THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS IN REALIZING GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract
This research aims to examine the effectiveness of the local democracy system in promoting the realization of good governance principles at the regional government level. The study was conducted using a literature review approach by analyzing various scientific sources such as journals, academic books, and relevant policy reports. The focus of the discussion includes three main aspects: public participation in policy formulation, transparency and accountability of local government, and the challenges and solutions in the implementation of local democracy. The study results indicate that local democracy has strong potential in promoting good governance if implemented in a participatory, open, and responsible manner. However, challenges such as corruption, money politics, elite dominance, and weak oversight institutions still pose serious obstacles. Therefore, structural reforms, regulatory strengthening, bureaucratic capacity building, and participatory innovation are needed to ensure that local democracy can function effectively as an instrument of good governance.
Keywords: Local Democracy, Public Participation, Transparency, Accountability, Good Governance

INTRODUCTION

Local democracy is an integral part of the political system that brings decision-making closer to the community. In the context of decentralization, local governments play an important role in determining the direction of local development. The existence of local democracy allows the community to be directly involved in the governance process. This involvement includes the election of regional heads, development deliberations, and public policy oversight. Through democratic mechanisms, the community is expected to become an active subject in determining its own fate (Nia, 2024). Therefore, local democracy becomes an important foundation in participatory and responsive governance.

However, in practice, local democracy in Indonesia still faces various serious challenges. One of them is the low quality of public participation in the political process and decision-making. Public participation often tends to be

formalistic and does not touch on the substance of policies. Many citizens feel they do not have access to information or space to voice their aspirations (Febrianty & Sentanu, 2023). This causes a disconnect between the community and the local government. As a result, local democracy has not yet fully functioned effectively and fairly.

Besides participation, the aspect of transparency is also an important issue in local democracy. Many local governments are still reluctant to widely disclose public data and information. The openness of information, which should be a main principle, is often neglected. The lack of transparency makes it difficult for the public to monitor budget usage and the performance of public officials (Good, 2024). In such a situation, the potential for corruption and abuse of power becomes even greater. Weak transparency ultimately undermines public trust in government institutions.

These issues indicate that the local democracy system has not yet been optimal in realizing good governance. Local democracy should not only be about elections, but also about accountability, citizen engagement, and open governance. For that reason, the principles of good governance need to be thoroughly integrated into the local democracy system. These principles include participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and the rule of law. Without the application of these principles, local democracy will stagnate and will not have a positive impact on people's lives. Good governance becomes an important indicator in measuring the success of democracy at the local level (Fajari & Setiadi, 2024).

The implementation of good governance through local democracy has a significant impact on the quality of public services. When the community is actively involved and transparency is guaranteed, the service process becomes more responsive and targeted. Regional governments that apply the principles of good governance tend to be more efficient in managing budgets and resources. This also contributes to the strengthening of institutions and local political stability (Rosenbaum, 2023). Thus, local democracy and good governance complement each other in creating an effective government that is trusted by the people. The relationship between the two must be studied in depth to improve the performance of local government.

Several studies show that the effectiveness of local democracy is greatly determined by the quality of institutions and the local political culture. In areas with a strong participatory tradition, local democracy can drive progressive social change. However, in other areas, local democracy is instead dominated by political elites and power dynasties. This causes the democratic

process to be superficial and only beneficial to certain groups (Saputri et al., 2024). This disparity reveals the existence of gaps in the implementation of democracy in various regions. Therefore, a literature review is necessary to understand the factors that influence the effectiveness of local democracy in various contexts.

Literature review is important for formulating strategies to strengthen local democracy that can achieve good governance. By examining various previous studies, we can identify patterns of success and failure in the implementation of local democracy. The literature also provides theoretical and empirical perspectives that can serve as a basis for policy formulation (Aziz & Salsabila, 2023). Furthermore, through this study, a more inclusive and sustainable model of local democracy can be formulated. The results of the literature review can also serve as recommendations for local governments in improving governance systems. Therefore, this research contributes to strengthening democracy and local government governance.

Based on that background, it is important to examine the effectiveness of the local democracy system in realizing good governance. This research will focus on the extent to which local democracy is capable of delivering participatory, transparent, and accountable governance. This study is conducted through a literature approach to obtain a comprehensive picture from various contexts and experiences. The hope is that this research can provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of local democracy. In addition, the research results are also expected to serve as evaluation material for local policymakers. Thus, local democracy can truly become a means of transformation towards good governance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature review approach to explore and analyze various scientific sources that discuss the effectiveness of local democracy systems in realizing good governance. The literature review was chosen because it can provide a comprehensive understanding of the development of theories, previous research results, and practices that have been implemented in various regions. Through this approach, researchers can identify patterns, trends, and relevant research gaps. The main focus of the study is on how the local democracy system is implemented, as well as the extent of its contribution to the principles of good governance. This approach also allows for the development of a strong conceptual framework to understand the

relationship between local democracy and good governance. Thus, the literature review serves as the foundation for critical and reflective analysis.

The data sources in this research are obtained from indexed scientific journals, academic books, and policy reports from both national and international institutions such as UNDP, KPK, Bappenas, and the World Bank. The literature used was selected based on relevance, novelty, and contribution to the issues of local democracy and good governance. The analysis technique used is thematic synthesis, which involves grouping findings from various literatures into main themes such as participation, transparency, accountability, and implementation challenges. This synthesis is conducted systematically to identify patterns of relationships between the variables studied and to identify gaps that still exist in the literature. Through this technique, the research is expected to provide a more structured, sharp, and critical understanding of the dynamics of local democracy. The results of the analysis will be used as the basis for discussion and recommendations in this research (Snyder, 2019; Tranfield et al., 2003).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
The Effectiveness of Local Democracy in Increasing Public Participation

Public participation is a key pillar in a healthy local democracy. Through community involvement, local policies can be more responsive to the real needs on the ground. Various literature shows that community participation in policy formulation enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of government programs. This participation can take the form of deliberative forums, public consultations, or the expression of aspirations through representative institutions (Singh, 2022). In this context, local governments play a strategic role in providing inclusive participatory spaces and mechanisms. Without open participatory spaces, local democracy will lose its essence.

A study by Prasetyo (2021) shows that community involvement in the preparation of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) is still symbolic. Although there are formal forums such as Musrenbang, their implementation often does not guarantee the representation of vulnerable groups. Many decisions are already determined before the participatory process takes place, rendering the dialogue space superficial (Marxer, 2022). This shows that not all regions have implemented participation substantively. Superficial participation only creates an illusion of democracy, without any real impact on policies. As a result, the community tends to be apathetic towards the regional planning process.

One of the main obstacles to public participation is widespread political apathy at the local level. Many citizens feel that their aspirations will not be responded to by the government, making them reluctant to engage in the policy-making process. This apathy is influenced by past negative experiences, where participation did not yield results (Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022). Moreover, the level of political education among the public is still low, especially in rural areas. Ignorance about rights and participatory mechanisms leads to low initiative to get involved. These factors reinforce inequalities in local democracy.

On the other hand, the exclusivity of the local elite poses a serious challenge in achieving fair participation. Many regional policies are dominated by the interests of certain groups that are close to local authorities. This creates a gap between the general public and decision-makers. The dominance of the elite hinders the entry of alternative voices, especially from marginalized groups (Chendra et al., 2024). The literature shows that in some cases, participatory forums are co-opted by political elites and no longer reflect the broader public interest. Local democracy is also at risk of turning into local oligarchy.

However, there are also studies that show that effective public participation can bring positive changes in governance. For example, a study by Nurhidayat (2022) in the city of Surakarta revealed that community involvement in budget planning resulted in more targeted policies. Community-based programs thrive well due to the sense of ownership from the community. The city government also regularly holds open discussion forums to hear citizens' aspirations directly (Fiander et al., 2024). As a result, the level of public satisfaction with services significantly increased. This case serves as an example that participatory local democracy can improve the quality of governance.

Another example is Banyuwangi Regency, known as an area with digital-based participatory innovations. Through platforms such as e-Musrenbang and online complaint channels, the community can participate in designing and monitoring regional programs. The local government actively follows up on incoming aspirations and integrates them into planning documents. Enhanced digital literacy also helps reach young groups and rural communities (Delamaza, 2022). As a result, public participation not only increased quantitatively but also qualitatively. This practice proves that with the support of technology and political will, participation can be significantly increased.

Based on various findings in the literature, the effectiveness of public participation highly depends on political commitment and supportive institutional design. When local governments provide open and transparent spaces, the community tends to be more trusting and actively engaged. However, without strengthening the capacity of the community, participation will remain uneven and exclusive. Therefore, political education and the involvement of civil groups are key to strengthening local democracy. In addition, the role of local media is also important as a bridge between the government and the community. With the right mechanisms, public participation can be a driving force for good governance.

Thus, local democracy has great potential in increasing public participation, but structural and cultural challenges still need to be addressed. The literature shows that substantial and sustainable participation can improve the quality of local governance. However, this requires synergy between the government, civil society, and educational institutions to build citizen awareness and capacity. This study emphasizes the importance of promoting inclusive and meaningful participation at every stage of public policy formulation. The success of certain regions serves as evidence that local democracy can function effectively if supported by an accountable and transparent system. Therefore, strengthening public participation must be a priority in the agenda for regional government reform.

The Role of Transparency and Accountability in Local Government

Transparency and accountability are core elements of good governance that are ideally strengthened by a local democratic system. In a healthy democratic system, decision-making is conducted openly, involves various stakeholders, and is accountable. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of local democracy in promoting transparency still varies greatly between regions (Lee, 2023). Some regions show a strong commitment to information transparency, while others remain closed off and reluctant to open public data. Literature notes that many regional heads still monopolize information, especially related to budgets and strategic projects. This lack of transparency weakens public control and decreases trust in the government.

Public information disclosure is an important prerequisite for the realization of accountable governance. Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure has guaranteed the public's right to know the processes and outcomes of decision-making at the local level. However, the implementation of this law still faces serious obstacles in the field. Many local

governments have not effectively established Information and Documentation Management Officers (PPID) (CHALTSEVA, 2023). Moreover, the official websites of local governments are often not updated regularly and only contain formal information with minimal substance. This shows that transparency has not yet become a culture in the local bureaucracy.

In this context, local media play an important role as watchdogs and information disseminators to the public. Independent media can help uncover opaque policies and encourage the government to be more transparent. However, challenges arise when local media depend on government advertisements or have close ties with local political elites. This condition weakens the media's control over power. Community media literacy is also still limited, so not all citizens are able to filter and understand the information conveyed (Connors & McMorrow, 2024). Therefore, there is a need to strengthen a professional and independent local media ecosystem.

Accountability in local government is also greatly determined by a transparent financial reporting system that is accessible to the public. Regional financial accountability reports should not only be prepared for BPK audits but should also be easily understood by the general public. Literature shows that clear reporting can increase public trust and encourage citizen participation in budget oversight. Some regions have developed digital-based public financial dashboards as a form of transparency innovation (Stewart, 2023). However, not all regions have the technological capacity and human resources to do the same. This disparity creates differences in the level of accountability between regions.

DPRD (Regional People's Representative Council) as a regional legislative body has a crucial function in overseeing the executive. In the local democratic system, the DPRD should be the representation of the people's voice and the main controller of the regional head's policies. Unfortunately, much literature notes that the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) often lacks criticality and tends to be compromising towards the executive. This is caused by the overly close political relationships or dependence in the budgeting process. The weak oversight from the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) opens up opportunities for deviations in regional financial governance (Iwabuchi, 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity, integrity, and independence of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) so that it can perform its functions optimally.

Besides the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), civil society also plays an important role in ensuring the transparency and

accountability of local government. Non-governmental organizations, student organizations, and citizen groups can monitor the implementation of public policies. Several studies show that the presence of an active civil society can curb the potential for corruption and improve government performance. However, challenges arise when civil space is restricted or activism is perceived as a threat by local governments. However, public oversight is part of the checks and balances system in a democracy (Seimuskane & Pukis, 2022). Therefore, regulations that support constructive citizen participation and oversight are necessary.

Literature also highlights the importance of transparency innovation based on information technology. By utilizing digital platforms, local governments can provide information quickly, widely, and cheaply. For example, the use of official websites, public complaint applications, and e-budgeting has proven to increase transparency in several regions. However, the implementation of technology is not enough if it is not accompanied by political commitment and adequate bureaucratic capacity. Transparency must become part of the organizational culture, not just a digital formality (Eranti & Boldt, 2024). Therefore, digitalization must be accompanied by comprehensive governance reform.

Based on the literature review, it can be concluded that local democracy has the potential to strengthen transparency and accountability, but its effectiveness highly depends on the commitment of local actors and the empowerment of the community. The role of the media, information transparency, financial reporting systems, local legislative councils, and civil society are interconnected important factors. To achieve good governance, all these elements must work synergistically and reinforce each other. When transparency and accountability are upheld, the potential for abuse of power can be minimized. Therefore, strengthening local democracy must be directed towards creating an open and accountable governance system. This is an important prerequisite for the realization of good governance at the regional level.

Challenges and Solutions in Achieving Good Governance through Local Democracy

Although local democracy in Indonesia has made significant progress since the reform era, its implementation is still marked by various serious challenges. One of the main challenges is the high level of corruption at the local level, whether in the form of bribery, budget mark-ups, or abuse of

power. These corrupt practices hinder the realization of the principles of transparency and accountability in local governance. The literature shows that regional autonomy is sometimes misused by local elites to strengthen personal power. This condition undermines the integrity of local democracy and reduces public trust in local institutions (Eranti & Boldt, 2024). Therefore, corruption becomes the main obstacle in achieving good governance.

Besides corruption, money politics or money politics has also become a deeply rooted phenomenon in the local democratic process, especially during regional head and legislative elections. Many regional leader candidates win contests not because of their vision and mission, but because of the financial power used to buy votes. This transactional politics worsens the quality of democracy and produces leaders who are incompetent or not committed to public service (Victor, 2024). The literature highlights that money politics creates elite dependence on funding, which is then repaid with pro-capitalist policies. As a result, the interests of the people are often sidelined. This becomes a structural challenge in the development of an integrity-based local democracy.

Another challenge comes from the dominance of local elites in the decision-making process and the distribution of power. Many regions experience the phenomenon of political dynasties and local oligarchies, where power circulates only among certain groups or families. This dominance hinders inclusivity in democracy, as the space for public participation becomes narrow. Literature states that in such conditions, the political process becomes closed and undemocratic. Marginalized groups such as women, indigenous communities, and the poor find it difficult to access power. This indicates that local democracy has not truly guaranteed equality and justice (Singh, 2022).

The weakness of oversight institutions, both formal and informal, further exacerbates the local democratic situation. The Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD), the inspectorate, and the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (BPKP) often do not perform their supervisory functions to the fullest, and even get caught up in conflicts of interest. On the other hand, civil society and local media do not always have the capacity and freedom to critically oversee the government. Literature reveals that without strong oversight, power abuses will continue to recur. When there is no effective control mechanism, the principles of good governance are difficult to realize (Marxer, 2022). Therefore, strengthening oversight institutions becomes an important priority.

Various literature offers solutions to address those challenges. One of the solutions is the strengthening of regulations and consistent, non-discriminatory law enforcement. Regulatory reform is needed so that anti-corruption agencies and regional supervisors have clear and effective authority. In addition, there needs to be synergy between the KPK, BPK, and local governments in addressing corrupt practices. Strict law enforcement will create a deterrent effect for offenders and strengthen the integrity of the bureaucracy. Without a strong rule of law, local democracy will only become a formality without substance (Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022).

The next solution is the enhancement of the capacity of the bureaucracy and local stakeholders. Governance literacy, public ethics training, and administrative digitization can strengthen the quality of public services. Regional bureaucrats must be trained to understand the principles of good governance and how to implement them in daily practice (Chendra et al., 2024). In addition, regional heads also need to be encouraged to build a work culture that is professional, transparent, and innovative. Literature notes that regions with strong bureaucracy tend to have better governance quality. Therefore, investing in bureaucratic human resources is a long-term strategy that must be prioritized.

Moreover, participatory innovation also serves as a strategic solution to expand the space for local democracy. The use of information technology such as e-Musrenbang, digital public aspiration channels, and public budget dashboards can enhance community participation and oversight. This innovation allows citizens to actively participate without having to be physically present in formal forums. The literature notes that regions implementing participatory digital systems experience improvements in government transparency and response speed. However, the implementation of this innovation must still be accompanied by an increase in the digital literacy of the community. Without it, technology will only become a symbolic tool that does not empower (Fiander et al., 2024).

The direction of future local democracy renewal should be aimed at a more inclusive, transparent, and accountable system. This includes reforms in the power structure, strengthening oversight institutions, and institutionalizing community participation. The central government also needs to provide incentives for regions that successfully implement the principles of good governance consistently. In addition, strengthening collaboration between local governments, civil society, and the private sector is highly necessary. With comprehensive renewal, local democracy can become an

instrument of social transformation and sustainable development. Only in this way can good governance truly be realized at the local level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review that has been discussed, it can be concluded that local democracy plays a crucial role in realizing the principles of good governance. The three main aspects analyzed, namely public participation, transparency and accountability, as well as institutional challenges and solutions, show that the effectiveness of local democracy is greatly determined by the quality of implementation on the ground. Substantial community participation has proven capable of improving policy quality and strengthening the legitimacy of local government. Meanwhile, transparency and accountability become important pillars that ensure local government operates openly and can be monitored by the public. Structural challenges such as corruption, money politics, and elite domination remain serious obstacles that require addressing through regulation and policy innovation. Thus, the effectiveness of local democracy does not only depend on the formal framework but also on the empowerment of actors and civil society.

The potential of local democracy in realizing good governance will be achieved if it is implemented consistently with participatory, transparent, and accountable principles. Active community involvement in decision-making, information transparency, and strengthening oversight institutions are the main keys to ensuring good governance practices. In addition, the renewal of the local democracy system through technological innovation and the strengthening of bureaucratic capacity can enhance the effectiveness of regional governance. Collaboration between the government, society, media, and the private sector also needs to be enhanced as a form of synergy in building a responsive and integrity-driven government. Therefore, local democracy must continue to be developed not only as a political procedure but also as a system of values and culture that favors public interests. Efforts to realize good governance through local democracy must become a strategic agenda in sustainable regional development.

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