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The Identification of Public Values on the Winning-Public Service Innovations: Case Study of the United Nations Public Service Awards Winner in 2015-2024

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Abstract

Although public value and public service innovation have received substantial attention in public administration research, limited scholarship has systematically examined the public values embedded in internationally recognized service innovations. This study aimed to identify and synthesize the public values reflected in innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) between 2015 and 2024 and to develop a comprehensive Public Values Framework. A qualitative descriptive approach with a multiple-case study design was employed, involving 97 UNPSA award-winning public service innovations selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected from official UNPSA documents, government reports, and relevant scholarly publications using a structured document analysis protocol. Document analysis was integrated with thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-stage framework, while data-source triangulation was used to enhance the credibility of the findings. The analysis identified four major dimensions of public value: Outcome Achievement, Trust and Legitimacy, Service Delivery Quality, and Efficiency. Across these dimensions, Fairness, Equity, Adaptability, Stakeholder

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Value, Innovation, and Citizens' Involvement emerged as the most prominent values. The findings demonstrate that successful public service innovations create public value not only by improving administrative performance but also by promoting inclusive governance, citizen participation, organizational adaptability, and collaborative stakeholder engagement. This study advances Public Value Theory by integrating innovation typology with multidimensional public value analysis and by proposing a comprehensive framework for examining value creation in public service innovation. Practically, the framework provides governments and public managers with guidance for designing and evaluating citizen-centered innovations and establishes a foundation for future comparative and mixed-methods research on public value creation.

Keywords: Public Administration; Public Service Innovation; Public Value Creation; Public Value Theory; United Nations Public Service Awards

INTRODUCTION

Public value has become one of the central paradigms in contemporary public administration, reflecting a fundamental shift in how governments evaluate their performance and define organizational success. Unlike traditional public administration, which primarily emphasizes compliance with administrative procedures, or New Public Management, which focuses on efficiency, productivity, and performance measurement, the public value perspective argues that governments should ultimately be assessed based on their ability to create meaningful benefits for society. Public organizations are therefore expected not only to deliver services efficiently but also to promote social justice, strengthen democratic governance, protect citizens' rights, and enhance public trust through transparent, accountable, and inclusive decision-making processes (Bozeman, 2007; Moore, 1995; O'Flynn, 2007).

The increasing complexity of contemporary governance has further reinforced the importance of public values in guiding public sector reforms. Governments around the world are confronted with multidimensional challenges, including rapid digital transformation, climate change, widening social inequalities, demographic changes, fiscal constraints, and growing public expectations regarding service quality and government accountability (Chen et al., 2020; Cinar et al., 2024). These challenges cannot be addressed solely through administrative efficiency or technological advancement. Instead, governments are increasingly required to design innovative policies and public services that generate broader

social benefits while maintaining legitimacy, transparency, participation, and responsiveness (Luthfia & Alkhajar, 2025; Osborne et al., 2022). Consequently, public value has emerged as a normative framework that enables governments to balance efficiency with democratic principles and societal well-being.

Public service innovation has consequently become one of the primary strategies adopted by governments to respond to these evolving challenges (Cinar et al., 2023; Ojasalo & Kauppinen, 2024). Innovation in the public sector extends beyond the introduction of new technologies or administrative reforms; it encompasses new approaches, processes, collaborations, and governance mechanisms that improve citizens' quality of life (Mousa et al., 2025; Peng, 2025). Successful innovations are expected to increase service accessibility, responsiveness, inclusiveness, accountability, and sustainability while simultaneously strengthening public confidence in government institutions (Brilhante & Romero, 2025; Guenduez et al., 2025). Therefore, the success of public sector innovation should not be evaluated merely by organizational efficiency or cost reduction but by its capacity to create sustainable public value for citizens and society.

Recognizing the strategic importance of innovation in improving public governance, the United Nations established the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), one of the world's most prestigious international recognition programs for excellence in public administration (Hajar & Arma, 2024). The UNPSA acknowledges innovative initiatives implemented by governments that demonstrate significant contributions to effective, inclusive, accountable, and sustainable public service delivery (Junior et al., 2024). Since its establishment, the award has showcased a wide range of innovations addressing diverse policy challenges, including digital government, healthcare, education, environmental sustainability, social protection, disaster management, and citizen participation (Thabit et al., 2025). More importantly, UNPSA award-winning initiatives provide valuable empirical evidence of how governments create public value through innovative governance practices implemented across different institutional, political, and socio-economic contexts (Casalini & Zavolokina, 2025).

Although numerous public service innovations have been recognized globally, understanding the public values embedded within these innovations remains a significant scholarly challenge (Conteh & Harding, 2023). Existing evaluations of public service innovation frequently concentrate on managerial performance, organizational effectiveness,

digital transformation, or service quality improvement (Hendriks, 2022). While these perspectives contribute substantially to the literature, they often pay relatively limited attention to the normative values underlying successful innovations, including responsiveness, transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, inclusiveness, equity, collaboration, and sustainability. As a result, public administrators and researchers still lack a comprehensive framework capable of systematically explaining which dimensions of public values consistently characterize successful public sector innovations.

This limitation is particularly important because governments increasingly require evidence-based guidance when designing and implementing innovative public policies. Without a clear understanding of the public values that distinguish successful innovations, public organizations may focus excessively on technological advancement or administrative modernization without ensuring that these initiatives genuinely improve citizens' well-being or strengthen democratic governance. Consequently, identifying the dimensions of public values reflected in internationally recognized public service innovations is essential for both theoretical development and practical policy implementation.

From this perspective, public value should be viewed not merely as an abstract normative concept but as a practical framework for evaluating the societal impact of public sector innovation. Public organizations create value when their policies and services generate outcomes that are recognized as beneficial by citizens while simultaneously upholding democratic principles, protecting public interests, and fostering trust in government institutions. Accordingly, examining internationally recognized public service innovations through the lens of public values provides an opportunity to better understand how governments successfully translate normative principles into tangible public outcomes. Such an examination also contributes to the growing body of knowledge seeking to integrate public administration theory with empirical evidence derived from real-world governance practices.

Previous studies have extensively examined public values from various perspectives within public administration. Bozeman (2007) conceptualized public values as normative principles that define citizens' rights, governmental obligations, and institutional responsibilities in democratic governance. Moore (1995), through Public Value Theory, argued that public managers should focus on creating value that is recognized and appreciated by society by balancing public value outcomes, operational capabilities, and

political legitimacy. Building upon these foundational perspectives, subsequent studies have explored the relationship between public values and governance quality, public service performance, citizen participation, accountability, transparency, and collaborative governance (Fukumoto & Bozeman, 2019; O'Flynn, 2007). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that public values play a critical role in enhancing institutional legitimacy and improving citizens' trust in government (Mišić et al., 2025).

Another stream of research has focused on public sector innovation as an instrument for improving government performance and service delivery (Wahyudi, 2016). Existing studies generally conclude that innovation enables governments to increase administrative efficiency, improve service quality, accelerate digital transformation, and strengthen organizational adaptability in responding to increasingly complex societal demands (Simanulang & Pramudya, 2021). More recent studies also emphasize that successful public innovations should not only generate organizational improvements but also create broader social impacts by promoting inclusiveness, sustainability, and citizen-centered governance (Syafira & Siahaan, 2024). Consequently, public service innovation has increasingly been recognized as an essential mechanism for achieving long-term public value creation.

Despite these important contributions, the existing literature exhibits several limitations. First, many studies investigate public values primarily from a conceptual or theoretical perspective without systematically examining how these values are manifested in actual public sector innovations. Second, studies on public service innovation frequently emphasize managerial effectiveness, digital government, organizational performance, or technological adoption while giving relatively limited attention to the underlying public values embedded within successful innovations. Third, although the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) represent one of the world's most authoritative repositories of internationally recognized public service innovations, empirical studies synthesizing the public values reflected across UNPSA award-winning initiatives remain limited. Existing research tends to examine individual cases, specific countries, or particular innovation programs rather than identifying recurring public value dimensions across multiple award-winning initiatives over an extended period.

These limitations indicate an important research gap in the current public administration literature. Although both public values and public service innovation have received considerable scholarly attention, limited research has attempted to integrate these

two streams of literature by systematically identifying the dimensions of public values embedded in internationally recognized public service innovations. Consequently, there remains insufficient empirical understanding regarding which public values consistently characterize successful innovations implemented by governments across different institutional and national contexts. Addressing this gap is important because a comprehensive understanding of these recurring public value dimensions can provide practical guidance for governments seeking to design citizen-centered, accountable, and sustainable innovations while simultaneously enriching the theoretical development of public value scholarship.

Accordingly, this study offers several scholarly contributions. First, it synthesizes empirical evidence from public service innovations recognized through the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) between 2015 and 2024, thereby providing a broader international perspective than studies focusing on individual countries or isolated innovation cases. Second, rather than evaluating innovation solely from managerial or technological perspectives, this study identifies the fundamental public values consistently embedded within successful public service innovations. Third, based on the synthesis of empirical findings, this study develops an integrated Public Values Framework that illustrates the interrelationships among the identified dimensions of public values and demonstrates how these dimensions collectively contribute to successful public sector innovation. This framework is expected to enrich the theoretical discussion of public values while providing a practical reference for policymakers, public managers, and future researchers interested in evaluating and designing public service innovations.

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily grounded in Public Value Theory proposed by Moore (1995), which argues that governments create value by delivering outcomes that are socially recognized, politically legitimate, and operationally feasible. This perspective is complemented by Bozeman's (2007) conception of public values, which emphasizes the normative principles governing public institutions, including accountability, transparency, justice, responsiveness, citizen participation, and protection of the public interest. Integrating these complementary perspectives provides an appropriate analytical foundation for identifying the public values reflected in internationally recognized public service innovations.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to systematically identify and synthesize the dimensions of public values embedded in public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards during the period 2015–2024. Furthermore, the study seeks to develop a comprehensive Public Values Framework that explains how these dimensions collectively contribute to successful public sector innovation and effective public governance. By doing so, this study is expected to contribute to the advancement of public administration literature while providing practical insights for governments seeking to strengthen public value creation through innovative, inclusive, accountable, and citizen-centered public services.

METHODS

Type of Research

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research approach to identify and analyze the public values embedded in public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) during the period 2015–2024. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand the characteristics, meanings, and dimensions of public values reflected in innovative public service practices rather than to examine statistical relationships among variables. Unlike quantitative research, which emphasizes measurement and hypothesis testing, qualitative research enables researchers to interpret complex social phenomena and explore how values are manifested within specific institutional and governance contexts.

Qualitative descriptive research is particularly suitable for studies aiming to provide comprehensive descriptions of social phenomena based on documentary evidence. According to Mukhtar (2013), qualitative descriptive research seeks to explain phenomena systematically by interpreting empirical evidence within its natural context. Similarly, Moleong (2017) argues that qualitative research emphasizes understanding social realities holistically by examining meanings, behaviors, and interactions rather than numerical measurements. Saryono (2007) further explains that qualitative inquiry is appropriate when the objective is to interpret complex social phenomena that cannot be adequately represented through quantitative indicators alone.

In the context of this study, the qualitative descriptive approach enabled the researcher to examine how public values are reflected in internationally recognized public

service innovations. Rather than measuring innovation performance quantitatively, the study focused on interpreting documentary evidence to identify recurring dimensions of public value and to develop a comprehensive analytical framework describing how governments create value through innovative public services.

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative multiple-case study design supported by document analysis as the primary research strategy. A multiple-case study design was selected because the research investigated numerous public service innovations implemented in different countries and institutional settings rather than focusing on a single case. According to Rahardjo (2017), case study research enables an in-depth examination of contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts while considering the complexity of social, political, and institutional environments. By examining multiple award-winning innovations, the study was able to identify recurring public value dimensions across diverse governance systems and public administration contexts.

Document analysis constituted the principal method of data collection and empirical investigation. Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting written documents to generate meaningful empirical knowledge. Compared with interviews or surveys, document analysis provides an effective approach for examining historical records, official reports, policy documents, and archival materials that describe public sector innovations comprehensively.

The research design consisted of several sequential stages. First, the researcher identified all public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards between 2015 and 2024. Second, official innovation documents and supporting references were collected from multiple sources. Third, each innovation was examined systematically to identify its objectives, implementation process, and documented outcomes. Fourth, qualitative coding was conducted to identify public value dimensions reflected in each innovation. Finally, the identified codes were grouped into broader analytical categories and synthesized into an integrated Public Values Framework that explains the common characteristics of internationally recognized public service innovations.

The multiple-case design was particularly appropriate because the study aimed not to evaluate the effectiveness of individual innovations but to identify common public value dimensions emerging across different countries, policy sectors, and governance

environments. This design therefore facilitated analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization by identifying recurring patterns supported by multiple independent cases.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Because this study employed qualitative document-based research, it did not involve human participants. Instead, the unit of analysis consisted of public service innovations recognized through the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA). A total of ninety-five (95) award-winning innovations implemented between 2015 and 2024 constituted the primary analytical units of the study.

The innovations were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique commonly employed in qualitative research to identify information-rich cases capable of providing relevant evidence for addressing the research objectives. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because not all public service innovations provide comparable empirical evidence regarding public value creation. The UNPSA database contains internationally recognized innovations that have undergone rigorous evaluation by independent experts based on criteria such as innovation, effectiveness, sustainability, inclusiveness, impact, and transferability. Consequently, these award-winning innovations represent highly relevant cases for investigating how governments generate public value through innovative public services.

To ensure consistency throughout the analysis, several inclusion criteria were established. First, the innovation had to receive official recognition through the United Nations Public Service Awards between 2015 and 2024. Second, sufficient documentary evidence describing the innovation had to be publicly available through official UNPSA documentation, government reports, or other authoritative institutional publications. Third, each innovation had to contain adequate information regarding its objectives, implementation process, beneficiaries, and documented outcomes to enable comprehensive qualitative analysis. Innovations lacking sufficient documentation or reliable supporting evidence were excluded from the analysis.

The final sample comprised innovations representing diverse geographical regions, administrative systems, and public policy sectors, including healthcare, education, environmental management, digital government, social protection, disaster risk reduction, public administration reform, and citizen participation. The diversity of the selected cases

strengthened the analytical robustness of the study by enabling comparisons across different governance contexts while identifying common public value dimensions shared by successful public service innovations worldwide.

Instruments and Data Collection

The primary research instrument employed in this study was a structured document analysis protocol developed by the researcher to ensure systematic and consistent data extraction from each public service innovation. Unlike quantitative studies that rely on questionnaires or standardized tests, qualitative document-based research requires an analytical instrument capable of guiding the identification, classification, and interpretation of relevant information across multiple documentary sources. The document analysis protocol served as a coding guide to facilitate consistent examination of all selected innovations.

The protocol consisted of several analytical components, including the country of implementation, year of award, innovation title, policy sector, objectives of the innovation, implementation strategy, key stakeholders involved, documented outcomes, and evidence of public values reflected in the innovation. Additional coding fields were included to classify each innovation according to the proposed innovation typology and to identify the dimensions of public values emerging from the documentary evidence. The use of a standardized protocol minimized subjectivity during data extraction and ensured consistency throughout the analytical process.

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from authoritative documentary sources. The principal data source was the official United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) database, which contains detailed descriptions of award-winning public service innovations from governments worldwide. The database provides comprehensive information regarding the background, objectives, implementation processes, innovation characteristics, and documented achievements of each recognized initiative. Because all innovations included in the database have undergone rigorous international evaluation, the UNPSA represents a highly credible and reliable source for examining public value creation in public administration.

To strengthen the comprehensiveness of the analysis, additional documentary sources were consulted, including official government reports, policy documents,

institutional publications, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and doctoral dissertations related to public values, public service innovation, governance, and public administration. These supplementary sources provided contextual information that supported the interpretation of each innovation and enhanced the theoretical foundation of the study.

Data collection was conducted through several sequential stages. First, all UNPSA award-winning innovations published between 2015 and 2024 were identified and compiled. Second, official innovation descriptions and supporting documents were collected for each selected innovation. Third, each document was reviewed repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the innovation's objectives, implementation mechanisms, and reported outcomes. Fourth, relevant information was extracted using the document analysis protocol and organized into a structured database to facilitate subsequent coding and analysis. Finally, the extracted information was verified through cross-document comparison before proceeding to the analytical stage.

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed data source triangulation. Triangulation is widely recognized in qualitative research as an effective strategy for enhancing credibility by comparing evidence obtained from multiple independent sources (Aprila et al., 2023; Aprila & Dwiharyadi, 2026). In this study, information describing each innovation was verified using three complementary sources whenever available: (1) the official UNPSA innovation description, (2) official government reports or institutional publications, and (3) relevant academic literature discussing the innovation. Comparing these independent sources reduced the possibility of bias, improved data accuracy, and strengthened confidence in the interpretation of public values identified throughout the study.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis integrated with document analysis to identify recurring dimensions of public values embedded within award-winning public service innovations. Thematic analysis was selected because it provides a systematic procedure for identifying, organizing, interpreting, and reporting meaningful patterns emerging from qualitative data. The analytical procedure followed the six-stage framework

proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which has been widely adopted in qualitative research across various social science disciplines.

The first stage involved familiarization with the data. During this stage, all collected documents were read repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics, objectives, implementation processes, and outcomes of each innovation. Repeated reading enabled the researcher to become immersed in the data while identifying preliminary indications of public values reflected within the innovation narratives.

The second stage consisted of generating initial codes. Relevant statements, descriptions, and evidence contained in each document were systematically coded according to their substantive meaning. Coding focused on identifying characteristics related to public value creation, including responsiveness, transparency, accountability, participation, inclusiveness, collaboration, sustainability, efficiency, service quality, and other value-oriented attributes. Whenever new concepts emerged that were not adequately represented by the preliminary framework, additional codes were developed inductively to ensure that important empirical findings were not overlooked.

The third stage involved searching for broader analytical categories by grouping conceptually similar codes into meaningful themes. Codes representing comparable characteristics were combined to construct higher-level categories describing recurring public value dimensions across multiple innovations. This process enabled the researcher to move from descriptive coding toward conceptual interpretation while maintaining consistency with the empirical evidence.

The fourth stage consisted of reviewing and refining the identified themes. At this stage, the researcher compared the themes against the original documentary evidence to ensure that each category accurately represented the underlying data. Themes that overlapped conceptually were merged, whereas themes lacking sufficient empirical support were revised or removed. This iterative process enhanced analytical rigor and ensured that the final thematic structure reflected consistent patterns across the dataset.

The fifth stage involved defining and naming the final themes. Each theme was clearly conceptualized based on its defining characteristics and supported by empirical evidence extracted from the analyzed innovations. The identified themes were subsequently synthesized into broader dimensions of public values that collectively explained how internationally recognized public service innovations generate value for society.

The final stage focused on interpretation and framework development. The identified themes were interpreted using Public Value Theory (Moore, 1995) and the Public Values perspective proposed by Bozeman (2007). The empirical findings were then integrated into a comprehensive Public Values Framework illustrating the relationships among innovation characteristics, governance practices, and public value dimensions identified throughout the analysis. Rather than merely describing individual innovations, this framework provides a conceptual explanation of how public service innovations contribute to public value creation across diverse governance contexts.

To enhance the dependability of the analysis, coding and categorization were conducted systematically using the predefined document analysis protocol while allowing new categories to emerge inductively whenever justified by the empirical evidence. This combination of deductive and inductive analysis enabled the study to maintain theoretical consistency without limiting the discovery of new insights arising from the documentary data. Consequently, the analytical procedure ensured methodological rigor, transparency, and credibility while supporting the development of a robust conceptual framework for understanding public value creation through public service innovation.

RESULTS

Distribution of UNPSA Innovations by Continent

Asia recorded the highest number of innovations with 31 cases (31.96%), followed by Europe with 24 innovations (24.74%). North and South America collectively contributed 22 innovations (22.68%), while Africa accounted for 13 innovations (13.40%). Oceania recorded one innovation, representing 1.03% of the total dataset. The distribution of UNPSA-winning innovations by continent is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of UNPSA Innovations by Continent (2015–2024)

Continent	Number of Innovations	Percentage (%)
Asia	31	31.96
Europe	24	24.74
North & South America	22	22.68
Africa	13	13.40
Oceania	1	1.03
Total	97	100.00

Source: Processed by the author from the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), 2015–2024.

Table 1 presents the geographical distribution of public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) during the period 2015–2024. A total of 97 award-winning innovations were identified across five continents.

Distribution of Public Service Innovation Types

The classification of innovation types identified from the analyzed UNPSA cases is presented in Table 2. Since a single innovation may exhibit more than one innovation characteristic, the analysis produced 120 innovation classifications derived from 97 innovations.

Table 2. Distribution of Public Service Innovation Types

Type of Innovation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mission Innovation	2	2.06
Policy Innovation	4	4.12
Management Innovation	4	4.12
Partner Innovation	15	15.46
Service Innovation	14	14.43
Citizen Innovation	13	13.40
Administrative Process Innovation	5	5.15
Technological Process Innovation	17	17.53
Conceptual Innovation	0	0.00
Governance Innovation	15	15.46
Systemic Innovation	7	7.22
Social Innovation	24	24.74

Source: Author's coding based on Windrum (2008), Walker (2008), and Cinar et al. (2022).

Based on table 2, Social Innovation was identified most frequently with 24 classifications (24.74%). Technological Process Innovation accounted for 17 classifications (17.53%), followed by Partner Innovation and Governance Innovation, each with 15 classifications (15.46%). Service Innovation represented 14 classifications (14.43%), while Citizen Innovation accounted for 13 classifications (13.40%). Administrative Process Innovation, Systemic Innovation, Policy Innovation, Management Innovation, and Mission Innovation represented smaller proportions of the total classifications. No innovation was categorized as Conceptual Innovation.

Public Values under the Outcome Achievement Dimension

The frequency distribution of public values identified within the Outcome Achievement dimension is presented in Table 3. A total of 101 public value occurrences were identified across the analyzed innovations.

Table 3. Public Values under the Outcome Achievement Dimension

Public Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fairness	34	33.66
Equity	31	30.69
Benefits of Economic Endeavour	20	19.80
Access to Knowledge	8	7.92
Social Cohesion	5	4.95
Common Good	2	1.98
Public Interest	1	0.99
Total	101	100

Based on table 3, Fairness was the most frequently identified public value with 34 occurrences (33.66%), followed by Equity with 31 occurrences (30.69%). Benefits of Economic Endeavour accounted for 20 occurrences (19.80%), while Access to Knowledge represented eight occurrences (7.92%). Social Cohesion was identified five times (4.95%), followed by Common Good with two occurrences (1.98%) and Public Interest with one occurrence (0.99%).

Public Values under the Trust and Legitimacy Dimension

Table 4 summarizes the public values identified within the Trust and Legitimacy dimension. A total of 23 occurrences were recorded across the analyzed innovations.

Table 4. Public Values under the Trust and Legitimacy Dimension

Public Value	Frequency
Citizens' Involvement	7
Dialogue	4
Openness	4
Listening to Public Opinion	3
Accountability	2
Responsiveness	2
Honesty	1
User Democracy	0
Integrity	0
Professionalism	0

Based on table 4, Citizens' Involvement was the most frequently identified public value with seven occurrences. Dialogue and Openness each appeared four times, followed by Listening to Public Opinion with three occurrences. Accountability and Responsiveness were identified twice, while Honesty appeared once. User Democracy, Integrity, and Professionalism were not identified in the analyzed innovations.

Public Values under the Service Delivery Quality Dimension

The distribution of public values within the Service Delivery Quality dimension is presented in Table 5. A total of 43 public value occurrences were identified from the analyzed public service innovations.

Table 5. Public Values under the Service Delivery Quality Dimension

Public Value	Frequency
Adaptability	21
Friendliness	8
User Orientation	7
Reliability	7
Stability	0
Timeliness	0

Based on table 5, Adaptability represented the most frequently identified public value with 21 occurrences, followed by Friendliness with eight occurrences. User Orientation and Reliability each accounted for seven occurrences. Stability and Timeliness were not identified in the analyzed innovations.

Public Values under the Efficiency Dimension

Table 6 presents the distribution of public values identified within the Efficiency dimension. A total of 80 public value occurrences were recorded across the analyzed innovations.

Table 6. Public Values under the Efficiency Dimension

Public Value	Frequency
Stakeholder Value	39
Innovation	39
Productivity	1
Effectiveness	1
Parsimony	0

Based on table 6, Stakeholder Value and Innovation were the two most frequently identified public values, each with 39 occurrences. Productivity and Effectiveness each appeared once, while Parsimony was not identified in any of the analyzed innovations.

Cross-analysis between Innovation Types and Public Values

To further examine the relationship between innovation characteristics and public value creation, a cross-analysis was conducted between the identified innovation types and their dominant public values. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Cross-analysis between Innovation Types and Public Values

Innovation Type	Dominant Public Value	Interpretation
Technological Process Innovation	Adaptability, Efficiency	Digital technologies improve service accessibility, responsiveness, and operational efficiency.
Social Innovation	Fairness, Equity	Social innovations primarily address vulnerable populations and promote social inclusion.
Governance Innovation	Openness, Citizen Involvement	Governance innovations strengthen transparency and participatory governance.
Partner Innovation	Stakeholder Value	Collaboration among multiple actors enhances innovation capacity and public value creation.
Service Innovation	User Orientation	Service redesign improves citizen satisfaction and service accessibility.
Citizen Innovation	Dialogue	Citizens actively participate in planning and implementation.
Administrative Process Innovation	Efficiency	Administrative improvements streamline organizational performance.
Policy Innovation	Equity	Policy reforms promote equal access to public services.
Management Innovation	Reliability	Internal organizational reforms improve service consistency.
Mission Innovation	Common Good	Innovations are designed to achieve broad societal objectives.
Systemic Innovation	Stakeholder Value	Cross-sector coordination enhances institutional effectiveness.
Conceptual Innovation	None Identified	No evidence of fundamental changes to governance paradigms.

Source: Author's analysis (2026).

Based on table 7, the analysis shows that each innovation type was associated with one or more dominant public values identified during the coding process. Technological Process Innovation was primarily associated with Adaptability and Efficiency. Social Innovation was linked to Fairness and Equity, while Governance Innovation was associated with Openness and Citizens' Involvement. Partner Innovation corresponded with

Stakeholder Value, whereas Service Innovation was related to User Orientation. Citizen Innovation was primarily linked to Dialogue, Administrative Process Innovation to Efficiency, Policy Innovation to Equity, Management Innovation to Reliability, Mission Innovation to Common Good, and Systemic Innovation to Stakeholder Value. No dominant public value was identified for Conceptual Innovation because no innovation was classified under this category.

Overall, the findings identified four major dimensions of public values across the analyzed innovations: Outcome Achievement, Trust and Legitimacy, Service Delivery Quality, and Efficiency. Within these dimensions, several public values occurred more frequently than others, including Fairness, Equity, Adaptability, Stakeholder Value, Innovation, and Citizens' Involvement. In addition, the cross-analysis demonstrated that different innovation types were associated with different dominant public values across the analyzed UNPSA innovations.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the Main Findings

The primary objective of this study was to identify and synthesize the public values embedded in public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) between 2015 and 2024. By analyzing 97 award-winning innovations from different countries, this study identified four major dimensions of public values, namely Outcome Achievement, Trust and Legitimacy, Service Delivery Quality, and Efficiency. Within these dimensions, Fairness, Equity, Adaptability, Stakeholder Value, Innovation, and Citizens' Involvement emerged as the most prominent public values reflected across the analyzed innovations. These findings demonstrate that internationally recognized public service innovations are evaluated not merely by their administrative performance or technological sophistication but also by their capacity to create meaningful value for society.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the dominance of Fairness and Equity within the Outcome Achievement dimension. Together, these two public values accounted for more than sixty percent of all identified values within this dimension, indicating that successful public service innovations consistently prioritize equal access to public services, inclusive policy implementation, and equitable distribution of public benefits. This finding suggests that governments increasingly recognize inclusiveness as a fundamental

objective of public sector innovation. Rather than focusing exclusively on administrative efficiency, innovative public services are designed to reduce disparities in access to healthcare, education, social protection, digital services, and other essential public services. Consequently, public value creation is increasingly associated with governments' capacity to ensure that innovation benefits diverse groups of citizens, particularly vulnerable and underserved populations.

Another important finding concerns the Trust and Legitimacy dimension. The analysis indicates that Citizens' Involvement, Dialogue, and Openness were the most frequently identified values within this dimension. These findings demonstrate that internationally recognized innovations increasingly incorporate participatory approaches throughout policy implementation and service delivery. Citizen participation enables governments to better understand community needs while strengthening transparency and public accountability. The prominence of these values indicates that successful public service innovation extends beyond technological modernization by creating governance processes that encourage collaboration between governments, citizens, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. As a result, public trust becomes an integral outcome of innovative governance rather than merely a consequence of effective service delivery.

Within the Service Delivery Quality dimension, Adaptability emerged as the dominant public value. This finding indicates that award-winning public service innovations frequently emphasize organizational flexibility and the capacity to respond to changing societal needs. Governments increasingly operate in environments characterized by rapid technological development, demographic changes, public health emergencies, environmental challenges, and evolving citizen expectations. Consequently, successful innovations demonstrate the ability to adjust administrative procedures, redesign service delivery mechanisms, and integrate digital technologies to improve responsiveness and accessibility. Adaptability therefore represents an essential characteristic of contemporary public administration, enabling governments to sustain high-quality public services under dynamic governance conditions.

The Efficiency dimension also revealed noteworthy findings. Stakeholder Value and Innovation were the two most frequently identified public values, highlighting the importance of collaboration and continuous improvement in public sector innovation. Rather than emphasizing efficiency solely through cost reduction or productivity gains, the

analyzed innovations demonstrate that governments increasingly create value by engaging multiple stakeholders, including public institutions, private organizations, universities, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Such collaborative arrangements facilitate knowledge sharing, resource integration, and joint problem-solving, thereby enabling governments to address increasingly complex public challenges more effectively.

The cross-analysis between innovation types and public values further demonstrates that different forms of innovation contribute to different dimensions of public value. Technological Process Innovation was primarily associated with Adaptability and Efficiency, reflecting the role of digital technologies in improving organizational performance and service responsiveness. Social Innovation was predominantly linked to Fairness and Equity, indicating its strong orientation toward addressing social inequalities and improving citizen welfare. Governance Innovation was closely associated with Openness and Citizens' Involvement, emphasizing the importance of participatory governance in strengthening democratic legitimacy. Likewise, Partner Innovation consistently generated Stakeholder Value through collaboration among multiple actors, while Service Innovation primarily enhanced User Orientation by improving citizens' experiences during service delivery.

Taken together, these findings indicate that public value creation is multidimensional and cannot be adequately explained by a single indicator of public sector performance. Instead, internationally recognized public service innovations simultaneously integrate multiple dimensions of public values that collectively strengthen governance quality, service delivery, democratic legitimacy, and societal well-being. The findings therefore support the view that successful public innovation should be understood as a comprehensive governance process that combines organizational effectiveness, citizen participation, collaboration, and equitable public outcomes rather than focusing exclusively on administrative efficiency or technological advancement.

Comparison with Theories and Previous Literature

The findings of this study strongly support the fundamental propositions of Public Value Theory developed by Moore (1995), which argues that the ultimate objective of public organizations is to create value that is recognized and appreciated by society. Moore emphasizes that public managers should balance public value outcomes, operational capabilities, and political legitimacy to achieve sustainable governance. The present findings

demonstrate that internationally recognized public service innovations consistently integrate these three elements. Innovations identified within the UNPSA database not only improve administrative performance but also generate broader societal benefits through equitable service delivery, citizen participation, collaborative governance, and organizational adaptability. These findings therefore provide empirical evidence supporting Moore's theoretical proposition that successful public management should be evaluated according to its contribution to public value rather than organizational efficiency alone.

The dominance of Fairness and Equity within the Outcome Achievement dimension is also consistent with Bozeman's (2007) conception of public values. Bozeman argues that governments have a fundamental responsibility to protect citizens' rights, ensure equitable access to public services, and pursue the public interest through democratic governance. The present study extends this theoretical perspective by demonstrating that fairness and equity are not merely normative principles but are consistently embedded within internationally recognized public service innovations. Across multiple governance contexts, governments appear to prioritize innovations that reduce inequalities, improve service accessibility, and promote inclusive development. This finding suggests that public value creation increasingly reflects governments' capacity to deliver equitable outcomes for diverse segments of society rather than simply increasing administrative efficiency.

The findings further reinforce O'Flynn's (2007) argument that public value is generated not only through policy outcomes but also through governance processes. The prominence of Citizens' Involvement, Dialogue, and Openness within the Trust and Legitimacy dimension demonstrates that successful public innovations emphasize participatory governance and continuous interaction between governments and citizens. Rather than adopting a traditional top-down administrative approach, many award-winning innovations actively involve citizens in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. This observation supports O'Flynn's assertion that public trust and institutional legitimacy emerge from inclusive governance processes characterized by transparency, accountability, and meaningful citizen engagement.

The identification of Adaptability as the dominant value within the Service Delivery Quality dimension also aligns with contemporary public administration literature emphasizing organizational resilience and innovation. Previous studies have argued that governments must continuously adapt their organizational structures and service delivery

mechanisms to address rapidly changing social, economic, technological, and environmental conditions. The present findings provide empirical support for this perspective by demonstrating that organizational adaptability is consistently reflected in internationally recognized innovations. Many award-winning initiatives incorporated digital technologies, integrated service platforms, and flexible administrative arrangements that enabled governments to respond effectively to evolving public needs. Consequently, adaptability appears to have become an essential component of high-quality public service delivery in contemporary governance.

Similarly, the prominence of Stakeholder Value and Innovation within the Efficiency dimension supports previous studies highlighting the importance of collaborative governance. Windrum (2008), Walker (2008), and Cinar et al. (2022) argue that public sector innovation increasingly depends on collaboration among governments, private organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and local communities. The present findings confirm this proposition by demonstrating that collaborative partnerships constitute one of the defining characteristics of internationally recognized public service innovations. Rather than relying solely on internal governmental resources, successful innovations frequently mobilize external expertise, financial resources, technological capabilities, and community participation to address complex public problems. These collaborative arrangements enable governments to create broader public value while enhancing institutional capacity and long-term sustainability.

An important contribution of this study lies in the integration of innovation typology with public value dimensions. Previous studies generally examined innovation types or public values as separate analytical concepts. For example, Windrum (2008) and Walker (2008) primarily focused on categorizing different forms of public sector innovation, whereas Bozeman (2007) and Moore (1995) concentrated on conceptualizing public value from normative and managerial perspectives. By systematically examining the relationships between innovation types and public values, the present study bridges these two streams of literature and demonstrates how different innovation characteristics contribute to distinct forms of public value creation. This integrated perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of why particular innovations generate specific societal outcomes.

Furthermore, this study extends the work of Naidoo and Holtzhausen (2020) as well as Faulkner and Kaufman (2017), who proposed multidimensional frameworks for

evaluating public values. While their studies primarily developed conceptual classifications of public values, the present research validates these dimensions using empirical evidence derived from 97 internationally recognized public service innovations. The findings demonstrate that the identified public value dimensions are consistently observable across diverse countries, administrative systems, and policy sectors, thereby strengthening their empirical relevance within contemporary public administration.

Another noteworthy contribution concerns the international scope of the analysis. Much of the existing literature on public value focuses on individual countries, specific public organizations, or particular policy sectors. In contrast, this study synthesizes evidence from award-winning innovations implemented across multiple regions of the world over a ten-year period. This broader comparative perspective enables the identification of recurring public value dimensions that transcend national administrative traditions and institutional differences. Consequently, the findings contribute to the growing body of comparative public administration research by demonstrating that certain public values particularly fairness, equity, adaptability, stakeholder value, and citizen participation consistently characterize successful public service innovation regardless of geographical context.

Overall, the findings not only confirm several fundamental propositions within Public Value Theory and contemporary public administration literature but also extend existing knowledge by integrating innovation typologies with multidimensional public value analysis. The resulting Public Values Framework provides a more comprehensive explanation of how governments generate societal value through innovation and offers an empirical foundation for future theoretical development in public administration and public sector innovation research.

Research Implications

The findings of this study offer several important theoretical contributions to the development of public administration literature, particularly within the field of Public Value Theory. First, the study provides empirical evidence supporting the proposition that public service innovation should be evaluated not only in terms of organizational performance but also according to its ability to generate public value. By synthesizing evidence from 97 award-winning innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA), the study demonstrates that successful public innovations consistently integrate multiple

dimensions of public values, including Outcome Achievement, Trust and Legitimacy, Service Delivery Quality, and Efficiency. These findings strengthen the theoretical argument that public value creation represents a multidimensional process involving both governance outcomes and governance processes.

Second, this study extends existing public value literature by integrating innovation typology with multidimensional public value analysis. Previous studies have generally examined public sector innovation and public values as separate research domains. The present study demonstrates that different innovation types contribute to different dimensions of public value creation. This integrated analytical perspective contributes to the refinement of Public Value Theory by illustrating how innovation characteristics are associated with specific public values across different governance contexts. Consequently, the proposed Public Values Framework provides a conceptual foundation for future studies seeking to examine the relationship between innovation and public value creation in public administration.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide useful guidance for governments, public managers, and policymakers responsible for designing and implementing public service innovations. The results indicate that successful innovation extends beyond technological modernization or administrative reform. Governments should simultaneously promote fairness, equity, transparency, citizen participation, organizational adaptability, and stakeholder collaboration when developing innovative public services. These public values should therefore be incorporated into planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes to ensure that innovations generate meaningful and sustainable societal benefits.

The findings also have implications for international organizations and public sector innovation programs. Institutions responsible for evaluating public service innovation, including the United Nations Public Service Awards, may utilize the proposed Public Values Framework as a complementary analytical tool for assessing the broader societal value generated by innovative public services. Likewise, governments seeking to replicate successful innovations may use the framework to identify essential public value dimensions that should be embedded within innovation initiatives regardless of their administrative or technological characteristics.

Finally, this study contributes methodologically by demonstrating the usefulness of combining qualitative multiple-case study research, document analysis, thematic analysis, and

data triangulation to investigate public value creation across multiple countries. This methodological approach provides a systematic procedure for synthesizing documentary evidence from internationally recognized innovations and may serve as a reference for future qualitative studies examining public administration, governance, and public sector innovation.

Research Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the analysis was limited to public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards between 2015 and 2024. Although the UNPSA represents one of the most prestigious international public sector innovation programs, the selected innovations may not fully represent all innovative practices implemented by governments worldwide. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted within the context of internationally recognized innovations rather than the entire population of public sector innovations.

Second, the study relied exclusively on secondary documentary evidence obtained from official reports, government publications, and scholarly literature. While document analysis enables comprehensive examination of multiple international cases, the absence of primary data such as interviews or direct observations limited the opportunity to explore stakeholders' experiences, implementation challenges, and contextual factors that may influence public value creation. Future studies incorporating interviews with policymakers, public managers, or service users could provide richer empirical insights into how public values are generated and perceived during innovation implementation.

Third, although thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring public value dimensions across multiple cases, qualitative interpretation inevitably involves a degree of researcher judgment during coding and categorization. To minimize potential bias, this study employed a structured document analysis protocol and data source triangulation. Nevertheless, future research may strengthen analytical robustness by involving multiple coders, conducting inter-coder reliability assessment, or applying computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to improve coding consistency.

Future research is also encouraged to expand the scope of comparative analysis by examining public service innovations across specific regions, administrative systems, or

policy sectors. Comparative studies focusing on ASEAN countries, OECD member states, developing economies, or particular public service sectors may provide a deeper understanding of contextual factors influencing public value creation. In addition, longitudinal research investigating the evolution of public values over time would contribute to understanding how changing governance environments influence innovation outcomes.

Finally, future studies may integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to validate and refine the Public Values Framework proposed in this study. Quantitative techniques such as structural equation modeling, multivariate analysis, or comparative statistical modeling could be employed to examine the relationships among innovation characteristics, governance mechanisms, and public value dimensions across larger datasets. Such mixed-methods approaches would further strengthen the empirical foundation of Public Value Theory while expanding its applicability in contemporary public administration research.

Overall, despite these limitations, the present study provides a comprehensive empirical synthesis of public values embedded in internationally recognized public service innovations. The findings contribute to both theoretical development and practical understanding of how governments create public value through innovation and establish a foundation for future research examining the intersection of public sector innovation, governance, and public value creation.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to identify and synthesize the public values embedded in public service innovations recognized by the United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) between 2015 and 2024. Based on the analysis of 97 award-winning innovations, the findings demonstrate that public value creation is reflected through four interrelated dimensions, namely Outcome Achievement, Trust and Legitimacy, Service Delivery Quality, and Efficiency. Among these dimensions, Fairness, Equity, Adaptability, Stakeholder Value, Innovation, and Citizens' Involvement emerged as the most dominant public values across the analyzed innovations. The findings indicate that internationally recognized public service innovations create value not only by improving administrative performance but also by promoting inclusive governance, strengthening citizen participation, enhancing service quality, and encouraging collaborative approaches to addressing complex societal challenges.

This study contributes to the advancement of public administration literature by providing an integrated empirical analysis of public values derived from internationally recognized public service innovations. The proposed Public Values Framework extends previous studies by linking different types of public sector innovation with multidimensional public values, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of how innovation contributes to public value creation. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the usefulness of combining qualitative multiple-case study research, document analysis, thematic analysis, and data triangulation to examine public value across diverse governance contexts. Practically, the findings provide a useful reference for governments, policymakers, and public managers in designing, implementing, and evaluating public service innovations that prioritize societal benefits alongside organizational effectiveness.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited to documentary evidence obtained from UNPSA award-winning innovations published between 2015 and 2024 and therefore does not capture all forms of public sector innovation implemented globally. Future research is encouraged to expand the geographical scope, incorporate additional innovation databases, and employ mixed-methods approaches combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. Further studies involving interviews with policymakers, public managers, and service users may also provide deeper insights into the processes through which public values are created, implemented, and sustained across different public administration contexts.

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