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Building Public Trust and Cooperation through Investigator Effectiveness: The Mediating Role of Public Satisfaction and the Moderating Role of Accountability

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how investigator effectiveness shapes public trust and public cooperation by positioning public satisfaction as a mediating mechanism and investigator accountability as a moderating condition. The empirical setting is Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, and the respondents were 263 community members who had interacted with investigators during investigative processes and were not suspects. Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. The measurement model demonstrated strong convergent validity and reliability, with AVE values ranging from 0.851 to 0.875 and composite reliability values from 0.953 to 0.965. Investigator effectiveness significantly increased public trust ($\beta=0.359$, $p<0.001$) and public satisfaction ($\beta=0.836$, $p<0.001$), but did not directly increase public cooperation ($\beta=-0.056$, $p=0.591$). Public satisfaction strengthened public trust ($\beta=0.570$, $p<0.001$) but did not directly predict cooperation ($\beta=0.122$, $p=0.204$). Public trust was a strong predictor of cooperation ($\beta=0.535$, $p<0.001$). Public satisfaction significantly mediated the effectiveness–trust relationship ($\beta=0.477$, $p<0.001$), whereas trust significantly mediated the effectiveness–cooperation relationship ($\beta=0.192$, $p<0.001$). Accountability did not significantly moderate the effectiveness–cooperation relationship ($\beta=-0.002$, $p=0.965$). The findings indicate that technical effectiveness is insufficient to generate citizen cooperation unless it is translated into relational confidence. The study contributes by distinguishing satisfaction from trust as two different post-service mechanisms and by showing that trust, rather than satisfaction or accountability as a boundary condition, is the more consequential pathway toward voluntary public cooperation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public cooperation is indispensable to contemporary policing because criminal investigation depends not only on formal authority but also on citizens who report incidents, provide information, appear as witnesses, comply with investigative directions, and participate in crime-prevention initiatives. This dependence is particularly important in investigative work, where evidence and information are frequently dispersed across social networks rather than held exclusively by law-enforcement agencies. Consequently, investigator performance should be assessed not only by case-processing outcomes but also by whether professional performance produces public confidence and voluntary cooperation. [5], [12], [25], [33]

The performance perspective proposes that citizens evaluate public institutions partly through observable competence, responsiveness, reliability, and the capacity to deliver expected outcomes. In policing, effectiveness can signal institutional capability and reduce uncertainty about whether authorities can perform their mandate. Yet performance is not interpreted in a social vacuum. Citizens also evaluate how authority is exercised, whether interactions are respectful, whether information is clear, and whether institutional conduct appears consistent with legitimate public purposes. [4], [8], [10], [11], [22]

This distinction is central to investigator–community relations. Effective investigators may process cases accurately and promptly, but citizens can remain reluctant to cooperate when they do not experience the process as trustworthy. The source study in Konawe identifies precisely this tension: preliminary observations indicated that procedural and technical effectiveness did not automatically translate into willingness to report, provide evidence, or participate as witnesses. This gap suggests that cooperation is a relational outcome rather than a simple behavioral response to technical performance. [1], [13], [18], [39]

Public satisfaction provides one mechanism through which performance may be converted into more favorable institutional evaluations. Service-quality logic holds that citizens compare their experiences with expectations regarding responsiveness, clarity, reliability, and treatment. When investigators communicate well, provide timely follow-up, and handle procedures professionally, citizens are more likely to evaluate the encounter positively. Satisfaction therefore captures an immediate evaluative response to the service experience. [20], [27], [30], [38]

Trust is conceptually different from satisfaction. Satisfaction is typically encounter-oriented, whereas trust reflects a broader willingness to accept vulnerability based on beliefs that investigators are competent, dependable, lawful, and oriented toward legitimate public interests. Trust can therefore carry the consequences of a positive service experience beyond the immediate encounter. In policing research, legitimacy and procedural justice perspectives repeatedly identify trust as an important precursor of compliance, support, and cooperation. [8], [9], [17], [21], [34], [35], [36], [37]

Social exchange theory further explains why effective and respectful service may elicit reciprocal citizen behavior. Positive exchanges can create obligations and expectations of reciprocity, but the conversion of favorable experience into cooperation depends on whether citizens believe the relationship is dependable. From this perspective, satisfaction may help generate trust, while trust becomes the relational resource that supports voluntary cooperation. [6], [16], [23], [33]

Accountability is another theoretically important condition. Accountability can signal that investigator discretion is constrained by rules, transparency, answerability, and mechanisms for responding to complaints. It is therefore plausible that accountability strengthens the relationship between effectiveness and cooperation: citizens may be more willing to respond to effective performance when they also believe that investigators can be held responsible for their conduct. Prior work has linked accountability and governance quality to trust and cooperation, but evidence about its role as a moderator remains limited and context dependent. [1], [17], [19], [38]

The present study extends the model developed around police effectiveness, citizen satisfaction, trust, and cooperation by testing accountability as a moderator in an Indonesian investigative context. This extension is important because a moderator asks a different question from a direct antecedent: rather than whether accountability itself is valued, it tests whether the effectiveness–cooperation relationship changes at different levels of perceived accountability. The empirical setting is Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, where the study focuses on community members who had direct experience with investigative processes. [1], [2], [38]

Accordingly, the study addresses three linked questions. First, does investigator effectiveness directly shape satisfaction, trust, and cooperation? Second, do satisfaction and trust transmit the effects of effectiveness toward downstream citizen responses? Third, does accountability alter the effectiveness–cooperation relationship? By testing these mechanisms simultaneously, the study separates technical performance, affective evaluation, relational confidence, and cooperative behavior rather than treating favorable public attitudes as a single outcome. [1], [25], [39]

The study contributes to public management and policing scholarship in two ways. Theoretically, it clarifies that satisfaction and trust occupy different positions in the pathway from investigator effectiveness to cooperation. Practically, it identifies whether improvement strategies should prioritize technical efficiency alone, service experience, trust-building, or accountability mechanisms. Such differentiation is important for evidence-based policing because interventions that improve internal performance indicators may not automatically generate the citizen behavior needed for effective investigation. [10], [15], [24], [26]

1.1 Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Logic

The conceptual model treats investigator effectiveness as the initiating performance signal. When investigators demonstrate competence, timeliness, responsiveness, and professional case handling, citizens receive evidence that the institution can deliver its mandate. This logic supports positive paths from effectiveness to satisfaction and trust. At the same time, the study tests whether this performance signal is sufficient to motivate cooperation or whether cooperation requires an intervening relational judgment. [4], [8], [22]

Public satisfaction is positioned as an experiential evaluation. Citizens who perceive investigative services as effective are expected to report higher satisfaction because performance reduces service failures and aligns the encounter with expectations. Satisfaction should subsequently strengthen trust because repeated positive evaluations provide evidence that investigators are dependable. The model therefore distinguishes an immediate evaluative reaction from a more durable relational belief. [20], [27], [30]

Public trust is positioned closer to cooperative behavior. Cooperation exposes citizens to potential costs, including time, uncertainty, social visibility, and continued involvement in legal procedures. Trust can reduce these perceived costs by increasing confidence that investigators will act competently and appropriately. Accordingly, the model expects trust to explain why effective investigation can eventually generate willingness to cooperate even when the direct performance–cooperation relationship is weak. [25], [33], [35], [37]

The model also tests satisfaction as a mediator toward both trust and cooperation. This dual test is important because it avoids assuming that all favorable service evaluations have the same behavioral consequence. If satisfaction mediates effectiveness to trust but not effectiveness to cooperation, the evidence would indicate that satisfaction is primarily a trust-building mechanism rather than a direct driver of citizen action. [6], [15], [23]

Accountability is modeled as a moderator of the effectiveness–cooperation relationship because answerability and transparency may affect how citizens interpret performance. Under this logic, the same level of technical effectiveness could produce different cooperative responses depending on whether citizens believe investigator conduct is open to scrutiny and responsibility. Testing the interaction provides a stricter assessment than simply showing that accountability is positively valued. [1], [17], [38]

The integrated model therefore examines ten substantive relationships: effectiveness with trust, cooperation, and satisfaction; satisfaction with trust and cooperation; trust with cooperation; the effectiveness-by-accountability interaction; and three indirect effects through satisfaction or trust. This architecture makes it possible to identify not only whether investigator performance matters, but how and under what conditions it is translated into citizen cooperation. [1], [39]

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Setting

The study employed a quantitative explanatory design to test direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among investigator effectiveness, public satisfaction, public trust, public cooperation, and investigator accountability. The empirical setting was Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The analytical focus was citizen evaluation of investigators rather than investigator self-assessment, allowing the model to capture how public experiences are translated into attitudes and cooperative intentions. [14]

The study involved 263 community respondents who had interacted with investigators during investigative processes at Polres Konawe and were not suspects. The respondent profile included complainants, witnesses, reported parties, and other community members involved in investigative interactions. This criterion ensured that evaluations were grounded in direct contact with investigative services rather than general perceptions of policing.

2.2 Respondent Profile

Table 1. Profile of the Study Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	119	45.25
Gender	Female	144	54.75
Age	25–34	54	20.53
Age	35–44	98	37.26
Age	45–54	94	35.74
Age	>54	17	6.46
Investigation status	Complainant	30	11.41

Investigation status	Witness	125	47.53
Investigation status	Reported party	11	4.18
Investigation status	Other	97	36.88

Source: Primary data processed in the source study, 2026.

The sample was relatively balanced by gender, although women represented a slightly larger share. Respondents aged 35–54 years constituted the dominant age groups, indicating that most assessments came from mature adults with substantial social and public-service experience. Nearly half of respondents interacted with investigators as witnesses, making witness experience a particularly important component of the observed citizen–investigator relationship.

2.3 Constructs and Measurement

Investigator effectiveness was conceptualized as citizens' evaluation of investigators' capacity to perform investigative duties competently, responsively, professionally, and in accordance with expected procedures. Public satisfaction represented the evaluative response to investigative service experiences. Public trust captured confidence in investigator competence, integrity, consistency, benevolence, and non-abuse of authority. Public cooperation reflected willingness to report crime, participate in police–community programs, comply with investigative directions, and become involved in investigative processes. Accountability represented perceived answerability, transparency, responsibility, and responsiveness to public concerns. [1], [27], [31], [35], [37]

The measurement logic integrates service-quality, performance, social-exchange, public-service, and procedural-justice perspectives. This integration is appropriate because citizens simultaneously assess what investigators accomplish, how they are treated, whether authority is exercised legitimately, and whether the relationship is sufficiently dependable to justify cooperation. [6], [15], [27], [28], [29], [33], [36]

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling with SmartPLS 4. The analysis proceeded in two stages: assessment of the measurement model and assessment of the structural model. Convergent validity was evaluated using indicator loadings and average variance extracted (AVE), while construct reliability was assessed through composite reliability. The structural model was evaluated using R^2 , Q^2 predictive relevance, path coefficients, and bootstrapped p-values. The same structural framework was used to estimate direct effects, specific indirect effects for mediation, and the interaction term for moderation.

PLS-SEM was suitable for the study because the model contains multiple endogenous constructs, mediation paths, and an interaction effect that must be estimated simultaneously. Statistical significance was assessed at $\alpha=0.05$, consistent with the hypothesis-testing procedure reported in the source study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Measurement Model

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Composite Reliability

Construct	AVE	Composite reliability	Assessment
Investigator effectiveness	0.851	0.958	Valid and reliable
Investigator accountability	0.861	0.961	Valid and reliable
Public satisfaction	0.875	0.965	Valid and reliable
Public trust	0.872	0.953	Valid and reliable
Public cooperation	0.859	0.960	Valid and reliable

Source: SmartPLS 4 output from the source study, 2026.

All AVE values exceeded 0.50 and all composite reliability values exceeded 0.70. The measurement results therefore indicate that the constructs captured a substantial share of their indicators' variance and exhibited high internal consistency. This provides an adequate basis for interpreting the structural relationships among effectiveness, satisfaction, trust, accountability, and cooperation.

3.2 Explanatory Power of the Structural Model

Table 3. Structural Model Explanatory Power

Endogenous construct	R ²	Interpretation in this study
Public satisfaction	0.698	69.8% of variance explained
Public trust	0.794	79.4% of variance explained
Public cooperation	0.720	72.0% of variance explained

Source: SmartPLS 4 output from the source study, 2026.

The model explained 69.8% of public satisfaction, 79.4% of public trust, and 72.0% of public cooperation. The source study also reported $Q^2=0.982$ for the integrated model, indicating high predictive relevance within the study sample. The particularly high R^2 for trust is theoretically meaningful because trust is jointly shaped by effectiveness and satisfaction, whereas cooperation is positioned further downstream and depends on several relational mechanisms. [25], [34], [39]

3.3 Direct Effects

Table 4. Direct and Moderating Effects

Hypothesis	Structural path	β	p-value	Decision
H1	Investigator effectiveness → Public trust	0.359	<0.001	Supported
H2	Investigator effectiveness → Public cooperation	-0.056	0.591	Not supported
H3	Investigator effectiveness → Public satisfaction	0.836	<0.001	Supported
H4	Public satisfaction → Public trust	0.570	<0.001	Supported
H5	Public satisfaction → Public cooperation	0.122	0.204	Not supported
H6	Public trust → Public cooperation	0.535	<0.001	Supported
H7	Effectiveness × Accountability → Public cooperation	-0.002	0.965	Not supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 bootstrapping results from the source study, 2026.

3.3.1 Investigator Effectiveness and Public Trust

Investigator effectiveness had a positive and significant effect on public trust ($\beta=0.359$, $p<0.001$). This result supports the performance-based view of institutional trust: citizens use observable performance as evidence that investigators possess the ability and reliability required to exercise public authority. In an investigative context, competence is especially salient because errors, delays, unclear information, or inconsistent follow-up can directly affect citizens' legal interests. Effective performance therefore provides a cognitive basis for confidence in investigators. [4], [8], [22], [35]

The result is consistent with research showing that perceived police performance contributes to trust, while also fitting procedural-justice scholarship that treats effectiveness and fairness as distinct but complementary sources of legitimacy. The Konawe finding indicates that performance matters even when the outcome of interest is relational rather than operational. Citizens appear to interpret investigator effectiveness as evidence about whether the institution can be relied upon, not merely whether a specific task was completed. [9], [21], [34], [36]

3.3.2 Why Effectiveness Did Not Directly Produce Cooperation

The direct path from investigator effectiveness to public cooperation was negative but statistically non-significant ($\beta = -0.056$, $p = 0.591$). This is one of the most important findings because it challenges a simple instrumental assumption that better performance automatically produces more cooperative citizens. Cooperation requires behavioral commitment: reporting, sharing information, appearing as a witness, following directions, or becoming involved in an investigation may impose time, social, reputational, or perceived safety costs on citizens. Technical effectiveness alone may therefore be insufficient to overcome those costs. [12], [18], [23], [32]

The finding also clarifies why police–community relations should not be managed solely through internal productivity indicators. Citizens may acknowledge that investigators work efficiently while remaining uncertain about whether cooperation is safe, worthwhile, or socially supported. Prior scholarship on legitimacy and cooperation suggests that voluntary assistance is more closely tied to confidence in authority and the perceived rightfulness of institutional conduct than to performance alone. The absence of a direct effect in Konawe is therefore theoretically coherent with a relational account of cooperation. [25], [33], [34], [37], [39]

3.3.3 Investigator Effectiveness and Public Satisfaction

Investigator effectiveness strongly predicted public satisfaction ($\beta = 0.836$, $p < 0.001$), the largest direct coefficient in the structural model. This finding shows that citizens' immediate evaluation of investigative services is highly responsive to perceived performance. Timeliness, clarity, professionalism, responsiveness, and reliable case handling shape whether the service experience meets citizen expectations. In public-service terms, effectiveness becomes tangible to citizens through the quality of the encounter. [20], [27], [30], [38]

The magnitude of this relationship is practically significant. It suggests that managerial interventions aimed at investigator competence, case communication, service access, and response quality can generate substantial improvements in satisfaction. However, the later paths show that satisfaction is not the final objective if the institution seeks active cooperation. Satisfaction is an important evaluative stage, but its behavioral consequences depend on whether it develops into deeper confidence. [15], [20], [30]

3.3.4 Public Satisfaction and Public Trust

Public satisfaction had a positive and significant effect on public trust ($\beta = 0.570$, $p < 0.001$). This supports a sequential interpretation in which positive service experiences accumulate into broader beliefs about investigator reliability and integrity. Satisfaction is more encounter-specific, whereas trust extends beyond a single transaction and reflects expectations about future conduct. The significant path therefore demonstrates how service management can contribute to institutional legitimacy through repeated positive evaluations. [7], [8], [17], [20]

This relationship also strengthens the social-exchange interpretation of citizen–investigator relations. When citizens experience responsive and competent service, they receive evidence that the institution recognizes their concerns and fulfills its side of the public-service relationship. Such experiences reduce relational uncertainty and make trust more rational. In this sense, satisfaction is not merely an attitudinal endpoint; it is a bridge between experienced performance and a more durable willingness to rely on investigators. [6], [16], [23]

3.3.5 Why Satisfaction Did Not Directly Produce Cooperation

Public satisfaction did not significantly predict cooperation ($\beta = 0.122$, $p = 0.204$). A satisfied citizen is therefore not necessarily a cooperative citizen. Satisfaction may indicate that the service met expectations, yet cooperation involves an additional decision to expend effort, accept possible inconvenience, or expose oneself to social and legal processes. This distinction is important because public organizations often use satisfaction as a proxy for broader public support, even though the two outcomes are behaviorally different. [15], [20], [32]

The non-significant path suggests that investigators should avoid assuming that courteous or efficient service alone will secure witness participation, information sharing, or other forms of assistance. Cooperation may require explicit trust-building measures, assurance of confidentiality and safety, predictable follow-up, and communication about why citizen participation matters. The result thus refines service-quality logic by showing that favorable evaluations require a relational conversion mechanism before they become cooperative behavior. [18], [25], [37]

3.3.6 Public Trust as the Proximal Driver of Cooperation

Public trust significantly increased cooperation ($\beta=0.535$, $p<0.001$). Among the direct predictors of cooperation, trust emerged as the central relational mechanism. Trust reduces uncertainty about how investigators will use information, whether citizens will be treated fairly, and whether participation will be respected. When citizens believe investigators are competent, consistent, and oriented toward legitimate public purposes, the perceived risk of cooperation decreases. [25], [33], [34], [35], [37]

This finding is consistent with policing research that positions legitimacy and trust as foundations of voluntary cooperation. It also helps reconcile the non-significant effectiveness and satisfaction paths. Effectiveness and satisfaction are not irrelevant; rather, their contribution to cooperation appears to operate primarily by shaping the confidence citizens place in investigators. This creates a more nuanced managerial sequence: perform effectively, generate satisfactory experiences, consolidate trust, and then facilitate cooperation. [9], [13], [21], [39]

3.3.7 Accountability as a Non-significant Moderator

The interaction between investigator effectiveness and accountability did not significantly predict public cooperation ($\beta=-0.002$, $p=0.965$). Thus, the data do not support the proposition that perceived accountability changes the strength of the effectiveness–cooperation relationship. This result should not be interpreted as evidence that accountability is unimportant. A non-significant interaction only indicates that accountability did not function as the hypothesized boundary condition in this structural relationship. [1], [17], [38]

One explanation is that accountability may operate as a baseline institutional expectation rather than a contingent amplifier of performance. Citizens may expect investigators to be answerable and transparent regardless of whether technical effectiveness is high or low. Another possibility is that accountability influences cooperation indirectly through trust, legitimacy, complaint handling, or perceptions of fairness rather than by multiplying the effect of effectiveness. Future studies can test these alternative mechanisms rather than assuming that accountability necessarily behaves as a moderator. [17], [19], [36], [39]

3.4 Mediation Analysis

Table 5. Specific Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect path	β	p-value	Decision
H8	Effectiveness $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Trust	0.477	<0.001	Supported
H9	Effectiveness $\rightarrow$ Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ Cooperation	0.102	0.206	Not supported
H10	Effectiveness $\rightarrow$ Trust $\rightarrow$ Cooperation	0.192	<0.001	Supported

Source: SmartPLS 4 bootstrapping results from the source study, 2026.

The mediation results reveal two distinct pathways. Public satisfaction significantly transmitted the effect of investigator effectiveness to public trust ($\beta=0.477$, $p<0.001$). This means that citizens partly infer trustworthiness from the quality of the service experience generated by effective investigators. Effectiveness is therefore converted into trust not only cognitively through perceived competence but also affectively through satisfaction. [8], [20], [22]

By contrast, satisfaction did not significantly mediate the relationship between effectiveness and cooperation ($\beta=0.102$, $p=0.206$). The result reinforces the earlier finding that satisfaction is insufficient to move citizens directly from positive evaluation to cooperative behavior. A citizen can be satisfied without being willing to assume the additional responsibilities or risks associated with active involvement in an investigation. [15], [20], [32]

Public trust significantly mediated the relationship between effectiveness and cooperation ($\beta=0.192$, $p<0.001$). This pathway provides the clearest explanation for how investigator effectiveness becomes socially productive. Effective work builds confidence; confidence then makes citizens more willing to report, provide information, comply with directions, and participate. Trust is therefore not simply another favorable attitude but a behavioral bridge between institutional performance and citizen action. [25], [33], [34], [37], [39]

Taken together, the mediation results suggest a layered model of citizen response. Effectiveness primarily generates satisfaction and trust. Satisfaction is consequential because it strengthens trust, but trust is the construct that more directly enables

cooperation. This layered mechanism explains why organizations may observe high service ratings without equivalent increases in citizen participation: the missing element may be relational confidence rather than service quality itself. [6], [9], [23], [38]

3.5 Theoretical Contributions

First, the findings differentiate public satisfaction from public trust. Although both are positive evaluations, they are not interchangeable. Satisfaction is strongly responsive to investigator effectiveness and contributes to trust, while trust has the stronger downstream relationship with cooperation. This distinction advances public-service research by showing that favorable service experience and willingness to rely on an institution occupy different positions in the behavioral chain. [15], [20], [35]

Second, the study extends social exchange theory into an investigative public-service setting. Reciprocity is not immediate: effective service does not directly trigger cooperation. Instead, the exchange appears to require a trust-building stage. This result adds a relational condition to a simple reciprocity model and helps explain why citizens may appreciate service performance while remaining behaviorally cautious. [6], [16], [23]

Third, the non-significant moderation result places an important boundary on accountability theory. Accountability may be normatively essential and directly relevant to institutional legitimacy, but its role cannot be assumed to be multiplicative. In this sample, accountability did not alter the effectiveness–cooperation slope. This encourages future research to model accountability as an antecedent, mediator, or institutional climate variable rather than relying exclusively on moderation. [1], [17], [38]

Fourth, the study contributes to procedural-justice and legitimacy perspectives by showing that trust is a more proximal predictor of cooperation than satisfaction or technical effectiveness. The result supports the broader argument that citizens' willingness to assist legal authorities depends on confidence in the authority relationship, not only on instrumental judgments about service output. [21], [33], [34], [36], [37]

3.6 Practical Implications for Investigative Management

The first managerial implication is that performance improvement should be explicitly designed to produce trust, not merely faster case administration. Investigator training and supervision should combine technical competence with clear communication, respectful interaction, consistent follow-up, and explanations that make investigative decisions understandable to citizens. These practices help citizens interpret effectiveness as evidence of reliability rather than as an internal organizational achievement. [10], [27], [31]

Second, Polres Konawe can treat trust as a strategic intermediate outcome. Performance dashboards may complement conventional case indicators with measures of communication quality, confidence, perceived reliability, willingness to provide information, and willingness to participate as a witness. Monitoring these indicators can reveal whether operational improvements are being translated into the relational capital needed for investigation. [15], [24], [26]

Third, the non-significant satisfaction–cooperation path suggests that citizen-service programs should include explicit cooperation-enabling mechanisms. Easy and safe reporting channels, predictable information updates, witness protection awareness, clear explanations of citizen roles, and responsive complaint handling can reduce the practical and psychological costs of cooperation. The goal is to convert a positive service experience into a credible reason for continued engagement. [18], [25], [32]

Fourth, accountability should remain a governance priority even though it was not a significant moderator. Complaint responsiveness, transparent procedures, supervisory review, documentation, and answerability can strengthen institutional quality and may affect trust through pathways not tested as direct moderation in the present model. The empirical result therefore calls for better specification of accountability mechanisms rather than their abandonment. [17], [19], [38]

3.7 Limitations and Future Research

The study is based on a single regency and on respondents with direct investigative experience, so the findings should be generalized cautiously to other policing functions or regions. The cross-sectional design also limits causal inference because perceptions of effectiveness, satisfaction, trust, accountability, and cooperation were measured within the same broad period. Longitudinal designs could determine whether satisfaction develops into trust over time and whether trust predicts later observed cooperation. [14]

Future studies should distinguish different forms of cooperation, including reporting, information sharing, witness participation, compliance with investigative requests, and participation in community-policing programs. These behaviors carry different costs

and may respond differently to trust and accountability. Multi-group analysis could also test whether pathways vary by respondent role, age, education, prior police contact, or type of investigation. [12], [25], [32]

A further research priority is to re-specify accountability. The present non-significant interaction suggests testing direct and mediated models in which accountability predicts procedural justice, trust, or legitimacy. Qualitative work could complement structural modeling by identifying which forms of accountability citizens actually observe and whether formal accountability mechanisms are visible enough to shape public behavior. [17], [36], [39]

3.8 Integrated Interpretation: From Performance to Cooperative Citizenship

The overall pattern supports a staged rather than instantaneous model of public response. Investigator effectiveness first provides citizens with observable evidence about professional capacity. That evidence has two immediate consequences: it improves satisfaction with the encounter and strengthens trust in investigators. However, only trust is sufficiently relational to predict cooperation. This sequence is important because it separates the internal logic of performance management from the external logic of citizen participation. An organization can improve speed, technical accuracy, or procedural completion without necessarily reducing the uncertainty citizens associate with reporting, testifying, or sharing sensitive information. [8], [15], [25], [35]

A performance-only strategy can therefore produce what might be described as an implementation gap between efficient investigation and cooperative investigation. Efficient investigation concerns the investigator's ability to process tasks; cooperative investigation concerns the willingness of citizens to become active contributors to those tasks. The source study shows that the first condition does not guarantee the second. This is consistent with research in which citizen cooperation depends on perceived legitimacy, procedural justice, and confidence in authorities rather than on instrumental effectiveness alone. [9], [21], [33], [34], [39]

The strong effectiveness-to-satisfaction coefficient also deserves careful interpretation. It indicates that citizens are capable of recognizing and rewarding effective service with favorable evaluations. Thus, the non-significant direct effect on cooperation should not be interpreted as public indifference to performance. Instead, performance appears to be psychologically processed through intermediate judgments. Citizens first decide whether the encounter was satisfactory and whether investigators can be trusted before deciding whether deeper involvement is warranted. [20], [27], [30]

This distinction has implications for how investigative units interpret citizen satisfaction surveys. High satisfaction can be a valuable indicator of service quality, but it should not be treated as evidence that citizens will automatically provide information or participate in future investigations. Cooperation has a different behavioral threshold. It requires citizens to believe that the relationship with investigators is sufficiently predictable, fair, and secure to justify action. Trust is therefore a more appropriate strategic indicator when the organizational objective is voluntary citizen participation. [23], [25], [32], [37]

The finding also provides a useful refinement of social exchange theory. Reciprocal behavior is often described as a response to beneficial treatment, but the present evidence suggests that the perceived benefit must be accompanied by confidence in the exchange partner. Satisfaction indicates that the citizen values the prior encounter; trust indicates that the citizen expects future interactions to remain dependable. Cooperation is more likely when both temporal dimensions are connected: positive experience in the past and confidence about treatment in the future. [6], [16], [23]

From a procedural-justice perspective, the results suggest that managerial attention should extend beyond whether investigative procedures are technically correct. Citizens need understandable explanations, respectful treatment, opportunities to communicate relevant information, and confidence that investigator discretion will not be used arbitrarily. These features can transform technical effectiveness into perceived legitimacy and trust. Although procedural justice was not modeled as a separate construct in the present study, the pattern of relationships is compatible with this broader theoretical logic. [21], [33], [36], [37]

The accountability result is equally informative. Because the interaction term was essentially zero and non-significant, accountability did not make effective investigators more or less capable of eliciting cooperation in the hypothesized multiplicative sense. This may indicate that accountability is perceived as a minimum institutional standard. If citizens regard answerability and transparency as obligations that should always be present, variation in accountability may not condition their response to effectiveness. Accountability could instead influence trust directly or operate through perceived fairness and legitimacy. [1], [17], [38]

For public-sector human resource management, the findings imply that investigator development should integrate technical, service, and relational competencies. Technical training remains necessary because effectiveness strongly influences satisfaction and trust. Yet communication skills, respectful interaction, complaint responsiveness, ethical judgment, and consistency are also essential because citizens interpret performance through interpersonal encounters. Human resource systems that reward only case completion may therefore underinvest in the capabilities required to produce public cooperation. [3], [28], [29], [31]

Supervisory systems can operationalize this insight by combining conventional investigative performance measures with citizen-facing indicators. Examples include clarity of case information, timeliness of updates, perceived respect, confidence in confidentiality, confidence in investigator integrity, and willingness to provide future assistance. Such a balanced measurement architecture would help managers detect situations in which technical output improves while relational confidence remains stagnant. [10], [15], [24]

The results are also relevant to evidence-based community policing. Community cooperation should not be approached only as a communication campaign asking citizens to assist police. Cooperation is more sustainable when citizens have reasons to trust the institution that requests their assistance. Therefore, outreach programs should be linked to the quality of investigative encounters. Positive community messaging cannot compensate for inconsistent follow-up, unclear procedures, or experiences that weaken confidence. [12], [18], [24]

In the Konawe context, the practical sequence suggested by the model is clear: strengthen investigator effectiveness, ensure that effective work is experienced by citizens as satisfactory service, deliberately convert positive experiences into trust through consistency and transparency, and then reduce barriers to cooperation. This sequence is more precise than a generic recommendation to improve police performance because it identifies the mechanism through which performance becomes socially useful. [1], [38]

Finally, the study illustrates why null findings are theoretically valuable. The unsupported direct effectiveness-to-cooperation path, unsupported satisfaction-to-cooperation path, and unsupported accountability interaction prevent an overly simple narrative in which every positive institutional attribute automatically increases cooperation. Instead, the findings identify trust as the pivotal mechanism. This sharper specification provides a stronger basis for future replication across policing functions, regions, and types of citizen contact. [25], [34], [39]

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that investigator effectiveness is important for public trust and public satisfaction but does not automatically generate public cooperation. Effectiveness significantly increased trust and satisfaction, while its direct effect on cooperation was not significant. Satisfaction strengthened trust but did not directly predict cooperation. Trust, in contrast, was a significant and substantial predictor of cooperation.

The mediation results clarify the mechanism. Satisfaction successfully transmitted the effect of effectiveness to trust, whereas it did not transmit effectiveness to cooperation. Trust significantly mediated the effectiveness–cooperation relationship. These findings position trust as the critical relational bridge through which effective investigative work becomes voluntary citizen cooperation.

Accountability did not significantly moderate the relationship between effectiveness and cooperation. The finding does not negate the importance of accountability; rather, it indicates that accountability did not operate as the proposed boundary condition in this sample. For investigative management, the central implication is that technical effectiveness should be accompanied by service experiences and relational practices that make citizens confident enough to participate. Building cooperation therefore requires moving from performance, to satisfaction, to trust, and ultimately to citizen engagement.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Ade Heryanto Saputra: Conceptualization, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft. **Sudirman Zaid:** Supervision, methodology, validation, writing—review and editing. **Yusuf:** Methodology, validation, writing—review and editing. **Wahyuniati Hamid:** Supervision, interpretation, writing—review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study used survey responses from adult community members with prior investigative-service interactions.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to confidentiality and applicable institutional requirements.

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