

Research Article

Public Service Accountability At The Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Of Sidoarjo Regency In Providing Clean Water

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the accountability of public services at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) in providing clean water to the community. The research focuses on service transparency, responses to public complaints, accountability in services, as well as challenges and efforts to improve accountability in public services. This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation with informants consisting of PDAM employees and community members who use clean water services. Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman interactive model consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research findings indicate that public service accountability at the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM has been carried out through the provision of service information, public complaint channels, and responses to customer complaints. Transparency in services is implemented through direct and digital media, while service responsiveness is realized through the handling of public complaints by service units and technical officers in the field. However, service implementation still faces challenges such as limited human resources, the condition of the aging water distribution network infrastructure, and the unoptimized access to digital services for the community. This study recommends improving infrastructure quality, strengthening digital technology-based service systems, and enhancing human resource capabilities to support more transparent, responsive, and accountable public services.

Keywords: Clean Water ; PDAM, Public Accountability, Public Services; Service Responsiveness.

1. Introduction

Public services are one of the government's primary responsibilities, fulfilling the basic needs of the community, including the provision of adequate and sustainable clean water. Clean water is a basic need that directly impacts the health, well-being, and quality of life of the community (Ridha & Hutagalung, 2025). In the realm of public administration, the quality of clean water services is not only evaluated from the distribution side, but also from the level of accountability of the service provider institution to the community (Rahmawati & Mangalou, 2025). Accountability in public services is an important benchmark for evaluating the extent to which public organizations can carry out their duties in a transparent, responsive and responsible manner (Syarifuffin, 2024).

Regional Drinking Water Companies (PDAM) in Indonesia play a crucial role in supporting public water services. As one of these regional companies, PDAM Sidoarjo Regency is expected to provide the best possible service to the public as demand for clean water increases. However, in practice, various service issues persist, such as slow water distribution, customer complaints, system disruptions, and inconsistent water quality. This situation indicates that accountability in public services remains a major challenge in managing clean water services (Nur et al., 2024).

Previous research has examined the quality of public services at regional drinking water companies with an emphasis on customer satisfaction, service effectiveness, and the quality of water distribution (Rostania & Mursyidah, 2021; Supriatno & Damara, 2025). However,

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research specifically emphasizing the accountability dimension of public services in clean water provision remains limited, particularly at the local government level. Most previous studies have focused on the technical aspects of service delivery rather than institutional responsibility in addressing public needs and complaints. Therefore, there remains a research gap regarding how public service accountability is actually implemented in the process of providing clean water to the public.

This study provides a novel approach in focusing on public service accountability analysis, encompassing service transparency, responsiveness to public complaints, and institutional responsibility in ensuring the quality of clean water services. Furthermore, this study positions customer communities as the primary source in evaluating service accountability practices carried out by the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Water Company (PDAM). This approach is significant for providing an empirical illustration of the relationship between public service providers and the public as service recipients (Ningrum & Wicaksana, 2024). Another innovation lies in integrating the concept of public administration accountability with the context of providing basic clean water services at the regional level.

With this background in mind, this study aims to analyze public service accountability at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Utility Company (PDAM) in providing clean water to the community. This study aims to understand the implementation of accountability in public services related to the process of providing clean water to customers. Furthermore, this study also identified various obstacles that affect the implementation of service accountability within the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM. The research findings are expected to provide evaluation material and recommendations for improving the quality of public service management in the field of clean water provision.

Preliminaries or Related Work or Literature Review

Accountability is a crucial concept in public administration, relating to the responsibility of public organizations to explain the implementation of their duties and services to the public. According to Bovens, public accountability is a relationship between actors and forums, in which actors are obliged to explain and be accountable for the actions they take (Khotami, 2017). In public services, accountability serves as a tool to ensure that the services provided comply with standards, regulations and community needs (Agustiawan, 2019). Accountability theory is applied in this study as the primary theory for analyzing the obligations of the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Water Company (PDAM) in providing clean water services to the public.

Public accountability theory highlights several crucial dimensions: openness, responsiveness, oversight, and service accountability (Hanifa et al., 2026). Transparency relates to the accessibility of service information to the public, while responsiveness refers to an institution's ability to address user needs and complaints. Furthermore, service oversight indicates the existence of a system for evaluating and monitoring the performance of public organizations (Mastur et al., 2026). In this study, these dimensions were applied to evaluate the extent to which the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Water Company (PDAM) provides clean water services with accountability to the public.

Public services are essentially a collection of activities carried out by government organizations or public institutions to meet community needs. According to Parasuraman, service quality can be assessed by the institution's ability to provide services that meet public expectations (Nurdin & Resti, 2024). In the clean water supply sector, service quality encompasses not only the continuity of water distribution but also the accuracy of complaint handling, easy access to information, and assurance of service for customers. Therefore, accountability in public services is crucial to ensure that the public receives clean water services fairly, transparently, and responsibly.

The application of accountability theory to clean water services also relates to the principles of good governance in public management (Kuswanto et al., 2025). Good governance emphasizes the values of transparency, community involvement, service efficiency, and accountability of public institutions in carrying out their functions (Mahardhani, 2023). In the context of the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM), implementing these principles is absolutely necessary to increase public trust in the quality of services provided. Based on public accountability theory, this study aims to provide a detailed explanation of the implementation of accountability in public services related to clean water provision and the various challenges that arise in its implementation.

2. Proposed Method

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type to examine public service accountability at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) in providing clean water to the community. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in detail the service process, types of institutional accountability, and the organization's response to community needs and complaints (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). The research was conducted at the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Water Company (PDAM) office and several customer service areas facing clean water distribution and provision issues. Research informants were selected through purposive sampling techniques, including PDAM management, customer service staff, field officers, and residents who use clean water services. Research information was obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation of the service process, and documentation including service reports, customer complaint data, and public service policy archives. The research focus was analyzed based on the dimensions of public accountability, which include transparency, responsiveness, service responsibility, and oversight mechanisms for public services (Negoro et al., 2026).

The data analysis method in this study adopts an interactive model which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Huberman & Miles, 2012). The data reduction process was carried out by sorting and categorizing data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation according to the research focus on accountability in public services. Next, the information was presented in descriptive form to facilitate researchers in understanding service patterns, service challenges, and forms of institutional accountability to the public. The final stage was carried out by drawing conclusions based on the relationship between data obtained in the field. To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation so that the data obtained was more valid and could be scientifically accounted for.

3. Results and Discussion

Transparency Of Public Services In The Provision Of Clean Water At The Pdam Of Sidoarjo District

Transparency in public services is a crucial element in achieving accountability in organizations providing public services. Research at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Utility Company (PDAM) shows that service transparency has been implemented by providing service information to the public directly and through digital media. This information includes steps for installing new connections, water costs, payment schedules, and customer complaint procedures. The Sidoarjo Regency PDAM also uses social media and its official website to provide information regarding water distribution disruptions to customers.

Interviews with customers indicate that it is relatively easy for the public to obtain information regarding the service process and water bill payments. The majority of customers stated that service information is clearly provided at the service office and through the PDAM's digital application. However, some customers reported that information regarding water distribution disruptions is sometimes not communicated promptly to the public. This situation has led some customers to feel uncertain about receiving information during water service disruptions.

In providing public services, the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM also offers a customer complaint service through various communication channels. The public can submit complaints by telephone, social media, digital messaging applications, or in person at the service office. Based on service data, the majority of public complaints relate to irregular water distribution, leaking pipes, and poor water quality. The existence of various complaint

channels demonstrates the agency's efforts to provide more transparent and accessible services to the public.

However, observations indicate that service transparency still faces several obstacles in its implementation. One issue is the late delivery of information regarding water distribution network repairs in some customer areas. Furthermore, not everyone understands how to use the digital media provided by the Regional Water Company (PDAM) to obtain service information. This situation indicates that transparency in public services has not been fully effective in reaching all segments of the public who use clean water services.

According to the public accountability theory proposed by Bovens (2006), Transparency is a public organization's way of conveying information to the public as a form of accountability for its services. The transparency of services provided by the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) reflects the institution's efforts to fulfill the public's right to receive clear and open information about its services. The delivery of information through both direct and digital media demonstrates the organization's efforts to improve access to public services. However, the delay in providing information regarding water distribution disruptions indicates that transparency in services still needs to be improved, so that the public can receive assurance of timely and accurate services.

From a public administration perspective, transparency in services is closely related to increasing public trust in public service providers. The more transparent the information provided to the public, the higher the organization's level of accountability in delivering public services (Iskandar, 2025). The research results show that transparency of service information at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) has made it easier for the public to access services and submit complaints. However, improvements in the quality of service communication and distribution of information access are still needed to more effectively implement the principle of transparency in providing clean water to the community.

Responsibility And Responsibility Of Sidoarjo District Pdam Services Towards Public Complaints

Service responsiveness is the ability of a public organization to respond quickly and accurately to the needs, complaints, and expectations of the public. According to research at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM), service responsiveness to public complaints has been implemented by establishing a customer service unit tasked with receiving and following up on customer complaints. Public complaints typically relate to irregular water flow, pipe leaks, cloudy water quality, and slow repairs to service disruptions. PDAM Sidoarjo Regency provides both in-person and digital complaint services to facilitate public access to service-related complaints.

Interviews with customers indicate that some consider service staff to be quite responsive in responding to customer complaints. Service staff are considered capable of providing initial explanations regarding the cause of water distribution problems and follow-up procedures for repairs. Furthermore, customers reported that field staff generally conduct inspections immediately upon reports of pipe leaks or distribution issues in a specific area. However, some customers stated that the process of resolving disruptions still takes a long time, especially in areas with high levels of network damage.

In terms of service accountability, PDAM Sidoarjo Regency strives to follow up on every complaint received from the public. According to service documentation, every

customer complaint is recorded and forwarded to the technical unit based on the type of problem reported. Technical officers then conduct field inspections and make network repairs if any damage is found to the clean water distribution system. This process demonstrates a service system in place that ensures every public complaint is handled according to established procedures.

Despite this, observations indicate that the implementation of responsiveness and service accountability still faces several challenges in the field. One major challenge is the limited number of technical staff compared to the service area and the large number of customer complaints that need to be resolved. Furthermore, the aging condition of the pipe network infrastructure often makes repairs take longer. This obstacle leads to delays in responding to public complaints, which impacts customer satisfaction with clean water services.

The responsiveness of service provided by the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) reflects the institution's efforts to fulfill its public service role by receiving and handling public complaints. The provision of various complaint channels and technical follow-up actions to customer complaints demonstrates the organization's commitment to fulfilling its responsibility to serve the public. However, delays in addressing disruptions in some areas indicate that the implementation of responsiveness still needs improvement, particularly in terms of service speed and efficiency (Faguet, 2004).

Responsibility in service is not only related to solving technical problems, but also involves an organizational commitment to providing service assurance to the community. The results of the study indicate that the Sidoarjo Regency Regional Water Company (PDAM) already has a fairly good complaint service system, but it has not fully met community expectations regarding the speed of problem handling. This situation indicates that improving human resource capabilities and improving service infrastructure remain crucial needs in supporting public service accountability. Therefore, responsiveness and responsibility in service must be improved so that the quality of clean water provision can be implemented more efficiently, quickly, and focused on community interests (Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024).

Obstacles And Efforts To Improve Public Service Accountability At The Sidoarjo District Pdam

The implementation of public service accountability at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) continues to face several obstacles in providing clean water to the public. According to studies, one of the main challenges is the condition of the water distribution network infrastructure, which is largely aging and prone to damage. Pipe leaks and water distribution problems mean that service to the public is not always optimal. Furthermore, limited service support facilities also impact the speedy resolution of problems reported by consumers.

Interviews revealed that another challenge identified is a lack of human resources, particularly in the technical field. The number of staff is insufficient for the size of the service area and the large number of public complaints that must be handled daily. This situation makes the complaint handling process in some areas take considerable time. Furthermore, some residents still face challenges in accessing digital services provided by the PDAM to obtain information or submit complaints regarding services.

To improve public service accountability, the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM has implemented several service improvement measures. These measures include increasing the use of digital platforms for customer service, gradually improving the water distribution network, and enhancing collaboration between service units and technical field units. In addition, PDAM strives to improve service quality by conducting regular evaluations of customer complaints and public service performance. This action is taken to enhance clean water services to be more responsive, transparent, and responsive to residents' needs.

Public organizations are responsible for managing services to the public in an efficient and open manner (Kiwi et al., 2025). Infrastructure issues, human resource shortages, and inadequate access to digital services indicate that public service accountability still faces challenges. However, service improvement efforts undertaken by the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) demonstrate the institution's commitment to improving the quality of public service accountability. Therefore, technology-based service system enhancements and human resource capacity are needed to ensure more efficient public service accountability (Tahir et al., 2025).

From a public administration perspective, increasing public service accountability requires support from a flexible, responsive, and public-interest-focused service system. Studies show that the success of public services is influenced not only by the technical capabilities of agencies, but also by the efficiency of service communications and the speed of response to public needs (Zia ud din et al., 2023). Increasing information transparency, enhancing the capabilities of service personnel, and modernizing infrastructure are crucial elements in supporting the quality of clean water services. Therefore, the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) must implement sustainable service innovation through the development of integrated digital services, improving the quality of the water distribution network, and optimizing the public complaints system to enhance public service accountability.

4. Conclusion

Based on research conducted, accountability in public services at the Sidoarjo Regency Water Company (PDAM) for clean water provision has been realized through the implementation of transparency, responsiveness to public complaints, and institutional responsibility in providing services to customers. Service transparency is demonstrated by the provision of service information both directly and digitally, although the delivery of information regarding water distribution disruptions is still not fully optimal. In terms of responsiveness, the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM has established various complaint channels and followed up on customer complaints. However, handling of disruptions in some areas still experiences delays due to limited resources and the condition of the water distribution network infrastructure. This situation indicates that while the implementation of accountability in public services has been successful, improvements still need to be made in terms of effectiveness and speed of service.

This research found that the main challenges in implementing public service accountability include limited human resources, aging network infrastructure, and the uneven distribution of digital services among the public. To address these issues, the Sidoarjo Regency PDAM has implemented various steps, including increasing the use of digital technology in its services, routine service evaluations, and gradual improvements to the water distribution network. Based on research findings, increasing public service accountability must be supported by strengthening technology service systems, improving the skills of service personnel, and optimizing information communication for the public. Consequently, improving the quality of clean water services is expected to strengthen public trust and create more transparent, responsive, and accountable public services.

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