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The role of the village government performance and transparency in influencing village public trust

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Abstract

Research aims: This research examines the effect of transparency on the village community's trust through village government performance as an intervening variable.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research was carried out using a survey method by distributing questionnaires to the village government in Jeneponto Regency, Indonesia. Totally, 196 questionnaires were filled in. Data analysis was then conducted by using Partial Least Square (PLS) approach.

Research findings: The results revealed that the performance and transparency of the village government influenced public trust. The research emphasizes that the village government's performance had an intervention role in the relationship between transparency and public trust.

Theoretical contribution/Originality: This research discovers that performance plays a role as an intervening variable between transparency and public trust in the context of a village government study.

Research limitation/Implication: The research was only conducted in the scope of Jeneponto Regency; therefore, the generalization capacity was limited.

Keywords: Transparency; Village Government Performance; Public Trust; Village Government; Intervening Variable

Introduction

The vulnerability of village fund misappropriation is a need for more transparency that causes low public trust in the government (Zakariya, 2020). In addition, the community's exclusion from the forum for village development plans, when the village head solely represents it, can further erode trust in the village government (Damayanti & Syarifuddin, 2020). Meanwhile, the dominant factor causing poor public trust in the village government is corruption scandals (Sofyani et al., 2022a). To solve this problem, transparency enhancements are urgently needed (Fard & Rostamy, 2007; Raaphorst & Van De Walle, 2018).

Trust produces public legitimacy that can create social capital and be used to obtain political support and government activities (Putra, 2017). Several village heads take advantage of public trust as social capital to be re-elected as village heads. In addition, public trust is also employed by the village government as social capital in assisting the development of the village government because collaboration between the village

government and the community based on trust impacts rapid village development (Sofyani et al., 2018).

Transparency, as one of the instruments of village government, is part of a good government management system and can enhance public trust (Sofyani et al., 2022b). Furthermore, transparency generates public trust in the government through community control and participation (Heald, 2018; Sofyani et al., 2022b; Wanusmawatie et al., 2020). However, while some research has expressed that transparency is an aspect affecting the enhancement of public trust (Beshi & Kaur, 2020; Nurrizkiana et al., 2017), some other studies, such as Sofyani et al., (2022a) and Aprilia (2019), revealed that transparency is unrelated to public trust.

The village government's performance as a mediating variable is also based on the theory used in this study, namely stakeholder theory, where the organization (village government) not only operates for its sake but also must benefit its stakeholders (community). The organization's survival also depends on stakeholder support, and this support must be sought through organizational activities (government performance).

Therefore, transparency needs to be added to village government performance as an intervening variable to cover the inconsistency of the good governance result, especially transparency towards public trust. Nevertheless, at the moment, research on transparency and the relationship between government and public trust, especially in village government, is still lacking. The most closely related research on local government was conducted by (Basri et al., 2021; Tran, 2022). Tran and La (2022) also expressed that transparency is not always a determining factor for public trust, so government performance plays a crucial role in explaining the relationship between transparency and public trust.

Until now, research on the relationship between transparency and public trust in village government, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia, is still small because studies on public trust mostly involved urban communities and rarely targeted rural communities (Pratolo et al., 2022). Also, as previously mentioned, there is still a lack of related research exploring the relationship between good governance and public trust in the context of village government (Pratolo et al., 2022). As a result, this study investigates the relationship between transparency in village governance and public trust through village government performance as an intervening variable.

Thus, eventually, the results of this research will provide practical recommendations to the village government, especially related to the factors that must be considered to enhance public trust in the village government. The results also contribute to the literature, specifically concerning the topic of village public trust in the village government, which is still limited.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Theory

Transparency is generated to overcome differences in information so that the public can assess and identify what is happening in government (Matheus & Janssen, 2020). In the context of village government, transparency is a mandatory issue since it can be linked to satisfaction and trust among the public and can be used as a tool to uphold government legitimacy that can be identified after village government reforms that result in obtaining autonomy (Sofyani et al., 2022b). In terms of transparency, the village government must demonstrate its activities through the media website, billboards, and village meetings to demonstrate a commitment to observance (Krina & Lalolo, 2003).

In this study, stakeholder theory supports the relationship between transparency, village government performance, and public trust. Freeman (1984) defines stakeholders as groups or individuals who can influence or be affected by the organization's achievement, goals, or performance. Conceptually, stakeholder theory suggests that an organization is not an entity that only operates for its sake but must also benefit its stakeholders, whose survival depends on stakeholder support, which can be sought through organizational activities (Gray et al., 1995). In accounting, stakeholder theory is closely related to providing legitimacy to stakeholders (Sofyani et al., 2022a).

As in the private sector, stakeholders can influence public managers in government organizations. For example, the community's decision on a new leader (village head) can be based on the village government's financial and non-financial performance (Sofyani et al., 2022a). Thus, instruments in the private sector also have a role in the public sector, namely transparency and budget participation as a means of exposure (Darmawati, 2019).

Transparency and village government performance

Transparency is created to overcome information gaps and enable the general people to analyze and understand what is going on in government (Matheus & Janssen, 2020). Using this policy, the public can assess and increase trust in government management. Furthermore, transparency can also facilitate the accumulation of more information within the organization (Rosman et al., 2016). Thus, transparency can influence stakeholders through information on achievement, goals, or organizational performance.

Basri et al. (2021) and Hermansyah et al. (2018) found that transparency positively affected government performance. Transparency is not limited to the act of providing information. On the other hand, transparency is an essential control instrument, especially in the organization's planning, implementing, and controlling program activities to achieve the stated goals (Hansen & Mowen, 2009; Sofyani et al., 2020). Based on the mentioned arguments, transparency positively impacts village government performance.

H₁: Transparency positively affects the village government's performance.

Village government performance and public trust

Mardiasmo (2021) defined that government performance describes the extent of the achieved goals based on the results of the activities that have been carried out. The achievement can be accomplished by providing good services and obtaining public trust (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001). It indicates that the organization's survival depends on the support of stakeholders, and the support can be found in the organization's activities (Gray et al., 1995).

The availability of relevant information can be used to develop an effective strategy or plan to support the organization in achieving its goals. According to Bouckaert & Van de Walle (2001) and Susliyanti (2020) improved government performance boosts public trust. Based on the arguments, the village government's performance positively affects public trust.

H₂: Village government performance positively affects the village public trust.

Transparency and public trust

Transparency can be a legitimate tool to satisfy the stakeholders, strengthening the organization's legitimacy to operate further (Sofyani et al., 2020). The public can assess and trust government management through transparency. In addition, transparency can also facilitate the accumulation of more information within the organization (Rosman et al., 2016). In addition, (Gray et al., 1995) suggested that the organization's survival depends on the support of stakeholders, which can be found in the organization's activities. Thus, transparency is one of the organization's activities that can be carried out to obtain public trust.

Nurrizkiana et al. (2017) expressed that government transparency practices minimize the assumption of public distrust of the government. Besides, Beshi and Kaur (2020) stated that government transparency influences public trust. Meanwhile, (Sofyani et al., 2022b) argued that transparency positively affects public trust. Based on the arguments, transparency has a positive effect on public trust.

H₃: Transparency positively affects the village public trust.

Village government performance as intervening

The village government's performance as a mediating variable is also based on the theory used in this study, namely stakeholder theory, where the organization (village government) operates not only for its sake but must also provide benefits to its stakeholders (community), and the organization's survival depends on the stakeholder support, and this support must be sought through organizational activities (government performance). Therefore, good performance will also result in good transparency,

enhancing public trust. Broadbent (2020) also suggested that one of the government's strategies to maintain public trust is to provide quality services to the community. Hence, good government performance can produce transparency, especially concerning information settlement programs, thereby enhancing public trust in the government.

Moreover, Alessandro et al. (2021) asserted that government performance could mediate the relationship between transparency and public trust. Sa'adah and Syadeli (2021) also expressed that transparency affects public trust, mediated by government performance. Based on the arguments, it is predicted that government performance will mediate the relationship between transparency and public trust.

H₄: Village government performance mediates the relationship between transparency and village public trust.

Based on the hypothesis developed, this study formulated a research model, as depicted in Figure 1.

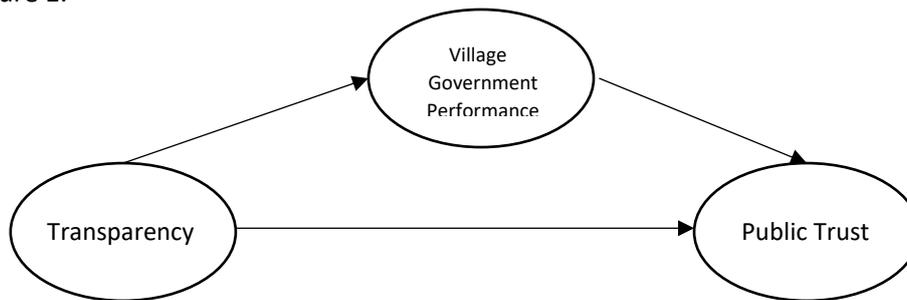


Figure 1 Research Model

Research Method

This research applied a survey method to test the proposed hypothesis. The research was carried out at the village government within the Jeneponto Regency. Jeneponto was chosen because its village governments have implemented several good governance practices, including budget participation. The sampling adopted the sample measurement method used by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) that the ideal sample size for 400 population is 196. Data collection was then carried out from October to November 2022.

The respondents in this study were members of *Badan Permusyawaratan Desa* (BPD/Village Consultative Council). They were chosen because they could represent the perceptions of the village community. After all, they consisted of figures who were considered influential, such as community leaders, religious leaders, and village youth leaders (Sofyani et al., 2022b). Departing from these arguments, the authors argue that the members of the Village Consultative Council were the right respondents. Apart from being able to represent the perceptions of the village community, it was also due to considerations of better objectivity if it did not involve village officials as respondents.

For research instruments, the transparency instrument was adapted from Krina and Lalolo (2003). In addition, studies by Mahoney et al. (1965) and Fard and Rostamy (2007) were adapted for developing measurements of village government performance and public trust. However, in this research, the study conducted by Krina and Lalolo (2003) was more considered in developing a questionnaire as it measured government transparency in Indonesia. Table 1 presents a summary of operational definitions and variable measurements.

Afterward, questionnaires were distributed directly to respondents to get a high response. To represent the sample, members of the Village Consultative Council were selected as respondents to ensure better objectivity than village officials. A total of 196 completed questionnaires could be used and analyzed further. The measurement of question items used a Likert scale, where 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree."

To test the hypothesis, data were analyzed using Partial Least Square (PLS). The research employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as a data analysis method. Thus, the SEM method applied was one based on Partial Least Square. Generally, SEM-PLS uses two stages to test the proposed model (Two-step Structural Equation Modeling). The two-stage approach in SEM-PLS is the Outer Model and Inner Model. SEM-PLS was used because Partial Least Square is good for survey-based research with analysis of latent constructs (using primary data) (Lee et al., 2011). In addition, SEM-PLS is good for research looking for exploratory relations in situations of less developed theories and/or expansion of existing theories (Hair et al., 2013). Previously, SEM-PLS has been widely used in similar research (Pratolo et al., 2022; Purnamasari et al., 2022; Sofyani et al., 2020).

Table 1 Operational definitions and measurement of variables

Variable	Operational definition	Indicators
Transparency (Krina & Lalolo, 2003)	Accountability is responsible for the results of activities, achievement of organizational goals, periodic reporting, and use of information.	1. Clear information 2. Easy access to information 3. Cooperation with the mass media
Village government performance (Mahoney et al., 1965)	Government performance consists of planning, investigating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising, staffing, negotiating, and representative in advancing the general interest of the organization.	1. Planning 2. Investigation 3. Coordinating 4. Evaluation 5. Supervision 6. Staff arrangement 7. Negotiation 8. Representative
Public trust (Fard & Rostamy, 2007)	People's trust in the government is obtained by the government's honesty to the people, eliminating prejudice of dishonesty, trust in the community without knowing each other beforehand, and the government conveys the correct conception.	1. Government honesty 2. Eliminating prejudice of dishonesty 3. Beliefs that previously did not know each other 4. Trust in society 5. Delivery of the correct conception

Results and Discussion

Before testing the hypotheses formulated, validity and reliability tests were carried out. The validity test included convergent and discriminant validity tests. The convergent validity test utilized the outer loading score. The results showed that the outer loading scores of all variable indicators were above 0.4 (See Table 2).

Table 2 Outer loading score

Variable	Indicator	Code	Loading Score
Transparency	Clear information	<i>Tran1</i>	0.746
	Easy access to information	<i>Tran2</i>	0.794
	Cooperation with the mass media	<i>Tran3</i>	0.715
Village Government Performance	Investigation	<i>VGP2</i>	0.648
	Coordinating	<i>VGP3</i>	0.742
	Evaluation	<i>VGP4</i>	0.750
	Supervision	<i>VGP5</i>	0.710
	Staff arrangement	<i>VGP6</i>	0.723
	Negotiation	<i>VGP7</i>	0.742
	Representative	<i>VGP8</i>	0.819
	Public Trust	Government honesty	<i>Trust1</i>
Eliminating prejudice of dishonesty		<i>Trust2</i>	0.795
Beliefs that previously did not know each other		<i>Trust3</i>	0.737
Trust in society		<i>Trust4</i>	0.841
Delivery of the correct conception		<i>Trust5</i>	0.697

According to Hair et al. (2017), convergent validity in this study was met. In addition, the PLS analysis revealed that the construct loading value was higher than the other constructs (see Table 3).

Table 3 Discriminant validity score

Variable	Transparency	Village Government Performance	Public trust
Transparency	0.865		
Village Government Performance	0.596	0.764	
Public Trust	0.700	0.726	0.734

It can be concluded that discriminant validity was also met. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha score of all constructs was higher than 0.6, and the Composite Reliability score for all constructs fulfilled the rules of thumb (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), as shown in Table 4. Thus, it can be inferred that all constructs met the criteria of validity and reliability so that hypothesis testing could be carried out.

Table 4 Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and AVE Score

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Transparency	0.814	0.896	0.748
Village Government Performance	0.821	0.875	0.584
Public Trust	0.856	0.890	0.538

The summary is presented in Table 5. It can be seen that transparency practices positively affected village government performance and public trust. In addition, the village government's performance could mediate the relationship between transparency and public trust. It signifies that transparency might become a challenge in obtaining public trust, so the village government should take the initiative to improve performance.

Table 5 Hypotheses test result summary

Hypothesis	Direction	Original sample	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
TR → VGP	H1 +	0.704	2.025	0.000*	Supported
VGP → CT	H2 +	0.601	2.185	0.000*	Supported
TR → CT	H3 +	0.200	2.761	0.000*	Supported
VGP → TR → CT	H4 +	0.686	1.650	0.000*	Supported

Note: TR: Transparency; VGP: Village Government Performance; CT: Public trust.
*Significant at alpha 0.01

Then, the study uncovered that village government performance mediated the relationship between transparency and public trust. Based on the mediation test, the results strengthen that good village government performance practices are essential in encouraging increased public trust. Apart from the significance value of the mediation test, which was not so strong, this variable is still vital to consider since it had a significant partial effect on public trust.

Discussion

The results confirmed that transparency positively impacted village government performance, so H1 was supported. This result aligns with Pratolo et al. (2022), Sofyani et al. (2022a), Basri et al. (2021), and Hermansyah et al. (2018). In this regard, transparency is a tool that the village government can use to obtain public trust, so the government needs to understand its role and provide good performance because the community has high expectations (Sofyani & Tahar, 2021). In addition, the developmental effect of transparency makes good performance results (Grimmelikhuisen, 2012). These findings also verify stakeholder theory, as stated by Freeman (1984), that stakeholders can be influenced by organizational performance, where the performance can be found in organization activities (Gray et al., 1995). One of the activities is transparency. This practice provides positive support for fulfilling the goals that the village government wants to achieve (Pratolo et al., 2020). Technically, the quality of government services is crucial in assembling public trust and legitimacy (Pratolo et al., 2022).

This study also supported H2 that government performance enhanced public trust. It is based on stakeholder theory, stating that the survival of an organization depends on the support of stakeholders (community), and this support must be sought through organizational activities (government performance). This statement corroborates with Bouckaert & Van de Walle (2014) that the availability of relevant information can be used to develop an effective strategy or plan to help achieve organizational goals. Technically, the village government must be able to accommodate all the community's interests, where the government can realize the community's interests through good performance in case the community believes that the government is working for them (Basri et al.,

2021). As a concrete example, disclosing the financial and non-financial performance of the village government can be the basis for village communities to trust their government (Sofyani et al., 2022a).

Furthermore, this study also reinforced H3 that transparency determined public trust. The finding is consistent with several previous studies. Sofyani and Tahar (2021) and Nurrizkiana et al. (2017) found that transparency could increase public trust and trigger them to develop the village actively. In addition, the findings can be supported because village communities that are strong in a culture of togetherness will feel valued when what the village government carried out is reported (informed) to them. Therefore, trust in the village government will also grow (Sofyani et al. 2021). Moreover, village communities have used transparency practices to determine trust in the village government (Sofyani et al., 2022b).

Additionally, the study confirmed that village government performance had an intervening role in the relationship between transparency and public trust. Thus, H4 was supported and indicates that government performance as a strategy could enhance public trust (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012). It can be based on stakeholder theory, suggesting that the organization (village government) operates not only for its sake but must also provide benefits to its stakeholders (community), and the organization's survival depends on stakeholder support, and this support must be sought through organizational activities (government performance). Moreover, enhancing public trust is not only providing information (transparency) but is also accompanied by good performance (Alessandro et al., 2021). Information in the context can be verified and does not contain elements of manipulation because manipulating information will extremely reduce public trust in the village government and result in a loss of value in information. Thus, transparency requires the support of the village government's performance in enhancing public trust.

Conclusion

The research aims to review the effect of transparency and village government performance on public trust. A total of 82 village governments in Jeneponto Regency were involved as the samples. In summary, the research uncovered that village government transparency and performance are important factors to consider in encouraging public trust, taking into account the significant influence of both. In addition, village government performance was found to have an intervening role. The presence of village government performance could make transparency have a positive impact on public trust.

Set out of these findings, dominant contributions, both practically and theoretically, are inspected. Practically, there is the suggestion that village governments who face many demands from the community, especially about information of government management (transparency), or when the community no longer trusts the village government, need to improve village government performance to be better. It is because village government performance is vital in encouraging transparency and enhancing public trust. Theoretically, there is an addition to the research treasury of stakeholder theory, mainly

in the public sector, especially in village government, which is still under-researched. As the premise of stakeholder theory, the process to enhance public trust must be clearly understood by members of the organization through village government performance, and it has been found that the performance contributes positively to public trust.

Despite the important contribution, this research has several limitations. First, this research only examined two determinants of village public trust. Hence, further studies can examine other potential variables, especially in applying good governance principles, such as accountability and budget participation. In addition, this research was only conducted in the village government of the Jeneponto Regency. Retrieving the vastness of Indonesia and the diverse characteristics of villages in various regions, the results of this research were not strong enough to produce a generalization. Therefore, further research is crucial for other village governments, specifically those with different organizational contexts.

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