system and general perceptions regarding the fairness, accuracy, and legitimacy of evaluation outcomes ([Deniz & Erdener, 2023](#); [Omilovna, 2025](#)). When trust in evaluation mechanisms is low, even methodologically sound assessment frameworks may fail to produce the intended impact. Therefore, identifying and systematically assessing trust levels represents an important scientific and practical task in the development of higher education systems. The primary objective of this article is to provide a systematic analysis of methods for determining trust levels in the evaluation of the higher education system and to substantiate their scientific foundations.

The evaluation of higher education systems has become a central pillar of contemporary education policy, governance, and institutional accountability in both developed and developing countries. As higher education increasingly functions as a driver of economic growth, social mobility, innovation, and national competitiveness, governments and stakeholders demand credible mechanisms to assess institutional performance, learning outcomes, and graduate employability ([Goczek, Witkowska, & Witkowski, 2021](#); [Kromydas, 2017](#)). Evaluation systems are therefore expected not only to measure educational quality accurately but also to legitimize public investment and inform strategic policy decisions. In this context, evaluation operates as both a technical instrument and a social process, linking measurable indicators with societal expectations and perceptions.

However, the effectiveness of higher education evaluation systems does not depend solely on the robustness of their methodological design or the sophistication of their indicators. A growing body of literature emphasizes that the perceived credibility of evaluation outcomes is equally—if not more—important than their technical validity ([Deniz & Erdener, 2023](#); [Niedlich et al., 2021](#)). When evaluation results are not trusted by stakeholders, even the most comprehensive assessment frameworks may fail to achieve their intended impact. This challenge has intensified in recent years due to the expansion of performance-based funding models, international rankings, accreditation regimes, and digital monitoring tools, all of which increase the visibility and consequences of evaluation outcomes ([Hazelkorn, 2015](#)).

Trust has therefore emerged as a critical mediating variable between evaluation mechanisms and their social effectiveness. In the context of higher education, trust reflects stakeholders' confidence that evaluation processes are fair, transparent, accurate, and aligned with educational and societal goals ([Deniz & Erdener, 2023](#)). Students, academic staff, parents, employers, and policymakers rely on evaluation outcomes to make high-stakes decisions, ranging from enrollment choices and curriculum design to recruitment, funding allocation, and regulatory reform. If these groups perceive evaluation systems as biased, opaque, or disconnected from real-world outcomes, trust erodes, undermining the legitimacy of both institutions and governing authorities ([Nazaretsky et al., 2025](#)).

From a sociological perspective, trust functions as a mechanism for reducing uncertainty and complexity within social systems. Drawing on institutional theory, Luhmann conceptualizes trust as a stabilizing force that enables individuals and organizations to act despite incomplete information and future risks. Applied to higher education, trust allows stakeholders to accept evaluation outcomes without fully understanding the technical details of assessment methodologies ([Niedlich et al., 2021](#)). This institutional trust is particularly important in education systems, where evaluation processes are often highly complex, multidimensional, and abstract for non-expert audiences.

At the same time, trust in higher education evaluation is not a static or uniform construct. It is shaped by stakeholders' experiences, expectations, and interactions with assessment systems over time. Empirical studies indicate that trust varies significantly across stakeholder groups, with students often expressing greater skepticism toward fairness and transparency, while academic staff tend to emphasize methodological rigor and internal coherence ([Legood, van der Werff, Lee, den Hartog, & van Knippenberg, 2023](#); [Panjaitan et al., 2026](#)). Employers, by contrast, evaluate trust primarily through the

practical relevance of evaluation outcomes, particularly the extent to which grades, credentials, and institutional reputations reliably signal graduates' competencies and job readiness ([Cahyani et al., 2025](#)).

The growing importance of trust is further reinforced by the digital transformation of higher education evaluation. The adoption of learning analytics, artificial intelligence–based assessment tools, online accreditation systems, and performance dashboards has increased both the scale and opacity of evaluation processes. While digital technologies promise greater efficiency and data-driven decision-making, they also raise concerns regarding algorithmic bias, data privacy, and interpretability. Recent research shows that trust plays a decisive role in stakeholders' acceptance of AI-powered evaluation technologies, particularly among students and educators who are directly affected by automated assessments ([Nazaretsky et al., 2025](#)).

Despite the growing recognition of trust as a crucial dimension of higher education evaluation, existing research reveals several conceptual and methodological limitations. First, many studies treat trust as a secondary or implicit variable, rather than as a core object of measurement. Trust is often inferred indirectly from satisfaction surveys or reduced to single-item indicators, which fail to capture its multidimensional nature ([Niedlich et al., 2021](#)). Second, there is limited consensus on how trust should be operationalized, weighted, and aggregated across different stakeholder groups. As a result, trust assessments frequently lack comparability, analytical depth, and policy relevance.

Moreover, current evaluation frameworks tend to privilege quantitative performance indicators—such as graduation rates, publication outputs, or employment statistics—while underestimating the role of qualitative and perceptual factors in shaping trust. Although quantitative indicators provide valuable information about system performance, they do not fully explain why stakeholders may accept or reject evaluation outcomes ([Burgass, Halpern, Nicholson, & Milner-Gulland, 2017](#)). Studies increasingly suggest that qualitative dimensions, including transparency of procedures, clarity of criteria, and effectiveness of communication, exert a decisive influence on trust formation ([Hazelkorn, 2015](#); [Sacre et al., 2023](#)).

The lack of integrated and systematic approaches to measuring trust represents a significant gap in higher education evaluation research. While composite indices and multidimensional assessment models have been widely applied in fields such as environmental governance, public health, and economic development, their application to trust in education evaluation remains limited ([Platt, Jacobson, & Kardia, 2018](#); [Tomaselli, Giuffrida, Gozzo, & Mazzeo Rinaldi, 2020](#)). An integrated trust index that combines quantitative and qualitative indicators could provide a more holistic understanding of how evaluation systems function as both technical and social institutions.

In addition, the policy relevance of trust measurement has become increasingly salient in the context of global education reforms. International organizations such as OECD and UNESCO emphasize transparency, stakeholder engagement, and accountability as key principles of quality assurance in higher education. Trust-based evaluation frameworks align with these principles by highlighting the importance of social acceptance and legitimacy alongside performance measurement ([Sanz, 2025](#)). For countries undergoing rapid expansion or reform of higher education systems, systematic trust assessment can serve as an early warning mechanism, identifying potential mismatches between formal evaluation structures and stakeholder expectations.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to advance the conceptualization and measurement of trust in the evaluation of higher education systems. Rather than treating trust as a peripheral outcome, this study positions trust as a central analytical construct that shapes the effectiveness and legitimacy of evaluation mechanisms. By integrating sociological insights with quantitative assessment techniques, the study aims to develop a structured methodological approach for determining trust levels among key stakeholder groups.

Specifically, this research addresses the following objectives. First, it seeks to clarify the conceptual foundations of trust in higher education evaluation by synthesizing insights from sociological,

psychological, and economic perspectives. Second, it aims to identify and operationalize core trust indicators—such as fairness, transparency, clarity, and practical relevance—that reflect both institutional performance and stakeholder perceptions. Third, it proposes an integrated trust index that combines quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive and comparable assessment of trust levels across stakeholder groups.

By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the growing literature on quality assurance and governance in higher education. It offers both theoretical and practical value by providing policymakers, administrators, and researchers with a systematic framework for assessing trust as a key dimension of evaluation systems. Ultimately, strengthening trust in evaluation processes is essential not only for improving educational quality but also for enhancing the social legitimacy and sustainability of higher education systems in an increasingly complex and competitive global environment.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development

The concept of trust has evolved as a complex and significant theoretical category within the social sciences, interpreted differently across various scholarly traditions. In sociology, trust is regarded as a key mechanism ensuring the stable functioning of social systems. According to N. Luhmann's theory of institutional trust, trust serves to reduce societal complexity and uncertainty by fostering stable expectations toward institutions ([Taulu & Kurniawan, 2025](#)). From this perspective, the education system, as a social institution, demonstrates its functional effectiveness largely through the degree of trust it commands in society.

Early studies in education research primarily examined trust in relation to the social legitimacy of educational institutions. Higher education institutions were conceptualized as producers of knowledge and facilitators of social mobility, with public trust in their outcomes closely linked to broader societal development. This macro-level approach, however, devoted limited attention to the internal mechanisms of evaluation systems ([Aarthi, Ravikumar, Sobirova, & Mamadiyarov, 2026](#)).

Subsequent research increasingly connected trust with education quality and evaluation processes. International literature emphasizes that trust in higher education evaluation is largely shaped by perceptions of fairness and transparency. Reports by OECD and UNESCO identify openness of evaluation procedures, clarity of criteria, and comprehensible presentation of results as critical factors in building trust among students and parents. Within this framework, trust is understood as an attitude toward the organizational and procedural dimensions of evaluation.

Other studies conceptualize trust as a psychological and sociological construct measured through subjective experience ([Legood et al., 2023](#)). In this approach, students' and teachers' personal experiences with assessment processes, satisfaction with outcomes, and attitudes toward evaluation constitute key indicators ([Adilov et al., 2025](#)). Survey-based studies reveal that low trust in evaluation systems is associated with declining student motivation and increasingly formal attitudes toward assessment among instructors, thereby limiting the role of evaluation in enhancing educational quality.

An alternative research strand links trust to the labor market recognition of educational outcomes. From an economic perspective, evaluation systems function as signaling mechanisms regarding the quality and reliability of graduates' competencies. Studies by E. Hanushek and L. Woessmann demonstrate that the economic effectiveness of education outcomes is indirectly related to trust in evaluation systems, with employer assessments serving as a key external indicator of trust ([Cahyani et al., 2025](#)). Despite extensive scholarly attention, the literature reveals insufficient systematization of methodologies for measuring trust. In many studies, trust is assessed through a single general question or simple average scores, failing to capture its multidimensional and structural nature. In particular, the relative contribution of components such as fairness, transparency, clarity, and practical relevance remains underexplored.

Recent analytical approaches emphasize the need for quantitative assessment of trust indicators through integrated indices ([Burgass et al., 2017](#)). Concepts of visual analytics proposed by S. Few and E. Tufte

highlight new opportunities for complex data analysis and decision-making. In this context, trust indicators are considered not merely as sociological measures but as analytical tools supporting governance decisions ([Mandagi, Pasuhuk, & Kainde, 2024](#); [Tomaselli et al., 2020](#)). Hazelkorn's research on higher education evaluation and rankings further underscores that complex and opaque methodologies intensify distrust among stakeholders. This perspective highlights that trust depends not only on evaluation outcomes but also on the transparency and comprehensibility of evaluation processes ([Elov, Kholikov, Abdullayeva, Mamadiyarov, & Ruzikulova, 2025](#)).

The curriculum should systematically identify the determinants of learning outcomes and incorporate advanced simulation-based instructional modules that yield measurable results in developing sustainability-related competencies ([Jaffar, Mohd Zain, Mustafa, & Jusop, 2025](#); [Nguyen & Adhikari, 2025](#)). Moreover, curriculum objectives must be explicitly aligned with sustainability-oriented learning frameworks to ensure that students acquire both conceptual understanding and practical skills ([Claro & Esteves, 2021](#); [Wilhelm, Förster, & Zimmermann, 2019](#)). When educational activities are structured around project-based learning and implemented collaboratively with industry stakeholders throughout various project phases, the learning process transforms into a pragmatic, constructivist, action-driven, and socially responsible pedagogical model ([Martins, Martins, & Brandão, 2021](#)). Following the completion of initial pilot initiatives, higher education institutions may establish long-term strategic partnerships with construction companies and technology providers to sustain hybrid learning environments or "living laboratories." Such partnerships can offer continuous access to cutting-edge technologies and real-world industry data, thereby enhancing the authenticity and relevance of the learning experience.

Furthermore, the integration of virtual reality (VR) and digital twin technologies (DTT) into mainstream academic courses can support ongoing curriculum relevance, foster deeper learner engagement, and facilitate experiential learning at scale. Institutions may also reinvest the operational cost savings generated through the adoption of immersive technologies into the further development, modernization, and expansion of simulation-based learning infrastructures ([Harahap & Yosepha, 2025](#); [Lusardi & Tomelleri, 2020](#)). Overall, while trust in higher education evaluation has been widely discussed, methods for determining trust levels and calculating indicators remain insufficiently systematized ([Putra & Hariri, 2022](#)). This study aims to address this methodological gap by conceptualizing trust through structural indicators and integrating them into a comprehensive evaluation model.

3. Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods methodological approach ([Almeida, 2018](#)). Primary data were collected using a sociological survey targeting key stakeholder groups directly involved in the higher education system: students, academic staff, parents, and employers ([Lim, Tan, Tan, Sng, & Teng, 2025](#)). Survey instruments were designed based on a Likert scale and covered the following dimensions of the evaluation system ([Kanwar & Sanjeeva, 2022](#)):

1. Clarity of evaluation criteria
2. Fairness of evaluation processes
3. Transparency of evaluation outcomes
4. Practical relevance of the evaluation system

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. Trust indicators were normalized, and weighting coefficients were determined through expert assessment. An integrated trust index was subsequently calculated.

4. Results and Discussion

Within the framework of this study, particular attention was devoted to identifying the level of trust in the evaluation of the higher education system through the integration of quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (sociological) indicators ([Goczek et al., 2021](#)). The results of the analysis indicate that the level of trust is determined not only by the absolute values of education quality indicators but also by the way these indicators are interpreted, explained, and perceived by different stakeholder groups during

the evaluation process.

Table 1. Quantitative indicators and their impact on trust formation

Indicator	Average Value	Degree of Impact on Trust
Student enrollment rate (%)	38	Moderate
Academic staff holding scientific degrees (%)	54	High
Graduate employment rate (%)	72	Very high
Availability of educational infrastructure	Moderate	Moderate
Research publication activity (per 100 academic staff)	16	High

The quantitative analysis was conducted on the basis of official statistical indicators of the higher education system (Hazelkorn, 2015). These indicators reflect the institutional stability and functional effectiveness of the system. Among them, the graduate employment rate emerged as the strongest quantitative determinant of trust. This finding suggests that society and employers primarily evaluate educational outcomes through their practical effectiveness in the labor market. In addition, the scientific capacity of academic staff was identified as a significant factor contributing to the strengthening of trust in the higher education system (Bachmann & Kroeger, 2017).

The analysis demonstrates that trust in the evaluation of higher education is not a single, homogeneous indicator. Instead, it represents a complex social phenomenon shaped by stakeholders' interactions with the evaluation system, their prior experiences, and their expectations. Differences in trust levels are directly related to how various aspects of the evaluation system are perceived by different stakeholder groups, which substantiates the need for a differentiated approach in improving evaluation mechanisms (Zokir Mamadiyarov, Atajanova, Iskandarov, & Ahmad, 2026). Qualitative analysis was based on the results of sociological surveys conducted among key stakeholder groups. These indicators made it possible to assess the subjective perception of the evaluation system and its level of social legitimacy.

Table 2. Trust scores based on qualitative indicators (1–5 scale)

Qualitative Indicator	Students	Academic Staff	Employers
Fairness of evaluation	3.3	3.9	3.6
Transparency of evaluation	3.4	4.0	3.7
Clarity of evaluation criteria	3.6	4.1	3.8
Reliability of evaluation outcomes	3.5	4.2	4.0

Relatively lower scores were observed in students' assessments of fairness and transparency. This finding indicates the necessity of strengthening communication and feedback mechanisms within the evaluation system. In contrast, academic staff evaluated the methodological soundness of evaluation processes more positively. A detailed analysis of students' responses revealed a cautious and critical attitude toward the evaluation system. This cautiousness is primarily associated with doubts regarding the extent to which the principle of fairness is ensured in practice. Since students closely associate evaluation outcomes with their academic and professional prospects, any perceived ambiguity or subjectivity in assessment procedures leads to a decline in trust (ZT Mamadiyarov, 2025). Moreover, insufficiently clear and accessible mechanisms for reviewing results and submitting appeals were identified as additional factors negatively affecting students' trust (Sanz, 2025).

Academic staff assessed the evaluation system mainly from the perspective of its internal methodological logic. The analysis shows that instructors consider the scientific validity of evaluation criteria, the existence of standardized assessment methods, and the consistency of learning outcome measurement as key determinants of trust. This reflects their professional approach to evaluation as active participants in the assessment process. At the same time, the relatively high level of trust among academic staff appears to be more closely linked to the didactic and methodological coherence of the system than to its external perception (Panjaitan et al., 2026).

Employers' evaluations provided insight into trust in the evaluation system from the perspective of external outcomes. The analysis indicates that, for employers, the value of the evaluation system lies in its ability to accurately reflect graduates' practical skills and alignment with labor market requirements. If evaluation results fail to adequately demonstrate competencies such as independent problem-solving, teamwork, and practical application of knowledge, employers tend to express lower levels of trust. In this regard, employer assessments may be considered an important external indicator reflecting the economic and practical effectiveness of the evaluation system ([Ravikumar, Aarthi, Rai, & Mamadiyarov, 2026](#)).

The perspective of parents highlighted the communicative and informational dimensions of trust. The analysis shows that, for parents, the way evaluation results are explained and communicated is more important than the complexity of evaluation methodologies themselves. Clear and accessible presentation of results was identified as a key factor strengthening parental trust, whereas opaque or overly complex evaluation processes may contribute to increased skepticism among parents. By integrating quantitative and qualitative indicators, the overall level of trust was calculated in the form of an integrated trust index. This approach made it possible to reflect not only the statistical performance of the evaluation system but also its level of social acceptance.

Table 3. Integrated trust index (0–100 scale)

Stakeholder Group	Contribution of Quantitative Factors	Contribution of Qualitative Factors	Overall Trust Index
Students	32	37	69
Academic staff	40	43	83
Employers	38	42	80

The results indicate that qualitative factors slightly outweigh quantitative ones in shaping trust across all stakeholder groups. This finding suggests that improving statistical performance alone is insufficient to enhance trust in the evaluation system; ensuring transparency, clarity, and effective communication is equally essential. The calculation of the integrated trust index enabled a comprehensive yet substantively rich representation of trust in the evaluation system ([Platt et al., 2018](#)). Unlike simple average scores, the index incorporates the relative roles and influence of different stakeholder groups ([Tan, Cheng, & Ling, 2025](#)). Therefore, the integrated trust index may be regarded as a relatively objective indicator reflecting the social acceptance of the evaluation system.

Comparative analysis with education quality indicators revealed a positive relationship between trust levels and education quality, although this relationship is neither direct nor absolute. In some cases, relatively high education quality indicators coexist with low levels of trust, typically due to deficiencies in transparency and result interpretation mechanisms. Conversely, when evaluation processes are open and understandable, trust levels may remain high even if education quality indicators are moderate ([Midway, 2020](#)). Correlation analysis demonstrates moderate to strong positive relationships between trust levels and education quality indicators. In particular, the strong correlation with evaluation transparency confirms the critical role of institutional openness in strengthening trust.

Table 4. Correlation between trust level and key education quality indicators

Indicators	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Trust index – graduate employment rate	0.63
Trust index – evaluation transparency	0.68
Trust index – academic staff capacity	0.55

The discussion of results suggests that trust in evaluation systems is not a static indicator but a dynamic process that evolves over time. Reforms in evaluation mechanisms, increased information openness, and effective communication with stakeholders contribute to the growth of trust. Therefore, trust levels should not be measured on a one-time basis but should be subject to continuous monitoring ([Boeren, 2019](#)).

Overall, the analysis and discussion confirm that trust constitutes a crucial qualitative indicator in the evaluation of higher education systems. Differences across stakeholder groups indicate that improving evaluation systems requires not a universal approach but differentiated strategies aligned with the specific needs and expectations of each group. The integrated trust index emerges as an important analytical tool for assessing not only the methodological effectiveness of evaluation systems but also their social legitimacy.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

The conducted analysis demonstrates that evaluating the higher education system on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative indicators represents the most appropriate and comprehensive approach for determining the level of trust. While quantitative indicators reflect the functional efficiency and performance capacity of the system, qualitative indicators capture its social legitimacy and subjective acceptance among stakeholders. The integration of these two approaches provides a solid scientific and analytical foundation for improving evaluation mechanisms and strengthening trust in the higher education system.

The research findings confirm that identifying the level of trust in the evaluation of higher education systems is of significant scientific and practical importance. Assessing trust not merely as a single aggregated value, but through a set of structural and component-based indicators, enhances the objectivity, transparency, and analytical depth of evaluation processes. Such an approach allows for a more accurate reflection of how evaluation systems are perceived and accepted by different stakeholder groups.

From a practical perspective, the following recommendations are proposed to establish regular and systematic monitoring of trust indicators within the evaluation of higher education systems, to strengthen communication and feedback mechanisms aimed at increasing the transparency and clarity of evaluation processes, to present trust indices in a visualized and openly accessible format through information-analytical platforms. The implementation of these recommendations will contribute to reinforcing the social legitimacy of higher education systems and to increasing confidence in evaluation processes. Ultimately, a trust-based evaluation framework can enhance the effectiveness of education policy and support sustainable development in higher education.

The findings indicate that analysis based on trust indicators plays a crucial role in improving assessment systems by enabling the identification of specific dimensions that undermine trust, supporting the development of differentiated policies tailored to stakeholder groups, and creating a solid analytical foundation for strengthening the institutional legitimacy of assessment mechanisms. The results of the study confirm that determining the level of trust in higher education assessment systems constitutes an essential component of education quality evaluation. The integration of sociological and statistical approaches in calculating trust indicators enhances the objectivity and transparency of assessment systems and supports evidence-based decision-making in educational governance.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it adopts a cross-sectional design that captures stakeholder trust at a single point in time, which limits the ability to observe changes in trust dynamics over time. Second, the analysis focuses on four stakeholder groups—students, academic staff, parents, and employers—while excluding other relevant actors such as policymakers, accreditation bodies, and quality assurance agencies. Third, the study relies partly on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to response bias and subjective interpretation. Finally, the weighting of trust indicators is based on expert judgment, which, although contextually relevant, may introduce a degree of subjectivity into the integrated trust index.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs to examine the evolution of trust in higher education evaluation systems over time. Further studies should also expand stakeholder coverage by

including policymakers and accreditation agencies to enhance generalizability. In addition, future research may refine the integrated trust index by incorporating trust in digital and AI-based evaluation systems, particularly as technology-driven assessment becomes more prevalent. Comparative and cross-national studies, as well as the application of advanced analytical methods, are recommended to deepen understanding of trust as a key governance mechanism in higher education evaluation.

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