Analyzing the Influence of Policy Networks on the Quality of Public Policy in West Java Province (2024–2025)

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Abstract : Policy networks are an important factor in improving the quality of public policy, as they involve interaction and collaboration between the government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academics, and the public. This study aims to analyze the influence of policy networks on the quality of public policy in West Java Province in the 2024–2025 period. A quantitative approach was used with survey methods and multiple linear regression analysis, supported by documentation studies and semi-structured interviews. The results of the study indicate that limited collaboration between actors, uneven distribution of resources and information, variations in the capacity of non-governmental actors, and weak coordination and communication mechanisms are the main obstacles that affect the effectiveness, innovation, and responsiveness of public policy. This study concludes that strengthening policy networks through collaborative forums, increasing actor capacity, sustainable coordination mechanisms, regulatory simplification, and collective learning can improve the quality of public policy. These findings provide theoretical contributions to the study of policy networks as well as practical recommendations for more effective and participatory governance.

Keywords: policy network, quality of public policy, collaboration, West Java Province

1. Introduction

Quality public services are a crucial indicator of successful governance, which hinges on both effective and responsive governance. Effective governance ensures that government decisions benefit the public, while responsive governance ensures that citizens' needs and concerns are addressed (Ilhami, 2023). Furthermore, the quality of public policy is significantly influenced by public policy networks, which facilitate collaboration between various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private entities. These networks enhance the exchange of ideas and resources, ultimately shaping more effective policies (Ilhami, 2023). Furthermore, governance capacity plays a crucial role, encompassing the government's ability to design and implement effective policies and programs, ensuring that public services meet public demands (Hanafiah et al., 2021).

The interaction of governance capacity, effective and responsive governance, and collaborative networks is crucial for delivering quality public services. Policy networks, according to Rhodes (1997), are structures of interdependent relationships between government and non-government actors, where information, resources, and influence are distributed to support the process of making, implementing, and evaluating public policies. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) emphasize that network patterns influence the effectiveness of coordination, information exchange, and policy innovation.

In West Java, the 2024–2025 period presents complex challenges for public policy, particularly in fostering innovation and ensuring equitable access to public services. Integrating innovative approaches, such as digitalization and community engagement, is crucial for improving service quality and accessibility (Ulfa & Frinaldi, 2025). Furthermore, effective cross-sectoral coordination is crucial, as it enables diverse stakeholders to collaborate toward common goals, optimizing resources and expertise (Ilhami, 2023). Strengthening accountability and transparency is also crucial for building trust and ensuring equitable policy implementation, which can be achieved through citizen participation and oversight mechanisms (Engkus, 2023). Policy networks serve as strategic instruments to enhance actor engagement and collaboration, ultimately improving the

quality of public policy (Ilhami, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these networks in influencing policy outcomes requires systematic empirical research to fully understand their dynamics and impacts in West Java (Sukandi, A, 2024).

This study of policy networks in West Java Province aims to assess their impact on the quality of public policy during 2024–2025. Using policy network analysis, researchers can identify key stakeholders and their roles, which is crucial for understanding how these networks shape effective governance (Ifah et al., 2012). High-quality public policy is crucial for addressing societal needs, and the collaborative nature of network governance can enhance policy responsiveness and innovation (Fkun et al., 2023). Furthermore, fostering policy innovation is crucial for developing creative solutions that meet evolving societal demands (Klijn et al., 1995). Ultimately, responsive governance, characterized by the ability of government institutions to address citizen concerns, will be a significant outcome of this study, promoting trust in public administration. These findings are expected to contribute to theoretical advancements in governance studies, leading to more effective, innovative, and responsive public policies in the region.

2. Literature review

1. Policy Network

Policy networks are an analytical framework that emphasizes that public policy is formed through interactions between various interdependent actors, including government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academics, and the public. Rhodes (1997) states that policy networks involve the distribution of information, resources, and influence between actors, which form relatively stable patterns of relationships in the public policy process. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) add that network characteristics, such as membership structure, intensity of interaction, distribution of power, and stability of relationships, determine the network's ability to support policy coordination, collaboration, and innovation.

Policy networks also facilitate cross-sector collaboration, information exchange, and shared learning, which are essential for improving the effectiveness of public policies. An inclusive, participatory, and transparent network structure enables various actors to contribute optimally to policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

2. Quality of Public Policy

The quality of public policy refers to the extent to which a policy is able to achieve its intended goals effectively, efficiently, fairly, and responsively to societal needs (Howlett, 2014). Indicators of public policy quality include implementation effectiveness, relevance to social issues, stakeholder engagement, innovation in the policy process, and transparency and accountability in decision-making.

In the context of policy networks, the quality of public policy is strongly influenced by the network's ability to facilitate coordination between actors, information distribution, and resource integration. Effective networks support decision-making that is evidence-based, participatory, and adaptive to changing social and economic conditions. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that strong collaboration between actors within a network can enhance the legitimacy and sustainability of public policy.

The integration of policy networks and public policy quality provides an important foundation for analyzing how interactions between actors can influence the effectiveness and relevance of policies in West Java Province during the 2024–2025 period. This analysis provides a basis for understanding the causal relationship between network structure and the quality of the resulting public policies.

3. Research methods

This study uses a quantitative approach with survey methods and regression analysis to measure the influence of policy networks on the quality of public policy. This approach was chosen to obtain empirical data that allows for the analysis of causal relationships between policy network variables and public policy quality indicators in West Java

Province. The study population includes local government officials, relevant agency officials, NGOs, the private sector, and academics involved in the process of formulating and implementing public policy in West Java Province. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique, selecting actors directly involved in the policy network, with the number of respondents adjusted to be representative for statistical analysis.

4. Research result

The results of the empirical problem identification obtained in the field are as follows, among others:

Interaction between stakeholders in policy networks in West Java remains limited and sectoral. Local governments, NGOs, the private sector, and academics tend to work separately, resulting in suboptimal information exchange and coordination of public policy programs. This hinders the creation of synergies that could enhance policy effectiveness.

Resources, data, and information related to public policy are not distributed evenly among actors in the network. The dominance of local governments in decision-making limits access for non-governmental actors, thus minimizing their contribution to the quality of public policy.

Some non-governmental actors, including NGOs and the private sector, face limited technical capacity and resources to participate effectively in policy networks. These limitations impact their low contribution to innovation and the relevance of public policy.

Coordination between actors in policy networks remains ad hoc or limited to formal meetings. The lack of regular and transparent communication hinders collective learning, policy innovation, and integrated problem-solving.

The above obstacles have direct implications for the quality of public policy, as evidenced by low implementation effectiveness, limited program innovation, lack of responsiveness to community needs, and low policy accountability and transparency. In other words, weak policy networks directly impact the quality of public policy in West Java Province.

Discussion

Research findings indicate that the policy network in West Java Province for the 2024–2025 period still faces various obstacles that impact the quality of public policy. One major issue is limited collaboration between actors, which results in suboptimal information exchange, program coordination, and collective learning. Rhodes (1997) emphasized that an effective policy network requires intensive interaction between actors and a balanced distribution of information so that policy decisions reflect shared interests. When interaction between actors is weak, the network's ability to produce effective and responsive policies is limited. The West Java Provincial Government needs to establish or strengthen a policy network forum involving all stakeholders, including relevant agencies, NGOs, the private sector, academics, and the community. This forum should serve as a space for coordination, consultation, and regular dialogue, thereby enhancing information exchange, cross-sector collaboration, and alignment of public policy programs.

Furthermore, unequal distribution of resources and access to information reinforces the unequal roles between government and non-government actors, such as NGOs, the private sector, and academics. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) assert that power structures within networks influence participation and policy legitimacy. The dominance of local governments diminishes the contributions of other actors to policy quality, including innovation and program relevance. The technical, managerial, and resource capacities of non-government actors (NGOs, the private sector, and academics) need to be enhanced through training, mentoring, and technical guidance. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that actors with adequate capacity can participate strategically, contribute to innovation, and enhance the effectiveness of public policy.

The varying capacities of non-governmental actors are also a limiting factor. Ansell and Gash (2008) emphasize that effective collaboration requires actors with the technical capacity, resources, and analytical skills to participate strategically. Without adequate capacity, non-governmental actors contribute symbolically, resulting in

suboptimal public policy quality, both in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Collaborative mechanisms need to be established in a formal, transparent, and sustainable manner. Every stage of the policy process—from planning to implementation to evaluation—must involve networked actors with clear lines of communication. This encourages innovation, responsiveness, and accountability in public policy.

Weak coordination and communication mechanisms within networks also impact low innovation and policy transparency. Routine and transparent collaborative mechanisms are needed to strengthen collective learning, the exchange of good practices, and innovation in the policy process. In other words, an inclusive, communicative, and sustainable network structure positively impacts the quality of public policy. Regulations supporting the participation of non-governmental actors must be strengthened to expand collaboration and enhance the legitimacy of policy networks. Simplifying bureaucracy will facilitate non-governmental actors' optimal contribution to decision-making.

Overall, these findings indicate that the quality of public policy in West Java is significantly influenced by the quality of policy networks. Inclusive, collaborative, transparent, and capacity-based networks enable better coordination, program innovation, and policies that are responsive to community needs. This analysis confirms the causal relationship between policy networks and public policy quality, as proposed in the theories of Rhodes, Marsh & Rhodes, and Ansell & Gash. Mechanisms for evaluation, reflection on practice, and exchange of good practices between actors must be implemented routinely and institutionally. This collective learning strengthens policy networks, improves coordination, and encourages innovative and adaptive public policies to the needs of the West Java community.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that policy networks significantly influence the quality of public policy in West Java Province for the 2024–2025 period. Empirical findings indicate that limited collaboration between actors, uneven distribution of resources and information, varying capacities of non-governmental actors, and weak coordination and communication mechanisms are key barriers affecting the effectiveness, innovation, and responsiveness of public policy.

The research findings confirm that strengthening policy networks through collaborative forums, increasing actor capacity, sustainable coordination mechanisms, simplifying regulations, and institutionalizing shared learning can improve the quality of public policy. With inclusive, participatory, and collaborative networks, coordination between actors is more effective, policy innovation is more developed, and public policy becomes more responsive to community needs. This research provides theoretical contributions to the study of policy networks while offering practical recommendations for improving governance in West Java Province.

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