



Research Article

The Mediating Role of Sustainable Development in the Relationship Between Good Governance and Performance Improvement: A Case Study of Gaza Strip Municipalities

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Abstract

This study aims to understand and assess the extent of the application of good governance principles in the municipalities of the southern governorates of Palestine (Gaza Strip). How could good governance principles impact the improvement of the performance of these municipalities in achieving sustainable development objectives? To answer this question, we adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology mobilizing a quantitative questionnaire among employees of municipalities in the Gaza Strip. This research highlights a topic that has not been sufficiently explored: The relationship between good governance and improving the performance of municipalities in the Gaza Strip from the perspective of sustainable development. The choice of these institutions is motivated by their vital role in improving the quality of life of the Palestinian community. The main results of the study confirm: (1) The existence of an improvement in the quality of local governance, through transparency, the application of good governance, justice, accountability and the social involvement of citizens. (2) The fight against corruption through continuing training for municipal employers. (3) The positive relationship between good governance, performance and quality of municipal services. (4) The crucial role of good governance in achieving sustainable development goals in the Gaza Strip.

Keywords

Good Governance, Sustainable Development, Performance, Municipalities, Gaza Strip, Palestine

1. Introduction

In a world characterized by rapid changes and increasing economic and social challenges, governance has become a fundamental element in ensuring the sustainable success of companies and public institutions. The presence of effective governance systems and procedures is a critical factor in guiding and managing these entities in a way that ensures transparency and accountability, while protecting the interests of all stakeholders, whether they are shareholders or members of the

community.

The dimensions of governance are not limited to administrative and organizational aspects but also extend to wisdom in decision-making. In both companies and public institutions, decisions should be based on the public interest rather than the pursuit of narrow personal goals. Sustainability requires a comprehensive vision that relies on the integration of eco-

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conomic, social, and environmental objectives to achieve sustainable prosperity.

On the other hand, good governance plays a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development goals. When institutions adopt effective governance systems, they are able to operate efficiently and transparently, which enhances trust, attracts investments, and supports the path to sustainable development. Therefore, all entities, whether companies or public institutions, must adhere to the principles of fairness, accountability, and the rule of law at all levels.

In conclusion, it can be said that promoting good governance has become an urgent necessity to ensure sustainable success and achieve sustainable development in a world that demands the highest levels of transparency and accountability. Transitioning from individual rule to the rule of laws and institutions represents the proper framework to ensure the sustainability of businesses and institutions in a global environment that requires greater discipline and effective governance.

It is worth noting that the concept of governance, as both an idea and a term, has gained significant importance over the past three decades, both in developed and developing countries. With growing aspirations to achieve sustainable development, the commitment of developing countries to the principles of governance has become imperative and necessary to fulfill their peoples' goals of stability and sustainable growth. [4]

Governance is considered an effective tool for coordinating and integrating roles between the government, civil society organizations, and the private sector to achieve citizens' aspirations for sustainable development. This requires the presence of integrity, transparency, and accountability, in addition to promoting the rule of law and ensuring citizen participation in policy-making and decision-making processes.

The importance of governance is not limited to being a mechanism for achieving sustainable development; it is also a key approach for evaluating performance at the level of countries, governmental institutions, and private entities. This is evident in the studies conducted by the World Bank to measure countries' implementation of governance principles, where adherence to governance standards has become a fundamental criterion for obtaining international aid and loans.

In Palestine, many institutions work to promote integrity, transparency, accountability, and combat corruption, whether in the public sector, municipalities, or civil society organizations. Among the most prominent of these institutions are: the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability (AMAN), the Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (PANORAMA), and the Arab Thought Forum.

The Palestinian Capital Market Authority has also established the National Governance Committee, which serves as the general framework for the governance system in Palestine. The committee aims to create an effective governance system, especially for public joint-stock companies and other institutions, to promote the principles of transparency, accountability,

and achieve sustainable development. (Palestinian Financial Market Journal, 2008).

There are no comprehensive and unified standards agreed upon by Palestinian organizations that can be considered as good governance standards. Therefore, this study will adopt the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) standards to measure the extent of good governance implementation in the municipalities of the West Bank, as they are more comprehensive and aligned with sustainable development goals. In contrast, the standards of the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) primarily focus on economic growth as part of development.

The study aims to measure the awareness of good governance standards and their implementation in Palestinian municipalities, as they are a vital sector that directly interacts with citizens. Since their establishment, municipalities have been responsible for providing essential services such as water, electricity, and sanitation, and they strive to create a safe and healthy living environment.

To achieve this, municipal leaders must adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, as effective and legitimate institutions are a fundamental part of the economic development process. Conversely, weak governance can hinder growth and disrupt development.

Empirical research shows that countries with sound governance systems are more successful in attracting investments, stimulating economic growth, and providing job opportunities. Transparency is also a key pillar of good governance, as it helps clarify the rules and procedures within institutions and strengthens citizens' trust in them. [6]

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to study the relationship between good governance and performance improvement, while considering the role of the mediating variable (sustainable development) in this relationship.

This research also aims to:

- 1) Present a new and valuable contribution to highlight the relationship between good governance and performance improvement in new institutions that have not been studied before, specifically municipalities in Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip.
- 2) Study another factor that could alter the impact of this relationship, namely sustainable development.
- 3) Provide a theoretical framework regarding sustainable development, institutional performance, and some of the challenges faced by municipalities in the Gaza Strip.
- 4) Identify the importance of the dimensions of good governance and understand the impact of each on performance improvement.
- 5) Explore the mediating role of sustainable development

and how it influences the improvement of municipal performance in the Gaza Strip through good governance.

- 6) Build a model that simulates performance improvement for municipalities in the Gaza Strip.

2.2. Research Problem

Since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority and within its administrative governance structure, municipalities have been subject to the Ministry of Local Government and have followed all its instructions, both in terms of laws and procedures. On the other hand, municipalities have maintained their service-oriented role for which they were established and have been granted significant autonomy in managing their affairs. However, this does not change the fact that in the end, they are affiliated with a government ministry, which ties them to the broader governmental framework in Palestine, with its associated regulatory procedures, performance levels, overlapping authorities, and heavy reliance on external funding for managing their affairs.

Thus, the Ministry of Local Government and municipalities, like other ministries, suffer from weak regulatory procedures, transparency, and accountability, which ensure performance evaluation and improvement. Additionally, they have not fully embraced modern scientific management principles, which consider good governance as a key feature for enhancing performance and achieving the concept of sustainable development that all service institutions strive to reach.

One of the main reasons for the growing focus on governance in the public sector is the low level of performance in government entities, the overlap of powers and responsibilities, weak productivity, the absence of accountability, along with the overall weakness of the regulatory system, poor levels of disclosure and transparency, and the emergence of financial and administrative corruption. The concept of governance aims to subject the activities of government agencies to a set of systems, laws, policies, standards, and procedures that achieve institutional discipline in the management of government bodies by clearly defining the responsibilities and duties of senior and executive management.

2.3. Research Questions

Based on the research problem and with the aim of answering it and reaching conclusions that contribute to understanding the nature of this relationship and the factors influencing it, I have broken down the previous issue into several sub-questions. By answering all of them, the main research problem will be addressed. These questions are summarized as follows:

- 1) What are the factors that influence the implementation of good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?
- 2) What is the role of good governance in improving performance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?
- 3) What are the challenges facing the implementation of

good governance principles in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?

- 4) What are the possible actions that can be taken to enhance good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip and improve their performance?
- 5) What is the impact of practicing good governance on achieving sustainable development in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?

3. Research Methodology

Scientific research is defined as an organized intellectual activity aimed at increasing human ability to control the environment. Controlling the environment is a fundamental goal of science, which can be achieved through scientific knowledge. In this context, the British philosopher (Bacon) states: "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed." This means that understanding nature and complying with its laws is the first step toward controlling it. Scientific research is considered the result of a structured and deliberate effort to discover relationships between variables and phenomena according to a specific theory. [7]

3.1. Methodological and Cognitive Considerations

The descriptive-analytical approach was used as the most suitable method for the nature and objectives of the study, and because it is one of the most commonly used methods for studying social, human, and administrative phenomena. This approach involved describing the phenomenon under study by collecting facts and data, describing, processing, and analyzing them using quantitative and statistical methods, and interpreting the results of these methods. The descriptive and analytical approach was adopted to study the phenomenon as it exists in reality. The study addressed describing the phenomenon under investigation, and the researcher used the questionnaire as the main tool for data collection. The items of the questionnaire were designed based on the literature and previous studies, and the items were modified to suit the study's objectives. The questionnaire was designed to measure performance improvement using good governance and to assess the presence of sustainable development factors in achieving this improvement. The questionnaire consisted of 64 items distributed across three axes, each representing a variable in the study, in addition to the control variables under investigation. The questionnaire was designed according to the five-point Likert scale, which consists of five levels as follows: "Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree." The numbers were assigned in the analysis as follows: (1) corresponds to Strongly Agree, (2) corresponds to Agree, (3) corresponds to Neutral, (4) corresponds to Disagree, and (5) corresponds to Strongly Disagree. The researcher distributed 50 questionnaires to a sample of municipal employees from the study population to measure the validity, reliability,

and appropriateness of the questionnaire for the study's purpose. The data were then analyzed using the SPSS statistical software program.

3.2. Research Tool (Questionnaire)

3.2.1. Definition of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is one of the best and most popular tools used in collecting primary field data for scientific research. The researcher designs and formulates the questions in a way that aligns with the research topic and organizes them. The researcher must also clarify the purpose of the questionnaire to the target individuals to ensure they understand it when filling it out.

Thus, the questionnaire is a set of inquiries and questions that the researcher formulates according to the research topics. It requires clear and accurate answers, which are then provided by a group of individuals members of the target sample.

3.2.2. Measuring Good Governance

After reviewing several studies and research that addressed good governance, the researcher found that the requirements for the existence of good governance in the public sector are based on providing several fundamental pillars, according to the United Nations Development Programme, which underpins governance [2] how respond to them.

Combating Corruption: Transparency International defines corruption as the misuse of public office for personal gain. This definition is consistent with the study by [3, 9]

Justice: This refers to ensuring fair treatment for all, as well

as the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of development. This definition aligns with the study by [10].

Participation: This refers to the active involvement of citizens in managing the affairs of their community. This definition aligns with the study by [12].

Accountability: This refers to the existence of a comprehensive system of political and administrative accountability for public officials, civil society organizations, and the private sector. This definition aligns with the study by [9].

Transparency: This refers to the availability of accurate information in a timely manner, and providing the opportunity for everyone to access necessary and documented information, which helps in making correct decisions. Information should be published publicly, expanding the scope for ideal participation and accountability, reducing waste, and curbing corruption. This definition aligns with the studies by [1,10, 12, 14].

There are also other pillars that I did not study, not because of their lack of importance, but to focus on the aspects that are most relevant to my study, which are municipalities (rule of law and strategic oversight). These pillars are connected to the legislative, legal, and oversight institutions of the state.

3.2.3. Measuring Performance Improvement

I resorted to studying performance based on the evolution of performance dimensions within organizations, which can measure performance levels and the historical development of performance measurement, represented by the following table number (5): Evolution of Performance Dimensions in Organizations [13].

Table 1. Evolution of Performance Dimensions in Organizations.

The 1950s	The 1960s	The 1970s	The 1980s	The 1990s	Recent Years
Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness	Effectiveness
	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency	Efficiency
		Productivity	Productivity	Productivity	Productivity
			Flexibility	Flexibility	Flexibility
				Creativity	Creativity
				Innovation	Innovation
					Sustainability

Source [13]

I studied all the dimensions of performance (effectiveness, efficiency, flexibility, creativity, and innovation) and excluded (productivity) because municipalities are non-profit organizations. I also excluded (sustainability) because the continuity

of all municipalities is guaranteed by official decrees, either by legislation or by decisions from the Ministry of Local Government.

3.2.4. Measuring Sustainable Development

I created the questionnaire for measuring sustainable development by achieving balanced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in municipalities, taking into account the following points:

- 1) Preserving natural resources from depletion.
- 2) Improving living standards and ensuring the equitable distribution of economic growth benefits.
- 3) Choosing environmentally friendly investment projects.
- 4) Relying on modern technology in production processes that consider key components.
- 5) Advocating for clean production, sustainable investment, and avoiding waste.

3.2.5. Mediating Variable

It is a mechanism through which the primary independent variable can influence a specific dependent variable. A variable is considered mediating when it can reflect or alter the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Thus, it defines how and why these effects occur [5].

To verify the mediating effect of a variable, certain conditions must be met:

- 1) *Condition 1*: The independent variable (X) must have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y).
- 2) *Condition 2*: The independent variable (X) must have a significant effect on the mediating variable (M).
- 3) *Condition 3*: The mediating variable (M) must have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Y), when the effect of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) is controlled or regulated.
- 4) *Condition 4*: There must be a significant change in the effect of the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y) when the mediating variable (M) is included. The extent of this change determines the nature of the mediating effect.

3.3. Study Population and Sample

3.3.1. Study Population

The study population consists of all employees in the municipalities of the southern governorates (Gaza Strip) in Palestine, totaling 2,863 individuals, as shown in the following table.

Table 2. Study Population Sample.

No.	Municipality	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Rafah	203	7.1%
2	Al-Qarara	43	1.5%
3	Bani Suheila	75	2.6%
4	Abasan Al-Kabira	49	1.7%

No.	Municipality	Number	Percentage (%)
5	Al-Bureij	35	1.2%
6	Jabalia	262	9.2%
7	Deir Al-Balah	106	3.7%
8	Al-Nuseirat	103	3.6%
9	Al-Zawaida	32	1.1%
10	Gaza	1,369	47.8%
11	Beit Hanoun	95	3.3%
12	Khan Younis	356	12.4%
13	Beit Lahia	135	4.7%
Total		2,863	100%

This table represents the distribution of employees across municipalities in the southern governorates (Gaza Strip), highlighting their total numbers and corresponding percentages. Let me know if you'd like further adjustments or analysis.

3.3.2. Study Sample

The current study utilized two study samples as follows:

3.3.3. First: The Pilot Sample

A pilot sample consisting of 40 individuals was selected from the employees of municipalities in the southern governorates (Gaza Strip) using a simple random sampling method. The study tools were applied to this sample to ensure their validity, reliability, and suitability for application to the actual study sample.

3.3.4. Second: The Actual Sample

Based on the equation by Stephen Sampson, the study sample consisted of 339 municipality employees from a total population of 2,863 employees. Below is an explanation of this equation:

$$n = \frac{N \times p(1-p)}{[(N-1) \times (d^2 + z^2)] + p(1-p)}$$

- 1) N: Population size (2,863)
- 2) z: The standard score corresponding to the significance level of 0.95, which equals 1.96
- 3) d: The margin of error, which equals 0.05
- 4) p: The proportion of the neutral attribute = 0.50
- 5) n = 339

Thus, the sample size for the study was 339 municipality employees. A total of 339 questionnaires, including the Good Governance Scale, Performance Improvement Scale, and Sustainable Development Scale, were distributed. Eight questionnaires were excluded due to their unsuitability for data analysis and statistical processing. The following part shows the

distribution of the actual study sample members according to the municipalities, consistent with the percentages derived from the equation above.

4. Results

This study represents an attempt to understand and assess the extent of the application of good governance principles in the municipalities of the southern governorates in Palestine (Gaza Strip) and how these principles can impact the improvement of these municipalities' performance within the framework of sustainable development. To achieve these goals, the researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical approach and used a questionnaire to collect data from the study population, which includes all employees in the municipalities of Gaza Strip (a total of 2863 individuals). The questionnaire items were designed based on previous literature and similar research studies. A total of 339 questionnaires were distributed to employees in the study area, and eight forms were excluded for being unsuitable for statistical analysis. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data and statistical analysis. The significance of this research lies in shedding light on a topic that has not been sufficiently explored, namely the relationship between good governance and performance improvement within the context of sustainable development. The importance of choosing the study population, which consists of municipalities in the Gaza Strip, stems from their vital role in providing services and improving the standard of living for the Palestinian community.

The study reached a set of key findings, the most important of which are:

- 1) The municipalities of the Gaza Strip apply the principles of good governance well, with a slight improvement in the quality of local governance.
- 2) Transparency is considered the most important element in the application of good governance and is essential for the integrity and transparency of decision-making and implementation processes at the local level.
- 3) Justice and accountability rank second in importance after transparency. They are also important factors for achieving good governance in municipalities.
- 4) Enhancing community participation plays a significant role in achieving good governance at the local level, as citizens should be encouraged to actively participate in decision-making.
- 5) Combating corruption is considered an important element for promoting good governance, and effective mechanisms must be provided for detecting and combating corruption.
- 6) There is a positive relationship between the application of good governance and the improvement of performance in municipalities, indicating the importance of achieving good governance in enhancing the quality of local services.
- 7) Sustainable development plays a mediating role in the

impact of good governance on improving performance in municipalities, and strengthening it can complement the achievement of a full positive impact.

- 8) The experience and job title of the participants may influence their evaluation of anti-corruption efforts and performance improvement.
- 9) Department heads may express greater satisfaction with the application of good governance and the achievement of performance improvement compared to section heads in municipalities.
- 10) Females have shown higher levels of sustainable development compared to males in these municipalities, suggesting the role of women in promoting sustainable development and improving local performance.

This research highlights the vital role of good governance in improving the performance of municipalities in the Gaza Strip within the context of sustainable development. Despite the existing challenges, strengthening the concepts of transparency, justice, accountability, participation, and anti-corruption in municipal governance systems is essential. This improvement in good governance contributes to providing high-quality services to the local community, thereby enhancing sustainable development in the region.

Therefore, researchers and decision-makers should consider strengthening good governance as one of the main tools for achieving sustainable development in the Gaza Strip. This includes improving municipal performance and delivering excellent services to the community. These joint efforts can significantly contribute to enhancing sustainable development in the region and improving the quality of life for citizens.

5. Discussion of Results

5.1. First / Results Related to the Main Question

What is the role of good governance in improving performance under the factor of sustainable development in municipalities in the Gaza Strip?

The results mentioned indicate that good governance plays an important role in improving performance and enhancing sustainable development in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip. These results reflect a positive relationship between good governance and factors influencing sustainable development and performance improvement.

The relationship between good governance and sustainable development suggests that achieving a high level of governance in municipalities can have a positive impact on enhancing sustainable development. This can result from better utilization of resources, effective planning, and sustainable decision-making that supports long-term development.

Moreover, the analysis indicates that good governance has a direct and strong impact on improving performance in municipalities. This means that reforms in governance can significantly contribute to improving the delivery of services and programs to citizens, leading to better outcomes.

Additionally, it is observed that sustainable development plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between good governance and performance improvement. This means that sustainable development can be one of the factors that transfers the impact of good governance to improved performance, demonstrating the complex interaction between these factors.

Previous studies referenced confirm this positive interaction between good governance and sustainable development, highlighting the importance of strengthening good governance as a means to achieve sustainable development in local communities. However, the specific circumstances of each area and local factors must also be considered when developing governance and development strategies.

These results are consistent with the studies of Zain Al-Abidin [15], Hamoud [8], and Tahrishi [14], which proved that governance leads to optimal resource utilization, which in turn achieves higher development rates. Furthermore, good governance is considered an important player in bearing the costs of sustainable development. However, the study by [11] demonstrated that governance has a moderate impact on environmental development.

5.2. Secondly, the Results Related to the First Question

What are the factors that affect the application of good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?

It is clear that all the probability values for all dimensions of the good governance scale and its total score are statistically significant at 330 degrees of freedom and a significance level of ($\alpha \leq 0.05$). It was found that the relative weight of the total score is (72.34), which is a relatively high score. The fifth dimension, related to transparency, ranked first with a mean of (3.71) and a relative weight of (74.20), followed by the second dimension (justice) with a mean of (3.69) and a relative weight of (73.70), then the fourth dimension (accountability) with a mean of (3.68) and a relative weight of (73.51), then the third dimension (participation) with a mean of (3.50) and a relative weight of (69.97). Last in rank is the first dimension (anti-corruption) with a mean of (3.48) and a relative weight of (69.69). This indicates that the municipalities in the southern governorates of Palestine apply good governance at a slightly high level, with the highest implementation being transparency and the lowest being anti-corruption. This issue is due to the workers' feeling that anti-corruption efforts are not being carried out as required by the municipal administrations.

The results indicate a generally positive evaluation of the application of good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip, with a greater focus on the fifth dimension related to transparency, achieving a high degree of transparency in government performance. However, they also point to a gap in the application of the anti-corruption dimension.

5.3. The Discussion of the Results Includes

- 1) *Reasons for Excellence in Transparency*: The greater focus on transparency could be due to increased international pressure to ensure greater transparency in local and governmental administration. This may be due to financial reporting and accountability requirements set by international organizations and donors.
- 2) *The Need to Strengthen Anti-Corruption Efforts*: Achieving good governance requires a focus on combating corruption and enhancing transparency in this aspect as well. Strategies and tools to combat corruption must be developed, and greater efforts should be directed towards promoting integrity and accountability.
- 3) *International Support and International Organizations*: International support can play an important role in enhancing the application of good governance in Gaza Strip municipalities. This could include providing expertise and financial assistance for implementing governance-enhancing projects.
- 4) *Encouraging Community Participation*:
 - a) Employees should be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes and the development of institutional policies. This can be done by creating mechanisms and platforms for participation and discussion within the organization.
 - b) *Enhancing Communication*: Internal communication between different employee levels within the organization should be strengthened. This can include regular social sessions, workshops, and open discussions about governance issues and performance improvement.
 - c) *Guiding Individuals*: Employees should be provided with training and guidance on the principles of good governance and best practices in this regard. This can help them understand the importance of their role in improving performance and enhancing integrity.
 - d) *Participation in Decision-Making*: Employees should have a role in making decisions related to institutional policies and procedures. This can be achieved by involving employee representatives in decision-making processes or consulting them regularly.

In summary, employee participation in the organization means actively engaging them in applying and strengthening the concepts of good governance from within the organization, which contributes to promoting integrity, improving performance, and contributing to sustainable development.

The results mentioned indicate that the first dimension related to "anti-corruption" ranked last with an average of 3.48 and a relative weight of 69.69%. This suggests that there are challenges facing the implementation of the anti-corruption principle in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip. The discussion on combating corruption can include the following points:

- 1) *The necessity to raise awareness about the importance of anti-corruption*: It appears there is a need to increase

awareness about the dangers of corruption and its negative impact on governance and sustainable development. Awareness and educational campaigns about the risks of corruption and unethical practices should be directed.

- 2) *Developing anti-corruption strategies*: Municipalities and relevant authorities must develop anti-corruption strategies and effective policies. This could include providing easy and secure channels for reporting corruption and ensuring accountability for those involved.
- 3) *Enhancing transparency and oversight*: Transparency and precise oversight play a crucial role in preventing and uncovering corruption. Monitoring and accountability systems should be strengthened, and promoting the disclosure of financial information and accountability for expenditures is essential.
- 4) *Enhancing Accountability*: Accountability should be strengthened and justice should be pursued in cases of corruption. This may include the strict enforcement of laws and penalties, ensuring that corrupt individuals are not protected.
- 5) *Enhancing Public Trust*: Fighting corruption helps in building public trust between citizens and local authorities. Municipalities should work on rebuilding trust through effective anti-corruption measures and active citizen engagement.

Overall, combating corruption is a key element to ensure good governance and improve performance in municipalities. The focus should be on implementing effective anti-corruption strategies and raising awareness among employees and the local community about its importance to ensure sustainable development and enhance integrity and transparency.

5.4. Third/ Results Related to the Second Question

What is the role of good governance in improving performance in municipalities in the Gaza Strip?

From the results presented, we can conclude that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between good governance and performance improvement in municipalities in the Gaza Strip. The tables and statistical values related to the impact and analysis show that good governance plays an important role in improving the performance of municipalities. The positive effects include:

- 1) *Improved Efficiency*: When municipalities follow the principles of good governance, their efficiency and ability to manage resources and projects improve.
- 2) *Increased Transparency*: Good governance enhances the level of transparency in municipalities, which helps build trust between citizens and local authorities.
- 3) *Strengthened Anti-Corruption Efforts*: Good governance includes intensive efforts to combat corruption, reducing the opportunities for it to occur and enhancing integrity.
- 4) *Enhanced Consultation and Participation*: Good gov-

ernance encourages collaboration and participation between municipalities and employees in decision-making and project implementation.

5.5. Fourth/ Results Related to the Third Question

What are the challenges faced in applying the principles of good governance in municipalities in the Gaza Strip?

From the results presented, several challenges facing the application of the principles of good governance in municipalities in the Gaza Strip can be identified:

- 1) *Corruption and Weak Anti-Corruption Efforts*: One of the biggest challenges facing good governance in the Gaza Strip is combating corruption. There may be issues with effectively implementing anti-corruption policies, which negatively affect the integrity of municipalities and their ability to deliver services efficiently.
- 2) *Political and Economic Challenges*: The Gaza Strip is located in a region suffering from political and economic tensions, which can negatively impact municipalities' ability to achieve stability and sustainable development.
- 3) *Security Challenges*: Municipalities in the Gaza Strip face security challenges and attacks on infrastructure, which can disrupt development projects and lead to additional costs.
- 4) *Lack of Awareness and Training*: There may be a lack of awareness and training regarding the principles of good governance among employees and local council members. This can hinder the ability to apply these principles effectively.
- 5) *Pressure from the Local Community*: The needs and expectations of the local community, as well as the pressures exerted on municipalities, vary. These pressures need to be addressed in a way that ensures the community's needs are met while maintaining the standards of good governance.
- 6) *Low Participation from Employees*: The results indicate that participation may be low, which can pose a challenge in achieving sustainable development and strengthening good governance.

Recognizing these challenges and working to address them effectively is crucial to ensuring improved performance, enhancing the principles of good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip, and achieving sustainable development.

5.6. Fifthly / Results Related to Question Four

What possible measures can be taken to enhance good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip and improve their performance? To enhance good governance in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip and improve their performance, several measures and actions can be taken:

- 1) *Enhancing Awareness and Training*: Efforts should be directed toward raising awareness of the principles of

good governance among employees and members of local councils. Training courses and workshops can be organized to increase their understanding of the concepts and tools related to good governance.

- 2) *Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts*: Effective strategies and policies should be developed and implemented to combat corruption. This includes enhancing integrity in procurement processes and promoting a culture of reporting corruption.
- 3) *Enhancing Transparency*: The level of transparency in all aspects of municipal work should be increased. This can be done by publicly and clearly publishing information about budgets, decisions, and policies, as well as developing disclosure systems.
- 4) *Promoting Employee Participation*: Employees should be encouraged to participate in decision-making and in monitoring the performance of municipalities. Public meetings and listening sessions can be organized to respond to community needs and involve them in planning and development processes.
- 5) *Promoting Cross-Sectoral Collaboration*: Cooperation and partnerships between municipalities, relevant entities, other government institutions, and non-governmental organizations should be strengthened. This can contribute to improving the implementation of projects and services.
- 6) *Enhancing Justice and Equal Opportunities*: The focus should always be on ensuring equal opportunities for all.
- 7) *Performance Evaluation and Monitoring*: Regular evaluations of municipal performance should be conducted to assess progress in achieving good governance goals. Based on these evaluations, action plans can be developed to improve performance.
- 8) *Enhancing Reporting and Accountability*: Encouraging and facilitating the reporting of corruption and governance violations should be prioritized, with clear procedures in place to ensure accountability.

5.7. Sixthly / Results Related to Question Five

What is the impact of practicing good governance on achieving sustainable development in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip?

Practicing good governance plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip. Here is the impact of practicing good governance on sustainable development in this context:

- 1) *Increasing Efficiency in Resource Management*: By improving the management of financial, human, and material resources, good governance enables municipalities to use resources more efficiently. This leads to the effective implementation of projects and programs, achieving better results.
- 2) *Increasing Transparency and Integrity*: Good governance enhances levels of transparency and integrity in

municipal operations, which increases the trust of the local community and donors. This helps attract investments and contributes to sustainable development.

- 3) *Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts*: Good governance contributes to enhancing anti-corruption measures and preventing the misuse of power and public resources. This ensures that resources are directed towards projects and programs that support sustainable development.
- 4) *Improving the Quality of Public Services*: Through better management of public services such as health, education, and infrastructure, good governance can achieve improvements in the standard of living and quality of life for citizens.
- 5) *Enhancing Environmental Sustainability*: Good governance can encourage the implementation of policies and programs that promote environmental sustainability, protecting natural resources and reducing negative environmental impacts.
- 6) *Improving Project Implementation*: Good governance can improve planning and project implementation processes, ensuring they are completed on time and within budget. This contributes to achieving developmental goals effectively.
- 7) In general, good governance plays a fundamental role in achieving sustainable development in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip by improving management, increasing transparency and participation, combating corruption, improving the quality of public services, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

6. Conclusion

This research, spanning six chapters, addressed the relationship between good governance and performance improvement in the municipalities of the southern governorates (Gaza Strip), in light of the mediating variable of sustainable development.

The study was divided into two parts. The first part focused on the theoretical study of the research variables, which was covered in the first three chapters. The first chapter dealt with the independent variable, which is good governance. In the second chapter, the dependent variable, performance improvement, was discussed, while the third chapter reviewed the mediating variable, sustainable development, as well as the study community, which is the municipalities in the southern governorates (Gaza Strip).

The second part, which also consisted of three chapters, focused on the field and scientific research aimed at testing the research hypotheses and determining, through scientific means, whether to confirm or reject them. Chapter four of this research addressed the methodology used in the scientific research, as well as shedding light on the study community and sample.

In Chapter five, the study tested the variables of the research using descriptive statistical analysis of the personal variables

of the sample and also conducted descriptive statistical analysis of the sample's characteristics and the responses gathered about the various research variables. Finally, in Chapter six, the statistical testing of the research hypotheses was conducted, along with a discussion of the results obtained from the statistical analysis. The main objective of this research was to investigate the role of good governance in improving performance under the factor of sustainable development in municipalities in the southern governorates (Gaza Strip). The researcher's problem was to answer the following question:

The role of good governance in improving performance within the context of sustainable development in municipalities in the Gaza Strip:

In order to answer this question, I conducted a theoretical review of a large number of sources, including books, articles, and previous references that addressed the topic. I then formulated a set of hypotheses that, when tested, would help answer the main research question, which represents the research problem. This study attempts to understand and assess the extent to which the principles of good governance are applied in the municipalities of the southern governorates in Palestine (Gaza Strip), and how these principles can impact the improvement of these municipalities' performance within the framework of sustainable development.

To achieve these objectives, I adopted a descriptive analytical approach and used a questionnaire to collect data from the study community, which includes all employees in Gaza's municipalities (a total of 2,863 individuals). The questionnaire items were designed based on previous literature and similar studies.

A total of 339 questionnaires were distributed to employees in the study area, and eight questionnaires were excluded due to their unsuitability for statistical analysis. The statistical analysis was performed using the SPSS software.

The importance of this research lies in shedding light on a topic that has not been sufficiently explored: the relationship between good governance and performance improvement within the context of sustainable development. The significance of choosing the study community, which is the municipalities in the Gaza Strip, stems from their vital role in providing services and improving the living standards of the Palestinian community.

After conducting the statistical tests, the following results were obtained:

- 1) Municipalities in the southern governorates (Gaza Strip) implement good governance to a slightly high degree. The factors affecting the application of good governance are ranked as follows: transparency in first place, followed by fairness in second place, accountability in third place, participation in fourth place, and finally, anti-corruption in fifth place.
- 2) There is a statistically significant positive role of good

governance in improving the performance of municipalities in the Gaza Strip, meaning that the application of good governance in these municipalities enhances their performance.

- 3) The researcher also found a statistically significant relationship between the mediating role of sustainable development and both the elements of good governance and performance improvement in the municipalities of Gaza. The effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable is partial, not total, as there is significant evidence of the effect of the mediating variable on the independent variable through the results obtained.
- 4) Municipalities in the Gaza Strip implement performance improvement to a slightly high degree, with the most applied aspects being efficiency, followed by creativity, innovation, effectiveness, and lastly, flexibility.
- 5) There are statistically significant differences in respondents' answers regarding the level of creativity based on the age group variable, although these differences are not substantial.
- 6) Respondents with service experience ranging from 10 to less than 15 years provided a better evaluation and expressed greater satisfaction with the anti-corruption efforts in the municipalities of the southern governorates in Gaza.
- 7) Department heads provided a better evaluation and expressed greater satisfaction with the application of good governance in the municipalities of the southern governorates in Gaza compared to section heads.
- 8) Department heads achieved the required levels of performance improvement better than section heads in the municipalities of the Gaza Strip.
- 9) There are statistically significant differences concerning the level of sustainable development between males and females. The results indicate that females demonstrated higher levels of sustainable development, which is statistically significant when compared to males in these municipalities.

Author Contributions

Albhaisi Abdalmoti: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis Formal, Resources, Project administration, Funding Acquisition, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Souda Kamoun Chouk: Supervision

Conflicts of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest.

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