

Does Public Attention Impact Local Government Performance? An Empirical Study in Indonesia

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the effect of public attention on public service quality in Indonesian local governments. The study utilizes secondary data obtained from authorized government agencies in Indonesia. Using purposive sampling method, we generated a set of unbalanced panel data with total of 1,886 observations from 508 local governments during 2016-2019. Our descriptive analysis indicate that public service quality in Indonesia, on average, is already at a high level. Nevertheless, there remain several local governments that face challenges in achieving such high-quality public services. The empirical study conducted on our research data reveals a positive correlation between public attention and the quality of public services. While submitting complaints/reports is one form of public attention, more comprehensive participation, encompassing public attention in program planning, decision-making, and evaluation, holds significant importance. Public attention at all these stages enables the public to contribute valuable insights towards creating more effective and sustainable solutions for enhancing public service quality in Indonesia. Consequently, it is imperative for the government and related institutions to promote extensive and diverse public attention. This can be facilitated through consultation platforms, open meetings, surveys, and other mechanisms that empower the public to directly contribute to the enhancement of public services. Consequently, heightened public participation will exert a more favorable impact on the overall quality of public services in Indonesia.

Keywords: Public Attention, Public Service Quality, Local Government, Indonesia.

Introduction

Ever since the 1998 reforms, the Indonesian government made significant amendments to the constitution to regulate equal distribution of power through decentralization policy (Diprose et al., 2019). A set of laws are issued to regulate local government that started from

the first stage UU/22/1999¹ to prepare for the implementation of decentralization for two years, the second stage is regulated in UU/32/2004² and the third stage is UU/23/2014³ (Rini & Damiati, 2017; Sutopo et al., 2018). The existence of these regulations were meant to strengthen local autonomy so that it can give local governments more authority to manage resources and meet the needs of local people (Holzhacker et al., 2016; Mubarok et al., 2022). This delegation of authority aims to improve coordination between the central and local governments in achieving national goals in which local governments understand better what are needed (Keuffer, 2018). Furthermore, decentralization can also increase effectiveness, efficiency, accountability as well as reduce development inequality (Lewis, 2010). Therefore, the decentralization can improve local governance, public services quality, and public welfare (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019).

Nevertheless, the fact reveals that decentralization has not solved the problems that occur in local governments (Rini & Damiati, 2017). Until now, the performance of the local governments in Indonesia still becomes one of the target of public criticism and has not really fulfilled people's expectation (Juduary & Nabihah, 2015; Utami & Widarjo, 2022). The government has not been able to carry out democratic and participatory governance that prioritizes the interests and satisfaction of the public (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019). According to The Global Economy's assessment, the level of quality in Indonesia's public services has failed to meet the expectations of the general people., this is because in the Southeast Asia region, Indonesia is still in the fifth lowest position. This is not in line with the goal of local autonomy to improve the quality of public services (Keuffer, 2018) as indicated in the following figure:

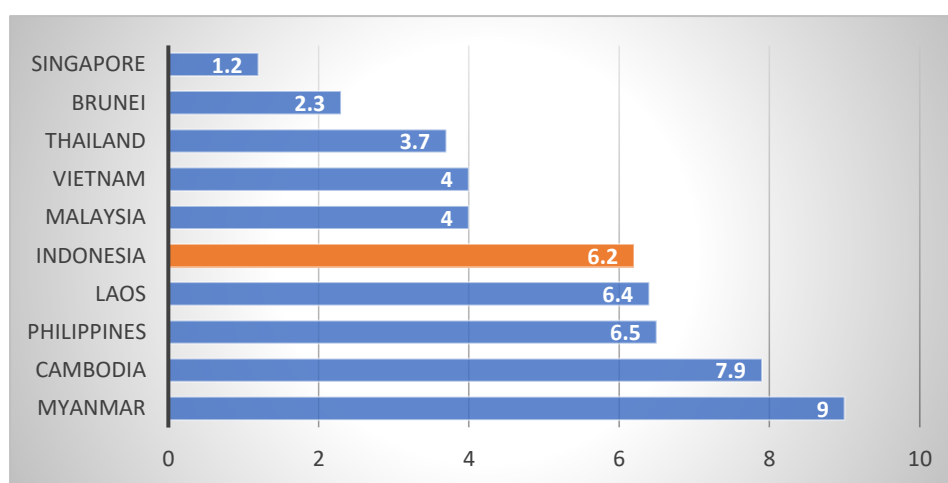


Figure1. The Global Economy Public Services Index in South East Asia

Source: *The Global Economy*

In line with the data, public services still becomes a complex obstacles in public administration and have a bad reputation (Nadjib, 2020). Various issues still exist such as the high costs for education and health, access difficulty by rural groups, and complex documentation procedure. Public services are considered to be identical with lateness, high

¹ Law Number 22 of 1999 concerning Local Government

² Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Local Government

³ Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Local Government

costs, and unfairness (Hadian, 2017). Pambudi & Hidayat (2022) state that the people still face problems related to public services such as the poor quality of public service delivery, unclear complaint mechanisms, dispute resolution and low/non-existent access to public services for vulnerable groups such as poor women and people with disabilities. Therefore, within the implementation of public services, there is a risk of maladministration by the organizers that can harm the service recipient, both indirectly and directly (Fernandes & Fresly, 2017). The current state of public service quality in Indonesia has not fulfilled the anticipated standards, hence deviating from the objectives of regional autonomy. (Judary & Nabihah, 2015; Keuffer, 2018; Rini & Damiati, 2017). Thus, the issue of public services quality in Indonesia is interesting to be studied comprehensively.

The supervision on public administration must be carried out to realize public welfare through services quality improvement, public participation, and ensuring information disclosure (Pambudi et al., 2022). The inclusion of public participation in decision-making processes facilitates the development of more suitable and inventive resolutions to public issues. Consequently, an increased utilization of individuals' input will enhance the quality of public services (Neshkova & Guo, 2012). Public participation as a form of direct oversight by the public and criticism submitted is very important to ensure the quality of public services is in accordance with public expectations (Lima, 2019). Therefore, it is important for the public to monitor the ongoing public services and use their right to express opinions in decision-making processes related to the public interest, either directly or indirectly (Afriyanti et al., 2015). Supervision of public services listed in UU/25/2009 states that the oversight of the execution of public services is conducted externally through two means: public supervision in the form of reports or complaints pertaining to the implementation of public services, and oversight by the ombudsman. (Karyani & Parsa, 2020). This research focuses on the quality of public services and oversight by the public as stipulated in the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman Regulation/26/2017. Through the use of data on the number of complaints reported to the Indonesian Ombudsman related to public services, this study can also evaluate the level of dissatisfaction or problems faced by the public in using public services.

This study provides updated research findings that address the limitations identified in previous studies. First, previous research used a theoretical study approach such as that carried out by (Aritonang, 2017; Karyani & Parsa, 2020; Pambudi et al., 2022; Tangy et al., 2021; Tshiyoyo & Koma, 2011; Van De Wale, 2016). Both previous studies had limited observation coverage which only examined a few local governments (Fernandes & Fresly, 2017; Lanin & Hermanto, 2019; Nadjib, 2020). Third, previous research used a questionnaire survey method which has the potential to cause measurement bias (Chih -Pei et al., 2021; Hadian, 2017; Lanin & Hermanto, 2019; Nulhusna et al., 2017). Fourth, previous research used other factors to find out about the quality of public services (Furqan et al., 2020; Sutaryo et al., 2022; Utami & Widarjo, 2022). Furthermore, this research carries out empirical testing regarding the role of the public attention as measured by the number of public complaints through the Indonesian ombudsman regarding the quality of public services and using observation objects from local governments in Indonesia.

Literature Reviews

Agency Theory

The study adopts the concept of agency theory to explain the occurrence of agency conflict between agents and principals (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) that is also relevant for public sector (Sutaryo et al., 2022). Principal in this case is the public that delegate the

authority to local government as agents to fulfil public interests in the form of good public service performance. The delegation of authority is manifested in the general elections that are held to elect agents, such as regents and mayors with the aim of improving people's welfare through public services. However, once elected, the leaders may prioritize their own interests over public interests (Utami & Widarjo, 2022). This causes agency problems between the public as principals and local leaders as agents (Furqan et al., 2020). This problem is a consequence of a democratic government system with direct elections (Holzhacker et al., 2016). Agency theory highlights the importance of delegating authority from the public to the government in order to provide public services that are responsive and in accordance with the needs of the public. The theory is a relevant foundation in explaining the existing issues and ensuring the implementation of effective and efficient public services. Supervision needs to be conducted in order to improve public welfare through improved government services (Pambudi et al., 2022). For the sake of adequate supervision, the active participation of the people is very important in order to face challenges more effectively (Sari, 2022). Public participation plays an important role in finding more appropriate and innovative solutions to public problems, so involving more input from the people will improve the quality of public services (Neshkova & Guo, 2012).

Public Service Delivery in Indonesian Local Government

Indonesian government mandated most of the public services to the local government that consists of mandatory and secondary affairs, that are assessed annually as a part of Local Government Administration Performance (*Evaluasi Kinerja Penyelenggaraan Pemerintah Daerah, EKPPD*). The basis for this assessment is derived from the legal framework established by Law Number 25 of 2009 and Government Regulation Number 96 of 2012.. These regulations delineate that public services encompass a diverse range of activities conducted by central and local government entities. These activities can take the form of either products or services, with the overarching objective of fulfilling the requirements of the general public. The scope of public services encompasses various components, namely public goods, public services, and administrative services. In accordance with Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning local government, public services are carried out based on the principles of public interest, legal certainty, equality of rights, balance of rights and obligations, participation, openness and accountability. This study focuses on public service variables as measured based on the Minimum Administration System (*Standar Pelayanan Minimal, SPM*). SPM, in accordance with Government Regulation Number 2 of 2018 concerning Minimum Service Standards which states that the requirements for several types of basic service quality which are Mandatory Government affairs must at least be accepted by Citizens. Quality of Basic Services in the regulation refers to the measurement of the quantity and quality of goods and services provided to meet basic needs at a minimum, in accordance with standards that guarantee a decent public life. Basic services themselves refer to public services provided by local governments to meet public needs.

Frameworks

As to the provisions of Law Number 25 of 2009 pertaining to Public Services, it is explicitly stipulated that input, responses, reports, or complaints from the public can be conveyed to the government as service providers, the organizer's direct superiors, related parties, or through mass media (Pambudi and Hidayat, 2022) Service standards public services that have been set can be monitored by the public as service users. If services do not comply

with established standards, the public has the right to submit their complaints to the available complaints unit. In this case, the Indonesian Ombudsman plays a role in handling public complaints regarding public services that do not meet established standards (Pambudi et al., 2022). Local governments need the active participation of the public in order to face challenges more effectively (Sari, 2022). Public participation plays an important role in finding more appropriate and innovative solutions to public problems, so involving more input from citizens will improve the quality of public services (Neshkova & Guo, 2012).

The use of Ombudsman complaints can help see the extent of public attention to local government supervision. By receiving complaints from the public regarding local government actions, the Ombudsman can find out about issues that are important to the public. By analyzing these complaints, the Ombudsman can evaluate local government supervision in accordance with public expectations. This evaluation is useful for providing recommendations and improvements to local governments so that they can provide public services that improve the welfare of the public. The increasing number of complaints submitted to the Ombudsman indicates the quality of the public services provided. These complaints are an indicator of public dissatisfaction with services and can reveal problems in the delivery of public services. The more critical the public is in the implementation of public services provided by local governments, the better the quality of public services will be. There needs to be an in-depth evaluation to identify the root of the problem underlying the complaint. These complaints are important as input for improving and improving the quality of ongoing public services. Public participation plays an important role in finding more suitable and inventive approaches to address societal challenges., so that involving more input from citizens will improve the quality of public services.

Public Attention and Its Effect on Public Service Quality

As a country that adheres to a democratic system, citizen participation is considered very important in promoting good public governance in Indonesia (Lima, 2019). Citizen participation includes various forms such as elections, public discussions, consultations, and access to public information. Through active participation, citizens can play a role in making political decisions, convey their aspirations and interests to the government, and ensure accountability and transparency in public governance (Yavetz & Aharony, 2022). Citizen participation is important in improving public services as a supervisory function. Through active engagement, citizens can provide feedback, report problems, and monitor government performance in providing high quality services. Involving the active participation of the people can help the government face challenges more effectively (Sari, 2022). Public participation also contributes to more appropriate and innovative solutions to public issues so that involving more input from the people can improve the quality of public services (Neshkova & Guo, 2012).

In the Indonesian context, the facilitation of public attention is carried out through a formal governmental institution known as the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. This agency plays role in the National Priorities regarding the handling of external complaints. The public can participate in public services by providing input, responses, reports or complaints to the service provider, the administrator's direct supervisor, related parties, or through mass media (Pambudi & Hidayat, 2022). As service users, the public has the right to monitor the delivery of public service. If the people do not receive services according to the standards set, they have the right to submit their complaints to the available complaint units. In practice,

the Ombudsman will handle public complaints regarding public services that do not meet predetermined standards (Pambudi et al. al., 2022).

Public attention as facilitated by the Ombudsman is expected to be able to realize justice for the people and be a means of control over the implementation of government duties (Triono et al., 2022). As the public has the right to submit complaints, the circumstances can reduce the risks that government agencies do not carry out their obligations properly, violate prohibitions, provide services that do not comply with service standards and carry out maladministrative practices. Several forms of maladministration are stated including protracted delays, not providing services, incompetence, abuse of authority, deviations from procedures, requests for compensation, inappropriateness, partiality, discrimination and conflicts of interest⁴. In this context, public complaints regarding public services manifest a form of control from the perspective of the people and service providers. Thus, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia has an important role in supervising the implementation of public services to achieve good governance (Swastika and Susanto, 2022). Based on the expansion above, and supported by the regulations and previous studies, higher public attention is expected to improve public service quality. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H1. Public attention positively affects public service quality

Research Method

Population and sample

The population of the study is all District/City local governments in Indonesia with a total of 514 local governments according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The research period is 2016-2019 fiscal year. The sample selection process is carried out using purposive sampling. During the process of sample selection, certain local governments are excluded based on specific criteria. These criteria include the absence of financial statements that have undergone auditing by the Supreme Audit Board (BPK), incomplete availability of public service quality data for the years 2016 to 2019, and failure to provide comprehensive Ombudsman complaint data.

Table 1.

Sample Selection Process

Description	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Total local government	514	514	514	514	2056
Local governments with unaudited financial statement	6	6	6	6	24
Local government with incomplete public service data	28	32	46	40	146
Local government with incomplete public attention (Ombudsman complaint) data	0	0	0	0	0
Total Samples	480	476	462	468	1886

Data and Sources

This study uses secondary data obtained from the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the public service quality, the Ombudsman for the public attention, audited local government

⁴ Ombudsman Regulation Number 26 of 2017

financial statements (LKPD) for financial variables, and the Central Statistics Bureau for the demographic variables (local government geography and type). The nature of the data that this study uses is panel data that combines time series with cross-section data.

Research Variables

The dependent variable of the study is public service quality while the independent variable is public attention. The study additionally incorporates other control factors, namely local government size, local government capital expenditure, local government geography, and local government type. Overall variables and variable measurements carried out in this study are as follows:

Table 2.

Operational Definition of Research Variables

Variable	Notation	Measurement	Reference
Dependent Variable			
Public service quality	SPM	Minimum Service Standards (SPM) <i>assessment</i> scores by the Ministry of Internal Affairs	(Furqan et al., 2020; Karyani & Parsa, 2020; Sutaryo et al., 2022)
Independent Variable			
Public attention	COMPLAINT	Number of public complaints to the Ombudsman	(Pambudi et al., 2022; Triono et al., 2022)
Control Variables			
Local government size	SIZE	Natural logarithm value of total local government assets in one fiscal year	(Furqan et al., 2020; Sutaryo et al., 2022; Utami & Widarjo, 2022)
Local government capital expenditure	EXPNDTR	The natural logarithm value of the total local government capital expenditure in one fiscal year	(Furqan et al., 2020; Sutaryo et al., 2022; Utami & Widarjo, 2022)
Local government geography	GEO	<i>dummy</i> , 1= local government located on the island of Java, 0= local government located outside the island of Java	(Furqan et al., 2020; Sutaryo et al., 2022) and (Suharyanto et al., 2018)
Local government type	TYPE	<i>dummy</i> , 1= Java Island, 0= local government outside Java	(Sutaryo et al., 2022; Sutopo et al., 2018)

Data Analysis

The initial step in our data analysis involves conducting a descriptive statistics study. This entails examining the distribution of frequencies, as well as calculating measures such as the average, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation values. Additionally, we analyze

the relationship between variables by doing a correlation test. In order to evaluate the hypothesis, the primary analysis method employed is panel data regression analysis. The general regression model is expressed as follows:

$$SPM = \alpha + \beta_1 COMPLAIN + \beta_2 SIZE + \beta_3 EXPNDTR + \beta_4 GEO + \beta_5 TYPE + e$$

Information :

SPM	= Public Service Quality
COMPLAINT	= Public Attention
SIZE	= Local Government Size
EXPNDTR	= Local Government Capital Expenditure
GEO	= Local Government Geography
TYPE	= Local Government Type

Results And Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

We perform descriptive statistics to obtain general summary of the research phenomenon based on our research data. The result is presented as follows:

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs	Mean	std . Dev .	Min	Max
SPM	1886	2,757	0,524	0,207	4
COMPLAIN	1886	232.994	122.661	4	831
REVENUE	1886	27.936	0.486	26.963	29.802
EXPNDTR	1886	26.376	0.502	24.542	28.644
Variables	Obs	Dummy 0		Dummy 1	
		frequency	Presentations	frequency	Presentations
GEO	1886	1407	74.60%	479	25.40%
TYPE	1886	1527	80.97%	359	19.03%

Notes: SPM = Public Service Quality; COMPLAINT = Public Attention; SIZE = Local Government Size; EXPNDTR = Local Government Capital Expenditure; GEO = Local Government Geography; TYPE = Local Government Type

Descriptive statistics result for the dependent variable reveals that the lowest score of public service quality is at 0.27 (very low), while the highest SPM score is 4 (very high). And the average SPM score is 2.757. With these acquisitions, the average acquisition of SPM in Indonesia has a high rating. but there are still local governments that obtain small SPM scores. This observation indicates that the provision of public services in Indonesia has not met the desired standards as seen by the general populace..

In terms of the independent variable, specifically the number of complaints directed towards the Ombudsman, Bolangomondow Regency reported the lowest number of complaints in 2016, whilst Metro City had the largest number of complaints during the same year. The data reveals that there was an average of 232,994 complaints, indicating a significant level of public concern regarding the oversight of public services offered by individual local governments.

For the control variables in this study, there are income, spending, geography and type of local government. The average revenue of local governments is 27,825 or IDR

1,548,174,313,957.41. In 2017, the West Pakpak district had the lowest income of IDR 512,671,276,740.76, while the City of Surabaya had the greatest income of IDR 8,765,153,020,782.67. Local government spending has an average of 26,376 or Rp. 328,724,210,943.61, for the lowest capital expenditure by Biak Numfor Regency in 2017 of Rp. 45,531,533,245.00 and The City of Surabaya had the highest valuation in 2019, reaching Rp. 2,754,304,824,082.00.. For the geographical location of the local governments as many as 1,407 are on the island of Java and 479 outside the island of Java . The types of local governments studied were 1,527 municipal local governments and 359 regency local governments.

Correlation Test

We also perform correlation test among the research variables. The result is presented as follows:

Table 4.
Correlation Test

Variables	SPM	COMPLAINTS	REVENUE	EXPNDTR	TYPE	GEO
(1) SPM	1,000					
(2) COMPLAINTS	0.119***	1,000				
(3) REVENUE	0.235***	-0.024	1,000			
(4) EXPNDTR	0.112***	-0.037*	0.811***	1,000		
(5) TYPE	0.148***	0.036	-0.097***	-0.044*	1,000	
(6) GEOs	0.364***	0.153***	0.568***	0.399***	0.089***	1,000

Notes: SPM = Public Service Quality; COMPLAINT = Public Attention; SIZE = Local Government Size; EXPNDTR = Local Government Capital Expenditure; GEO = Local Government Geography; TYPE = Local Government Type

**** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$*

The table above shows that the correlation between variables, service quality (SPM) is positively correlated with the number of complaints (COMPLAIN), regional income (REVENUE), local government capital expenditure (EXPNDTR), type of local government (TYPE) and local government geography (GEO).

Regression Results

The main analysis of our study is performed with panel data regression analysis to test the research hypothesis. The result is reported as follows:

Table 5.

Hypothesis Testing Using Panel Data Regression Analysis

Y_SPM	Coef.	St. Err .	t- value	p- value	[95% Conf	Intervals]	Sig
COMPLAINTS	0,000	0,000	6.60	0,000	0.001	0.001	***
REVENUE	0.094	0.043	2.20	0.028	0.010	0.178	**
EXPNDTR	-0.047	0.039	-1.22	0.224	-0.124	0.029	
TYPE	0.166	0.022	7.68	0,000	0.123	0.208	***
GEO	0.362	0.022	16.12	0,000	0.318	0.406	***
Constant	0968	0.584	1.66	0.097	-0.176	2.113	*
Year	Fixed	Yes					
effects							
Mean dependent var	2,757		SD dependent var		0.524		
R- squared	0.266		number of obs		1886		
F- test	139,183		Prob > F		0,000		
Akaike crit . (AIC)	2347.457		Bayesian crit . (BIC)		2397.337		
<i>Notes: SPM = Public Service Quality; COMPLAINT = Public Attention; SIZE = Local Government Size; EXPNDTR = Local Government Capital Expenditure; GEO = Local Government Geography; TYPE = Local Government Type</i>							
<i>*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1</i>							

Based on the results of the t test above, it is explained that the number of complaints to the Indonesian ombudsman has a positive influence on the quality of public services with a p- value of 0.001. This shows that the greater public participation in local government services, the better the quality of services provided (Lima, 2019; Neshkova & Guo, 2012). The increase in the number of complaints forwarded to the ombudsman as a result of increasing public participation reflects the community's push to be more active in monitoring and evaluating the quality of public services in Indonesia (Swastika & Susanto, 2022). This shows that the public does not only receive services passively, but also plays an active role in revealing problems and imperfections that exist in public services (Ispriyarso & Badriyah, 2021). A quick and proactive response to these complaints by the government and related institutions can help improve the quality of service according to the aspirations and needs of the public (Ispriyarso & Badriyah, 2021). The conclusion that the number of Ombudsman complaints has an effect on the quality of public services is supported by previous research (Ispriyarso & Badriyah, 2021; Pambudi et al. al., 2022; Swastika & Susanto, 2022; Syafingi et al., 2023).

Active public participation in the matter of government functions provides significant benefits for local governments. Apart from giving every citizen the opportunity to exercise their rights, it also provides the government with a rich source of information to make informed decisions (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). Increased participation, trust and better delivery of public services are the result of collaboration between government and society. The people will feel encouraged to provide input, confident that their contributions will influence policies made by government agencies (Neshkova & Guo, 2012). In terms of public administration that is oriented towards the public interest, the circumstances can create a better, more dignified and prosperous society (Lanin & Hermanto, 2019) as the importance of providing efficient public services and understanding public needs has been recognized (Andrews & Turner, 2017). Therefore, the people are encouraged to participate in conveying

their expectations for public services (Madumo, 2014). In this context, participatory governance becomes one of the a key instruments to enable participation and representation of the people that suffer social and economic issues. A full civic experience is the ultimate goal, although this is a complex challenge for both society and government (Lima, 2019). As a supervisor of public service providers, the Indonesian Ombudsman plays an important role in assessing and checking the level of government compliance with public service standards. The Indonesian Ombudsman also plays a role in improving the quality of public services through completing public reports on public service providers (Pambudi & Hidayat, 2022).

Conclusion

This study aims to gather empirical information concerning the influence of public attention on the quality of public services in local governments in Indonesia. In general, it is evident that the average quality of public services is already at a high level. Nevertheless, a significant number of local governments continue to face challenges in attaining exemplary levels of public service delivery. The analysis of empirical study data processing indicates a positive correlation between public attention and the quality of public services provided by local governments. The higher the public participate in governance through submitting complaints, the higher the performance of local government. Although filing a complaint is one form of participation, more comprehensive participation including public involvement in program planning, decision making and evaluation is also very important. Participating in all these stages allows the public to provide valuable input in designing more effective and sustainable solutions to improve the quality of public services in Indonesia. Therefore, it is important for the government and related institutions to encourage broad and diverse public participation. This can be realized through consultation platforms, open meetings, surveys and other mechanisms that enable the public to contribute directly to improving public services. Thus, the more active public participation will have a more positive impact on the quality of public services in Indonesia as a whole.

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