
COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE: OPTIMIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE FUNCTION OF CUSTOMARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the role of customary institutions in improving public service performance through a collaborative governance approach. By using collaborative governance theory and functionalism as analytical tools, this research analyses how the government, customary institutions, the community, and other stakeholders collaborate to achieve optimal public service goals. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with primary and secondary data collection through literature review and interviews. The results show that customary institutions have a strategic role in strengthening the social legitimacy of policies, but still face structural challenges and a lack of formal recognition. This research provides recommendations to strengthen synergy between customary institutions and the government through collaborative governance strategies.

Keywords: *Collaboration, Performance, Governance, Functionalism, Customary Institutions.*

A. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the concept of collaborative governance has increasingly been recognized as an important approach in strengthening government performance in various fields. Collaborative governance refers to the process in which the government collaborates with other actors, including the community, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to jointly formulate and implement public policies. This collaboration is considered crucial as it integrates perspectives and resources from various parties and allows the government to be more responsive to community needs and more adaptive to the complexities of existing problems.

Public service is at the core of the government's function in meeting the needs of society, especially in countries with cultural diversity like Indonesia. In the concept of collaborative governance, optimal public service often requires synergy between the government and non-government stakeholders, including customary institutions. The collaborative governance framework according to (Ansel & Gash, 2007) seeks to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of collaboration and how this model can be optimized to achieve better outcomes. With collaborative governance, it not only supports the achievement of government goals but also contributes to strengthening the relationship between the government and society.

Government performance can be interpreted as the ability of the government to achieve goals that can be accomplished through the implementation of programs, activities, and policies effectively and efficiently. The success of a policy greatly depends on the effectiveness of public services, especially in achieving the welfare of the community. Traditional institutions in Indonesia not only act as guardians of traditional values but also play a strategic role in bridging the aspirations of the community and the government. Gorontalo, with the philosophy of “*Adat Bersendikan Syara’*, *Syara’ Bersendikan Al-Quran*”, provides a unique model of how tradition and religion are integrated into community governance. By strengthening the synergy

between traditional institutions and the government, it is hoped that public services will become more responsive and effective, especially in meeting the diverse needs of the community.

The existence of traditional institutions is an organization that grows and has the authority to regulate the community to preserve culture and resolve conflicts, as well as play a role as a form of governance in maintaining order and ensuring the welfare of the local community (Soekanto, 2012). Traditional institutions also become community organizations that can play a role in increasing community participation to work together with the government in the processes of development, policy design, and implementation to enhance community welfare (Natalia, 2019:18).

Various studies on collaboration between the government and customary/traditional institutions have shown significant impacts on improving the quality of public services. (Hilhorst et al, 2019) studied the collaboration between the government and traditional authorities in Africa, highlighting the important role of a local authority in providing access to services. The results indicate that recognition of local authorities strengthens the legitimacy of public policies at the community level. In Canada, (Osborn et al, 2021) examined how indigenous communities play a strategic role in local-based public service policies. This research highlights the importance of respecting traditional values as a foundation for building trust among collaborative actors. In New Zealand, (Johnson et al, 2020) studied the relationship between the government and Maori communities in traditional-based spatial planning. The results of this research show that the involvement of indigenous communities enhances the sustainability of development.

Various relevant studies such as (Emerson et al., 2018), which focused on identifying dimensions of collaboration that influence the success of public services, (Purwanto et al. 2020) with a focus on analysing the role of local wisdom in public service innovation, (Nabatchi et al. 2020) with a study on collaborative governance for sustainable development, (Sakir, 2024) focusing on the study of the application of human resource knowledge and the development of local community skills in improving public service performance, and (Zakiah et al. 2024) focusing on the study of collaboration between the government, non-governmental organizations, and the community are needed to provide quality public services that are responsive to community needs. (Hidayat et al. 2023) focused on the role of traditional institutions in Aceh in handling and resolving issues.

From the results of existing relevant research, there is still a lack of attention to local-based governance adaptation or local wisdom and has not specifically focused on the role of traditional institutions as part of governance. Adaptation analysis can show the importance of understanding the specific context or characteristics of each region (Liu et al., 2021). The lack of attention to structural barriers at the local level in collaboration with traditional institutions and the insufficient in-depth discussion of cross-sector collaboration strategies indicate the need for the involvement of traditional institutions in dialogue with the community, policy alignment, and strengthening trust and legitimacy among stakeholders, which is very important in facing and minimizing barriers (Bianci et al., 2021). The lack of emphasis on functionalism and dynamics among actors means that public service performance through traditional institutions is still not optimal; this can be strengthened by providing legitimacy and trust to traditional institutions so that the function of traditional institutions as mediators connecting aspirations to the government can be effective and efficient (Klijn, 2002).

This research is considered very important because it fills the gaps in the study of how traditional institutions can be optimized in collaborative-based public service governance. Based on the above thoughts and observations, this research has a focus that wants to be studied more deeply, namely how the structure of the collaboration model between local governments and traditional institutions, as well as what the roles, challenges, and collaboration strategies

are in optimizing the performance of public services through the functions of traditional institutions.

The results of this research are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in integrating traditional institutions into the public service system. This research also has objectives that want to be achieved, namely, to bridge the gap in analysing the roles and authorities of traditional institutions in supporting government performance to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public policy.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of collaborative governance according to (Ansel & Gash, 2007) is carried out by considering several key elements that influence the effectiveness of collaboration among stakeholders, namely being able to evaluate the structure and decision-making processes involving various actors including the government, the community, and non-governmental organizations. This aims to understand how interactions among actors can influence the results of collaboration. Furthermore, it can identify factors that influence trust and relationships among stakeholders. Trust is considered an important element in collaboration because it can facilitate better communication and reduce potential conflicts. Additionally, it can assess the impact of collaborative governance on achieving common goals, such as sustainable resource management and solving complex problems.

Collaborative Governance according to (Margerum, 2016) focuses on the innovations and adaptations needed to create social and institutional conditions that allow for the necessary changes for sustainability. Moreover, it is considered a beneficial approach to addressing change issues, both in terms of mitigation and adaptation. Several statements related to Collaborative Governance reflect various streams and other interpretations, such as according to (Healey, 2003) which states that Collaborative Governance is a way to make various institutions work together and adjust to each other in a fragmented institutional context. In such situations, various actors share resources and responsibilities. To solve problems, actors with different perspectives and goals must collaborate. Collaboration is based on equality and independence because Collaborative Governance is based on the principles of dialogue and mutual learning. This is aimed at achieving context through a transparent, democratic, and participatory process (Foster Fishman et al. 2001; Innes and Booher 2003).

Meanwhile, according to (Huxham et al. 2000; Foster Fishman et al. 2001; Emerson et al. 2012) Collaborative Governance includes the collaboration of organizations and individuals. Organizational involvement and individual motivation depend on successful collaboration; organizational resources, skills, and individual commitments representing the organization, as well as shared motivation. Thus, Collaborative Governance not only produces a context about the actions that must be taken but also enables joint actions that cannot be carried out by a single organization. Therefore, Collaborative Governance can create "new capacities for joint actions that previously did not exist and maintain or develop those capacities as common goals are achieved" (Emerson et al. 2012).

The functionalism theory according to Emile Durkheim in (Amirbayer, 2008), functionalism theory includes several main indicators, namely: a) System Balance, where society is a unity of a system consisting of interconnected and interdependent parts. System balance can be maintained if each part performs its function well. b) Social Function; Where each element in society has a specific function that contributes to the stability and welfare of the social system. If one part does not function, it will cause disruption to the system. c) Pathological Conditions; pathological conditions are identified as situations where system balance is disturbed, which can occur due to social change or dysfunction in one part of society. d) Adaptation and Integration; emphasizes the importance of adaptation and integration among

parts of society to achieve common goals and maintain social stability. Thus, these indicators can reflect views on how society functions and how changes can affect social balance.

Functionalism theory states that society is a system of interconnected parts that together form a whole. Each part of society contributes to fulfilling the functional needs of the system. If one part undergoes change, it will impact the entire system. This theory emphasizes that parts of society must function well for society to remain stable. In the context of this research, functionalism theory is used to support the argument that customary institutions play an important role in maintaining stability and contributing to the survival of society. The above opinion is supported by (Olokungboye et al., 2023) which summarizes that as part of society, customary institutions play an important role in maintaining stability and sustaining the survival of society in their region.

Studies from various countries have extensively discussed functionalism theory. Functionalism theory in (Olokungboye et al., 2023) can be criticized for still having weaknesses, including: a) Functionalism theory tends to focus on stability and order in society, thus being less able to explain the dynamics and social changes that occur, especially in the context of modernization and globalization; b) This theory often overlooks aspects of conflict and inequality that exist in society. With an emphasis on the positive functions of social institutions, functionalism may ignore how some groups may be disadvantaged by existing social structures. c) Another criticism is that functionalism theory is often too general and does not provide a sufficiently specific analysis of how certain institutions function in different contexts. This can lead to inaccurate or irrelevant conclusions in specific situations. d) This theory tends to view institutions as static and does not consider how institutions can adapt or change over time. This becomes a problem in the context of customary institutions that may undergo transformations in their roles and functions in the modern era.

Nevertheless, functionalism theory provides a useful framework for understanding the role of institutions in society; these criticisms indicate that this approach has limitations that need to be considered in further research. The follow-up of functionalism theory lies in its application to analyse the role of customary institutions in the context of governance and development, particularly in achieving good governance goals.

Gorontalo is one of the regions located in the northern part of Sulawesi Island, where most of its population is Muslim and has a strong adherence to customs and culture, as well as holding the philosophy of “*Adat Bersendikan Syara’ dan Syara’ Bersendikan Al-Qur’an*” which is firmly upheld by its people. This customary philosophy has significant implications for the role and authority of customary institutions in supporting government policies. In the context of Indonesia, *Syara’* (Islamic law) and the *Qur'an* (customary law) play a very important role in shaping the identity and culture of society. The above is synthesized with research stating that the connection between ancient customs and Islamic teachings in this area is considered very strong, as the community still upholds the philosophy of life, in the sense that the customs practiced by the Gorontalo community are largely sourced from the *Qur'an* (Djakaria, 2012).

Traditional institutions in Gorontalo have legal power through Regional Regulation Number 2 of 2016 concerning the Organization of Traditional Institutions in Gorontalo Province. This legal power serves as the basis for the establishment of traditional institutions down to the district/city level and gives traditional institutions legitimate legal authority in carrying out their roles and powers, as well as synergizing with the government in improving public services. This is supported by the opinion of (Herizal et al., 2020) which states that the new paradigm of public administration formulates a series of idealism and practices related to the use of certain values and norms in community life in the implementation of public service accountability. The strength of tradition based on this life philosophy can enable traditional institutions in Gorontalo to perform their duties and functions as good partners for the

community, thus providing a positive impact on government policies and performance in meeting public services. This is supported by the opinion of (Natalia, 2019) which summarizes that traditional institutions can conduct data collection activities to formulate policies and strategies in supporting the smooth operation and administration of the government for the success and sustainability of government performance.

C. METHOD

The research method used is descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative research is research aimed at understanding what phenomena are experienced by research subjects, such as perceptions, motivations, behaviors, actions, and so on holistically and descriptively in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (Sugiyono, 2020; Miles & Huberman, 2014).

The qualitative approach emphasizes the human element as the research instrument, and by emphasizing the human element as the research instrument, it will facilitate adjustment to the realities occurring in the field with the aim of obtaining in-depth information regarding the role of traditional institutions in improving government performance. This research uses a qualitative approach to produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behaviors.

It uses two data sources, namely primary data sources obtained through observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews from informants, and secondary data sources obtained from literature studies through various methods such as reading books, scientific writing, theses, journals, and various other sources related to this writing.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following will describe the results of the analysis of collaborative governance through the optimization of the functions of traditional institutions using the theory of Collaborative (Ansell & Gash, 2007) and the theory of Functionalism (Durkheim in Amirbayer, 2008).

1. Collaboration Dynamics

The dynamics of collaboration in public services through the functions of traditional institutions reflect the integration between modern government systems and local traditions. This collaboration aims to create a balance between government hierarchy, the function of traditional institutions as guardians of cultural values, and community involvement as service recipients. In practice, this dynamic often faces tensions between the formal authority of the government and the legitimacy of traditional institutions recognized by the community. Therefore, a mutually supportive interaction pattern is needed, where the government plays the role of policy facilitator, traditional institutions as guardians of local values, and the community as active actors in supporting the implementation of public services based on local wisdom.

2. Collaboration Actions

In the implementation of a policy, collaborative actions are the division of roles in the involved structure, namely the government, customary institutions, and the community. Each level collaborates by carrying out its respective role. This is being done to ensure the success of the policy being implemented. The roles of each level will be explained in the diagram below. Where the overall actors have an important role in the framework of public policy. The roles of one and the other complement each other in the implementation of services and policies.

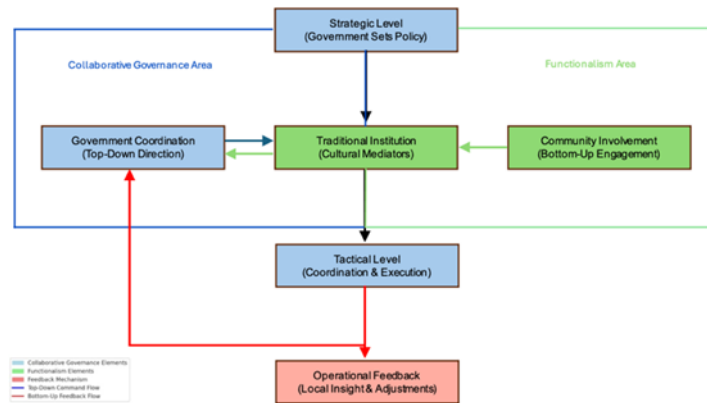


Figure 1. Collaboration Action Diagram

The diagram above illustrates the structure of the collaboration model in public services based on the functions of customary institutions. The following is an explanation for each level in that structure:

a. Strategic Level: Policy Setting and Macro Planning

At this level, the government plays a primary role in formulating collaborative policies based on data and local wisdom values. The strategic role of customary institutions is to provide input on policies that are relevant to the norms and traditions of the local community, so that the resulting policies are not only based on administrative efficiency but also reflect socio-cultural needs. The community, although at this level functions more as information recipients, has the right to voice aspirations through consultative forums. This strategic level demands effective dialogue between actors, as non-inclusive policies risk triggering community resistance.

b. Tactical Level: Coordination and Policy Implementation

At the tactical level, the government acts as the main coordinator ensuring that each actor performs their role according to the plan. Customary institutions act as a direct link to the community, translating formal policies into culturally acceptable language. For example, in environmental conservation programs, customary institutions can play an important role in educating the community through traditional approaches, such as customary rituals or local deliberations. In this implementation, the strong role of customary institutions can help reduce the potential for conflict between the government and the community, as well as enhance the legitimacy of the program.

c. Operational Level: Community Participation in Implementation

At this level, the community becomes the main actor ensuring the success of policy implementation on the ground. The community is responsible for carrying out government programs in daily life, such as maintaining environmental cleanliness, attending community-based health activities, or participating in village deliberations. Customary institutions support success at the operational level by ensuring community involvement in accordance with local values. The government, in turn, provides technical and administrative support, such as funding or training.

3. Roles, Challenges, and Collaboration Strategies

The government has a role as a regulator and facilitator of policies, ensuring that public services operate according to the principles of efficiency and effectiveness. Traditional institutions function as strategic partners that bridge local values with the needs of public services. The community, as service users, acts as driving actors who provide feedback and support the implementation of policies. The synergy among these three actors creates sustainability in the management of public services. For example, in health programs, the

government provides infrastructure and medical personnel, traditional institutions help socialize the program through cultural approaches, and the community actively participates in maintaining environmental cleanliness.

The results of collaborative roles can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public service delivery. This research indicates that good collaboration among various stakeholders can produce more innovative and responsive solutions to community needs. Furthermore, collaboration also contributes to building trust among stakeholders for the sustainability of public initiatives (Molenveld et al. 2021). Moreover, collaboration can help address the complex challenges faced by the government, such as managing limited resources and the need to adapt to social and technological changes. Thus, the role of collaboration in this context is crucial for achieving better outcomes in public service and community development.

Collaboration also has challenges; the main challenge faced is the difference in perspectives and priorities. The government often focuses on quantitative achievement targets, while traditional institutions pay more attention to cultural values that do not always align with modern policies. On the other hand, the community often faces limitations in information and resources, which makes them less optimal in participating. Another challenge is that collaboration requires complex interactions among actors who depend on different interests and priorities, which can complicate the process of achieving common goals. A significant challenge in achieving collaboration is building and maintaining trust among stakeholders, as well as ensuring sufficient resources for collaborative initiatives so that the effectiveness and accountability of stakeholders can be measured. Additionally, rapid modernization can threaten the existence of traditional institutions, necessitating integrated preservation efforts with government policies.

To address these challenges, comprehensive collaboration strategies are needed. First, building inclusive communication between the government, traditional institutions, and the community through regular dialogue forums. These forums can serve as spaces to align perceptions and resolve conflicts. This is supported by the opinion of (Liu et al., 2021), which states that strengthening dialogue forums and aligning policies among the involved organizations, as well as building trust and legitimacy among stakeholders, are key to the implementation of collaborative governance. Second, strengthening the capacity of traditional institutions through training and funding from the government, so they can perform their roles more professionally in supporting public services. This is supported by the opinions of Bardach (1998) and Peters (2015), which state that building existing strategic resources, such as incentive systems and expertise support, is key to achieving sustainable outcomes and ensuring that collaboration can run effectively and provide benefits to the community. Third, empowering the community through literacy forums and local-based training that encourages them to be more active in supporting government programs through digital platforms to facilitate communication and reporting from the community to the government. This becomes an effective supporting tool and a means of feedback from the community regarding a program and policy (Rajala et al., 2019).

To implement cross-sector collaboration can be done through our understanding of how the right model to meet the grassroots aspiration networks and from the top-down flow so that performance governance can improve the process, results, and accountability. The design and implementation of the suggested collaboration model by clarifying the roles that can be played by various sectors from the existing structural levels so that the result can become a tool for decision-making of a program and policy. By strengthening communication and coordination, it will also encourage better results in the community.

E. CONCLUSION

The integrated collaboration structure between the government, customary institutions, and the community not only becomes a strategic approach in a service but also becomes the key to creating sustainable development and can improve the quality of public services. With a collaboration model that integrates an approach based on communication, trust, and empowerment, all challenges can be minimized, and the quality of public services can be optimized. However, to ensure the success of this model, a joint commitment, inclusive policies, and transparent oversight mechanisms are needed.

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