Legitimacy and Administrative Reform: A Systematic Review of the Public Administration Literature

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ABSTRACT: Public administration reforms (PARs) are frequently justified by the expectation that they will enhance citizens' trust in government and strengthen the legitimacy of political and administrative institutions. Yet, despite decades of scholarly and policy attention, systematic, comparative, and empirical evidence on the relationship between PARs and citizens' perceptions of legitimacy remains limited. This paper presents a systematic literature review of empirical studies examining how administrative reforms influence legitimacy perceptions, following PRISMA reporting standards. The review synthesizes findings from diverse reform contexts to assess whether and under what conditions such reforms bolster political trust and perceived legitimacy. By mapping the scope, direction, and conditionality of observed effects, the study identifies key evidence gaps and conceptual ambiguities.