

Community Welfare in Medan City Government: The Role of Accountability, Transparency, and Apparatus Performance

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Abstract: This study aims to analyse the role of accountability, transparency, and performance of the apparatus in improving community welfare in Medan City. Using Public Policy Theory as an analytical framework, this study explores how policies taken by local governments affect the results achieved, especially in the context of community welfare. The methodology used in this study is a survey approach with data collection through questionnaires distributed to Medan City government employees. The research sample consisted of 130 government employees and was analysed using the Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique. The study results show that high accountability can increase public trust in the government, contributing to improved welfare. In addition, transparency in fund management and policy is essential to ensure adequate access to information for the public to participate in decision-making. The performance of government officials also functions as a crucial moderation variable. Good performance can strengthen the relationship between accountability, transparency, and public welfare. This study recommends the need to evaluate and improve the fund management system and welfare programs, as well as increase the capacity of government officials through training and competency development. With this holistic approach, it is hoped that development programs can significantly impact community welfare and build public trust in the government.

Keywords: Accountability, transparency, performance of the apparatus and public welfare.

INTRODUCTION

The community's welfare in Medan City is essential for the local government; to improve welfare, the Medan City Government has implemented various development programs that aim to meet the community's basic needs, such as education, health, and infrastructure (Astari & Nasution, 2024). Bakhtiar, (2021) the effectiveness of these programs is highly dependent on accountability and transparency in fund management and the performance of government apparatus. Research shows that accountability in fund management can positively impact community welfare, as revealed by Diansari et al., (2023), who stated that accountability in village fund allocation affects community welfare (Mani & Nugraeni, 2024). Accountability in managing public funds in Medan is the key to ensuring that the allocated resources are used effectively and efficiently (Purba et al., 2023). When local governments can clearly account for the use of funds, the public will have more confidence in the programs being implemented (Olowu & Smoke, 1992). This is in line with the research Dika, (2022) which states that the accountability of village fund allocation management impacts community welfare. Fox, (2015) with accountability, the community can see tangible results from the programs implemented, thereby increasing their trust and participation.

Transparency is also an essential factor in improving people's welfare (Kosack & Fung, 2014). The Medan city government needs to ensure that information on using funds and implementing development programs is accessible to the public (Chaniago et al., 2024). Miller, (1974) Lack of clarity can cause suspicion and dissatisfaction among the public. Research by Kim & Lee, (2012) shows that transparency in fund management can increase public trust in the government, which in turn can encourage active community participation in development programs. The performance of government apparatus as a moderating variable also plays a vital role in determining the success of welfare programs (Gao & Hafsi, 2015). Apparatus with good performance will be able to carry out the program more effectively and responsively to the community's needs (Korten, 1980). Research by Ebrahim, (2003) emphasizes t

hat high apparatus performance can strengthen the relationship between accountability and community welfare. Lubis, (2024) in the city of Medan, the challenge faced is that there are still reports of low performance of the apparatus in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, which can hinder the achievement of welfare goals.

One of the striking cases in Medan City is the social assistance program that is often not on target (Tarigan et al., 2017). Torbjornsen et al., (2024) people who should receive assistance do not get access, while those who do not need it are often recipients. This shows problems with accountability and transparency in managing social assistance programs. Research by Speer, (2012) revealed that public dissatisfaction with social assistance programs can be reduced if the government increases accountability and transparency in its implementation. To overcome this problem, the Medan city government needs to evaluate and improve the fund management system and welfare programs. Increasing the capacity of the government apparatus through training and competency development is also necessary so that they can better carry out their duties (Susanto, 2024). In addition, involving the community in planning and monitoring programs can increase accountability and transparency and ensure that the community's needs implement the programs (Waddington et al., 2019). Thus, to improve the welfare of the people in Medan City, a synergy between accountability, transparency, and the performance of the government apparatus is needed. Through this holistic approach, it is hoped that development programs can significantly positively impact community welfare and build public trust in the government. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken and identify best practices in managing funds and welfare programs in the City of Medan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Policy Theory

Public Policy Theory has evolved since the early 20th century, when the focus was on efficiency in government management and the separation between politics and administration, with figures such as Woodrow Wilson contributing to this thinking (Dwight & Hugh, 2017). In the 1950s and 1960s, a systematic approach began to be applied in policy analysis, with scientists such as George Edwards III and David Easton introducing the systems model (John, 2013). Ridde, (2009) the 1970s saw the emergence of a critical approach that highlighted issues of power and interest, while the 1980s and 1990s introduced network theory and the concept of "multiple streams" by Kingdon. Entering the 21st century, the theory continues to adapt, focusing on global issues and emphasising community participation and policy impact evaluation, reflecting the evolution of thinking about policy making, implementation, and assessment in an ever-changing social, political, and economic context (Howlett, 2019).

Public Policy Theory can be applied in research on managing fund allocation in the Medan City Government, focusing on its impact on community welfare (Golden & Min, 2013). In this context, this theory provides a framework to analyse how the policies taken by local governments affect the results achieved, especially in terms of community welfare (Douglas, 2005). Mejía Acosta, (2013) good public policy must be able to answer the community's needs and provide tangible benefits, so it is essential to evaluate how government officials' accountability, transparency, and performance play a role in implementing these policies. Mulgan, (2000) accountability refers to the government's obligation to account for the public's use of funds and decisions. In the context of Medan City, high accountability can increase public trust in the government, improving welfare (Sihombing, 2024). On the other hand, transparency is related to the disclosure of information regarding the management of funds and the policies taken (Fung, 2014). Meijer et al., (2018) with transparency, the public can more easily access information and participate in decision-making, strengthening the positive impact on welfare.

The performance of the government apparatus as a moderating variable is also critical in this study. Good performance of government apparatuses can strengthen the relationship between accountability, transparency, and public welfare. Nasution et al., (2024) if government officials can implement policies effectively and efficiently, the positive impact of these policies on people's welfare will be more visible. On the other hand, if the performance of the apparatus is low, then despite high accountability and transparency, a positive impact on the community's welfare may not be achieved (Rostami & Salehi, 2024). Using Public Policy Theory, this research can provide deeper insights into how these factors affect the community's welfare in Medan City. It is expected to give recommendations for local governments on formulating policies that are more effective and responsive to the community's needs and increase accountability and transparency in the management of public funds. This aligns with research showing that good and accountable policies can significantly improve people's welfare.

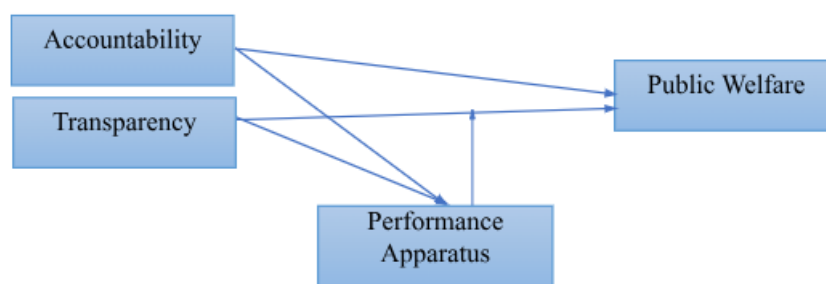


Figure 1. Research model

Accountability and transparency support each other in improving the performance of government apparatus (Mahmud & Hamson, 2020). Armstrong, (2005) accountability requires officials to hold their actions accountable to the public, while transparency ensures that information about policies and the use of resources is accessible to the public. Both encourage the apparatus to work more ethically and responsibly because their performance will be supervised (Falender & Shafranske, 2007). Transparency increases public understanding of the government process, increasing public trust (Afiyah, 2024). With the increase in trust, public participation in the government has also increased. Overall, this combination contributes to improved performance and quality of public services. Accountability reflects the government's responsibility and transparency in carrying out its duties, enabling effective budget management, targeted policy planning, and implementing programs oriented to the community's needs (Shkabatur, 2012). High accountability provides benefits through better access to public services, adequate infrastructure, and targeted social assistance (Ringold et al., 2011a). Conversely, low accountability can lead to misuse of resources, program inefficiencies, and a decrease in public trust in the government, which hurts people's welfare (G. Miller, 2000). Dawes, (2010) transparency, as a principle of openness in government management, allows the public to access information related to policies and work programs. Kolstad & Wiig, (2009) with transparency, public resources can be used efficiently, and the public can monitor government performance, reducing the risk of corruption. Grimmelikhuisen, (2010) transparency also increases public trust and participation in planning and decision-making. Lack of openness hinders effective public programs and lowers public trust, leading to declining quality of life, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H1. *Accountability has a positive impact on performance of the apparatus*
- H2. *Accountability has a positive impact on public welfare*
- H3. *The performance of the apparatus has a positive impact on public welfare*
- H4. *Transparency has a positive impact on performance of the apparatus*
- H5. *Transparency has a positive impact on public welfare*

However, the relationship between transparency and community welfare is greatly influenced by the performance of the apparatus as a moderating variable. High-performing apparatus plays an essential role in ensuring that the principle of transparency is not only limited to providing information but is also applied in concrete actions to improve the quality of services and development (Kirchmer, 2017). Good apparatus performance allows for more practical information management, more accurate policy implementation, and quick problem-solving, thereby increasing the impact of transparency on public welfare (Lathrop, D., & Ruma, 2010). On the other hand, if the performance of the apparatus is low, despite the high level of transparency, the implementation of policies and programs may not run optimally, reducing the impact on the community's welfare (Sanchez-Garcia et al., 2024). Incompetent or less dedicated officials can hinder the effectiveness of transparency, such as in distributing public services or budget allocation (Alessandro et al., 2021). Therefore, transparency and apparatus performance interact dynamically, where good apparatus performance strengthens the impact of openness on the welfare of the community, making the combination of the two an essential pillar in effective governance, we hypothesize the following:

METHODOLOGY

Data collection is carried out through a survey approach with a questionnaire filled out by yourself as a forum to collect all the information needed. The population of this study is the Medan City government, with sample respon

dents consisting of employees/apparatus. The sample consisted of Medan city government employees/apparatus. Thus, they are the most appropriate respondents for the questionnaire. The population of this study consists of local governments. Using the judgemental sampling technique, a total of 141 questionnaires were distributed, with 130 questionnaires returning. The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was used for data analysis. PLS also makes it easier for researchers to respond to a series of interrelated research questions in the proposed model by modelling relationships between multiple constructs (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Questions that measure variables are based on established measurements obtained from previous research. Public welfare (PW), Accountability (AC), Transparency (TR) and Government Apparatus (GA). PW, AC, TR and GP, all items are graded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Result and discussion

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographics	Classification	Respondents	
		n	%
Gender	Man	57	43.85%
	Female	73	56.15%
Age	< 30 years	16	12.30%
	31-40 years	57	43.84%
	41-50 years	37	28.46%
	51-60 years	19	14.61%
	> 61 years	1	0.76%
Education	Senior High School	8	6.15%
	Diploma I	1	0.76%
	Diploma III	7	5.38%
	Bachelor's degree	47	36.15%
	Master's Degree	67	51.53%
	PhD's Degree	3	2.30%
Working experience	< 5 years	15	11.53%
	6-10 years	9	6.92%
	11-15 years	30	23.07%
	16 -20 years	42	32.30%
	> 21 years	34	26.15%
Status	Married	106	81.53%
	No Married	24	18.46%

	Hypotheses	Original sample	Sample mean	SD	P values	Conclusion
AC -> GA	H1	0.350	0.350	0.078	0.000	Supported
AC -> PW	H2	0.031	0.029	0.027	0.245	No Supported
GA -> PW	H3	0.934	0.936	0.018	0.000	Supported
TRS -> GA	H4	0.170	0.180	0.075	0.024	Supported
TRS -> PW	H5	-0.001	0.001	0.022	0.958	No Supported
GA x TRS -> PW	H6	0.061	0.058	0.025	0.014	Supported
AC -> GA -> PW	H7	0.327	0.327	0.073	0.000	Supported
TRS -> GA -> PW	H8	0.159	0.169	0.070	0.025	Supported

The results of Hypothesis 1 show that accountability significantly affects the apparatus performance, by encouraging transparency, efficiency, and integrity. Through reporting and evaluation mechanisms, accountability ensures that the apparatus works professionally, increases public trust, and prevents deviations (Olsen, 2013), with clear resp

onsibilities, the apparatus is more motivated to achieve measurable results and use resources optimally (Spekle & Verbeeten, 2014). Accountability also increases job satisfaction and enthusiasm to provide the best results, strengthens integrity, and supports efficiency and productivity in achieving organizational goals (Saban et al., 2020). This study also concluded that no supporting H2, accountability that has no effect on the welfare of the public shows the ineffectiveness of its implementation. While it is supposed to ensure efficient resource management, accountability can fail to improve well-being if there are problems such as low transparency, weak oversight, or policies that are not on target (Mejía Acosta, 2013). As a result, even though the apparatus is responsible, the impact of the policy is not felt by the community (Herbert, 2005). Jamali et al., (2008) this emphasizes the importance of synergy between accountability and policies that focus on the needs of the public.

This study also supports H3 which proves that the performance of the apparatus has a significant effect on the welfare of the public because they are the implementers of government policies and programs. The professionalism, efficiency, and result-orientation of the apparatus ensure that the needs of the community are met, such as in public services, health, education, and infrastructure (Moshebi, 2002). Stiglitz et al., (2009) optimal apparatus performance also reflects the targeted use of state resources, which ultimately improves the quality of life of the community and encourages economic growth. (Marshall, 1965) The success of the apparatus in their duties is very important for the welfare of the community. Transparency does have a significant influence on the performance of government apparatus (H4). Lourenço, (2015) with openness, relevant information about government policies, budgets, and processes can be accessed by the public, which has the potential to increase accountability and supervision of the actions of government officials. This encourages government employees to work more efficiently, honestly, and responsibly because they know that their actions are being watched by society (Collier & Esteban, 2007).

Transparency may not support the welfare of the community (H5 results), this can be due to government policies that are ineffective or on target (van Oorschot, 2002). McCreddie & Rice, (1999) the public may also have difficulty accessing or understanding the information available. Kandachar & Halme, (2017) in addition, deep social and economic problems, such as poverty, cannot be solved with transparency alone. Despite the transparency, without real action to improve living conditions, the desired changes will not occur (McGee & Gaventa, 2011). Transparency must be supported by good policies and concrete steps to improve people's welfare (Kosack & Fung, 2014). Without it, the welfare of the community remains difficult to achieve.

The performance of the apparatus as a moderating variable makes transparency have a more significant impact on the welfare of the community (H6). Transparency allows access to open information, but its effect depends on the performance of the apparatus (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010). Blackman et al., (2012) high-performing apparatus can use transparency to optimize decision-making and improve public services. On the other hand, if the performance of the apparatus is low, transparency alone is not enough to have a real impact (Ciborra, 2005). Good apparatus performance strengthens the relationship between openness and public welfare by creating better quality public policies and services (Pananrangi et al., 2024).

Accountability mediates the relationship between apparatus performance and public welfare (H7), Berry & Rondinelli, (1998) ensuring that apparatuses are responsible for their duties and encouraging them to work more efficiently and effectively. When apparatus performance is reasonable and supported by clear accountability, policies and programs implemented will be more targeted, thereby improving public welfare (Ringold et al., 2011b). Ebrahim, (2003) accountability ensures that the results of apparatus performance benefit the community. The last consequence of H8 is that transparency mediates the relationship between apparatus performance and public welfare by providing information on policies, budgets, and program implementation that is open to the public. When the apparatus performs well, and the information is transparent, the public can monitor and participate in decision-making (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010). Transparency encourages apparatus to work more efficiently and responsibly, which improves the quality of public services and policies that positively impact public welfare (Joshi, 2013; Kosack & Fung, 2014).

Conclusion

The study results show that accountability significantly affects the performance of the apparatus by encouraging transparency, efficiency, and integrity but does not always impact public welfare if its implementation is ineffective. Transparency also plays a role in improving the performance of the apparatus through public supervision, but its

effects on welfare depend on the right policies and concrete steps. Good apparatus performance significantly affects public welfare by ensuring that public needs are met through efficient services and measurable results. In addition, apparatus performance moderates the impact of transparency on public welfare by optimizing decision-making and service quality. Accountability and transparency mediate the relationship between apparatus performance and public welfare by creating better policies and more responsible services. This combination is essential to improve the community's quality of life in a sustainable manner.

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