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The Influence of Community Participation and Government Transparency on Policy Quality in the Bengkulu City Government

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of public participation and government transparency on the quality of public policy at the Governor's Office of Bengkulu City. A quantitative associative approach was used, with data collected from 63 civil servants through questionnaires and document analysis. The results show that both public participation and government transparency significantly affect policy quality, both partially and simultaneously. Citizen involvement in policy planning and evaluation increases the relevance and legitimacy of policy decisions. Transparency, through open access to information and accountability mechanisms, enhances public trust and policy effectiveness. The study is limited by its focus on civil servant respondents, without including perspectives from the general public. Therefore, it is recommended that the local government strengthen participatory mechanisms and digital transparency systems to support more inclusive, accountable, and high-quality policymaking.

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Introduction

The phenomenon observed within the Governor's Office of Bengkulu Province reveals a substantial gap between expectations and reality. According to a report issued by the Bengkulu Provincial Information Commission (2023), only 32% of regional development planning documents are publicly accessible, while merely 28% of citizens believe they are involved in the formulation of regional development policies. This situation increases the likelihood of public resistance to government policies and heightens the risk of public dissatisfaction.

The primary issue addressed in this study is the limited level of community participation and the lack of government transparency in the policy-making process within the Governor's Office of Bengkulu Province, which ultimately affects the quality of public policies. On the one hand, members of the public perceive that their views are rarely incorporated substantively into the formulation of strategic regional programs. On the other hand, the limited disclosure of policy-related information restricts the public's ability to exercise social oversight over the provincial government.

Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* provides an important conceptual framework for this study. Arnstein distinguishes between symbolic participation and substantive participation, arguing that substantive participation represents a level of public involvement that has a meaningful influence on public decision-making. Meanwhile, Hood's (2006) theory of government transparency emphasizes the importance of providing relevant, accurate, and timely information to the public in order to strengthen public oversight and enhance bureaucratic accountability.

Numerous previous studies have highlighted the importance of these two variables. Sukoco (2016) found that public accountability, community participation, and government transparency significantly influence the effectiveness of budget oversight and the quality of public policy in Malang City. Similarly, Putra, Ardhiarisca, and Wijayanti (2018) demonstrated that public information disclosure in Indonesia has a significant impact on public trust and the effectiveness of e-government implementation.

Furthermore, Yunas (2017), in a study examining the implementation of the E-Musrenbang system in Surabaya City, found that low levels of community participation negatively affected the accuracy of regional development priority setting. Likewise, Rokhman (2023), in his study on water resource management, concluded that higher levels of transparency and community participation are directly associated with more successful policy implementation in the environmental sector. These findings reinforce the premise that public participation and government transparency contribute positively to improving the quality of regional policies.

Despite these findings, a significant research gap remains. Previous studies have predominantly focused on large urban areas or specific policy sectors, such as environmental management and public budgeting. Only a limited number of studies have specifically examined the simultaneous influence of community participation and government transparency on policy quality at the provincial government level, particularly in developing regions such as Bengkulu Province. This gap provides a strong justification for conducting the present study.

The urgency of this research is further underscored by the Bengkulu Provincial Government's ongoing efforts to accelerate bureaucratic reform as part of the national reform agenda. Without robust empirical evidence regarding the influence of community participation and government transparency on policy quality, bureaucratic reform initiatives may fail to achieve meaningful progress in improving public service delivery and regional development.

This study focuses on three principal dimensions: community participation, encompassing participation in policy planning, implementation, and evaluation; government transparency, including information accessibility, openness in decision-making processes, and accountability in public reporting; and policy quality, measured through policy relevance to community needs, implementation effectiveness, and program accountability.

The scope of this research is limited to organizational units within the Governor's Office of Bengkulu Province that are directly involved in the formulation and implementation of strategic public policies. The study employs a quantitative research approach. Data will be collected through questionnaires administered to public service users and provincial government officials, complemented by document analysis of regional planning and policy implementation documents.

Method

Before proceeding with further data analysis, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the questionnaire items were appropriate and capable of accurately measuring the research variables.

Prior to performing multiple linear regression analysis, the data were tested to ensure that they met the classical assumption requirements, including:

Normality Test, using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov or Shapiro–Wilk test.

Multicollinearity Test, assessed through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values.

Heteroscedasticity Test, examined using a scatterplot or the Glejser test.

Subsequently, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to examine the influence of the independent variables—Community Participation (X_1) and Government Transparency (X_2)—on the dependent variable, Policy Quality (Y).

The multiple linear regression model is expressed as follows:

$$[Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + e]$$

Where:

Y = Policy Quality

a = Regression constant (intercept)

$\mathbf{b_1}$ = Regression coefficient for Community Participation (X_1)

$\mathbf{b_2}$ = Regression coefficient for Government Transparency (X_2)

$\mathbf{X_1}$ = Community Participation

$\mathbf{X_2}$ = Government Transparency

e = Error term.

Results and Discussion

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the significance of the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. This analysis determines how changes in the independent variables, whether increases or decreases, influence the dependent variable. Based on the results of the analysis, the proposed hypotheses can be accepted or rejected.

Table 1. Results of the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.209	1.762	—	0.686	0.495
Community Participation	0.488	0.103	0.452	4.742	0.000
Government Transparency	0.473	0.091	0.493	5.172	0.000

Dependent Variable: Policy Quality

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics Version 22 Output

Based on the regression results, the estimated multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$[Y = 1.209 + 0.488X_1 + 0.473X_2 + e]$$

Where:

Y = Policy Quality

$\mathbf{X_1}$ = Community Participation

$\mathbf{X_2}$ = Government Transparency

1.209 = Regression constant

0.488 = Regression coefficient for Community Participation

0.473 = Regression coefficient for Government Transparency

e = Error term

The results indicate that both Community Participation and Government Transparency have positive regression coefficients, suggesting that improvements in either variable are associated with an increase in Policy Quality. Furthermore, both variables are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that Community Participation and Government Transparency each have a significant positive effect on Policy Quality.

Partial Significance Test (*t*-Test)

Table 2. Results of the Partial Significance (*t*) Test

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	*t*	Sig.
(Constant)	1.209	1.762	—	0.686	0.495
Community Participation	0.488	0.103	0.452	4.742	0.000
Government Transparency	0.473	0.091	0.493	5.172	0.000

Dependent Variable: Policy Quality

Based on the results presented in Table 4.17, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Effect of Community Participation on Policy Quality

The Community Participation variable produced a calculated *t*-value of 4.742, which is greater than the critical *t*-value of 1.671 (*t*calculated > *t*table). In addition, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating that Community Participation has a positive and statistically significant effect on Policy Quality.

Effect of Government Transparency on Policy Quality

The Government Transparency variable yielded a calculated *t*-value of 5.172, which also exceeds the critical *t*-value of 1.671. Furthermore, the significance value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 threshold. Consequently, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, demonstrating that Government Transparency has a positive and statistically significant effect on Policy Quality.

Model Feasibility Test (*F*-Test)

The F-test was conducted to evaluate the overall significance and goodness-of-fit of the multiple linear regression model. Specifically, the test determines whether the independent variables—Community Participation and Government Transparency—collectively have a significant effect on the dependent variable, Policy Quality. The results of the F-test are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Model Feasibility (*F*) Test

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	854.374	2	427.187	123.487	0.000
Residual	207.562	60	3.459	—	—
Total	1,061.937	62	—	—	—

Dependent Variable: Policy Quality

Predictors: (Constant), Government Transparency, Community Participation

Based on the results shown in Table 3, the regression model produced an F-value of 123.487 with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000. Since the significance value is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted.

These findings indicate that Community Participation and Government Transparency simultaneously have a positive and statistically significant effect on Policy Quality. Therefore, the multiple linear regression model is statistically significant and appropriate for explaining variations in Policy Quality. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, indicating that the independent variables jointly contribute significantly to the quality of public policy within the Governor's Office of Bengkulu Province.

Discussion

The Effect of Community Participation on Policy Quality

The first hypothesis proposed in this study states that community participation has a significant effect on policy quality. Community participation plays a crucial role in the formulation of public policies, as the inclusion of citizens' aspirations encourages policymakers to develop policies that better address public needs. The findings indicate that community participation has a positive and statistically significant effect on policy quality. Public involvement in decision-making, whether directly or indirectly through representative institutions that channel citizens' aspirations, contributes positively to the policy-making process. Such participation is founded upon the principles of freedom of association, freedom of expression, and constructive civic engagement. These findings suggest that the higher the level of community participation, the higher the quality of the resulting policies. Therefore, the first hypothesis is supported.

These findings are consistent with Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, which argues that meaningful public participation extends beyond symbolic involvement and enhances the legitimacy, accuracy, and effectiveness of public policies. Community

participation constitutes a fundamental element of democratic governance and represents one of the core principles of good governance. Within the context of the Governor's Office of Bengkulu Province, these results indicate that citizens have been involved through forums such as the Development Planning Deliberation (Musrenbang), public consultations, and other mechanisms for expressing public aspirations. Nevertheless, the quality and depth of public participation still require further improvement.

The findings of this study also reinforce those of Wulandari (2020), who concluded that public participation is positively associated with policy relevance and responsiveness to community needs. Similarly, Fitriyah and Budiarto (2021) found that citizen involvement in policy formulation contributes to more effective and sustainable policy implementation.

The Effect of Government Transparency on Policy Quality

The second hypothesis proposed that government transparency has a significant effect on policy quality. The results demonstrate that government transparency has a positive and statistically significant influence on policy quality. This finding implies that the higher the level of government transparency, the higher the perceived quality of public policies among civil servants responsible for policy implementation. Accordingly, the second hypothesis is supported.

Government transparency encompasses the openness of policy information, the disclosure of accountability reports, and public access to decision-making processes. Hood's (1991) Transparency Theory argues that transparency strengthens social control, enhances public trust, and reduces the likelihood of policy deviations and administrative misconduct.

The findings are consistent with those of Yuliana and Wibowo (2020), who reported that public information transparency enhances government accountability and improves the quality of policy outcomes. In the present study, transparency also includes easy access to digital information, the publication of draft policies, and public confidence in the credibility of government data.

Nevertheless, the transparency dimension still faces several challenges, particularly regarding accountability. Although accountability mechanisms have been established, they have not yet been fully implemented through real-time reporting systems that are readily accessible to the public. This finding highlights that transparency extends beyond merely providing information; it also requires clear decision-making processes and comprehensive accountability for policy outcomes.

The Simultaneous Effect of Community Participation and Government Transparency on Policy Quality

The third hypothesis proposed that community participation and government transparency simultaneously influence policy quality. The results reveal that 79.8% of the variation in policy quality is explained jointly by community participation and government transparency. Community participation plays a vital role in public policy formulation by ensuring that citizens' aspirations are incorporated into government decision-making,

thereby improving policy quality. Likewise, government transparency represents one of the fundamental principles of good governance, indicating that greater transparency contributes to higher-quality public policies.

These findings suggest that community participation and government transparency should not be viewed as independent factors but rather as complementary dimensions that jointly contribute to the development of responsive, effective, and citizen-oriented public policies. This conclusion supports the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) framework on good governance, which identifies participation and transparency as two of the nine fundamental principles of effective governance.

When citizens are actively involved in the policy-making process and government decision-making is conducted transparently, policy quality is likely to improve through stronger public support, more accurate information, and enhanced public oversight, thereby reducing the risk of policy failure or deviation. Furthermore, these processes foster greater public trust in government institutions and strengthen the legitimacy of public administration.

Conclusion

Community participation has a positive and statistically significant effect on policy quality. The findings indicate that the greater the level of community involvement in the policy formulation and implementation processes, the higher the perceived quality of public policies. Community participation includes information sharing, public consultation, and active involvement in decision-making forums. These results suggest that policies developed based on public aspirations are more readily accepted, more effectively implemented, and more responsive to the needs of the community.

Government transparency also has a positive and statistically significant effect on policy quality. Governments that provide open access to information, disclose accountability reports, and ensure transparent policy procedures are more likely to enhance perceptions of policy quality. Transparency promotes accountability, strengthens public trust, and minimizes the risk of errors or deviations throughout the policy-making process.

Community participation and government transparency simultaneously have a significant effect on policy quality. The results of the F-test indicate that these two variables jointly explain 68.4% of the variation in policy quality. This finding confirms that high-quality public policies are determined not only by internal technical and administrative factors but also by meaningful public participation and transparency throughout the policy-making process.

This study supports the principles of good governance, which identify participation and transparency as two fundamental pillars of effective governance. The findings are also consistent with previous studies emphasizing that public trust, policy effectiveness, and governmental legitimacy are strongly influenced by the quality of interaction between government institutions and the public.

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