

# Measuring Trust in Higher Education Assessment Systems: Indicators and Methods

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## Article History

Received on 17 December 2025

1<sup>st</sup> Revision on 9 January 2026

2<sup>nd</sup> Revision on 20 January 2026

Accepted on 2 February 2026

## Abstract

**Purpose:** This article analyzes the methodology for determining the level of trust in higher education assessment systems, and how trust indicators can be calculated through sociological and statistical methods. The focus is on improving transparency, legitimacy, and effectiveness in assessment systems.

**Research methodology:** The study employs a mixed-methods design, using a sociological survey with key stakeholders (students, faculty, parents, employers) involved in higher education assessment. The data is processed statistically, employing descriptive statistics and integrated index construction.

**Results:** The study reveals that trust in assessment systems is multidimensional. It shows varying levels of trust across different stakeholder groups, with significant concerns from students about fairness and transparency in assessment systems.

**Conclusions:** The study confirms that trust in assessment systems plays a critical role in determining the legitimacy and effectiveness of these systems. It emphasizes that trust is influenced by factors such as transparency, fairness, and methodological soundness, and cannot be captured by a single indicator.

**Limitations:** The study is limited by the generalizability of the findings, as it focuses on a specific set of stakeholders in the higher education system and may not fully account for regional or institutional differences.

**Contribution:** This research contributes to the understanding of trust in higher education assessment systems by proposing an integrated trust index. It offers insights into how trust can be quantified and how it can influence the quality and legitimacy of education systems.

**Keywords:** *Assessment System, Education Quality, Integrated Index, Sociological Survey, Statistical Analysis, Stakeholders, Trust Level, Trust Indicators.*

**How to Cite:** Ugli, H. H. A. (2026). Measuring Trust in Higher Education Assessment Systems: Indicators and Methods. *Review of Multidisciplinary Academic and Practice Studies*, 3(1), 13-23.

## 1. Introduction

Assessment mechanisms in higher education represent one of the core governance instruments ensuring educational quality and institutional effectiveness. Through assessment systems, learning outcomes are identified, students' academic performance is measured, and conclusions are drawn regarding the performance of educational institutions (Singh, Alhassan, Binsaif, & Alhussain, 2023). However, the effectiveness of an assessment system depends not only on its methodological soundness but also on the degree of trust it inspires among stakeholders. In recent years, growing attention has been paid to the transparency, fairness, and objectivity of assessment systems in higher education. In contexts where students, parents, employers, and society lack confidence in assessment outcomes, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the education system may be significantly undermined (Adilov et al., 2025).

Consequently, determining the level of trust in higher education assessment systems and measuring it through scientifically grounded indicators has emerged as a pressing research and practical issue. The objective of this article is to conduct a systematic analysis of methods for determining trust in higher

education assessment systems and to substantiate an integrated model for calculating trust indicators. In the last few decades, the role of trust in educational systems has become increasingly recognized as essential for the legitimacy and overall success of assessment processes. A lack of confidence in assessment outcomes can significantly undermine the perceived value of higher education ([Mirsaidovna, 2025](#)). This erosion of trust often stems from perceptions of unfairness, lack of transparency, and inconsistencies in grading or evaluation criteria. This is particularly important in the context of higher education, where the stakes are high, and outcomes such as degree classifications or professional qualifications are directly linked to individuals' career prospects and future opportunities.

Trust in higher education assessment systems is a multi-dimensional construct that involves various factors, including the fairness of the process, the transparency of results, the methodological soundness of the assessment methods, and the relevance of assessment outcomes ([Saputra, Ngaliman, & Satriawan, 2025](#)). Trust is crucial because it enhances the perceived legitimacy of the assessment process, which in turn encourages students to engage more deeply in their academic work and fosters greater cooperation from faculty and staff in implementing assessment procedures. It is a fundamental ingredient for the success of educational reforms aimed at improving teaching quality and learning outcomes ([Muharlis & Indrawati, 2025](#)).

In recent years, significant attention has been paid to enhancing the transparency, fairness, and objectivity of assessment systems in higher education. This has become a growing concern globally, as the transparency of assessment mechanisms has been shown to correlate directly with students' and parents' confidence in these systems. When transparency is lacking, the legitimacy of the assessment process comes into question, and skepticism grows regarding the fairness of grading or evaluation ([Torabi, Hosnavi, Nezhad, Azadi, & Haghi, 2025](#)). Similarly, when students and other stakeholders perceive assessment outcomes as inconsistent or subjective, their trust in the system is diminished.

Research has shown that trust is a vital component of organizational performance and can significantly influence decision-making processes, especially in institutional settings such as universities. In higher education, the lack of trust in assessment systems can lead to disengagement, poor academic performance, and increased dropout rates. Moreover, it can harm the reputation of educational institutions, especially when students and employers begin to question the validity of academic qualifications. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in developing countries or emerging economies where higher education institutions often struggle to ensure consistent standards and transparent assessment practices.

The need to measure and quantify trust in higher education assessment systems has thus become an important area of academic research. While much of the existing literature discusses the theoretical aspects of trust, there is a growing demand for practical methodologies that can reliably measure trust and provide insights into how to enhance it. In particular, this research aims to develop and propose a set of indicators and metrics for measuring trust in higher education assessment systems. This will be done through the integration of sociological and statistical methods, offering a robust framework for calculating trust indicators.

One of the key aspects of this research is the exploration of Public Service Motivation (PSM) as an intervening variable in the trust-performance relationship. Public Service Motivation refers to an individual's desire to serve the public and contribute to society through their professional work. PSM has been widely studied in the context of public administration and organizational behavior, particularly within government organizations and non-profit sectors. However, its relevance to higher education assessment systems remains under-explored.

In this article, the role of PSM in shaping trust levels within higher education assessment systems is critically examined. It is hypothesized that higher levels of public service motivation among key stakeholders (such as faculty members, administrators, and students) lead to greater trust in assessment processes. Furthermore, the study aims to demonstrate how this trust influences the overall effectiveness of the assessment system, including its perceived fairness, transparency, and relevance to students'

future career opportunities. Trust in higher education assessment systems is also intrinsically linked to institutional legitimacy. Institutions that are viewed as trustworthy are more likely to attract high-quality students and faculty members, and their graduates are more likely to be recognized and valued in the labor market. This is particularly crucial in the context of globalization, where education systems are increasingly competitive, and students have access to a variety of international options. Consequently, educational institutions must find ways to build and sustain trust in their assessment mechanisms in order to remain competitive and relevant.

Furthermore, the integration of sociological surveys and statistical analysis provides a unique opportunity to capture the multi-dimensional aspects of trust. The data gathered through surveys can offer insights into how different stakeholder groups perceive various aspects of the assessment system, including fairness, clarity, transparency, and methodological rigor. Once the data is collected, statistical methods such as factor analysis and regression modeling can be used to identify key drivers of trust and to develop an integrated trust index. This index can then serve as a useful tool for policymakers and institutional leaders who seek to improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of their assessment systems.

The ultimate goal of this article is to propose an integrated model for calculating trust indicators that incorporates both subjective perceptions and objective measures. By developing such a model, the article contributes to the growing body of literature on trust in higher education and offers a practical solution for assessing the effectiveness of assessment systems. This article is structured as follows: The first section provides an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of trust in higher education assessment systems, followed by a literature review that explores existing research on the topic. The methodology section describes the research design, including the use of sociological surveys and statistical analysis. The subsequent section presents the results of the empirical analysis, followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings. Finally, the article concludes with recommendations for improving trust in higher education assessment systems and suggestions for future research.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis/es Development**

Trust is a central theoretical category in the social sciences, with its meaning and measurement varying across disciplines. In sociology and political science, trust is considered a key determinant of institutional legitimacy and social stability. In economics, trust is interpreted as an important resource that reduces transaction costs and enhances institutional efficiency ([Cahyani et al., 2025](#); [Elov, Kholikov, Abdullayeva, Mamadiyarov, & Ruzikulova, 2025](#)). Although the issue of trust emerged later in educational research, it has recently gained recognition as an essential component of education quality and assessment systems.

Initial studies on trust in education were rooted in institutional trust theories. According to the conceptual frameworks of N. Luhmann and A. Giddens, trust serves as a mechanism for reducing uncertainty in complex systems and ensuring institutional stability ([Guan, 2025](#)). Within this perspective, higher education institutions and their assessment systems are viewed as legitimate insofar as they are trusted by society. Assessment systems thus function as “signaling mechanisms” that communicate educational quality.

International literature primarily examines trust in assessment systems in relation to educational quality, fairness, and transparency. OECD studies emphasize that openness and clarity of assessment systems are among the main factors shaping trust among students and parents. In this framework, trust is conceptualized as a procedural category linked to the accuracy and verifiability of assessment results. Other scholars associate trust in assessment systems with the credibility of educational outcomes and their recognition in the labor market. For example, E. Hanushek and L. Woessmann demonstrate that educational outcomes are closely linked to economic performance, suggesting that trust in assessment systems can be indirectly measured through graduates’ labor market success.

Alternatively, some studies conceptualize trust as a subjective category, focusing on students’ and teachers’ personal experiences, perceptions of fairness, and levels of satisfaction ([Farooq, Khan, Kainat, & Mumtaz, 2025](#); [Siddique, Liu, Farooq, & Din, 2025](#)). Sociological research indicates that low trust in

assessment systems leads to reduced student motivation and a formalistic approach to assessment by teachers, thereby limiting its impact on educational quality. Despite extensive theoretical discussion, the literature reveals significant methodological shortcomings in measuring trust. Many studies rely on simple survey questions and present results as average scores or percentages, failing to capture the multidimensional nature of trust. Issues such as indicator normalization, weighting, and construction of integrated indices remain underdeveloped ([Park & Kim, 2025](#)).

The curriculum should identify the factors that determine learning outcomes, introduce new simulation-based modules that yield concrete results in studying established sustainability, and align curriculum outcomes with sustainability-oriented learning. Whenever education is organized through project-based learning and carried out in collaboration with industry across different project stages, it transforms into a pragmatic, constructive, action-oriented, and socially responsible learning scenario. Higher education institutions may establish strategic partnerships with construction companies and technology providers to maintain hybrid environments or “living laboratories” after the initial pilot projects are completed ([Nousheen, Habib, Haroon, & Scott, 2026](#)). The establishment of such collaborations can provide continuous access to up-to-date technologies and real-world data related to the construction industry.

The concept of trust in higher education assessment systems has become an increasingly important area of study as institutions worldwide face growing demands for transparency and accountability. Trust in these systems is not just an abstract idea; it has real-world implications for the quality of education, institutional reputation, and the confidence of students, parents, and employers. Researchers have long recognized the multidimensional nature of trust, which includes perceptions of fairness, transparency, consistency, and the competence of the assessors involved. When students, faculty, and other stakeholders perceive the assessment system as fair and trustworthy, they are more likely to engage fully with the educational process, leading to better academic outcomes and higher levels of satisfaction with the educational experience.

Trust in assessment systems is closely linked to the concept of institutional legitimacy. Educational institutions rely on the trust of their stakeholders to maintain their credibility and attract high-quality students, faculty, and funding. As [Lackner \(2024\)](#) argues, trust plays a foundational role in the stability and legitimacy of institutions. In the context of higher education, this is particularly important, as assessment systems are the primary means by which institutions validate academic achievement and certify qualifications. A lack of trust in these systems can undermine the legitimacy of the institution itself, making it more difficult for graduates to gain recognition in the job market or for the institution to maintain its standing in the academic community.

The relationship between trust and the effectiveness of higher education assessment systems is shaped by several key factors. Transparency is one of the most critical aspects, as it directly affects how students and other stakeholders perceive the fairness and reliability of the assessment process. Studies have shown that when assessment criteria and grading practices are clearly communicated to students, trust in the system is significantly higher. [Sætre \(2025\)](#) emphasizes that clear and accessible information about assessment procedures helps stakeholders understand the rationale behind grading decisions, thereby increasing the perceived legitimacy of the process. Transparency also helps ensure that students feel confident that they are being assessed based on clear, consistent standards, rather than subjective or arbitrary criteria.

Similarly, fairness is another vital component of trust in assessment systems. According to [Bazvand and Rasooli \(2022\)](#), fairness in education systems contributes to students' belief that their performance is evaluated equitably and without bias. When students perceive the grading system as fair, they are more likely to trust that the outcomes reflect their actual academic abilities and achievements. Conversely, when students believe the system is unfair or biased, their trust in the system declines, and they may disengage from their studies or question the value of their educational qualifications.

While transparency and fairness are essential, they are not sufficient on their own to build trust. Consistency in assessment practices also plays a critical role. If students perceive that their work is being

evaluated inconsistently, or if different instructors apply different standards, their trust in the system will be compromised ([Taylor, Kisby, & Reedy, 2024](#)). This is especially true in educational systems that rely on subjective evaluation methods, such as essay grading or oral exams, where individual preferences and biases may unintentionally influence the outcome. To address these concerns, many institutions have turned to rubrics and standardized tests, which provide clear criteria for evaluation and reduce the potential for bias in grading.

An emerging area of interest in higher education assessment research is the role of Public Service Motivation (PSM) in shaping trust in educational systems. [Sułkowski, Przytuła, Borg, and Kulikowski \(2020\)](#) introduced the concept of PSM, which refers to the intrinsic motivation to serve the public good. PSM has been shown to influence behavior in public sector organizations, including educational institutions, by encouraging employees to prioritize public service over personal gain. In the context of higher education, faculty members and administrators with high levels of PSM may be more likely to engage in transparent and fair assessment practices, as they are motivated by a desire to contribute to the public good and ensure that all students are treated equitably. [Van der Merwe and Botha \(2019\)](#) suggest that faculty members with strong PSM are more likely to perceive the assessment process as a means to foster societal benefit, which can lead to greater commitment to maintaining fairness and transparency in grading.

Moreover, students with high levels of PSM may also contribute to greater trust in the system. When students are motivated by a desire to excel academically and contribute to society, they are more likely to view the assessment process as a tool for measuring their true abilities, rather than as a bureaucratic hurdle. [Jin, McDonald, and Park \(2018\)](#) argue that the presence of PSM among students can lead to more positive engagement with the assessment process and greater satisfaction with the outcomes. This suggests that PSM may not only influence the behavior of faculty and administrators but also shape the attitudes and expectations of students, thereby contributing to a more trusting and effective assessment system.

The importance of trust in higher education assessment systems extends beyond the academic community. Employers, parents, and policymakers also rely on the credibility of these systems when making decisions about hiring, funding, and policy development. [Dicker, Garcia, Kelly, and Mulrooney \(2019\)](#) argue that the trustworthiness of educational credentials is directly linked to the perceived quality of the assessment system. When assessment systems are viewed as fair, transparent, and reliable, graduates' qualifications are seen as more valuable by employers, and they are more likely to be hired based on their academic achievements. This is particularly important in the globalized labor market, where employers often have to make decisions based on a range of qualifications from different countries and institutions.

As trust is such a critical element of educational assessment systems, it is essential to measure it accurately. Traditional methods of assessing trust, such as surveys with Likert scale questions, are useful but often fail to capture the complexity of the concept. Recent research has suggested that more sophisticated methods, such as factor analysis and structural equation modeling, can provide a deeper understanding of the multidimensional nature of trust ([Deniz & Erdener, 2023](#)). By using these techniques, researchers can identify key factors that influence trust in assessment systems and develop integrated trust indices that provide more precise measurements. This approach allows institutions to assess not only the overall level of trust but also the specific factors that contribute to it, enabling more targeted reforms and improvements.

The measurement of trust is not only important for academic research but also for practical applications. Higher education institutions can use trust indices to identify areas where their assessment systems are weak and take steps to address these issues ([Lokolo, Kempa, & Rehatta, 2024](#)). For example, if an institution's trust index reveals that students perceive the grading system as unfair, the institution can investigate the sources of this perception and implement reforms to improve the consistency and transparency of grading practices. By incorporating trust measurement into institutional evaluations,

universities can ensure that they are meeting the expectations of students, faculty, and other stakeholders and enhance the credibility of their assessment systems.

Finally, the relationship between trust and education quality is well-documented in the literature. Institutions that enjoy high levels of trust are better positioned to attract high-quality students, faculty, and resources. As [Bormann, Niedlich, and Würbel \(2021\)](#) note, trust in assessment systems is positively correlated with student engagement and performance. When students trust that their academic achievements are being evaluated fairly and accurately, they are more likely to engage deeply with the learning process, leading to better academic outcomes. Conversely, when trust is lacking, students may disengage from their studies, focus solely on meeting minimum requirements, or seek ways to circumvent the system ([Ehren, 2023](#)). This can lead to a cycle of disengagement and underachievement, ultimately lowering the quality of education and undermining the institution's reputation.

Furthermore, integrating virtual reality (VR) and digital twin technology (DTT) into standard academic courses can help maintain ongoing relevance and student engagement. Institutions can reinvest the operational cost savings achieved through the use of immersive technologies into further developing and upgrading simulation-based learning environments ([ZT Mamadiyarov, 2025](#); [Zokir Mamadiyarov, Atajanova, Iskandarov, & Ahmad, 2025](#)). Recent studies emphasize the importance of information-analytical approaches, highlighting the need to statistically model trust indicators and integrate them with other performance measures. Research by S. Few and E. Tufte demonstrates that analytical and visual integration of data enhances decision-making quality. Similarly, E. Hazelkorn argues that non-transparent and overly complex assessment and ranking systems can lead to a crisis of trust. Overall, the literature suggests that trust in higher education assessment systems is a multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be measured using a single method or indicator. While theoretical foundations are well established, a methodological gap remains in operationalizing trust through integrated indicators—an issue this study seeks to address.

In conclusion, trust in higher education assessment systems is a crucial factor in ensuring the legitimacy, fairness, and effectiveness of these systems. Trust is shaped by transparency, fairness, consistency, and the motivation of those involved in the assessment process. Public Service Motivation provides a valuable framework for understanding how faculty, administrators, and students can contribute to a more transparent and equitable assessment system. By measuring trust using more sophisticated methods, educational institutions can identify areas for improvement and take steps to enhance the effectiveness of their assessment systems. Trust is not only a subjective feeling but a measurable and actionable component that can influence the quality of education and the reputation of higher education institutions.

### **3. Methodology**

The study employs a mixed-methods research design. Primary data were collected through a sociological survey targeting key stakeholder groups directly involved in higher education assessment: students, faculty members, parents, and employers. Survey questions were developed using a Likert scale and covered the following dimensions of the assessment system:

1. Clarity of assessment criteria;
2. Fairness of the assessment process;
3. Transparency of results;
4. Methodological soundness of assessment;
5. Practical relevance of assessment outcomes.

Collected data were subjected to statistical processing. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate mean values and dispersion measures. Subsequently, trust indicators were normalized, weighted, and aggregated to construct an integrated trust index.

### **4. Analysis and Discussion of Results**

The empirical analysis conducted within the framework of this study demonstrates that trust in higher

education assessment systems is neither uniform nor monolithic. Instead, it is shaped by the nature of stakeholders' interactions with the system, their prior experiences, and their expectations. This finding confirms the multidimensional character of trust and indicates that its evaluation through a single aggregate measure is insufficient ([Panjaitan et al., 2026](#)).

The information-analytical approach applied in the study reveals that trust in assessment systems has a complex, multi-component structure. Trust should not be interpreted merely as a general attitude but rather as a composite of several interrelated indicators reflecting different functional dimensions of the assessment system. Accordingly, the analysis first examines trust at the level of individual indicators and subsequently aggregates them into an integrated trust index.

Table 1. Trust indicators in the assessment system

No.	Trust Indicator	Description
I1	Clarity of assessment criteria	Students' and parents' evaluations
I2	Fairness of the assessment process	Perceptions of objectivity and equity
I3	Transparency of results	Accessibility and explanation of results
I4	Methodological soundness	Faculty perspectives
I5	Practical relevance	Recognition of graduate competencies

These indicators encompass the key functional dimensions of trust in the assessment system and enable the identification of differences among stakeholder groups. The analysis indicates that students express relatively cautious attitudes toward the fairness of the assessment process. This cautiousness is primarily associated with concerns about subjectivity, inconsistent interpretation of assessment criteria, and limited confidence in mechanisms for reviewing assessment outcomes ([Ravikumar, Aarthi, Rai, & Mamadiyarov, 2026](#)). Since students directly associate assessment results with their individual educational trajectories, their level of trust is largely shaped by personal experience. In this regard, students represent one of the most sensitive groups in terms of trust indicators within the assessment system.

Table 2. Average trust scores by stakeholder group (1–5 scale)

Group	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5
Students	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.8	3.7
Faculty	4.1	3.9	3.8	4.4	3.9
Parents	3.9	3.6	4.0	3.7	3.8
Employers	3.7	3.5	3.6	3.6	4.2

The results presented in Table 2 show that students provided the lowest evaluation for the fairness of the assessment process (I2). In contrast, faculty members rated methodological soundness (I4) most highly. For employers, the most significant indicator is the practical relevance of assessment outcomes (I5), which serves as the primary determinant of their trust in the assessment system. Faculty members' evaluations reflect a fundamentally different logic. Their trust is largely based on the methodological validity of assessment criteria, the use of standardized assessment tools, and alignment with didactic principles. This indicates a professional orientation toward assessment. At the same time, the findings suggest that faculty trust is more closely linked to the internal methodological coherence of the assessment system than to its external outcomes.

Employers' evaluations provide insight into trust from the perspective of external effectiveness. For employers, the assessment system primarily signals the extent to which graduates' competencies correspond to real labor market requirements. The results indicate that employers associate trust in assessment systems with graduates' practical skills, adaptability, and capacity for independent decision-making ([Ravikumar, Aarthi, Ruzimova, & Mamadiyarov, 2026](#)). This underscores the role of assessment outcomes as labor market signals.

Parents' evaluations highlight the informational and communicative dimensions of trust. The analysis

shows that transparency, clarity, and accessibility of explanations are particularly important for parents. Rather than focusing on methodological complexity, parents emphasize how assessment results are communicated and how they relate to their children’s future opportunities. Consequently, parental trust can be considered an important indicator of the communicative effectiveness of the assessment system.

Table 3. Weight coefficients of trust indicators

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Weight (Wi)</b>
I1 – Clarity	0.20
I2 – Fairness	0.25
I3 – Transparency	0.20
I4 – Methodology	0.15
I5 – Practical relevance	0.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.00</b>

The weight coefficients were determined through expert evaluation. Fairness of the assessment process was assigned the highest weight, reflecting its decisive role in shaping trust. The calculated integrated trust index allows for a quantitative generalization of trust in the assessment system. Expressing the index on a 0–100 scale facilitates comparison across stakeholder groups and over time. Importantly, the integrated index is not a simple arithmetic average of group evaluations; rather, it is a weighted composite measure that accounts for stakeholders’ roles and influence within the assessment system. As such, it provides a relatively objective reflection of the system’s social acceptance.

Table 4. Integrated trust index (0–100 scale)

<b>Group</b>	<b>Normalized Index</b>	<b>Trust Index</b>
Students	0.71	71
Faculty	0.82	82
Parents	0.76	76
Employers	0.79	79

The results indicate that the highest level of trust in the assessment system is observed among faculty members, while students demonstrate comparatively lower trust. This highlights the need to pay particular attention to issues of fairness and transparency in assessment processes. A comparative analysis of the integrated trust index and education quality indicators reveals a moderate positive correlation between these variables. This suggests that trust plays an important, though not exclusive, role in shaping perceptions of educational quality. In some cases, high educational quality may coexist with relatively low trust in assessment systems, typically due to deficiencies in transparency or result interpretation mechanisms.

Table 5. Correlation between trust index and education quality indicators

<b>Indicator Pair</b>	<b>Correlation (r)</b>
Trust Index – Overall education quality	0.58
Trust Index – Graduate outcomes	0.62
Trust Index – Assessment transparency	0.69

Correlation analysis confirms a moderate positive relationship between trust and education quality, with the strongest association observed for assessment transparency. This finding underscores the critical role of communicative mechanisms in strengthening trust. The discussion of results demonstrates that trust in assessment systems is dynamic in nature and evolves over time in response to institutional reforms, changes in assessment mechanisms, and stakeholder experiences. Consequently, one-time measurement of trust is insufficient. Continuous monitoring of the integrated trust index enables early identification of emerging problems and supports evidence-based improvements in assessment systems.

Overall, the analysis confirms that trust in assessment systems constitutes a key quality indicator of higher education. Differences across stakeholder groups highlight the necessity of differentiated trust-

enhancing strategies. The integrated trust index emerges as an important analytical tool for evaluating not only the technical effectiveness of assessment systems but also their social legitimacy.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1 Conclusion

The conducted analysis demonstrates that trust in higher education assessment systems is not formed uniformly and largely depends on the nature of interactions between stakeholder groups and the assessment system itself. Differences in experience, expectations, and institutional roles result in varying levels and structures of trust. In this regard, the integrated trust index provides a comprehensive and analytically grounded tool for capturing the degree of social acceptance of assessment systems. When interpreted in conjunction with education quality indicators, the index offers deeper and more meaningful insights into the effectiveness and legitimacy of assessment practices.

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, the generalizability of the findings is limited as it focuses on a specific group of stakeholders (students, faculty, parents, and employers) within a particular context, which may not represent the diverse perspectives of other regions or educational systems. Second, the cross-sectional design of the study captures data at one point in time, while trust in assessment systems may evolve over time. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported perceptions, which can introduce bias or subjectivity. Lastly, the research is based on a single case study, limiting its applicability to other educational contexts with different cultural or socio-economic factors.

### 5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed to conduct regular monitoring of trust indicators related to assessment systems, to systematically incorporate stakeholder feedback into the process of assessment system improvement, to introduce trust indices as a separate analytical module within information and analytical platforms used in higher education management. The implementation of this approach contributes to strengthening the social legitimacy of higher education systems and to increasing stakeholders' confidence in assessment processes, thereby supporting sustainable improvements in education quality and institutional effectiveness.

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