

From Governance to Resilience: Understanding Trust and Social Cohesion in Urban Societies

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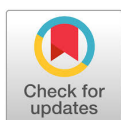
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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates how governance quality influences citizens' trust and access to justice, and how these factors, in turn, affect social resilience and shape the human-social nexus in urban societies. Data were collected from 490 respondents through a structured survey. The study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine both measurement and structural models, ensuring reliability, validity, and robustness of the results. The findings reveal that better governance quality strengthens citizens' trust in public institutions and improves access to justice, which together enhance social resilience. Moreover, governance quality, citizens' trust, access to justice, and social resilience all significantly contribute to the overall human-social nexus, with social resilience mediating several important relationships. These results highlight the central role of transparent, accountable governance and fair legal systems in fostering trust, resilience, and societal cohesion in contemporary urban contexts. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the mechanisms through which governance quality, citizens' trust, access to justice, and social resilience promote community cohesion and a stronger human-social nexus. It also offers practical policy insights, emphasizing the need for integrated strategies that combine institutional reform, citizen engagement, and community resilience initiatives to enhance social cohesion and adaptive capacity.

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Introduction

The complexities of contemporary societies have intensified the need to examine the intersection between human agency and social systems. Global challenges such as climate change, forced displacement, digital transformation, and widening inequalities are reshaping the way individuals, communities, and institutions interact. These dynamics underscore the urgent relevance of exploring how trust, resilience, and governance function within the human-social nexus, particularly in contexts marked by uncertainty and rapid transformation

(Atanga et al., 2024; Dogdu Yuceturk, 2025). Understanding these interconnections has become critical not only for policy and governance but also for building inclusive and sustainable pathways to human development.

Emerging research highlights the diverse arenas where these transformations manifest. Technological advances, such as big data analytics and artificial intelligence (Agrawal et al., 2025; Roundy & Asllani, 2024), are redefining decision-making processes, social innovation, and organisational legitimacy (Geldes et al., 2025). At the same time, digital entrepreneurship and platform economies are reshaping gender roles, community-building, and consumption patterns (Mousa et al., 2024; Farah et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2023). Parallel debates in sustainability stress the role of businesses and institutions in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (Mahajan et al., 2024; Nogueira et al., 2025), while relational worldviews argue for interdependence and collective accountability as essential to sustainable futures (Kennedy et al., 2020; Hopkins, 2020). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that the human–social nexus is a dynamic and multi-layered construct requiring cross-disciplinary attention.

Despite notable progress, important gaps continue to shape the field. Much of the literature remains siloed either concentrating on structural determinants such as governance, policy frameworks, and institutional arrangements (Carvalho et al., 2019; Reed & Reed, 2022), or examining how individuals and communities cope and adapt during periods of disruption (Dogdu Yuceturk, 2025; Atanga et al., 2024). What is still missing is a more integrated line of inquiry that connects these levels to illuminate how structure and agency interact to generate resilience, trust, and legitimacy in volatile contexts (Ayanian et al., 2025). Similarly, while research increasingly highlights the promise of technology in enabling participation and resilience (Agrawal et al., 2025; Gagliardi & Tomaselli, 2025), other studies emphasise its exclusionary risks (Matanzima, 2024; Buss et al., 2025). Yet few attempts situate these contrasting dynamics within a cohesive socio-human perspective. This fragmentation restricts the development of comprehensive insights capable of informing policy, organisational design, and community-level resilience in an interconnected way.

The present study aims to address these gaps by systematically examining the interconnections between human agency and social systems within the human–social nexus. Specifically, it seeks to (1) conceptualize the nexus as a multi-level framework integrating governance, trust, resilience, and technology; (2) identify how contemporary challenges such as digital transformation, sustainability transitions, and social inequalities are mediated through this nexus; and (3) outline pathways for fostering inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies.

The contributions of this study are threefold. First, it advances conceptual clarity by framing the human–social nexus as a dynamic process rather than a static structure, integrating insights across governance, sustainability, and digital transformation. Second, it provides a synthesis of emerging scholarship, bridging structural, organisational, and community-level perspectives to highlight their interdependencies. Third, it offers policy and practice-oriented implications for strengthening trust, legitimacy, and resilience in societies facing unprecedented global disruptions. In doing so, the study adds theoretical depth and practical relevance to the evolving discourse on the human–social nexus.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The human–social nexus has been explored across diverse domains, reflecting the interplay of governance, resilience, technology, and sustainability. Scholarship on resilience and vulnerability underscores how social systems respond to crises, whether in urban contexts, natural disasters, or political instability. For instance, Atanga et al. (2024) demonstrate how gated communities in Accra manifest as both protective and exclusionary social structures, while Dogdu Yucetürk (2025) highlights gendered vulnerabilities in urban flooding disasters, showing how resilience is socially differentiated. Similarly, Ayanian et al. (2025) emphasise the complexities of collective action under repressive conditions, underscoring the structural and cultural constraints on agency. These studies reveal that resilience is not merely an outcome of systemic design but emerges from the interactions between individuals, communities, and institutions under stress.

Parallel research has examined the ways technology reshapes social interactions and organisational practices within this nexus. Agrawal et al. (2025) argue that big data analytics enhances decision forecasting for sustainability, while Roundy and Asllani (2024) contextualise artificial intelligence within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Likewise, Obiri-Yeboah et al. (2025) explore digital transformation in small and medium enterprises, showing how technological adoption builds supply chain resilience and viability. These insights suggest that technology can be a powerful enabler of trust, resilience, and inclusivity; yet, they also point to uneven capacities across societies, where technological adoption is mediated by institutional quality and community engagement.

Table 1. Literature synthesis

Author (Year)	Method	Key Results
Agrawal et al. (2025)	Systematic review	Big data analytics can support environmental sustainability by enhancing decision forecasting.
Ali et al. (2023)	Bibliometric analysis & systematic review	Social media platforms facilitate social enterprise development and knowledge structuring.
Atanga et al. (2024)	Systematic review of empirical cases	Gated communities in Accra reveal resilience–fragmentation dynamics.
Ayanian et al. (2025)	Integrative review	Collective action under repression requires multi-level analysis of individual, group, and structural factors.
Buss et al. (2025)	Integrative review & framework	Female leadership is linked to inclusive and transformative outcomes.
Carvalho et al. (2019)	Theoretical & conceptual analysis	Punitiveness extends beyond criminal justice, tied to austerity and migration politics.
Dogdu Yucetürk (2025)	Quantitative assessment	Coastal women face gendered vulnerability and resilience challenges in urban flooding.
Durmus Senyapar (2024)	Conceptual & trend analysis	Sustainability marketing strategies in the energy sector face challenges and evolving trends.
Farah et al. (2022)	Case study	Online food aggregators shape consumer satisfaction and digital consumption.
Gagliardi & Tomaselli (2025)	Viewpoint	CSR in healthcare should align with AI for resilience in recovery.

Geldes et al. (2025)	Configurational analysis	Social innovation in Chilean firms is enabled through legitimacy mechanisms.
Hopkins (2020)	Editorial introduction	Explores innovative approaches to sustainable transport, mobility, and tourism.
Kennedy et al. (2020)	Conceptual	Proposes a relational worldview for sustainability emphasising interdependence.
Mahajan et al. (2024)	Systematic review	Business and management practices are key drivers of SDGs.
Matanzima (2024)	Qualitative case study	Communities disempowered by forced displacement during mineral extraction.
Mousa et al. (2024)	Empirical study	Digital entrepreneurship empowers Egyptian women through autonomy and community.
Nogueira et al. (2025)	Quantitative study	Labour practices positively affect performance via social sustainability.
Obiri-Yeboah et al. (2025)	Practice-based empirical study	Digital transformation builds supply chain resilience in SMEs.
Reed & Reed (2022)	Theoretical analysis	Authority is constructed through struggle during crises.
Roundy & Asllani (2024)	Review & content analysis	AI innovation is shaped by entrepreneurial ecosystem contexts.

The literature also highlights tensions between innovation and exclusion. While Geldes et al. (2025) identify pathways to social innovation in Chilean firms through legitimacy theory, Mousa et al. (2024) show how women in Egypt leverage digital entrepreneurship to gain autonomy and community recognition. Conversely, Matanzima (2024) documents how energy transition mineral extraction in Zimbabwe results in coerced displacements, disempowering affected populations. Such cases align with Carvalho et al. (2019), who discuss punitive social orders under conditions of austerity and migration, suggesting that structural inequalities often undermine the emancipatory potential of innovation. Taken together, these studies reflect a duality within the human–social nexus: it can foster empowerment and inclusivity but may also reinforce exclusion and systemic vulnerability.

A further body of work situates the nexus within sustainability and organisational performance discourses. Mahajan et al. (2024) argue that businesses and management practices are critical drivers of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while Nogueira et al. (2025) show that labour practices significantly contribute to organisational performance through social sustainability. Gagliardi and Tomaselli (2025) extend this discussion by aligning corporate social responsibility with artificial intelligence in healthcare, emphasising responsible innovation in post-pandemic recovery. At a conceptual level, Kennedy et al. (2020) propose a relational worldview for sustainability, highlighting interdependence and collective accountability. Together, these studies frame sustainability not only as an ecological imperative but also as a social and organisational challenge, linking business, ethics, and human resilience.

Finally, scholars have pointed to shifting notions of authority, legitimacy, and governance in times of crisis. Reed and Reed (2022) argue that authority is negotiated through struggle, particularly in contexts of disruption, while Buss et al. (2025) emphasise the role of female leadership as a transformative force in organisa-

tional and social domains. Complementary studies in mobility and consumption (Hopkins, 2020; Farah et al., 2022; Ali et al., 2023) show how practices of transport, tourism, and digital platforms reshape collective life and individual behaviour. Durmus Senyapar (2024) adds to this discussion by analysing sustainability marketing strategies in the energy sector, pointing to both opportunities and challenges in aligning social values with market logics. Collectively, these works reveal that the human–social nexus is a contested and evolving space, where authority, identity, and sustainability are continuously negotiated. Table 1 shows the synthesis of the literature review:

Governance theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how institutional quality, transparency, and accountability shape citizens' interactions with the state. Governance theory argues that effective governance characterized by fair legal systems, responsive public institutions, and consistent rule enforcement builds legitimacy and strengthens trust between citizens and authorities. Social capital theory complements this by emphasizing the role of trust, networks, and norms of cooperation in fostering collective action and societal cohesion. While governance theory explains how institutions create the structural conditions for fairness and justice, social capital theory highlights how citizens translate these institutional experiences into trust, resilience, and stronger community bonds. Together, the two theories offer a holistic framework for understanding how well-governed societies cultivate interpersonal trust, strengthen access to justice, and enhance social resilience, ultimately reinforcing the broader human–social nexus.

Despite growing scholarly attention to governance, trust, justice, and resilience, existing research often examines these constructs in isolation or within specific contexts, leaving a comprehensive understanding of their interrelationships in urban societies underexplored (Agrawal et al., 2025; Dogdu Yuceturk, 2025; Nogueira et al., 2025). While studies have highlighted the role of governance quality in fostering institutional trust and equitable access to justice (Ayanian et al., 2025; Gagliardi & Tomaselli, 2025), limited empirical evidence exists on how these factors jointly contribute to social resilience and overall societal cohesion. Moreover, the mediating mechanisms through which trust and justice translate governance performance into resilient communities have received insufficient attention, particularly in densely populated urban settings (Matanzima, 2024; Mousa et al., 2024). This gap underscores the need to investigate the direct and indirect relationships among governance quality, citizens' trust, access to justice, social resilience, and the broader integrative perception of societal cohesion. Figure 1 shows the relationships between the variables. Accordingly, the study develops the hypotheses:

- H1:** Governance Quality has a positive influence on Citizens' Trust.
- H2:** Governance Quality has a positive influence on Access to Justice.
- H3:** Citizens' Trust has a positive influence on Social Resilience.
- H4:** Access to Justice has a positive influence on Social Resilience.
- H5:** Governance Quality has a positive influence on the Human–Social Nexus.
- H6:** Citizens' Trust has a positive influence on the Human–Social Nexus.
- H7:** Access to Justice has a positive influence on the Human–Social Nexus.
- H8:** Social Resilience has a positive influence on the Human–Social Nexus.
- H9:** Citizens' Trust mediates the relationship between Governance Quality and Social Resilience.

H10: Access to Justice mediates the relationship between Governance Quality and Social Resilience.

H11: Social Resilience mediates the relationship between Citizens' Trust and the Human–Social Nexus.

H12: Social Resilience mediates the relationship between Access to Justice and the Human–Social Nexus.

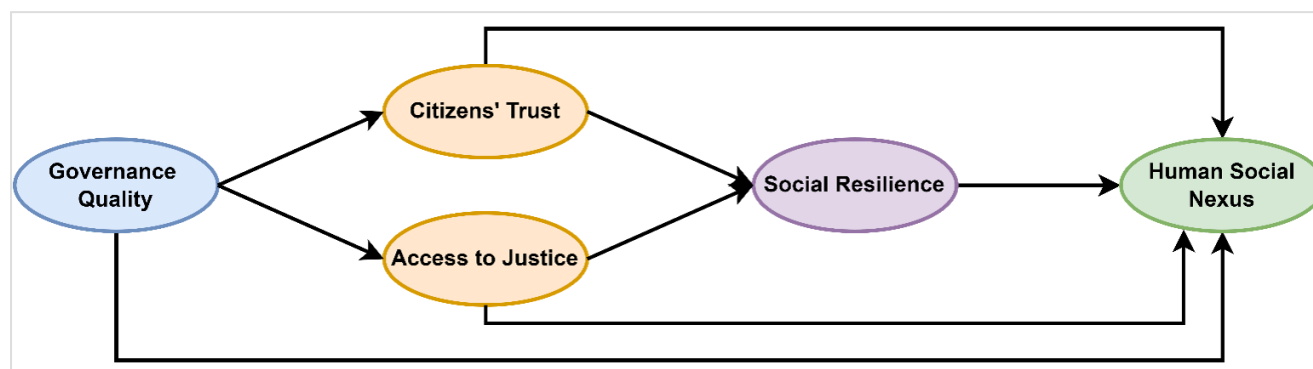


Figure 1. Conceptual model of study

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the dynamics of the human–social nexus in an urban context. Data were collected from Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh, between January and May 2024. As one of the most densely populated and socio-economically diverse urban centres in South Asia, Dhaka provided a suitable context for examining issues of governance, resilience, trust, and social transformation. The study targeted a range of respondents from different demographic and occupational backgrounds to capture variations in perceptions and experiences. In total, 490 valid responses were obtained, ensuring sufficient statistical power for subsequent analysis.

Table 2. Measurement scale

Constructs	Items (Code)	Measurement Items
Citizens' Trust	CT1	I trust public institutions to act in the best interests of citizens.
	CT2	Government agencies are reliable in providing essential services.
	CT3	I believe public officials act with integrity.
	CT4	I have confidence in the fairness of government decisions.
Governance Quality	GQ1	Government policies are transparent and accountable.
	GQ2	Corruption is effectively controlled in public service delivery.
	GQ3	Institutions enforce laws fairly and consistently.
	GQ4	Citizen participation is encouraged in decision-making.
Access to Justice	AJ1	Citizens can easily access legal support when needed.
	AJ2	Legal processes are affordable and efficient.
	AJ3	The justice system treats all citizens equally.
	AJ4	Dispute resolution mechanisms are effective.
Social Resilience	SR1	Communities recover quickly from social or political disruptions.
	SR2	People support each other during crises.

	SR3	Social networks enhance citizens' ability to cope with shocks.
	SR4	Trust in institutions strengthens collective resilience.
Human–Social Nexus	HSN1	Governance and trust jointly shape citizens' wellbeing.
	HSN2	Strong institutions improve resilience in society.
	HSN3	Trust enhances cooperation between government and citizens.
	HSN4	Fair governance increases collective social strength.

A structured questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The survey items were designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” This format allowed for the measurement of attitudes and perceptions in a consistent and comparable manner across respondents. The questionnaire was developed based on established measures from existing literature and refined to reflect the specific focus of this study, as can be shown in Table 2. A pre-testing phase was conducted with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the items. Following feedback, revisions were incorporated to improve the reliability and validity of the instrument.

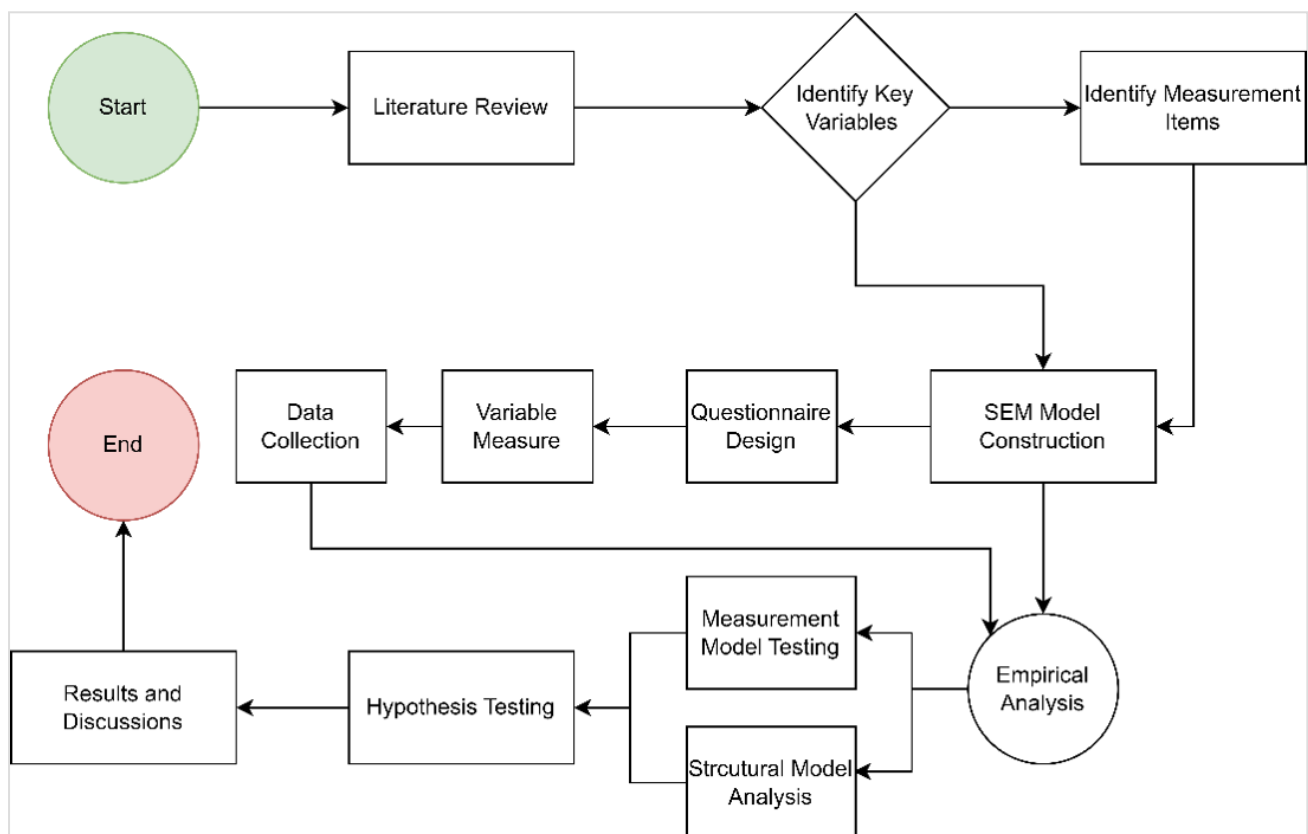


Figure 2. Logical flow of the methodology

Table 3 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 490 respondents surveyed in Dhaka city between January and May 2024. The sample reflects a relatively balanced gender distribution, with 56.7% male, 41.2% female, and 2.1% identifying as other or preferring not to disclose. In terms of age, the largest proportion of respondents (35.9%) were between 26 and 35 years, followed by 31% aged 18–25, indicating that the study captured perspectives of younger and middle-aged groups who are often highly engaged in governance and social issues. Education levels were generally high, with 42.4% holding a bachelor's degree and 30.6% a master's degree or above, consistent with the urban, educated profile of Dhaka residents. Occupation-wise, 40.4% were

service holders, 29.4% students, and 19.6% business owners, providing a diverse mix of professional and socio-economic backgrounds. Regarding income, most respondents reported monthly earnings between BDT 20,000 and 40,000 (36.3%), while 22.9% earned less than BDT 20,000, reflecting the heterogeneity of urban households in the city. This demographic profile ensures adequate representation of key social groups relevant to the study's exploration of trust, governance, and resilience.

Table 3. Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n = 490)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	278	56.7
	Female	202	41.2
	Other/Prefer not to say	10	2.1
Age (years)	18–25	152	31.0
	26–35	176	35.9
	36–45	102	20.8
	46 and above	60	12.2
Education Level	Secondary	38	7.8
	Higher Secondary	94	19.2
	Bachelor's Degree	208	42.4
	Master's Degree and above	150	30.6
Occupation	Student	144	29.4
	Service Holder	198	40.4
	Business	96	19.6
	Other	52	10.6
Monthly Income (BDT)	< 20,000	112	22.9
	20,000–40,000	178	36.3
	40,001–60,000	120	24.5
	> 60,000	80	16.3

To examine the proposed relationships among the constructs, this study employed PLS-SEM. PLS-SEM was chosen due to its suitability for predictive and exploratory research, its ability to handle complex models with multiple latent constructs, and its robustness in analysing non-normal data distributions common in survey research. The approach allowed simultaneous assessment of both the measurement model (validity and reliability of constructs) and the structural model (hypothesised causal relationships). Given the sample size of 490, PLS-SEM provided sufficient statistical power to test the model while accommodating reflective measurement items across constructs such as citizens' trust, governance quality, access to justice, social resilience, and the broader human–social nexus.

Results

In the Results section, we begin by presenting the measurement model output generated using SmartPLS 4. Table 4 reports the factor loadings for all constructs included in the study. As shown, the loadings for all items of Citizens' Trust, Governance Quality, Access to Justice, Social Resilience, and the Human–Social Nexus exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70; specially, loading ranged from 0.81 to 0.88. These results confirm that each indicator demonstrates sufficient reliability in representing its underlying construct. The consistently high loadings across all variables provide strong evidence of convergent validity, indicating that the measurement items are well aligned with their respective constructs and are suitable for further structural model analysis.

Table 4. Factor loadings

Constructs	Items	Loadings
Citizens' Trust	CT1	0.81
	CT2	0.84
	CT3	0.86
	CT4	0.83
Governance Quality	GQ1	0.85
	GQ2	0.82
	GQ3	0.87
	GQ4	0.83
Access to Justice	AJ1	0.84
	AJ2	0.81
	AJ3	0.86
	AJ4	0.83
Social Resilience	SR1	0.82
	SR2	0.85
	SR3	0.83
	SR4	0.84
Human–Social Nexus	HSN1	0.86
	HSN2	0.87
	HSN3	0.85
	HSN4	0.88

Table 5 presents the results of the measurement model, reporting the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs used in this study. Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs range from 0.85 to 0.89, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency. Composite reliability (CR) values, ranging from 0.89 to 0.92, further confirm the consistency of the measurement items. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs lies between 0.68 and 0.74, surpassing the 0.50 benchmark, which demonstrates adequate convergent validity. Overall, these results confirm that the constructs Citizens' Trust,

Governance Quality, Access to Justice, Social Resilience, and the Human–Social Nexus are measured reliably and validly, supporting their use in the subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 5. Measurement Model Results

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Citizens' Trust	CT1–CT4	0.85	0.89	0.68
Governance Quality	GQ1–GQ4	0.88	0.91	0.72
Access to Justice	AJ1–AJ4	0.86	0.90	0.70
Social Resilience	SR1–SR4	0.87	0.91	0.71
Human–Social Nexus	HSN1–HSN4	0.89	0.92	0.74

Table 6 presents the discriminant validity of the constructs using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The HTMT values, which range from 0.58 to 0.68, are all below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. Specifically, the correlations between Citizens' Trust, Governance Quality, Access to Justice, Social Resilience, and the Human–Social Nexus are moderate, suggesting that while the constructs are related, each captures unique aspects of the human–social nexus. These results confirm that the measurement model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, supporting the suitability of the constructs for subsequent structural model analysis.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Analysis using HTMT

Constructs	CT	GQ	AJ	SR	HSN
Citizens' Trust					
Governance Quality	0.62				
Access to Justice	0.58	0.63			
Social Resilience	0.60	0.61	0.59		
Human–Social Nexus	0.65	0.68	0.62	0.66	

Table 7 presents the structural path analysis results obtained from SmartPLS 4. The relationships between GQ and its immediate outcomes CT and AJ are both positive and statistically significant, with path coefficients of 0.52 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.48 ($p < 0.001$), respectively. These findings indicate that better governance is strongly associated with increased citizens' trust in public institutions and improved access to justice, highlighting the essential role of transparent, accountable, and participatory governance in shaping public perceptions and social systems.

The second set of relationships examines SR as influenced by Citizens' Trust and Access to Justice. Both paths are positive and significant, with $\beta = 0.43$ ($CT \rightarrow SR$) and $\beta = 0.39$ ($AJ \rightarrow SR$), suggesting that communities with higher levels of trust in institutions and fair access to justice demonstrate greater capacity to cope with social and political disruptions. These results underscore the importance of trust and justice as key factors in fostering resilient communities that can withstand and adapt to challenges.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 7 shows the effects of GQ, CT, AJ, and SR on the HSN. All paths are significant, with β values ranging from 0.25 to 0.36, indicating that each variable contributes meaningfully to the overall perception of societal cohesion and adaptive capacity. Notably, Social Resilience has the strongest ef-

fect ($\beta = 0.36$), emphasizing its central role in strengthening trust, governance, and justice within society. Overall, the results confirm that governance, trust, justice, and resilience are interrelated and collectively influence the dynamics of the human–social nexus in contemporary urban settings.

Table 7. Path analysis outcomes

Relationships	β (Beta)	Standard Error	p-value
Governance Quality $\rightarrow$ Citizens' Trust	0.52	0.045	<0.001
Governance Quality $\rightarrow$ Access to Justice	0.48	0.050	<0.001
Citizens' Trust $\rightarrow$ Social Resilience	0.43	0.048	<0.001
Access to Justice $\rightarrow$ Social Resilience	0.39	0.052	<0.001
Governance Quality $\rightarrow$ Human–Social Nexus	0.31	0.054	<0.001
Citizens' Trust $\rightarrow$ Human–Social Nexus	0.28	0.049	<0.001
Access to Justice $\rightarrow$ Human–Social Nexus	0.25	0.051	<0.001
Social Resilience $\rightarrow$ Human–Social Nexus	0.36	0.047	<0.001

Table 8 presents the results of the mediating effect analysis, examining the indirect relationships among GQ, CT, AJ, SR, and the HSN. The findings show that Social Resilience significantly mediates the effect of Governance Quality on both Citizens' Trust (GQ $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ SR, $\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$) and Access to Justice (GQ $\rightarrow$ AJ $\rightarrow$ SR, $\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that effective governance enhances social resilience indirectly through its positive influence on citizens' trust and equitable access to justice, highlighting the pivotal role of institutional performance in shaping resilient communities.

Furthermore, Social Resilience also mediates the impact of Citizens' Trust and Access to Justice on the Human–Social Nexus. Specifically, the indirect paths CT $\rightarrow$ SR $\rightarrow$ HSN ($\beta = 0.15$, $p < 0.001$) and AJ $\rightarrow$ SR $\rightarrow$ HSN ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$) are both significant. These results suggest that the positive effects of trust and justice on the overall human–social nexus are partially channelled through enhanced community resilience. Overall, the mediating analysis underscores the importance of Social Resilience as a key mechanism linking governance, trust, and justice to broader societal cohesion and adaptive capacity.

Table 8. Mediating Effect Results

Mediating Path	Indirect Effect (β)	Standard Error	p-value	Significance
GQ $\rightarrow$ CT $\rightarrow$ SR	0.22	0.036	<0.001	Significant
GQ $\rightarrow$ AJ $\rightarrow$ SR	0.19	0.039	<0.001	Significant
CT $\rightarrow$ SR $\rightarrow$ HSN	0.15	0.033	<0.001	Significant
AJ $\rightarrow$ SR $\rightarrow$ HSN	0.14	0.034	<0.001	Significant

Discussions

The results of this study provide clear evidence of the critical interplay between governance, trust, justice, and social resilience in shaping the human–social nexus. GQ was found to have strong and significant effects on both CT and AJ, highlighting that transparent, accountable, and participatory governance fosters confidence in public institutions and ensures fair legal processes. These findings align with prior research emphasizing

that institutional performance and integrity are essential for building legitimacy and citizen confidence (Agrawal et al., 2025; Ayanian et al., 2025). By strengthening trust and justice mechanisms, governance can create a foundation for social cohesion and community engagement, which are essential in contemporary urban societies.

The analysis further revealed that both Citizens' Trust and Access to Justice positively influence SR. Communities with higher levels of institutional trust and equitable access to justice demonstrate greater capacity to withstand and recover from social or political disruptions. This underscores the role of social and institutional support systems in promoting resilience, corroborating earlier studies that highlight the importance of trust, justice, and governance for collective adaptive capacity (Dogdu Yuceturk, 2025; Nogueira et al., 2025). The mediation results reinforce this finding, showing that the effects of governance on social resilience operate partly through citizens' trust and access to justice, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these constructs.

Finally, all four constructs Governance Quality, Citizens' Trust, Access to Justice, and Social Resilience significantly contribute to the HSN, demonstrating that societal cohesion and collective adaptive capacity are shaped by the combined effects of effective governance, institutional trust, fair justice, and resilient communities. Social Resilience emerged as a particularly influential factor, mediating the relationships between trust, justice, and the human–social nexus. These results suggest that policy and governance interventions cannot operate in isolation but must consider the synergistic effects of institutional quality, citizen confidence, and social networks to strengthen overall societal wellbeing.

From a practical policy perspective, the findings highlight the need for governments and policymakers to focus on enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in governance processes. Strengthening legal access and ensuring fair, efficient, and inclusive justice systems can build trust and promote resilience within communities. Policies aimed at fostering social cohesion, trust-building initiatives, and responsive governance mechanisms can collectively improve the human–social nexus, enabling urban societies like Dhaka to better adapt to social, economic, and political challenges. These insights provide actionable guidance for designing integrated governance strategies that enhance both institutional effectiveness and societal resilience.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings of this study, several policy recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the human–social nexus through improved governance, trust, justice, and social resilience. First, enhancing governance quality should be a top priority. The strong positive effects of governance on both citizens' trust and access to justice indicate that transparent, accountable, and participatory institutional practices are essential. Policymakers should implement mechanisms for greater transparency, such as public reporting, digital governance platforms, and citizen feedback channels, to ensure decision-making is open, fair, and responsive.

Second, building citizens' trust is critical for fostering social resilience. Programs aimed at increasing citizen engagement, participatory policy formulation, and effective communication of institutional actions can help strengthen trust. Training government officials in ethical conduct, anti-corruption practices, and service delivery standards will further enhance confidence in public institutions, which, in turn, supports community cohesion and resilience during crises.

Third, improving Access to Justice is necessary to ensure fairness and equity in society. The results highlight that access to legal support and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms contribute significantly to social resilience. Policymakers should focus on reducing bureaucratic barriers, ensuring affordable legal services, and promoting legal literacy among citizens, particularly in underserved urban communities. Leveraging digital platforms for legal information and services can also improve accessibility and efficiency.

Fourth, fostering social resilience through community-based initiatives is essential. Programs that strengthen social networks, community support systems, and local collective action can enhance the capacity of citizens to cope with social, political, or environmental disruptions. Encouraging civic participation, volunteerism, and local governance committees can empower communities and amplify the positive effects of trust and justice on societal wellbeing.

Finally, an integrated policy approach is recommended, wherein governance reforms, trust-building initiatives, legal accessibility measures, and community resilience programs are coordinated. This holistic strategy will create synergistic effects, as evidenced by the mediating role of Social Resilience in the model, ensuring that institutional improvements translate into stronger, more cohesive, and adaptive urban societies. By implementing these empirically grounded measures, policymakers can strengthen the human–social nexus and enhance overall societal stability and wellbeing.

Conclusion

This study examined the interrelationships among governance quality, citizens' trust, access to justice, social resilience, and the human–social nexus in contemporary urban societies. Employing PLS-SEM, the findings confirmed that governance quality significantly enhances citizens' trust and access to justice, which in turn strengthen social resilience; all four constructs further contribute positively to the human–social nexus, with social resilience playing a meaningful mediating role. These findings highlighted the deeply interconnected roles of institutional effectiveness, trust, and justice in fostering societal cohesion and adaptive capacity in urban contexts. The study contributed to the literature by offering a comprehensive and empirically grounded framework that links governance and institutional trust with social resilience and broader societal integration, while also providing practical policy insights for strengthening community-focused governance strategies. However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to limitations, including the focus on a single city, the cross-sectional design that limits causal inference, and potential biases from self-reported data; future research should adopt longitudinal approaches, expand to diverse urban and rural settings, and incorporate additional contextual factors such as socio-economic disparities and cultural dynamics to further validate and extend these results.

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Author contributions

Mohammad Jubair Hossain: Conceptualization, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

Md. Abdur Rahim Khan: Supervision, Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Ethics statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and ethically approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Bangladesh Institute of Governance and Management (Approval Number: 2023-0045-02098) on 20 December 2023. The ethical approval specifically covers the research procedures and data collection activities conducted for this study.

Data availability

Data available on request from the corresponding author.

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