Policy of The Asahan District Government, North Sumatera Province and its Implications for Improving Public Services

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the policies of the Asahan Regency Government, North Sumatra, in improving the quality of public services and their impact on community welfare. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, this study utilized interviews, observations, and document analysis to evaluate policy implementation in the health, education, and agriculture sectors. The results of the study indicate that although there has been progress in improving infrastructure and services, accessibility of services in rural areas remains a major challenge due to limited infrastructure and uneven distribution of services. Community participation in the policy process is still limited, although initiatives such as public forums and surveys have been carried out. On the other hand, the use of technology such as e-government has begun to show positive results in improving service efficiency, but the challenge of digital literacy in rural areas needs to be addressed immediately. This study recommends increasing the distribution of infrastructure, strengthening digital literacy, and involving the community more inclusively in the policy process. With these steps, it is hoped that the quality of public services can be improved, thereby encouraging the creation of more equitable welfare in Asahan Regency.

Keywords: Public Policy, Public Services, Asahan Regency.

INTRODUCTION

The Asahan Regency Government, located in North Sumatra Province, has a strategic role in advancing public welfare through policies that touch various sectors of life. Effective and efficient public services are one of the important aspects in creating a clean and accountable government and improving the quality of life of the community (Ziller & Andres, 2021). Therefore, the policy of the Asahan Regency government in improving the quality of public services needs to be a primary concern in regional development efforts.

Improving the provision of public services is the initial step in bureaucratic development reform which aims to create a clean and responsible government (Rochmansjah, 2019). Implementation of

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and utilization of human resources and social media can improve the quality of public services (Chalirafi et al., 2023). In addition, an approach that combines various methods such as classical public administration, new public management, and digital governance can increase the effectiveness of public services (Lyalikov, 2023).

Improving the quality of public services is also closely related to how local government policies can respond to community needs. In Asahan Regency, which consists of urban and rural areas, the problem of service accessibility is one of the main issues (https://bapperida.tanjungbalaikota.go.id/). Differences in social, economic, and geographical conditions in each sub-district affect the distribution pattern and effectiveness of public services provided by the government (Colley & Brown, 2015). In this case, it is important to see to what extent local government policies can reach all levels of society fairly and evenly.

On the other hand, good policies in public services do not only rely on government capacity, but also involve active community participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes of policies (Kgobe et al., 2023; Rijal, 2023). Various methods of community participation have been developed, but the lack of consistency in the application of these methods can create uncertainty (Pedersen et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the people of Asahan Regency are involved in decision-making regarding public services and how this participation mechanism can be improved. In the context of public service improvement policies, Asahan Regency also needs to pay attention to aspects of transparency and accountability in managing the budget and other resources. This is related to transparency and accountability initiatives having varying impacts on the quality and accessibility of public services as a whole (Joshi, 2013). This transparency is expected to increase public trust in the government and strengthen the legitimacy of the policies implemented.

In Asahan Regency, several development policies have been implemented well, but challenges in achieving broader goals are still visible. For example, in the health sector, although there have been programs to improve facilities and medical personnel, access to health in several remote areas is still limited. Likewise in the education sector, although there has been an increase in educational infrastructure, the quality of teaching and equity of education are still homework that has not been fully completed. Therefore, it is important to see whether existing policies are effective enough or whether changes need to be made to improve the quality of public services. As one of the areas with great potential in the agricultural and industrial sectors, Asahan Regency has advantages that can be utilized to support improving the quality of public services. However, the utilization of this potential must be carried out with the right policies and can answer the needs of the community. One of the factors that influences the success of the policy to improve public services is the extent to which the Asahan Regency government can optimize the use of technology in delivering services. With the right use of technology, the government can achieve the goal of better and more transparent governance (Widianto, 2023).

This study will examine various policies that have been implemented and their impact on the quality of services received by the community. This study aims to provide a clearer picture of the challenges, opportunities, and recommendations that can be taken to improve the effectiveness of these policies. This study will also identify factors that influence the success or failure of policy implementation, as well as

provide suggestions for future improvements. Overall, this study is expected to provide a significant contribution to the understanding of local government policies in the context of Asahan Regency, as well as provide recommendations that can be used to improve the quality of public services in the area. Thus, the ultimate goal of a policy to improve public services that are equitable, effective, and in accordance with community needs can be achieved, which will ultimately encourage the creation of public welfare in Asahan Regency.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the policies of the Asahan Regency government in improving the quality of public services and their impact on community welfare. The qualitative approach was chosen so that researchers can deeply understand the policies implemented, their implementation process, and their impact on the community. The case study focuses on Asahan Regency as a relevant research unit, taking into account the social, economic, and geographical characteristics of the area.

Data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with government officials and service recipients, both in rural and urban areas, to explore their perceptions, experiences, and views on public service policies. Observations were conducted to directly observe the implementation of public services and interactions between the government and the community, while document analysis was conducted on related policies such as Regional Regulations, development planning documents, and annual reports of related agencies.

The data analysis process was carried out inductively using thematic analysis. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed to identify key themes related to government policies in improving the quality of public services. This analysis aims to describe the factors that influence the success or challenges in policy implementation, as well as their impact on the quality of services received by the community.

This study also evaluates the effectiveness of the policy by considering the aspects of transparency, accountability, and community participation. The assessment is based on accessibility, justice, and welfare achieved by the policy. The results of the study are expected to contribute to improving public service policies in Asahan Regency and provide recommendations to improve the quality and effectiveness of public services that are more responsive to community needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the policies of the Asahan Regency Government in improving the quality of public services and their impact on community welfare. Based on data obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, several important findings were found related to policy implementation, challenges faced, and the effectiveness of policies that have been implemented. The following are the research results obtained from the data analysis conducted.

1. Implementation of Public Service Policy

The Asahan Regency Government has implemented a number of policies that focus on improving the quality of public services in various sectors, such as health, education, and agriculture. One policy that is considered effective is the provision of health facilities in urban and rural areas, although access to these facilities is still limited in some remote areas. In the education sector, there has been a significant increase in infrastructure, but the quality of teaching and equity of education are still major challenges.

Table 1: Implementation of Public Service Policy in Asahan Regency

Sector	Implemented Policies	Challenge
Health	Improvement of health facilities and medical personnel	Limited access in remote areas
Education	Improving educational infrastructure	Quality of teaching and equity of education
Agriculture	Improvement of irrigation infrastructure and fertilizer distribution	Limitations of extension services to farmers

The table explains the policies and challenges in three main sectors: health, education, and agriculture. In the health sector, the policies implemented are improving health facilities and medical personnel to improve public services, especially in areas in need. However, the main challenge is limited access in remote areas which hinders the distribution of health services. In the education sector, the government is trying to improve educational infrastructure, such as building schools and other supporting facilities, to create a better learning environment. However, challenges in the form of teaching quality and education equity are still obstacles to creating an inclusive education system. Meanwhile, in the agriculture sector, the policies implemented include improving irrigation infrastructure and fertilizer distribution to support agricultural productivity. However, limited extension to farmers is an obstacle to the application of modern agricultural technology and practices. Synergy between policies and strategic steps is needed to overcome the challenges in each of these sectors.

2. Accessibility and Fairness of Services

Accessibility of public services is one of the main issues in Asahan Regency, with differences in social, economic, and geographical conditions affecting the distribution of services. Urban areas tend to get better services, while people in rural areas face obstacles in accessing public services such as health and education. This shows that there is inequality in the distribution of public services received by the community.

Graph 1: Level of Accessibility of Public Services in Urban and Rural Areas
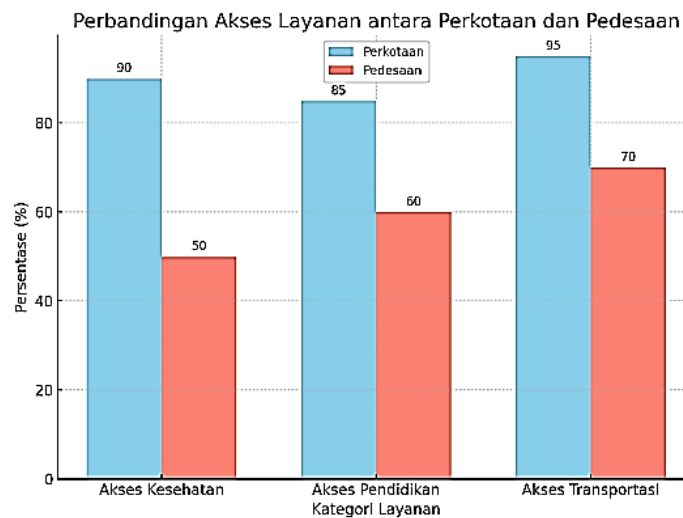
This graph illustrates the differences in the level of accessibility of public services between urban and rural areas in Asahan Regency. The data presented in this graph shows that people in urban areas have easier access to services such as health facilities, education, and public transportation compared to people in rural areas. In urban areas, health facilities are easier to reach with the presence of nearby hospitals and health centers. Meanwhile, in rural areas, people often have to travel far to get adequate health services. Likewise with access to education, where more complete and quality schools are generally located in urban areas.

In addition, transportation infrastructure in urban areas is much better than in rural areas, which often requires people to face difficulties in mobility. These obstacles cause inequalities in the quality of life and welfare of the community, given that access to essential public services is very limited for some residents in rural areas. It is important to look closely at the data presented in this graph, which provides a clear picture of the disparity between the accessibility of public services in the two areas. Improving infrastructure and equalizing the distribution of public services are important steps that need to be considered by the Asahan Regency government to ensure equal access for all people, both in urban and rural areas.

3. Community Participation in Policy

Community participation in the planning and evaluation of public service policies is still limited. Although there have been several initiatives to involve the community in decision-making, the implementation of consistent participation methods remains a challenge. Communities in Asahan Regency want more active involvement in the policy process to ensure that the policies implemented are in accordance with their needs.

Table 2: Level of Community Participation in the Policy Process

Forms of Participation	Participation Rate (%)	Constraint
Interviews with government officials	65%	Limited time and resources
Public discussion forum	50%	Lack of facilities and accessibility
Survey or poll	75%	Not evenly distributed across the region

The table illustrates the form of community participation, level of participation, and obstacles faced in its implementation. Interviews with government officials had a participation rate of 65% and aimed to obtain information directly from related parties, but faced obstacles in the form of limited time and resources. Public discussion forums, with a participation rate of 50%, became a place for the community to discuss and share opinions on important issues. However, its implementation was often hampered by a lack of facilities and accessibility, which limited community participation. Surveys or polls showed the highest participation rate, at 75%, because they allowed the community to express their views widely. However, obstacles in the form of uneven implementation across regions could reduce the representation of survey results. Overall, the level of community participation was still influenced by logistical challenges, facilities, and affordability, so efforts were needed to improve participation to be more inclusive and equitable.

4. Effectiveness of Using Technology in Services

The use of technology in public services, such as e-government, has had a positive impact in increasing administrative efficiency and facilitating access to information. The community in Asahan Regency has shown a positive response to this initiative, although challenges related to limited digital literacy in some communities still need to be overcome. The use of technology such as public service applications and digital platforms is expected to accelerate the service process and increase transparency.

DISCUSSION

Improving the quality of public services in Asahan Regency is one of the main focuses of local government policy. Effective and efficient public services are essential to improving public welfare and creating a clean and accountable government. In this context, the Asahan Regency government has implemented various policies in important sectors such as health, education, and agriculture. However, the

implementation of these policies still faces various challenges, including issues of accessibility, service quality, and equitable distribution of services throughout the region.

1. Health and Education Sector

In the health sector, the Asahan Regency government has tried to improve health facilities in urban and rural areas. Although there have been improvements, access to health services in remote areas is still a major problem. This is in line with research findings by Ellis (2008) which emphasizes that GPs working in very remote areas require specialized training and a different mix of skills compared to their counterparts in urban areas. This study shows that despite government efforts to build health infrastructure, geographical disparities remain a major obstacle to improving the quality of health services in certain areas.

In the education sector, although there has been an increase in educational infrastructure, the quality of teaching and equity of education remain challenges Solihin & Sara (2021)in his research on the education system in rural areas also showed that although educational infrastructure has improved, the uneven quality of teaching and curriculum in remote areas causes a gap in learning opportunities between urban and rural communities. Therefore, in addition to improving infrastructure, education policies in Asahan Regency must also focus on improving the quality of teaching and equalizing the quality of education throughout the region.

2. Accessibility of Public Services

Accessibility of public services is one of the main issues in Asahan Regency, reflecting the gap between urban and rural areas. Wilkinson (2019) in his research on accessibility of public services revealed that inequality in the distribution of infrastructure, such as roads, public transportation, and health facilities, is a major obstacle in ensuring equal distribution of services. The same thing also happened in Asahan Regency, where urban communities have easier access to public services compared to rural communities who face difficulties in mobility and access to basic facilities.

3. Community Participation in Decision Making

Public participation in the public policy process is a very important element in creating a transparent and accountable government. Kgobe et al. (2023) in his research on community participation in public policy emphasized the importance of involving the community in policy planning, implementation, and evaluation. In Asahan Regency, although there have been several forms of community participation, such as public forums and surveys, there are still limitations in terms of inclusiveness and accessibility for all levels of society.

Pedersen et al. (2021) also showed that consistent participation methods are essential to avoid uncertainty in policy implementation. They suggested that the government provide more platforms that are easily accessible to people in various regions, especially in rural areas. This can improve the quality of policies implemented and ensure that they truly reflect the needs of the community.

4. Utilization of Technology in Public Services

The use of technology in public services, such as e-government and other digital platforms, has a huge impact on increasing administrative efficiency and service transparency.Widianto (2023) in his research on the use of technology in local government revealed that digital technology allows people to

access information and public services more easily and quickly. The Asahan Regency Government has begun implementing several technology initiatives to improve public services, such as public service applications and e-government systems.

However, challenges related to digital literacy among the community, especially in rural areas, are still a major obstacle. Therefore, to ensure that the benefits of technology can be felt by all levels of society, the government needs to focus on improving digital literacy through training and counseling, especially in areas that still have less access to technology.

CONCLUSION

Improving the quality of public services in Asahan Regency is an important priority to support community welfare and create an accountable government. Despite progress in the health and education sectors, geographical disparities in accessibility and quality of services remain a major challenge. The same thing also happens in the accessibility of public services in general, which are more easily accessible to urban communities compared to rural communities. In addition, although technology is starting to be utilized to support service efficiency, low digital literacy in remote areas limits its positive impact. Community participation in policy decision-making also still needs to be improved to ensure inclusiveness and responsiveness of policies to community needs.

To overcome these challenges, the Asahan Regency government needs to accelerate the distribution of infrastructure and improve the quality of services, especially in remote areas. In the health and education sectors, special training is needed for health workers and teachers in remote areas to address the disparity in service quality. In addition, expanding the community participation platform and increasing digital literacy through intensive training will support transparency and efficiency of technology-based policies. With this approach, equal distribution of public services can be achieved, ensuring that all people, both in urban and rural areas, feel the benefits of sustainable development.

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