

**MANAGING PUBLIC TRUST IN IMPROVING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING DELIBERATIONS: A CASE STUDY IN TENGGARONG SUBDISTRICT, KUTAI KARTANEGARA REGENCY, EAST KALIMANTAN PROVINCE, INDONESIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The poor level of public trust in Kutai Kartanegara Regency's development planning process is the driving force for this study. The goal of this study is to examine public confidence in Tenggarong Sub-district's development planning deliberations as well as the variables that affect that confidence. The research design used in this study is qualitative. Both primary and secondary data were gathered. Key informant interviews, observation, and documentation studies are some of the methods used to gather data. Thirteen important informants, including people, community leaders, and sub-district officials, were interviewed. The findings show that the degree of community involvement in Tenggarong Sub-district's development planning discussions is mostly determined by public trust. Through social interactions and firsthand encounters between the community and government representatives, this trust is developed dynamically rather than being a static state. Public trust in the Tenggarong Sub-district Development Planning Conference is influenced by a number of factors, including communication, which has not been operating at its best, transparency, responsiveness, and integrity. The notion of public trust and involvement in the context of local governance is strengthened by this study. Practically speaking, the study's findings offer sub-district authorities suggestions for enhancing their ability to communicate with the public, bolstering their integrity, and establishing a more transparent and thoughtful development planning conference platform. To increase the conclusions' generalisability, more study using a quantitative or mixed methodologies approach is advised.

**Keywords:** Public Trust, Community Participation, Communication, Transparency, Responsiveness, Integrity

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

A crucial component of Indonesia's national development planning system, the Development Planning Conference is governed by Law Number 25 of 2004 governing the National Development Planning System. Because it integrates top-down and bottom-up methods in development decision-making, the National Development Planning has a strategic position. According to this concept, community involvement is not only an administrative supplement but also an essential requirement for the validity and efficacy of public policy. One of the most

important measures of how well a local democracy is inclusive, responsive, and deliberative is citizen engagement in the National Development Planning. Sub-districts' function as extensions of district/city governments is reinforced by decentralisation.

Sub-districts have several authorities. These include organising subdistrict development planning meetings, which serve as a meeting point between village/subdistrict planning and regional policies. Subdistrict Development Planning Meetings are not merely an annual formality, but also a crucial forum for communities to voice their needs and monitor development priorities. Therefore, the dynamics of participation in Subdistrict Development Planning Meetings reflect the extent to which good governance principles, such as transparency, accountability, and public participation, are implemented.

However, in reality, there are frequently significant obstacles to the development planning deliberation's implementation. The low level of community participation is one significant concern that emerges. This tendency can be found in urban and suburban settings as well as rural ones. The community's lack of participation in the development planning debate forum may point to a more serious issue with public confidence in regional bureaucratic processes. The community often withdraws from the development-planning process when they believe their goals are not respected or taken into consideration. The purpose of this study is to examine public confidence in Tenggara Sub-district's development planning process as well as the variables that affect that confidence.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Good governance

The application of sound and responsible management in development that is consistent with the values of democracy and an effective market is known as good governance (Mardiasmo, 2021). Additionally, good governance is defined as clean government and good governance in an organization that can eliminate corruption, collusion, and nepotism and that the public demands in order to receive transparent and accountable public services in line with its ideals (Djalil, 2014). Furthermore, according to (Mustafa et al., 2013), good governance is the use of sound and responsible development management that is consistent with the values of democracy and an efficient market, avoidance of investment fund misallocation, and prevention of corruption. According to (Rewansyah, 2011), legal certainty, orderly state administration, public interest, openness, proportionality, professionalism, and accountability are the tenets of good organisational governance. (Mahsun et al., 2013) go on to say that involvement, accountability, and transparency are signs of successful government governance.

According to Rhodes, governance is a dispersed process that involves several players from different governmental levels and sectors (Noor et al., 2022). Participation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and efficacy are all components of good governance. Participation in development planning is implemented locally through the Development Planning Deliberation (Musyawarah Perencanaan Pembangunan). The Development Planning Deliberation is one of the local participation procedures that translate the ideals of good governance. The technocratic approach in development planning deliberation has long been criticised. According to (Indika & Vonika, 2019), the primary reason for the decline in

democratic spirit in the Development Planning Deliberation forum is the predominance of technocracy.

The Development Planning Conference is positioned as a strategic tool for direct citizen participation in the development planning process. Through this forum, the government provides a space for the public to express their aspirations, identify priority needs, and oversee the planning process to ensure greater accountability and transparency. Several studies examining public trust and participation in relation to the Development Planning Conference, as examined by: (Lay, 2022), (Sholihah & Santoso, 2022), (Jayanti & Magister, 2023), (Setyaningrum et al., 2024) and (Udzmah et al., 2024).

## 2.2 Public Trust

A key component of the public-government interaction is public trust. According to (Anindito et al., 2022), this idea relates to the public's trust that public institutions and their representatives would behave in a fair, accountable, and transparent manner while keeping the public interest in mind. Public trust is a product of citizens' cumulative interactions with government policies and public services rather than something that is created overnight.

People's firsthand experiences in public forums like the Development Planning Deliberation have a significant impact on public trust in local government, including sub-districts. Musrenbang is a participatory forum that ideally facilitates communication between the public and the government. In actuality, though, participation in these forums frequently declines because people believe their opinions are not being heard, there is no genuine follow-up, or the procedure is just a formality (Firman et al., 2024).

A key component of democratic and sustainable governance is public trust. The degree of trust in the government is influenced by the concepts of good governance. According to (Suhardi et al., 2023), public trust is directly impacted by the values of good governance, especially responsiveness and transparency. Additionally, optimism amid precarious circumstances where the public believes the government will put the interests of the public first can be characterised as trust (Sirajuddin & Atrianingsi, 2020).

## 2.3 Community Participation

Community participation is defined as an individual or group of people actively participating in an activity, either directly or indirectly, with full understanding and accountability, beginning with the stages of planning, preparation, design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. According to (Anindito et al., 2022), data transparency, procedure clarity, and information openness have a significant impact on how well citizens participate in development planning deliberations. Community involvement in development planning discussions rises dramatically when local governments embrace the values of transparency and cooperation (Indika & Vonika, 2019). In a similar vein, growing engagement is influenced by visionary, collaborative, and risk-taking leadership styles (Puspita et al., 2026).

On the other hand, public participation in public forums is very low. This is inseparable from the declining public trust in bureaucratic performance (Firman et al., 2024). Forms of participation can be seen in the participation of ideas, labor, property, and skills and expertise

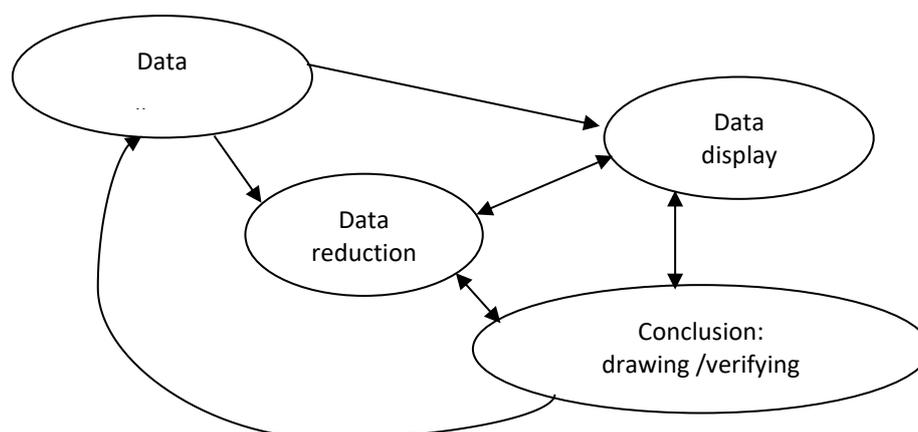
(Taufik & Eprilianto, 2022). Research related to public participation in Development Planning Deliberations, as conducted by; (Wagiu et al., 2015), (Mustanir & Abadi, 2017), (Samad et al., 2019), (Tjilen & Moento, 2023)

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-exploratory qualitative research design. This kind of research was selected because the primary goal of the study is to thoroughly examine how sub-district officials manage public trust and why this trust can affect the degree of community participation in the Tenggara Sub-district Development Planning Meeting in Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province. The Tenggara Sub-district Office of Kutai Kartanegara Regency carried out this investigation as a case study.

Thirteen important informants provided primary data, and secondary data was also gathered. A literature review was used to gather secondary data, which came from reading books, articles, or information about the subject of the study. Online data searches using internet resources were added to this. Archives, written reports, or inventory lists acquired in connection with the study were examples of documentation. Researchers employed data gathering strategies to get information for their study. Interviews, observation, and documentation were the methods employed in this study to gather data.

This study employed qualitative data analysis techniques with a thematic analysis approach. This approach was used to identify, analyse, and interpret patterns of meaning (themes) from data collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. The analysis technique is summarised in Figure 1.



**Figure 3.1. Components of Qualitative Analysis**

Source: (Sugiyono, 2012)

### 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public trust in the Tenggara Sub-district Development Planning Conference is influenced by a number of elements, including the standard of governance and community-government relations. As a result, the development of general public trust in the Tenggara Sub-district

Development Planning Conference in Kutai Kartanegara Regency depends on these four elements: communication, transparency, responsiveness, and integrity.

## 4.1 Communication

In several sub-districts in Tenggarong Sub-district, public communication is still conducted conventionally, such as through invitations from neighbourhood associations (RT) or sudden announcements. As a result, not all residents receive equal information, which then gives rise to discriminatory or exclusive perceptions. As the following interview results: "We feel that so far we have only received one-sided information without being involved in the dialogue, as if our presence were merely a formality (interview with informant W3 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)." This answer shows that a one-way communication approach still dominates and has not been able to revive the spirit of deliberation in the development planning deliberation. Communication carried out by the sub-district government has not been effective. Effective communication not only conveys information but also involves the community in a dialogical process.

According to this study, managing public trust by sub-district authorities is crucial to boosting public attendance at the Tenggarong Sub-district Development Planning Meeting. The primary question on the elements influencing public trust in the Development Planning Meeting in Tenggarong Sub-district, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, is also addressed by this finding. It was discovered through in-depth interviews and field observations that regions where officials function administratively and give little feedback had low levels of public participation. When residents feel respected, heard, and involved, trust increases. On the other hand, the primary causes of confidence erosion are ambiguous information and officials' lack of reaction. As a result, maintaining public trust is a component of citizen-oriented public service leadership rather than just an administrative duty.

Trust in public institutions grows when the bureaucracy demonstrates accountability, competence, and openness. In Tenggarong Sub-district, bureaucratic practices reflecting these values have been shown to increase citizen engagement in the development planning deliberation. This study's findings align with those of (Hasan et al., 2023), which found that public information transparency services in Makassar City are suboptimal. It is understood that open government is crucial for strengthening the legitimacy of the development planning deliberation. Although this study found that communication was ineffective, it provides a new contribution by adding local context, such as the role of traditional leaders, which has not been widely discussed in previous studies. This difference indicates that the effectiveness of trust management is highly contextual and cannot be separated from the social character of the local community and the history of citizen interactions with the bureaucracy.

## 4.2 Transparency

A solid basis for trust is transparency. If the development planning deliberation process is carried out transparently, from agenda-setting and proposal prioritisation to outcome determination, the public is more likely to have faith in the government. Citizens participate more in areas where officials offer information, such as lists of citizen ideas, evaluation

findings, and the execution of the previous year's program, since they are aware of the topics being discussed and how their goals are being met. However, in some places when information is restricted or shared exclusively within specific groups, residents become indifferent because they believe local elites have appropriated the development planning deliberation forum. Therefore, establishing and preserving public trust requires information to be transparent, whether through print, digital, or in-person media. When officials are able to promote two-way communication, significant engagement takes place. Locals will continue to participate in development planning discussions if they believe their goals are genuinely heard and taken into account. On the other hand, locals only participate symbolically in development planning conference forums that are held without open discussion, attending just to fulfil an invitation and not feeling like they have any say in how decisions are made. This illustrates how crucial it is to manage participation forums using a deliberative and dialogical approach.

The research findings show that the transparency of the Development Planning Meeting in Tenggara Sub-district, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, has been running well. As stated in the interview with key informants: "We attended as a form of support for the transparency of information that has been implemented by the village government." This shows good faith that deserves to be supported. (interview with informant W1 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)". Similarly, the same answer was given by another informant on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, as follows: "Because the information is open, I can explain the results of the Development Planning Meeting to my neighbours or group members who could not attend" (interview with informant T1 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)". This proves that transparency of information is a crucial element in building public trust.

Crucially, communicative leadership and a humanistic service style from officials are essential to the achievement of establishing public trust in a number of subdistricts. The primary causes of the decline in public trust are things like residents' bad experiences with broken promises and inadequate feedback. The study's findings were also impacted by contextual elements like Tenggara Sub-district's social diversity. Because they don't have enough information, inhabitants with higher levels of education are more outspoken and demand transparency, whereas residents with lesser levels of education are more likely to be quiet and passive. The results of this study are consistent with those of (Suardi et al., 2023), who contended that availability of public information is an essential instrument for boosting citizen participation. These results are also consistent with those of (Indika & Vonika, 2019), who claimed that fostering trust among the different stakeholders involved in development can also help to improve democracy.

The development planning meeting in Tenggara Sub-district, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, was conducted in a transparent manner. Social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp were used to swiftly and extensively spread information. This made it possible for locals even those who couldn't physically attend to remain up to date on the agenda, topics, and conclusions of the development planning meeting. Additionally, rather than just providing one-way notifications, the platform's comment and discussion capabilities promoted collaborative engagement. This is consistent with (Umayasari & Amantha's, 2025) assertion that social media use at the Development Planning Conference has been shown to

increase transparency, broaden access to information, and give marginalised groups like women or people with disabilities a platform to express their goals inclusively.

### 4.3 Responsiveness

Officials' responsiveness is another crucial metric. Residents of Tenggara typically anticipate that while their suggestions may not always be carried out, they will at least get a fair response during the development planning meeting. An explanation, a technical clarification, or a notification that the proposal would be considered the following year are some examples of this response. Residents in certain subdistricts are content with only getting a response to their suggestions. But in other areas, a key source of disappointment and dwindling trust is the absence of response or follow-up to expectations stated over years. Residents disengage from following development planning sessions because they believe that officials are incompetent and uncaring if they are unable to answer their desires.

According to the research findings, community responsiveness in the discussion of development planning has been proceeding smoothly. "I attended because I felt that every time I proposed something, the village officials really took note and responded seriously, even though not all of them could be realised immediately" (interview with informant W2 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)". Another informant provided the same statement: "I feel appreciated as a citizen because of the officials' prompt response. In contrast to the past, they now promptly explain any difficulties or modifications to the idea (interview with informant T3 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)".

Participation of Citizens in Development Planning Participatory democracy is built on discussions. However, if the presented recommendations are not sufficiently addressed, this involvement will seem meaningless. As a result, the first and most crucial rule is to react quickly to suggestions made by citizens. In addition to being a question of administrative efficiency, a prompt answer shows consideration for the time and effort that residents have put into it. Mistrust of the development planning process can be fostered and the spirit of involvement dampened by a delayed or nonexistent answer. A prompt reaction is insufficient on its own. Transparency and clarity play a critical role in determining the quality of the response. Whether a citizen's suggestion is approved, rejected, or postponed, it must be backed with a thorough justification. This means that the government or implementing agency must be able to describe the decision's justification, pertinent laws, available funds, or development priorities. A rational and comprehensible explanation will prevent unfavourable conjecture and promote mutual understanding by assisting citizens in comprehending the context and constraints.

### 4.4 Integrity

The integrity of the implementing officials is an ethical dimension of trust. Integrity is not only about not being corrupt but also about the alignment between words and actions, consistency in service, and fairness in decision-making. Integrity has been running well, as supported by the following interview results. "We always try to show that we are impartial in processing proposals. The community comes because they know that all proposals are considered based

on need, not proximity (interview with informant I1 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)." Similarly, a similar answer was given by another informant: "We realise that building trust begins with our own commitment. Therefore, we try to free every decision from personal interests. The community attends because they see that this development planning conference is carried out honestly and objectively (interview with informant I4 on Wednesday, February 19, 2025)".

The impartiality of each proposal's processing is crucial to the integrity of a development planning process, such the Development Planning Conference (Deliberative Council). Abuse of power and improper use of resources are quite likely in the absence of objectivity. Building public trust and creating development programs that are genuinely pertinent to community needs therefore depend on making sure that every step, from proposal approval to finalisation, is carried out fairly and openly.

The possibility of political manipulation and nepotism is one of the key obstacles to preserving objectivity. When choices are made based more on friendship or relatives than on the proposal's merits, nepotism may result. On the other hand, budgetary decisions that advantage particular groups or areas in order to win elections can be referred to as political manipulation. The Development Planning Conference's core value as an inclusive, participatory forum may be compromised by both of these elements, turning it into a platform for specialised interests. A strong, needs-based proposal selection process is required to offset these detrimental effects. This implies that every suggestion must be assessed according to precisely defined standards, independent of the source or the person who made the idea. The degree of urgency, the anticipated beneficial impact, the number of beneficiaries, alignment with the regional strategic plan, and resource availability are a few examples of these factors.

Processing proposals objectively involves more than just following protocol; it also involves fostering an ethical culture inside the government. We build a system that is equitable, effective, and really serves the interests of all citizens by removing opportunities for nepotism and political manipulation and making sure that the entire process is based on needs and clearly documented. This is an essential starting point for growth that is both egalitarian and sustainable.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be made based on the findings of studies on managing public trust to boost community involvement in development planning discussions. The degree of community involvement in development planning discussions in the Tenggara Sub-district is largely determined by public trust. Through social interactions and firsthand encounters between the community and government representatives, this trust is developed dynamically rather than being a static state. Local sociocultural elements, such as the function of community leaders, educational attainment, and citizens' prior encounters with the bureaucracy, have a significant impact on the success of trust management. This shows that a humanistic, personal, and adaptive approach to local characteristics is more effective than a uniform and bureaucratic approach. Factors that influence public trust in the Tenggara Sub-district Development Planning Meeting are a) communication. Communication has not been running optimally, b)

transparency. Transparency in the development planning meeting in Tenggara Sub-district, Kutai Kartanegara Regency, in East Kalimantan has been running well, c) responsiveness. Responsiveness has been running well, and d) integrity has been running well. Integrity is the foundation that strengthens the other three factors and has been running well.

Several recommendations were made in order to increase public participation in development planning deliberations, namely, 1) creating a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for public communication that emphasises two-way dialogue and ensures information reaches all levels of society; 2) optimising and maximising the use of digital platforms (e-Musrenbang or social media) for transparency, while also being balanced with increasing the capacity of human resources of officials in managing and responding to feedback from the public quickly and adequately; 3) creating a clear and scheduled feedback mechanism (feedback loop) after the development planning deliberation to inform residents about the status of their proposals so that responsiveness does not only occur during the forum but continues until the evaluation stage; 4) establishing an independent monitoring system to ensure integrity and objectivity in the proposal selection process in order to prevent nepotism and ensure resource allocation based on priority needs; and 5) further research is recommended to use a quantitative or mixed methods approach to expand the reach of generalisability of the results.

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