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## The Public Communication Model of the Government of Gorontalo Province as a Strategy for Enhancing Public Trust from a Governance Perspective

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### Abstract

This study examines how the Government of Gorontalo Province operationalizes public communication as a governance strategy to strengthen public trust. While prior studies discuss public communication and good governance normatively, this research contributes by empirically mapping how transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability are practiced and interconnected within a provincial government setting. Using a qualitative case study design, data are collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants, non-participant observations, and document analysis. Thematic analysis is applied to identify communication patterns and governance dimensions. The findings show that public communication is predominantly informational, with limited but emerging dialogical elements. Informants perceive that transparency and responsiveness are relatively evident in service delivery, whereas participation and accountability remain largely procedural. Within this case context, these patterns shape public perceptions of openness and fairness, indicating that strengthening dialogical and participatory communication is essential for sustaining public trust in local governance.

### KEYWORDS

public communication; public trust; good governance; public service delivery.

### Introduction

Public trust is a fundamental prerequisite for the effective functioning of democratic governance and public service delivery. In the context of good governance, public trust is not solely shaped by policy outcomes or administrative performance, but also by how governments communicate with citizens in a transparent, participatory, responsive, and accountable manner (Bovens, 2007; United Nations Development Programme, 1997). Public communication functions as a strategic instrument that connects government institutions with the public by disseminating information, explaining policies, and fostering mutual understanding and legitimacy (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

Despite its strategic importance, public communication in local governments is often still understood as a one-way dissemination of information rather than a dialogic process (Lai et al., 2020). This condition may lead to information asymmetry, limited public participation, and declining levels of public trust in government institutions (Grunig, 2024). Such practices contradict the principles mandated in Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services (Indonesia), which explicitly establishes transparency, public participation, and accountability as fundamental principles of public service delivery.

At the regional level, the role of public communication has become increasingly critical due to growing public demands for openness, responsiveness, and service quality (Akdere et al., 2020). The Government of Gorontalo Province faces similar challenges in managing public communication amid rising expectations for accessible information, effective feedback mechanisms, and accountable governance. Although various communication channels—both conventional and digital—have been developed, empirical observations indicate persistent issues such as inconsistent messaging across

government agencies, limited two-way communication, and the underutilization of public communication as a strategic tool for building public trust (Febryanti et al., 2025; Rina et al., 2024). Hattke & Vogel (2023; Tan et al., 2022) From a theoretical perspective, public administration scholarship places communication at the core of governance processes. In this regard, communication is not merely a technical instrument for disseminating information but a structural component that shapes coordination, legitimacy, and institutional performance within governance systems. Rosenbloom (2015) argues that public administration encompasses legal, managerial, and political dimensions that are inherently interconnected, making communication indispensable to effective governance. Furthermore, the New Public Service (NPS) paradigm emphasizes that governments should serve citizens as active participants rather than passive clients, thereby requiring public communication to be dialogic, inclusive, and participatory (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The problem of public communication in government is inherently complex, as it involves multiple actors, institutional interests, bureaucratic cultures, and power relations (Figenschou, 2020; Viteritti, 2024). Public communication is not merely a technical process of information delivery, but also a governance mechanism that shapes accountability, citizen engagement, and public perception of government legitimacy (Dwiyanto, 2021). Consequently, a comprehensive and context-sensitive analysis is required to understand how public communication models operate in practice and how they contribute to trust-building processes.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the public communication model of the Government of Gorontalo Province as a strategy for strengthening public trust from a governance perspective. To ensure methodological clarity within a qualitative case study design, this research addresses the following questions: (1) How is public communication operationalized through the principles of transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability in the Government of Gorontalo Province? and (2) How do these communication practices shape informants' perceptions of public trust in local government institutions? By formulating these research questions, the study focuses on exploring processes and perceived relationships within the specific governance context rather than testing causal effects.

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis as data collection techniques. This approach enables an in-depth and contextual understanding of public communication practices from the perspectives of government officials and citizens as public service users (Miles et al., 2014; Moleong, 2021)

Academically, this study contributes to the literature on public communication within public administration and governance studies, particularly at the subnational government level. Practically, the findings are expected to provide insights for local governments in designing and implementing more effective public communication strategies to strengthen public trust and improve the quality of governance.

## Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study design to examine the public communication model of the Government of Gorontalo Province as a strategy for enhancing public trust from a governance perspective. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth and contextual understanding of social processes, interactions, and meanings embedded in public

communication practices within governmental institutions (Creswell, 2023; Moleong, 2021). The case study design allowed the researchers to explore the phenomenon holistically within its real-life setting, focusing on a specific institutional and geographical context (Yin, 2018).

This study focused on actors directly involved in public communication and public service delivery within the Government of Gorontalo Province, as well as members of the public who interact with government communication channels. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance, experience, and direct involvement in public communication processes (Patton, 2015). A total of 12 informants participated in the study, consisting of government officials responsible for policy formulation and communication coordination, civil servants and frontline staff engaged in service delivery, and community members representing users of public services. The number of informants was determined using the principle of data saturation, assessed through an iterative coding process in which interview transcripts were continuously analyzed and compared across emerging themes. Saturation was considered achieved when additional interviews did not generate new codes, categories, or substantive variations relevant to the research objectives (Guest et al., 2021).

The research was conducted at several organizational units within the Government of Gorontalo Province, Indonesia. This location was selected due to its strategic role in implementing public communication policies and delivering public services at the provincial level, making it relevant for examining communication practices within the framework of local governance.

The primary research instrument was the researcher, who was actively involved in data collection, interpretation, and analysis. To support data collection, several tools were employed, including a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability in public communication; an observation guide to examine communication practices and interactions between government officials and citizens; and a documentation review guide to analyze relevant laws, local regulations, standard operating procedures, performance reports, complaint records, and official government communication media. These instruments were developed based on the study's conceptual framework and relevant literature on public communication and governance.

Data collection was conducted using a triangulation approach by combining in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings (Denzin, 2017). In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in probing emerging issues related to public communication practices. Observations were carried out to capture actual communication processes and service interactions in their natural settings, while document analysis was used to verify and complement data obtained from interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involved selecting, coding, and categorizing data according to the research focus and key themes. Data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and matrices to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and continuously verified through comparison across data sources to ensure analytical rigor. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify patterns and relationships among key concepts related to public communication and public trust (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical considerations were applied throughout the research process to ensure integrity and trustworthiness. Prior

**Table 1.** Profile of Research Informants

Informant Category	Description	Number
Government officials	Policy makers and communication managers	4
Civil servants	Frontline public service providers	4
Community members	Public service users	4
Total		12

Source: Primary Data

to data collection, all informants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the use of data solely for academic purposes. Informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was maintained, and informants' identities were anonymized using codes. These ethical procedures were implemented in accordance with qualitative research ethics standards to protect participants and ensure the credibility of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### Population and Sample/Informants

The study focused on stakeholders directly involved in or affected by public communication practices within the Government of Gorontalo Province, including policy-level officials responsible for communication coordination, frontline civil servants engaged in public service delivery, and citizens who access government information and services. Given the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative approach was employed, with informants selected using purposive sampling. This technique was chosen to ensure that participants possessed sufficient knowledge, experience, and involvement in public communication and public service delivery (Creswell, 2023; Sugiyono, 2019).

A total of twelve informants were involved in the study (see table 1). They consisted of provincial government officials responsible for public communication policies, frontline civil servants who interact directly with citizens in public service delivery, and members of the public who have experience accessing government information and services. The number of informants was not determined statistically but was guided by the principle of data saturation, whereby data collection continued until no new significant information emerged (Guest et al., 2021). This sampling strategy allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives on the implementation of public communication and its influence on public trust.

#### Research Location

The study was conducted in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia, which represents a regional government context characterized by administrative decentralization and increasing demands for transparency and accountability in public service delivery. Gorontalo Province was selected due to its ongoing efforts to improve governance practices and public communication through both conventional and digital platforms.

This regional setting provides a relevant context for examining how public communication strategies are implemented at the provincial level and how they contribute to building public trust. As a subnational government unit, the province faces unique challenges in balancing policy dissemination, citizen engagement, and service responsiveness, making it a suitable case for an in-depth qualitative investigation (Yin, 2018).

#### Instrumentation or Tools

Data were collected using qualitative research instruments designed to capture in-depth insights into public communication practices. The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the research

objectives, theoretical framework, and relevant governance principles. The interview guide included open-ended questions focusing on communication strategies, information dissemination, public participation, responsiveness, and accountability mechanisms.

In addition to interviews, observation sheets were used to document communication practices in public service settings, including interactions between government officials and citizens, as well as the use of communication media. Documentation checklists were also employed to review policy documents, service standards, official reports, and government communication materials. The use of multiple instruments supported methodological triangulation and enhanced the credibility of the findings (Denzin, 2017; Moleong, 2021).

#### Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a four-month period from Jan to Maret 2026. In-depth interviews were carried out either face-to-face or through online communication platforms, depending on informants' availability and institutional conditions. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the informants' consent. Field notes were taken to capture contextual information and non-verbal cues during the interviews. Specifying the timeframe enhances transparency and allows the findings to be interpreted in relation to ongoing administrative and policy dynamics within the provincial government.

Observations were conducted concurrently to examine real-time public communication practices and service delivery processes. Furthermore, relevant documents were collected and reviewed to complement interview and observation data. The integration of interviews, observations, and documentation constituted a triangulation strategy, enabling cross-verification of data from different sources and methods to ensure data validity (Creswell, 2023).

#### Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively using an interactive analysis model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and all qualitative data were systematically coded to identify recurring patterns and themes related to public communication and public trust.

Data reduction involved selecting and focusing data relevant to the research questions, while data display was conducted through narrative descriptions and thematic matrices to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and continuously verified against the data to ensure consistency and analytical rigor. This analytical process enabled the study to develop a comprehensive understanding of the public communication model of the Government of Gorontalo Province and its role in strengthening public trust.

## Result and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings of the study derived from in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings are interpreted based on the conceptual framework that emphasizes transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability as the core dimensions of the public communication model implemented by the Government of Gorontalo Province. These dimensions collectively illustrate how public communication functions as a strategic instrument for strengthening public trust within the framework of good governance.

The results indicate that the public communication model applied by the Government of Gorontalo Province in public service delivery remains predominantly informational, with limited dialogical interaction. Information related to public

**Table 2.** Summary of Empirical Research Findings

Dimension	Key Indicators	Empirical Findings
Transparency	Information accessibility and clarity	Informants reported that public service information is generally available through official channels; however, its accessibility and clarity appear uneven across different government agencies.
Participation	Feedback channels and citizen involvement	Informants indicated that participation mechanisms such as consultations and feedback channels exist, but citizen involvement tends to be reactive and has limited influence on decision-making processes.
Responsiveness	Speed and accuracy of responses	Informants generally perceived frontline officers to respond to inquiries and complaints within a reasonable timeframe, although the level of responsiveness appears to vary depending on institutional capacity and workload.
Accountability	Information consistency and justification	Interview and document findings suggest that accountability practices are primarily expressed through administrative reporting and procedural compliance rather than open public justification of policy decisions.
Public Trust	Perceived openness and fairness	Informants reported moderately positive perceptions of government openness and fairness; however, these perceptions indicate that public trust is still developing and not yet fully consolidated.

Source: Primary Data

services is disseminated through official websites, social media platforms, public notice boards, and direct communication by frontline officers. This pattern reflects a predominantly informational communication approach. Similar practices have been identified in previous studies on public sector communication (Lovari & Valentini, 2020; Wamprechtsamer, 2024). This pattern reflects the public information model of communication, with emerging elements of two-way communication, particularly in complaint handling and public feedback mechanisms (Nababan, 2020). However, dialogical interaction between the government and citizens remains limited in both scope and depth (Maulida, 2021). Although feedback channels are available, they are not consistently utilized as part of a structured and systematic communication strategy, confirming Grunig (2024) assertion that many public sector organizations operate at a transitional stage between one-way and two-way communication models.

Transparency emerged as a fundamental dimension of public communication practices in this study. This finding is consistent with prior research emphasizing the central role of transparency in shaping public communication and governance processes Molina Rodríguez-Navas et al. (2021; Wood & Aronczyk, 2020). Informants acknowledged that information on service procedures, requirements, and completion timelines is generally accessible to the public (Muzhaffar & Nurdin, 2025). Nevertheless, inconsistencies were identified across government agencies in terms of information clarity, completeness, and accessibility. From the perspective of public service users, transparency is perceived as adequate at the procedural level but remains limited at the policy and decision-making levels. This indicates that transparency has primarily been implemented as formal information disclosure rather than as an effort to foster meaningful public understanding, reinforcing Bovens (2007) view that transparency must go beyond openness to include substantive accountability.

Public participation in communication processes was found to be present but largely reactive. Citizen involvement mainly occurs through complaint submissions, suggestion boxes, and digital feedback platforms, rather than through proactive engagement in policy formulation or service design, this is in accordance with the findings (Burton, 2025; Secinaro et al., 2022). Community informants reported that participation opportunities are often insufficiently socialized,

resulting in low awareness and limited engagement. This observation aligns with broader findings that emphasize the importance of effective outreach and communication in strengthening community readiness and participation Muellmann et al. (2021). Informants reported that participation mechanisms such as public consultations and feedback channels are formally available, yet their influence on actual decision-making processes remains limited. In practice, citizen involvement tends to occur at the level of consultation rather than substantive deliberation. This condition reflects Arnstein (1969) concept of tokenistic participation, where participation mechanisms exist but do not substantially influence decision-making processes. Despite this limitation, the existence of participation channels suggests potential for strengthening dialogical communication if supported by stronger institutional commitment (Tumanggor & Kholil, 2025).

Responsiveness emerged as one of the more positively perceived dimensions of public communication in this study. Informants noted that frontline officers generally responded to public inquiries and complaints within a reasonable timeframe, particularly through direct communication channels. However, the level of responsiveness varied depending on institutional capacity, workload, and individual officer competence. These variations indicate that responsiveness is shaped not only by communication systems but also by organizational and human resource factors (Samsudin, 2021). Within the broader literature on public administration, responsiveness has been widely discussed as an important dimension of public service quality that influences citizens' perceptions of government performance and trustworthiness, as highlighted by Dwiyanto (2021).

Findings from interviews and document analysis further indicate that accountability in public communication is mainly expressed through official clarifications, public announcements, and service evaluation mechanisms.

However, informants observed that these practices tend to emphasize administrative compliance rather than open public justification of policy decisions. Communication regarding policy outcomes, service shortcomings, or corrective actions remains limited, which constrains the potential of public communication to fully foster public trust. In the perspective of the New Public Service paradigm, accountability is understood not only as procedural reporting but also as ethical responsibility and public dialogue between government

and citizens (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

To synthesize these empirical findings, the study categorizes the results across the main analytical dimensions of transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, and public trust. As summarized in Table 2, transparency and responsiveness demonstrate relatively positive outcomes, while participation and accountability remain limited in their substantive impact. Information accessibility is uneven across agencies, participation tends to be reactive with limited influence on decision-making, responsiveness varies by institutional capacity, and accountability is dominated by procedural compliance, resulting in recurring expressions of perceived openness and fairness among informants, although such perceptions remain fragile and not yet institutionally consolidated.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the public communication model of the Government of Gorontalo Province has contributed to improving transparency and responsiveness in public service delivery, which are essential prerequisites for building public trust. However, limited public participation and predominantly procedural accountability constrain the model's transformative potential. These findings reinforce the argument that effective public communication must evolve toward a more dialogical, participatory, and accountable governance practice to sustainably enhance public trust within the framework of good governance (McQuail & Deuze, 2020; United Nations Development Programme, 1997).

The qualitative analysis, based on in-depth interviews with government officials, frontline public service providers, and public service users, revealed several interrelated themes that explain the role of public communication in strengthening public trust. Thematic analysis indicates that transparency-oriented communication constitutes a central element of the public communication model implemented by the

Government of Gorontalo Province. Informants emphasized that clear, accessible, and consistent dissemination of public service information is essential for reducing uncertainty and preventing misinformation among citizens (Horowitz et al., 2022). Although information is generally available through official digital platforms and service counters, inconsistencies across agencies limit the overall effectiveness of transparency practices.

In addition, public participation in communication processes tends to be reactive rather than proactive. Citizen involvement predominantly occurs through complaint mechanisms, suggestion boxes, and digital feedback platforms, rather than through structured engagement in policy formulation or service design (Khan & Krishnan, 2021). This pattern suggests that public communication has not yet fully facilitated deliberative participation but instead functions mainly as a response mechanism to service-related issues. Nevertheless, the existence of participation channels indicates the potential for developing more dialogical communication practices if supported by stronger institutional commitment.

Responsiveness emerged as a relatively strong dimension of public communication. Informants reported that frontline officers generally respond to public inquiries and complaints in a timely manner, particularly through direct interactions. However, the level of responsiveness varies across institutions due to differences in organizational capacity, workload, and individual competencies. This finding underscores the influence of institutional and human resource factors on the effectiveness of communication practices.

Accountability was identified as a critical theme in relation to public trust formation. Accountability in public communication is primarily manifested through administrative

**Table 3. Summary of Theoretical and Empirical Literature on Public Communication and Public Trust**

No	Author(s)	Year	Study Focus	Key Findings	Moderating Factors	Geographic Context
1	Grunig	1984	Public communication models	Two-way symmetric communication enhances mutual understanding and public trust	Organizational openness	Global
2	Arnstein	1969	Public participation	Levels of participation determine citizen influence in decision-making	Institutional commitment	United States
3	Bovens	2007	Public accountability	Transparency must be linked to accountability to strengthen public trust	Governance capacity	Europe
4	Dwiyanto	2021	Public service quality	Responsiveness is a key indicator of service quality and citizen satisfaction	Bureaucratic structure	Indonesia
5	Denhardt & Denhardt	2015	New Public Service	Citizen-centered governance enhances democratic accountability and trust	Leadership orientation	Global

Source: Primary Data

reporting, formal announcements, and service evaluations. While these practices contribute to a moderate level of public trust, informants noted that communication regarding policy rationales, service shortcomings, and corrective actions remains limited. As a result, accountability tends to be

procedural rather than dialogical, indicating the need for more substantive and justificatory communication to strengthen long-term public trust. The review of relevant literature demonstrates consistent evidence that effective public communication is a key determinant of good governance and

public trust (Hartanto et al., 2021; Sihotang, 2023). Previous studies emphasize that transparency enhances public understanding and reduces information asymmetry between governments and citizens, while participatory communication strengthens democratic legitimacy when citizens are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). Responsiveness is widely recognized as a core indicator of public service quality, closely associated with citizen satisfaction and trust. Furthermore, accountability-oriented communication is identified as essential for sustaining public trust, particularly when governments are open to scrutiny and public evaluation. The literature also indicates that the effectiveness of public communication strategies is influenced by moderating factors such as institutional capacity, organizational culture, and governance context.

To summarize the key insights derived from the reviewed studies, Table 3 presents the main themes, findings, and contextual factors identified in the literature.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the public communication model implemented by the Government of Gorontalo Province plays a significant role in shaping public trust within the framework of good governance. The analysis indicates that transparency and responsiveness emerge as relatively stronger dimensions of public communication, while public participation and accountability remain limited in their substantive application. The findings further suggest that greater transparency—particularly in the provision of accessible service information—appears to support more immediate and structured responsiveness from frontline officers, as citizens are better informed about procedures and channels for inquiry. However, the limited scope of participation constrains opportunities for citizens to influence decision-making processes, which in turn shapes how accountability is perceived. When participation remains largely reactive, accountability tends to be experienced primarily as procedural reporting rather than as dialogical justification, thereby limiting the consolidation of public trust within the governance process. This suggests that public communication has been implemented primarily as an informational and administrative function rather than as a fully dialogical and participatory governance instrument. These findings reinforce the view that effective public communication extends beyond information dissemination to include interaction, justification, and citizen engagement in public service processes.

When interpreted in the context of existing research, the results align with Grunig (2024) communication model, which emphasizes that one-way communication remains dominant in many public institutions despite normative expectations for two-way symmetrical communication. The predominance of informational communication observed in this study is also consistent with (McQuail & Deuze, 2020) argument that public sector communication often prioritizes message delivery over dialogue. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating how such communication patterns operate at the provincial government level in Indonesia, where decentralization and local governance reforms have increased demands for transparency and accountability. Cultural and institutional factors, including bureaucratic hierarchy and administrative routines, appear to moderate the extent to which dialogical communication is practiced.

The findings related to transparency corroborate earlier studies suggesting that access to information is a prerequisite for public trust but not sufficient on its own. Consistent with Bovens (2007) and United Nations Development Programme (1997), this study confirms that transparency implemented merely as procedural disclosure does not automatically lead to public understanding or trust. In contrast, the limited effectiveness of participation mechanisms reflects Arnstein

(1969) concept of tokenistic participation, where formal channels exist but do not significantly influence decision-making. This outcome differs from studies that report stronger participatory outcomes in governance contexts with higher institutional openness and civic capacity, indicating that participation is highly contingent on organizational commitment and governance culture.

Responsiveness emerged as a comparatively positive dimension of public communication, supporting Dwiyanto (2021) assertion that responsiveness is a core indicator of public service quality and citizen satisfaction. However, the variability in responsiveness across institutions suggests that communication effectiveness is influenced by organizational capacity and human resource competencies rather than communication systems alone. Similarly, accountability practices observed in this study tend to focus on administrative compliance rather than public justification, which contrasts with the normative expectations of the New Public Service paradigm that emphasizes ethical responsibility and citizen-centered accountability (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). This gap indicates that accountability mechanisms need to be strengthened through more transparent and dialogical communication to consolidate public trust.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant careful consideration. As a qualitative case study, the findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to other regional or national settings. The reliance on interview data also introduces the possibility of subjective bias, as informants may present socially desirable responses. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to assess changes in communication practices and public trust over time. These limitations suggest the need for caution in interpreting the findings as definitive evidence of causal relationships.

Future research should address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to examine how changes in public communication strategies influence public trust over time. Comparative studies across different provinces or levels of government would also provide a broader understanding of contextual factors shaping public communication practices. Additionally, mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative insights with quantitative measures of public trust could enhance analytical robustness. Exploring specific communication behaviors, such as crisis communication and digital engagement strategies, may further deepen understanding of how public communication contributes to good governance and democratic legitimacy.

## Conclusion

This study investigated the public communication model of the Government of Gorontalo Province as a strategy for strengthening public trust within the framework of good governance. The study aimed to analyze how transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability are implemented in public communication practices and how these dimensions influence public trust in public service delivery. The findings indicate that, within the Gorontalo Province case, public communication practices are perceived to support transparency and responsiveness, while public participation and accountability appear limited in their substantive application. These results highlight a predominant reliance on informational and procedural communication, with emerging but still underdeveloped elements of dialogical interaction between the government and citizens. In this context, dialogical interaction is reflected in the availability of complaint-handling mechanisms, limited feedback exchanges through digital platforms, and occasional direct clarification by frontline officers in response to citizen inquiries. However, such

interactions remain largely reactive and issue-specific rather than institutionalized as sustained two-way deliberative engagement in policy formulation or service design.

Notably, this study provides context-specific insights into public communication practices at the provincial government level in Indonesia, where decentralization and bureaucratic structures shape the dynamics of governance communication. The findings underscore the importance of strengthening two-way, participatory, and accountable communication as a strategic instrument for enhancing public trust and improving public service quality. Practically, the results suggest the need for institutionalizing dialogical communication mechanisms, improving information consistency across agencies, and enhancing the communicative capacity of public servants as part of broader governance reforms.

While this study offers valuable insights into public communication and public trust, several limitations should be acknowledged. The qualitative case study design limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the Gorontalo Province context, and the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the ability to capture changes in communication practices over time. Additionally, reliance on interview-based data may introduce subjective bias in informants' responses.

Future research should focus on expanding comparative and longitudinal studies across different regions and levels of government to deepen understanding of public communication dynamics. Incorporating mixed-method approaches that combine qualitative analysis with quantitative measurement of public trust would further strengthen empirical evidence. Such research could enhance theoretical development in public communication and governance studies while informing more effective public communication policies and practices aimed at strengthening democratic governance and public trust.

## Author contributions

Author 1 was responsible for the conception and design of the study, data collection through interviews, observations,

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## Conflict of interest

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