Implementation of Transparency Principles in Handling Public Complaints at the Enrekang Police Headquarters

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Abstract. This study examines the growing public demand for transparency in public complaint services at the Enrekang Police Department, where challenges such as discriminatory practices and inadequate technological infrastructure persist. The research aims to evaluate the implementation of transparency principles in complaint handling services and to identify the internal and external factors influencing these processes. A qualitative research method employing a case study approach was utilized, incorporating in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis to ensure data triangulation, with thematic analysis applied for data interpretation. The findings reveal that although the Enrekang Police have made notable improvements in responsiveness, speed, and accuracy demonstrated through courteous interactions and diligent case handling significant shortcomings in timeliness remain. These delays are primarily attributed to discriminatory practices and technological constraints. The study concludes that achieving transparency in public services necessitates not only procedural and technical advancements but also a cultural transformation within the institution. It further suggests that continuous human resource development, digital innovations such as mobile case-tracking systems, and participatory public education are critical to bridging the gap between transparency ideals and practical implementation. These strategies offer a pathway toward enhancing public trust and strengthening institutional accountability.

Keywords: Transparency; Principles; Public Services; Public Complaints; Police Services

INTRODUCTION

Public demand for transparent, responsive, and accountable public services continues to rise in line with societal and technological developments (Gedye et al., 2021; Kumari et al., 2021). In this context, the principle of transparency has become a fundamental pillar for strengthening public trust in government institutions, including the police (Adikaram & Kailasapathy, 2020; van Dael et al., 2022). Transparency in public services encompasses not only the openness of information but also dimensions of accountability, procedural justice, and service effectiveness (Oliver, 2020; van Mulken, 2024).

The application of transparency principles in public complaint services is critical to ensuring that complainants receive clear information regarding the status, procedures, and outcomes of their reports (Elektra Van Herck & Vangehuchten, 2024; Helmy et al., 2024). Several studies have demonstrated that effective complaint management significantly contributes to enhancing public trust and service quality (Christianto et al., 2022; Nguyen & Hang Pham, 2022). Conversely, failures to uphold transparency can lead to dissatisfaction, perceptions of discrimination, and the erosion of institutional legitimacy (Ngoc Quang & Thuy, 2023; Shuja et al., 2023).

Challenges in implementing transparency frequently arise from limitations in human resources, low levels of technological literacy, and the persistence of bureaucratic cultures resistant to change (Bai et al., 2022; Sardjono et al., 2024). Innovations in complaint management models, including the adoption of smart system-based information technologies and online platforms, have proven effective in improving service efficiency and information clarity (Abbasi et al., 2023; Javornik et al., 2020; Markova, 2023).

Research conducted in various countries highlights that the success of transparency in complaint handling is influenced by internal organizational factors, such as the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms and the understanding and application of procedural justice principles among personnel (Park et al., 2025; Shams et al., 2020). Several innovations in both the public and private sectors such as the adoption of chatbots, the strategic use of humor, and verbal de-escalation techniques have been applied to improve the quality of service interactions (Omoola et al., 2023; van Mulken, 2024).

In the Indonesian context, despite the availability of national platforms such as LAPOR! (Puspitasari & Kurniawan, 2023), challenges persist in ensuring that procedural designs align with their implementation in practice (Aboalganam et al., 2024; Badawi et al., 2021). Studies in the health and education sectors have shown that a lack of public outreach and limited human resource capacities often hinder the achievement of transparent services (Ahmed et al., 2020; Hartati & Muslichah, 2020).

International literature also emphasizes the importance of organizational capacity building through internal training, performance-based reward and punishment systems, and the implementation of automated tracking technologies to strengthen complaint systems (van Mulken, 2024; Van Rompuy, 2022). Complaint handling that prioritizes procedural justice can mitigate public dissatisfaction and enhance institutional credibility (Ali et al., 2023; Lee & Zhao, 2024).

While digitalization in public services has become increasingly widespread, the role of human interaction remains vital in building trust and improving user satisfaction (Jeanpert et al., 2021; Laliberté et al., 2022). The use of social media and other online channels for transparent information dissemination is also critical in reducing information asymmetry between institutions and the public (Ku et al., 2021; Sembiring et al., 2023).

However, the sustained achievement of transparency depends on continuous efforts to reform internal regulations, expand public participation, and build adaptive monitoring mechanisms (Dobrucalı Yelkenci et al., 2023; Zhang & Wang, 2023). This aligns with the

findings of (Fitzalan Howard et al., 2024), who emphasize the necessity of fair procedural practices in complaint management.

This study focuses on analyzing the implementation of transparency principles in public complaint services at the Enrekang Police Department. The research aims to identify the extent to which these principles have been implemented, uncover inhibiting factors, and provide strategic recommendations to enhance service quality based on the principles of good governance (Agnihotri et al., 2022; Williams et al., 2021). Consequently, this study is expected to contribute meaningfully to public service reform, particularly in the policing sector, and to enrich the academic literature on transparency in public service (Hake et al., 2021; Istanbulluoglu & Sakman, 2024).

In modern public service practices, transparency is increasingly recognized as a strategic instrument for fostering accountability and strengthening democratic quality (Charlton, 2022; Morgeson et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding the internal and external factors that influence the implementation of transparency principles is crucial for promoting public services that are fairer, more efficient, and more widely trusted by society (Ford et al., 2022; Matheus et al., 2021; Skraaning & Jamieson, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the implementation of transparency principles in public complaint services at the Enrekang Police Department. This method was selected because of its effectiveness in deeply understanding social phenomena (Gedye et al., 2021; Kumari et al., 2021). A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as it captures contextual nuances and the internal dynamics of organizations in the application of transparency principles (Adikaram & Kailasapathy, 2020; van Dael et al., 2022).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis, following qualitative social research approaches as recommended by (Oliver, 2020) and (van Mulken, 2024). Interviews were conducted with personnel from the SPKT (Integrated Police Service Center), Criminal Investigation Unit, Professional and Security Division (Propam), Public Relations Division, as well as with complainants, NGOs, and academic experts to ensure data triangulation (Elektra Van Herck & Vangehuchten, 2024; Helmy et al., 2024). Observations

focused on complaint handling processes, adopting methodologies similar to those used by (Christianto et al., 2022) in studies of patient complaint management systems.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively using a thematic approach, consistent with the framework applied by (Nguyen & Hang Pham, 2022) in their study of public procurement complaint mechanisms. The analysis process involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing based on interpretation (Sardjono et al., 2024; Shuja et al., 2023).

Data Validation Strategy

Source, technique, and time triangulation were applied to enhance the validity of the data, in line with recommendations from studies on complaint management by (Javornik et al., 2020) and (Abbasi et al., 2023). Validation was conducted through cross-checking between informants, comparing documents, and confirming field observations (Markova, 2023; Shams et al., 2020).

Informant Selection Criteria

Informants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with direct experience in the complaint handling process, consistent with prior research in the public sector (Omoola et al., 2023; Park et al., 2025). Selected informants were required to demonstrate active involvement in complaint processes, a sound understanding of procedural aspects, and a willingness to provide honest information (Idayanti et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2022).

Research Instruments

The research instrument consisted of a semi-structured interview guide, developed based on theories of public service transparency (Prasasti et al., 2023; Puspitasari & Kurniawan, 2023). The interview questions focused on aspects such as information openness, procedural justice, response speed, and user satisfaction (Aboalganam et al., 2024; Badawi et al., 2021).

Research Procedure

The research procedure involved several stages: obtaining permissions, mapping informants, conducting interviews and observations, documenting findings, and analyzing data. Each stage was conducted by adhering to principles of procedural fairness and research ethics (Ahmed et al., 2020; Hartati & Muslichah, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to key research ethics principles, including informed consent, anonymity, and data confidentiality, as applied in international complaint handling research (van Mulken, 2024; VAN ROMPUY, 2022). Each informant was fully informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time (Ali et al., 2023; Jeanpert et al., 2021).

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to analyzing public complaint handling processes at the Enrekang Police Department over the past year. The focus was directed toward the principles of information openness, procedural justice, and accountability in complaint resolution (Laliberté et al., 2022; Sembiring et al., 2023).

By applying this methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive depiction of the actual conditions regarding the implementation of transparency principles and to offer data-driven recommendations for improving the public complaint handling system within the police force (Ku et al., 2021; Zhang & Wang, 2023).

RESULT

Implementation of the Principle of Transparency in Public Complaint Services at the Enrekang Police Department

Responsiveness encompasses the attitude and communication of officers when interacting with the public, reflecting the importance of responsive complaint handling emphasized by (Gedye et al., 2021) and (Kumari et al., 2021). A friendly, polite, and fair demeanor forms the foundation for building positive relationships with the community, consistent with best practices observed in various sectors (Adikaram & Kailasapathy, 2020; van Dael et al., 2022).

Based on interview results, SPKT officers at the Enrekang Police Department consistently demonstrated efforts to deliver excellent service. This finding aligns with (Oliver, 2020; van Mulken, 2024), who stressed the crucial role of employee demeanor in successful complaint resolution. One officer, referred to as M, highlighted the consistent application of the 3S principle (smile, greet, and say hello), indicating a strong institutional commitment to service quality.

Nevertheless, several community members noted the need for improved proactive communication, which is critical for service transparency, as emphasized by (Helmy et al., 2024) and (Elektra Van Herck & Vangehuchten, 2024). Effective communication strategies enhance clarity and user satisfaction, supporting the findings of (Shuja et al., 2023) and (Sardjono et al., 2024).

The speed of service delivery was generally perceived as satisfactory. Interview findings suggested that officers responded quickly to complaints, although limitations stemming from technological and infrastructural constraints were acknowledged, mirroring challenges documented by (Nguyen & Hang Pham, 2022) and (Christianto et al., 2022).

Accuracy in complaint handling was positively evaluated, reinforcing the significance of meticulous case processing as highlighted by (Javornik et al., 2020) and (Abbasi et al., 2023). However, some inconsistencies were reported, particularly concerning case follow-ups, echoing concerns raised by (Markova, 2023) and (Shams et al., 2020).

In terms of timeliness, outcomes were mixed. While officers generally sought to adhere to the standards set by Chief of Police Regulation No. 12 of 2009, public dissatisfaction remained due to perceived discrimination in complaint processing. This issue reflects similar problems identified in studies by (Park et al., 2025) and (Omoola et al., 2023).

Factors Hindering the Implementation of the Principle of Openness in Complaint Handling at the Enrekang Police Department

Both internal and external factors were found to significantly influence the effectiveness of transparency initiatives. Internally, the persistence of outdated work paradigms and limited understanding of complaint handling procedures among officers emerged as key obstacles. These findings are consistent with the barriers identified by (Peng et al., 2022) and (Prasasti et al., 2023). Additionally, the lack of strict supervision of employee performance contributed to lapses in discipline and service quality, corroborating the observations of (Puspitasari & Kurniawan, 2023) and (Badawi et al., 2021). Low professionalism among some employees remains a critical concern, as highlighted by (Aboalganam et al., 2024) and (Ahmed et al., 2020).

Externally, the general lack of public familiarity with complaint procedures hampers service effectiveness, supporting findings by (Hartati & Muslichah, 2020) and (van Mulken & Heslenfled, 2025). Moreover, the limited dissemination of information regarding complaint mechanisms further exacerbates these challenges, a concern echoed (VAN ROMPUY, 2022) and (Perehudoff, 2022).

Overall, the findings align with broader literature emphasizing that successful transparency initiatives in complaint handling require not only organizational commitment but also technological innovation and public engagement (Jeanpert et al., 2021; Ku et al., 2021; Laliberté et al., 2022; Sembiring et al., 2023; Zhang & Wang, 2023).

DISCUSSION

In recent years, expectations for transparent, responsive, and accountable public services have intensified globally, driven by increasing civic awareness and democratization of governance mechanisms. Studies across sectors have consistently underscored that public institutions, including law enforcement, play a pivotal role in fostering public trust by ensuring fair and transparent complaint handling processes (Gedye et al., 2021; Kumari et al., 2021; van Dael et al., 2022). Within this context, the performance of the Enrekang Police Department reveals a notable advancement in aspects of responsiveness, communication quality, and case handling accuracy elements long emphasized as foundational in complaint resolution frameworks (Adikaram & Kailasapathy, 2020; Oliver, 2020).

The emphasis on responsive behavior, notably exemplified through the 3S principle smile, greet, and say hello demonstrates alignment with interpersonal strategies recognized for enhancing user satisfaction (Abbasi et al., 2023; van Mulken, 2024). However, these interpersonal improvements must be complemented by systematic communication protocols, a gap observed in this study. As (Helmy et al., 2024) and (Elektra Van Herck & Vangehuchten, 2024) noted, passive communication undermines public confidence and reduces service transparency. Similarly, (Nguyen & Hang Pham, 2022) emphasized that transparent service systems demand mechanisms that offer real-time updates and two-way interaction. The absence of tools such as SMS alerts or digital dashboards at Enrekang confirms the findings by (Shuja et al., 2023) and (Sardjono et al., 2024), who identified technological stagnation as a major impediment in complaint responsiveness.

Beyond communication, deeper structural issues persist, especially concerning discriminatory practices in case prioritization. Patterns of favoritism observed in this context resonate with broader findings in studies on healthcare and administrative systems, which cite weak oversight and internal bias as key barriers to procedural justice (Adikaram & Kailasapathy, 2020; Markova, 2023; Shams et al., 2020). Delays rooted in insufficient technological infrastructure, as noted in (Sardjono et al., 2024), and a lack of smart complaint systems as discussed by (Christianto et al., 2022) point to an urgent need for digital transformation. Similarly emphasized the utility of real-time urban problem tracking systems to mitigate bureaucratic lag and subjectivity (Peng et al., 2022).

Cultural inertia within the bureaucracy remains a significant challenge. Who noted that entrenched hierarchical mindsets resist the adaptability required for transparent reforms. This is compounded by human resource limitations, particularly in training and procedural awareness, a concern echoed by (van Mulken & Heslenfled, 2025). These challenges are exacerbated in

peripheral areas like Enrekang, where modernization policies are not always effectively socialized or implemented (Prasasti et al., 2023; Puspitasari & Kurniawan, 2023).

Externally, public unfamiliarity with complaint mechanisms is a recurring theme. Suggested that civic education through preventive communication brochures, community forums, and instructional videos plays a critical role in enhancing transparency. Similarly, (Laliberté et al., 2022) and (Jeanpert et al., 2021) highlighted that transparency must incorporate not just institutional reforms but also user empowerment and literacy. As indicated in research on e-governance and ICT in public services, sustained participation and trust hinge on accessible and inclusive communication strategies (Javornik et al., 2020; Ku et al., 2021; Matheus et al., 2021).

This interplay between internal and external dimensions of complaint handling aligns with multi-perspective models of transparency that stress both structural change and cultural transformation (Gill, 2023; VAN ROMPUY, 2022). Organizational shifts require not only new systems but also ethics-centered training, values-based service orientations, and robust accountability structures (Abbasi et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2021). Studies have shown that digital complaint monitoring systems and chatbots, when integrated with procedural fairness principles, can significantly reduce ambiguity and abuse of power (Ali et al., 2023; Park et al., 2025).

In this context, the Enrekang Police are advised to adopt digital platforms such as mobile case-tracking applications and chatbot-based interaction portals to enhance real-time transparency (Ngoc Quang & Thuy, 2023; Sardjono et al., 2024). Updating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to mandate community involvement at every stage of complaint processing would further embed democratic accountability (Badawi et al., 2021; Ford et al., 2022). Proactive public outreach, especially through local media and participatory education initiatives, is also crucial in mitigating asymmetries in access to information (Agnihotri et al., 2022; Hartati & Muslichah, 2020).

Oversight mechanisms should include independent review panels and public reporting channels to strengthen institutional credibility, in line with recommendations from (Jeanpert et al., 2021) and (Charlton, 2022). Theoretical insights from (Morgeson et al., 2020) and (Skraaning & Jamieson, 2021) suggest that transparency encompasses more than disclosure it requires integrated systems of fairness, timeliness, and responsiveness.

Ultimately, persistent practices of discrimination and clientelism within public institutions underscore the need for holistic reform. Strict enforcement of anti-discrimination policies, while (Hake et al., 2021) and (Abbasi et al., 2023) advocated for integrated systems that combine algorithmic neutrality with procedural fairness. Despite progress in interpersonal transparency,

the Enrekang case study reinforces disjunction between formal compliance and substantive transparency.

This study, however, acknowledges its limitations: a single-site design, qualitative subjectivity, and short-term data collection restrict generalizability. Future research should compare institutions across regions, apply quantitative validation, and use longitudinal methods to track reform impact over time.

In summary, this research contributes to both theory and practice by illustrating how transparency reforms must be supported by technological innovation, ethical workforce development, and participatory frameworks to realize their full transformative potential (Fitzalan Howard et al., 2024; Hussein et al., 2020; Matheus et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that while the Enrekang Police Department has achieved improvements in transparency through responsiveness, speed, and accuracy evidenced by friendly service attitudes, effective communication, and diligent complaint handling significant challenges persist, particularly in the timeliness of case resolution due to discriminatory practices and technological limitations such as the absence of a digital case tracking system. These findings highlight that transparency in public complaint services is not merely a technical issue but also a socio-cultural challenge, especially in peripheral areas still influenced by traditional bureaucratic paradigms and insufficiently internalized modern service policies. To bridge the gap between ideal transparency principles and practical implementation, continuous human resource development, participatory public education, and technological innovations are essential.

It is recommended that the Enrekang Police Department adopt a mobile-based case tracking system and official chat services to enhance procedural clarity and reduce misunderstandings, while future studies should evaluate the effectiveness of the Polri Presisi program in overcoming cultural and technological barriers to public service reform.

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