

# Urban and Rural Public Trust to Government in Covid-19 Pandemic Responses

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**Abstract:** *This study attempts to assess the level of public trust in the Surabaya City Government and Banyuwangi Regency Government's handling of Covid-19. A survey is conducted to 400 samples from each city/region's generation Y and Z and then descriptively analyzed. The findings of the study indicate that there is a high level of trust in all dimensions of the Banyuwangi Regency Government's handling of Covid-19. On the other hand, the Surabaya City Government received medium levels of trust in terms of responsiveness and reliability but garnered high levels of trust in terms of integrity, transparency, and fairness.*

**Keywords:** *Covid-19 pandemic, local government, public opinion, public trust*

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini mencoba untuk menilai tingkat kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap Pemerintah Kota Surabaya dan Pemerintah Kabupaten Banyuwangi dalam menangani Covid-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik survei yang dianalisis secara deskriptif. Metode quota sampling digunakan untuk mengumpulkan 400 sampel dari generasi Y dan Z di masing-masing kota/daerah. Berdasarkan temuan, terdapat tingkat kepercayaan yang tinggi pada semua dimensi pada Pemerintah Kabupaten Banyuwangi. Tingkat kepercayaan sedang diberikan kepada Pemerintah Kota Surabaya dalam hal daya tanggap dan keandalan, tetapi tingkat kepercayaan yang tinggi diberikan dalam hal integritas, transparansi, dan keadilan.*

**Kata Kunci:** *kepercayaan publik, opini publik, pandemi Covid-19, pemerintahan daerah*

Public trust in government is a complex issue involving many factors (Bundi & Pattyn, 2022). Public trust is the trust that people have in public institutions and their capacity to act in the public interest (Hare et al., 2017), not only institutions but also groups and people tasked with advancing the common good. Trust is an essential element of social cohesion and a cornerstone of the legitimacy of public institutions (state context) (Brezzi et al., 2020), which is necessary to sustain

people's willingness to engage in activities that advance the common good (Zinchenko et al., 2021). The concern of diminishing public trust in government has essentially become a contemporary political discourse in many countries (Van de Walle et al., 2008).

There are several reasons why public trust is important for the government. First, support for policies: when the public trusts the government, they are more likely to support government policies and programs

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(Hidayat et al., 2020). This can help the government achieve its goals and improve the lives of citizens. Second, compliance with regulations: when the public trusts the government, they are more likely to comply with regulations and laws (Hidayat et al., 2020). This can help ensure that regulations are effective and that they are followed by the public. Third, effective communication: when the public trusts the government, they are more likely to listen to and believe government messages (Harris & Moss, 2021). This can help the government effectively communicate important information, such as during a public health crisis. Fourth, efficient decision-making: when the public trusts the government, they are more likely to accept government decisions and actions (Cooper et al., 2008). This can help the government make decisions more efficiently and effectively. Fifth, improved accountability: When the public trusts the government, they are more likely to hold the government accountable for its actions (Cooper et al., 2008). This can help ensure that the government is transparent and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, public trust in government had been declining in many countries, including the United States and European countries (Hosking, 2019; Kim et al., 2023). One of the factors that has caused a decline in public trust is social media, the advent of social media has led to a decline in public trust in traditional news sources, which in turn has contributed to a decline in trust in government (Kim et al., 2023). Economic, socio-cultural and political factors also point to a decline

in public trust over the years (Kim et al., 2023). Then the quality of public services, citizen satisfaction with the quality of public services has been shown to be positively related to public trust in government (Zhao & Hu, 2017). Democracy and transparency have also been cited as a cause of declining public trust, as it has generally been shown to be positively related to public trust in government (Zhao & Hu, 2017). The next is related to age, education, and income. Citizens who are younger, more highly educated, and well-paid have been found to have a lower probability of trust in government Lack of faith in the present system: The decline in public trust has led to a rising sense of injustice and helplessness, a lack of hope and trust in the present system, and a desire for radical change (Hosking, 2019).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on public trust in the government. For example, public skepticism about vaccines is considered a major obstacle to large-scale vaccination campaigns (Haddad et al., 2022). A survey of veterans with cancer found that 21 percent declined the Covid-19 vaccine, with reasons ranging from concerns about safety and efficacy to inadequate information (Haddad et al., 2022). During the apex of the initial surge of the Covid-19 pandemic, social media platforms were inundated with misinformation pertaining to the virus and its genesis, potential treatments and remedies, and governmental reactions to the epidemic (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2021). This misinformation has

contributed to a decline in public trust in government. Then, strict lockdowns to deal with the pandemic wave were also cited as a major factor in the decline in trust, which in turn led to a significant drop in mortality (Albouy-Llaty et al., 2021). There's also digital contact tracing (DCT) applications that have been developed in many countries to improve time tracking and contact tracing (Albouy-Llaty et al., 2021). However, the use of these apps raises concerns about privacy and data security, which could further erode public trust in the government.

The description of the phenomena of decreased trust is indicated to have occurred in Indonesia due to poor handling of Covid-19, especially in the early days of Covid-19 in Indonesia. Not only in the early days of the pandemic, but the Indonesian government was also faced with various dynamics, dilemmas, challenges, and opposition in the middle period until the pandemic status was revoked. The Indonesian government has been widely criticized for its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Various reports show that the Indonesian government's performance level in handling Covid-19 is among the worst in the world (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021). This is due to the attitude of underestimating or taking lightly the threat of a pandemic that is clearly dangerous (Alnizar & Manshur, 2022).

The government's response to the pandemic has also been very slow and stuttering, inconsistent and unclear in its policies and actions (Ayuningtyas

et al., 2021; Sitohang et al., 2022). The many regulations (inconsistencies in paying laws) issued by the government have complicated the handling of the pandemic, causing uncertainty, instability and confusion at all levels (Ayuningtyas et al., 2021; Radjab & Fuady, 2021). The National Health System was not prepared for the pandemic, and the government's communication patterns were criticized for trying to cover up information (Masduki et al., 2022). It is this poor, stuttering and inconsistent government policy in dealing with COVID-19 that has created resistance and distrust among Indonesians (Allard & Lamb, 2020; Budilaksono & Iskandar, 2020; Dewi et al., 2022).

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, various policies have been issued by the government to suppress the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia. The main policy is a social restriction which aims to limit the movement of the community. In Indonesia, the policy has changed its name, format, and concept several times, starting from the Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB), Transitional PSBB, Strict PSBB, the Community Activities Restrictions Enforcement (PPKM) Java-Bali, Micro PPKM, Emergency PPKM, to four-level PPKM (Ikfina, 2023; Permatasari, 2021; Roziqin et al., 2021). The implementation of this social restriction policy has become a polemic in Indonesia due to criticism of the effectiveness of its implementation (Smeru, 2020). There are still many violations of the physical distancing principle that occur everywhere. This indicates that the

policies made by the government are still not taken seriously by some components of society. The amount of uncontrolled information about Covid-19 and the failure of persuasion to break the chain of spread, causes no fundamental change in attitudes and behavior of the community, in addition to the communal nature and livelihood patterns often hinder persuasion steps from carrying out physical distancing. The appeal for physical distancing is more visible as an effort of persuasion, whose implementation process is based on individual awareness (Widaningrum & Mas'udi, 2020). Some experts and academics said that the series of policies chosen by the government were actually less effective because they did not impose a lockdown in the early days of the pandemic in Indonesia (Pangaribowo et al., 2022). Thus, the risks faced by the community are getting more complex and longer.

This social restriction policy also has significant economic implications in the form of delays, decreases, and loss of income, higher prices and/or lack of availability of foodstuffs, and even extreme job losses (Morgan et al., 2022; Morgan & Trinh, 2021), which target vulnerable groups such as informal workers, housewives, and MSMEs. This creates anxiety for them to survive in difficult times due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Amirudin et al., 2021; Lutfi et al., 2020; Mertens, 2021; Morante-García et al., 2022; Utomi, 2020). Ultimately, the success of this restriction policy lies in public compliance because compliance itself reflects trust. Unfortunately, public

trust has been undermined and declined since the beginning due to poor crisis governance plus the impact of devastating impact of the pandemic on society (Widaningrum, 2017; Mas'udi & Winanti, 2020). This is corroborated by Baharuddin et al. (2021), that PSBB policy triggered a decline in public trust which had an impact on public acceptance and collective action in fighting the spread of Covid-19. Until the end of the pandemic, it was seen that the public was completely apathetic and began to not respect or trust all forms of restriction policies issued by the government. This is a tough challenge for the government to restore public trust (Sutrisno et al., 2020).

The chronology of the government's response shows that there has been a policy crisis indicated by the strong attitude of ignoring public officials over the threat of Covid-19, weak crisis leadership, the absence of solid policies, the absence of coordination and synergy between governance actors, and the emergence of public distrust of the government. The policy crisis, one of which is manifested in the governance of the division of authority between government institutions, is unfortunately characterized by conflicts of authority between institutions both at the national level and in central-regional relations, which clearly shows disharmony in coordination in handling the crisis (Widaningrum & Mas'udi, 2020). The management of central and regional relations has also become blurred and unclear (Ariyanto, 2020), because the policies taken by the central government are

not in sync with local governments because each has its own view of the authority of the policies taken. This condition results in chaos of authority between the center and the regions, which in turn confuses the public (Aziz et al., 2021).

The issues with COVID-19 are local government issues, despite the fact that the central government has set a variety of laws, rules, standards, guidelines, and criteria to deal with them. Everything takes place in the regions, from the treatment of Covid-19 positive patients in local hospitals, to the people affected by Covid-19, to the societal issues brought on by this pandemic. Local government are better aware of their capacity to handle Covid-19 in terms of hospital availability, medical personnel, tracing, and what their communities would need to survive the pandemic (Santoso, 2020). However, the space for local governments is also limited because the rules regarding Covid-19 are centered on policies issued by the central government (Ariyanto, 2020).

This research focuses on the output of local government policies in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, namely public trust. Two regions are selected as the loci. The two regions are Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency which were chosen for reasons and considerations that will be further explained by the researcher. Communities in these two areas will be asked for responses based on the dimensions that researchers have determined. Trust in public institutions is impacted by 5 (five) policy dimensions. The Organisation for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) hopes to demonstrate through these aspects how strongly correlated with public trust are governmental ideals like high levels of integrity, fairness, and institutional transparency. Similarly, government skills like responsiveness and reliability in providing public services are crucial for boosting trust in public institutions (OECD, 2017b).

Surabaya City was chosen as the research location due to the fact that, according to the 2020 Population Census, it has a population of 2,874,314 and a population growth rate of -0.06 percent, making it the second largest metropolitan area in Indonesia after Jakarta. Surabaya City's population density in 2020 was 9,090 persons per square kilometer. (BPS Kota Surabaya, 2021). Surabaya has become one of the most important trade gateways in eastern Indonesia (Sugiharti, 2016). Due to its large population and expanding economic activities, it is not surprising that Surabaya is also known as a commercial city. (Liputan6.com, 2020). The high population, trade and industrial sectors that contribute to the community's economy, and adequate infrastructure certainly have implications for the high mobility of people entering and leaving Surabaya, both Surabaya natives and those from outside Surabaya in order to seek greater opportunities, fulfill life needs, and find sources of income (Dispendukcapil, 2019).

High mobility is a highlight in the pandemic era, because with a high intensity



of meetings, Covid-19 will also easily infect people, especially those with comorbid diseases (Lane et al., 2022). Consequently, in the early days of the pandemic, the Mayor of Surabaya, Tri Rismaharini, issued Surabaya Mayor Circular Letter Number 470/3674 / 436.7.13 / 2020 concerning Population Mobility Control Protocol addressed to the Heads of Neighborhood Associations (RT), country house managers, apartment managers, and East Java Real Estate Indonesia (REI) administrators (Humas Pemerintah Kota Surabaya, 2020). However, the city government of Surabaya does not consistently implement its efforts on the ground. The government does not exert a tighter grip. Only at the city's border checkpoints, and then inconsistently, has street scouring begun to be eliminated. Neither were curfew restrictions reinstated. In addition to government factors, when Surabaya was in the black zone, there were still a significant number of individuals who underestimated the dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic by disregarding health protocols. Surabaya was still implementing the PSBB around May to June of that year (Tambunan, 2020). Surabaya is in the black zone as a result of the inconsistent implementation of PSBB and public apathy toward government appeals (Sidik, 2020).

On Tuesday, June 2, 2020, there were 2,748 Covid-19 positive cases in Surabaya City. In other words, Surabaya was responsible for more over half of the positive coronavirus cases in East Java. One interpretation of the black zone scenario is an emergency situation. The

red danger zone has been passed. This indicates that there are already many cases, more than 2,000 cases. This situation raises concerns about the Covid-19 outbreak in Surabaya and raises projections about the city potentially becoming the birthplace of the Covid-19 outbreak, similar to Wuhan. With an emphasis on reducing the rate of coronavirus transmission in Surabaya, the Task Force moved quickly (Fadli, 2020). The highest Covid-19 fatality rate in East Java occurred in Surabaya in July. In Surabaya, the mortality rate was 22.06 cases per 100,000 people (Azizah, 2020). Tri Rismaharini, the mayor of Surabaya, claims that comorbidities account for over 90% of the elevated mortality risk of Covid-19 patients in Surabaya (Salman & Agriesta, 2020). Data from the Expert Team of the Covid-19 Handling Task Force were released in August, demonstrating that Surabaya City, East Java, continues to contribute the most Covid-19 positive cases and fatalities in Indonesia. Surabaya City is ranked #1 in both of these categories according to exposure data of Indonesia's top 40 districts and cities with the most cases and fatalities (CNN Indonesia, 2020b).

The second area chosen is Banyuwangi Regency, also known as "The Sunrise of Java" since it is situated at the easternmost point of Indonesia's East Java Province and is part of the horseshoe region (Dinas Pekerjaan Umum Cipta Karya dan Penataan Ruang Kabupaten Banyuwangi, 2018). Banyuwangi is the largest regency in East Java, covering an area of 5,782.50 square kilometers, which is larger than Bali Island

(5,636.66 km<sup>2</sup>). The primary crossing point between Java and Bali is Ketapang Port, which is located on the east coast of Banyuwangi Regency (BPS Kabupaten Banyuwangi, 2021).

Banyuwangi is a tourist destination as well. In recent years, Banyuwangi Regency has elevated tourism to a position of prominence in local economic growth. The yearly growth in the number of tourists visiting is proof of this. Foreign tourist visits have surged by 499% over the past ten years, whereas domestic tourist visits have climbed by 711% (Pemerintah Kabupaten Banyuwangi, 2020). The presence of tourist traffic and Ketapang Port as the gateway from Bali to Banyuwangi engenders a natural flow of mobility between Banyuwangi and Bali. Consequently, this could potentially act as a gateway for the transmission of the Covid-19 virus to propagate in Banyuwangi.

As explained previously, Covid-19 spreads due to mobility (population movement). The transmission of the virus will be higher in an area where population movement is high and lower in an area where population mobility is low (Waseso & Winarto, 2020). The Banyuwangi Regency Government acted swiftly in April 2020 to request that ferry tickets for customers traveling to Ketapang Port no longer be sold in Gilimanuk Port, Bali. They will be taken to quarantine for fourteen days in shelters that have been established, both in villages and dormitories controlled by the Banyuwangi Regency Government, if any residents continue to reach Banyuwangi

through Ketapang Port (Husdinariyanto & Kusbiantoro, 2020).

Prior to March 2020, the Banyuwangi Regency Government took seriously its plan to impede the entry of Covid-19 by closing tourist attractions temporarily and halting all activities that boost tourism. The reason for this phenomenon is that several tourist destinations located in Banyuwangi serve as primary attractions for visitors (Fanani, 2020). The Banyuwangi Regency Government tightened its Covid-19 prevention measures in December 2020 by closing tourist attractions and public spaces and restricting the hours that cafes and restaurants could be open over the four-day 2020 New Year holiday, which runs from December 31 to January 3, 2021 (Putranto, 2020).

The Circular Letter of the Banyuwangi Regency Covid-19 Handling Task Force Number 210/SE/STPC/2020 concerning Controlling Community Activities in the Context of Preventing COVID-19 during the 2021 New Year Holiday Period outlines the Banyuwangi Regency Government's position on closing all tourism sites. The policy of the task force is informed by several recommendations and the latest data regarding the surge in Covid-19 cases observed in December 2020. (Mubyarsah & Antara, 2020). In June 2020, the tourism sector in Banyuwangi was reinstated following an assessment by President Joko Widodo, who deemed the region to be the most prepared and committed in its efforts to enhance the tourism industry in light of the new normal. This was achieved through the

implementation of health protocols, including the regulation of tourist destination capacities and the assurance of visitor safety and security (CNN Indonesia, 2020a).

Banyuwangi Regent Abdullah Azwar Anas emphasized the importance of community productivity during the pandemic as the basis for economic recovery on September 24, 2020. To maintain and stimulate the regional economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, innovative measures are taken. Tourism industry business practices were altered. After the outbreak of COVID-19, tourism activities were no longer conducted by presenting tourist attractions. Banyuwangi prioritizes health by consistently implementing health protocols, restricting tourist arrivals, and innovating marketing digitalization to make it more convenient for tourists to visit (Kusuma, 2020). According to the findings of a Traveloka survey, the Banyuwangi Regency Government's innovative and strategic measures in the tourism sector have garnered significant public confidence, as evidenced by the preferences of domestic tourists for destinations to visit following the reopening of the tourism industry. After Yogyakarta and Bali, Banyuwangi placed third in the survey (Kurniawan, 2020).

From the explanation above, the researcher tried to summarize the reasons for selecting Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency as the research locus. First, Surabaya was chosen due to its high population, being a well-established trade and industrial center in Eastern Indonesia and having sufficient infrastructure. Second, Banyuwangi Regency

was selected for its strategic location, connecting the islands of Java and Bali. In addition, Banyuwangi is also a reference for tourists as evidenced by the increasing number of tourists visits each year. Both areas have the same characteristics, namely population mobility activities that trigger the spread of Covid-19. In this study, researchers assume that Surabaya City can represent an urban area, while Banyuwangi Regency can represent a rural area. However, this research cannot be generalized to encompass all cities in Indonesia. Nonetheless, this research can provide valuable case examples for cities with urban characteristics and cities with rural characteristics.

Ultimately, this research aims to prove whether local governments, in this case the Surabaya City Government and Banyuwangi Regency Government, can build trust, restore trust, or even maintain the trust of the people they serve or even vice versa, considering that local governments have tried and worked hard through various policies that are expected to control Covid-19 cases. The degree of trust will be assessed using a measurement framework developed by the OECD, namely five policy dimensions that affect trust in public institutions. These dimensions include responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness (OECD, 2017a).

When in practice, these dimensions are positive, in the sense that the policies/performances carried out are able to create the dimensions that the researchers mean, it is certain that it will be directly proportional to the increase or high public trust in the government



(Hartanto et al., 2021). The statement aligns with the assertion made by Van de Walle et al. (2008) that the government's performance is the primary driver of public trust. However, if public trust in the government decreases, this is clearly caused by the government's failure to solve problems and carry out proper governance. Expected outputs and outcomes are substandard, efficiency and effectiveness are low, and the government is unable to fulfill its vision and mission. According to Bouckaert & Van de Walle (2014), there are two ways that can be done if you want to trust an institution, namely trusting every individual in it, and the design/governance/policies in the institution.

The concept of public trust is intricately linked to that of public opinion. The term "public opinion" pertains to the collective perspectives and attitudes of a group of individuals regarding a specific subject matter or concern. The formation of public opinion can be shaped by a multitude of factors, such as individual encounters, media representation, and communal engagement (Wang et al., 2021). Public opinion can help researchers and policymakers to understand the views and attitudes of different groups, and can inform decision-making on a range of issues (Tournay et al., 2020). Public opinion (which develops and circulates in the midst of society), massively disseminated, and even internalized by society, will certainly generate trust, whether it is good or bad trust.

During the pandemic era, with the rapid intake of various information received by the public, even those that are not filtered will form public opinions. As is

known, during the pandemic, hoaxes have sprung up, and a lot of misinformation has been received by the public (Ho et al., 2022). This massive hoax news can affect a person's trust in Covid-19 (Ahmad et al., 2022; Meizahra et al., 2021), which of course will also have implications for the way they view government performance. Opinions that are allowed to run wild will undoubtedly generate negative opinions, especially considering the hardships experienced by the community during the pandemic. If left unchecked, these opinions will be internalized in people's minds, and form beliefs. If not managed properly, it will certainly lead to dislike, even extreme hatred of the government and narrate that the government has failed. Therefore, the government functions to maintain public trust with performance.

## METHOD

A quantitative approach and a descriptive research design were used in this study. In order to explore certain populations or samples, gather data using research tools, and analyze statistical data in order to test predefined hypotheses, a quantitative approach based on the positivist philosophy is used (Neuman, 2014; Thiel, 2022). The survey research method, known for its quantitative nature, is characterized by the use of a questionnaire to gather data from a substantial number of respondents (Effendi & Tukiran, 2012).

There are two sections to the questionnaire. The respondent's profile, including full name, gender, geographical

origin, age, profession, most recent education, and income, is shown in the first section. To gather demographic information, read this section. The second section of the survey consisted of 29 questions based on five characteristics or dimensions: responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness. The utilization of the five-point Likert scale is employed for the purpose of assessing the various facets of public trust, which are subsequently transformed into practical explications of variables: (1) Strongly Distrust (SD); (2) Distrust; (3) Neutral (N); (4) Trust; and (5) Strong Trust.

Generation Z, born between 1997 until 2012, and Generation Y (Millennials), born between 1981 until 1996, made up the research sample (BPS, 2021). According to Wijoyo et.al (2020), due to the effect of technological advancements, Generation Y (Millennials) has more open personality traits than other generations, while Generation Z, commonly referred to as the “internet generation,” has some benefits, such as digital technology proficiency, a propensity to be tolerant of cultural diversity, and the ability to adjust to changing circumstances (Wijoyo et al., 2020). The Slovin Formula was used to

calculate the total number of respondents in this study, resulting in 400 for Surabaya City and 400 for Banyuwangi Regency with a 5% margin of error (Sujarweni, 2014).

Non-probability sampling served as the sample strategy in this inquiry. According to Neuman (2014), non-probability sampling is a sampling method that does not ensure equal probability of selection for each unit or individual in the population. Quota sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, is used in this study. According to Kuswana (2011), When the population size is known in advance, the technique of “quota sampling” is used to select a sample from the population that matches the intended quota in terms of particular characteristics (Effendi & Tukiran, 2012).

The instrument needs to be reliable to ensure the viability of the data. Evaluate the soundness of the tool by utilizing the product moment correlation formula and providing an approximate estimation of Karl Pearson’s coefficient (Arikunto, 2010). A 5% error margin is used to compare the estimated  $r$  value to the  $r$  price in the product moment table. If  $r$  count exceeds  $r$  table, it is valid; if  $r$  count falls below  $r$  table, it is invalid. A validity test was conducted on the questionnaire instrument,

**Table 1 Responsiveness Dimension Classification**

Surabaya City Government				Banyuwangi Regency Government			
Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	57	14.3 %	14.3 %	Low	7	1.8 %	1.8 %
Medium	257	64.3 %	78.5 %	Medium	193	48.3 %	50.0 %
High	86	21.5 %	100.0 %	High	200	50.0 %	100.0 %
Total	400	100.0 %		Total	400	100.0 %	

Source: Primary Data (2021)

with a sample size of 30 respondents from each region. The findings revealed that the  $r$  count for item questions 1 to 29 exceeded the  $r$  table value, indicating the validity of the utilized question items. The correlation coefficient value obtained from the  $R$  table was 0.361. The consistency of the questionnaire was checked using the reliability test in the interim. By comparing the alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) to 0.06, the measuring gadget applies the Alpha Cronbach formula. If the alpha coefficient ( $r$  count) is higher than 0.06, the item is considered dependable (Arikunto, 2010). The results of the reliability test conducted on a sample of 30 respondents indicated that the measuring instrument, which was a consistent questionnaire, exhibited high reliability coefficients of 0.938 for Surabaya City and 0.957 for Banyuwangi Regency. The research findings' reliability and validity were assessed through the application of descriptive statistics, which involved the determination of central tendency measures. To facilitate analysis, the categories have been condensed into three distinct levels. Specifically, options 4 and 5 denote a high level of trust, option 3 signifies a moderate level of trust, and options 1 and 2 indicate a low level of trust.

## FINDING

The table below illustrates the varying degrees of public trust in the Surabaya City Government and Banyuwangi Regency, ranging from low to medium and high levels of trust:

According to the data presented in Table 1, the dimension of responsiveness exhibited by the Surabaya City Government is primarily characterized by a moderate level of trust, accounting for 64.3 percent of the total, while the Banyuwangi Regency Government's responsiveness dimension is predominantly characterized by a high level of trust, accounting for 50 percent of the total. The level of trust exhibited by individuals towards their local government in relation to Covid-19 is dependent on the level of responsiveness displayed by the government, which may be classified as low, medium, or high, its competence and correctness in doing so, and its capacity to implement policies that will serve the community's requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the responsiveness dimension will determine whether people trust the government through providing access to public services during the Covid-19 pandemic and the capacity of local governments to address community expectations and criticism (OECD, 2017b).

**Table 2 Reliability Dimension Classification**

Surabaya City Government				Banyuwangi Regency Government			
Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	64	16.0 %	16.0 %	Low	13	3.3 %	3.3 %
Medium	266	66.5 %	82.5 %	Medium	140	35.0 %	38.3 %
High	70	17.5 %	100.0 %	High	247	61.8 %	100.0 %
Total	400	100.0 %		Total	400	100.0 %	

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Table 2 shows that the reliability dimension for the Surabaya City Government typically displays a medium level of trust category of 66.5%, whereas the reliability dimension for the Banyuwangi Regency Government typically displays a high level of trust category of 61.8%. The reliability dimension's trustworthiness from low to high depending on several factors, including how local governments can adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic, foresee it, and manage social, economic, and political uncertainties. The reliability dimension's level of public trust in the government has also been influenced by efforts to shield citizens from the effects of Covid-19 and consistent local government responses to the pandemic (Brezzi et al., 2020).

Table 3 indicates that the integrity dimension is primarily characterized by elevated levels of trust, with the Surabaya City Government and Banyuwangi Regency

Government garnering trust levels of 51.3 percent and 71.5 percent, respectively. The effective management of the Covid-19 pandemic by an accountable government, along with the government's commitment to combatting corruption during this crisis, the adherence of local governments to relevant laws and regulations in their pandemic management, the government's astuteness in managing conflicts of interest, and the exercise of authority to the fullest extent possible, are all factors that contribute to a heightened level of trust (OECD, 2017b).

According to Table 4, the Surabaya City Government and Banyuwangi Regency Government exhibit a tendency to obtain high scores on the openness dimension, with percentages of 63 percent and 53.5 percent, respectively. This suggests that there is a notable level of trust present. The factors contributing to the high level of trust in the openness dimension include the provision

**Table 3. Integrity Dimension Classification**

Surabaya City Government				Banyuwangi Regency Government			
Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	29	7.3 %	7.3 %	Low	9	2.3 %	2.3 %
Medium	166	41.5 %	48.8 %	Medium	105	26.3 %	28.5 %
High	205	51.3 %	100.0 %	High	286	71.5 %	100.0 %
Total	400	100.0		Total	400	100.0 %	

Source: Primary Data

**Table 4 Openness Dimension Classification**

Surabaya City Government				Banyuwangi Regency Government			
Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	13	3.3 %	3.3 %	Low	6	1.5 %	1.5 %
Medium	135	33.8 %	37.0 %	Medium	180	45.0 %	46.5 %
High	252	63.0 %	100.0 %	High	214	53.5 %	100.0 %
Total	400	100.0 %		Total	400	100.0 %	

Source: Primary Data (2021)

**Table 5 Fairness Dimension Classification**

Surabaya City Government				Banyuwangi Regency Government			
Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent	Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Low	30	7.5 %	7.5 %	Low	11	2.8 %	2.8 %
Medium	105	26.3 %	33.8 %	Medium	135	33.8 %	36.5 %
High	265	66.3 %	100.0 %	High	254	63.5 %	100.0 %
Total	400	100.0 %		Total	400	100.0 %	

Source: Primary Data (2021)

of adequate, comprehensible, and easily accessible information on Covid-19, the clarity and comprehensiveness of Covid-19-related information, the degree of public acceptance of local government policies in addressing the pandemic, the regulatory framework established by the regional government for managing the Covid-19 pandemic, which guarantees transparency, and the opportunities for stakeholder engagement (Brezzi et al., 2020).

Table 5 indicates that the Surabaya City Government and the Banyuwangi Regency Government exhibit dominant fairness dimensions with high trust levels of 66.3 percent and 63.5 percent, respectively. The degree to which local governments have strived to address the needs of their communities amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as their efforts to enhance the living standards of their citizens in response to the pandemic's effects, and their equitable treatment of both citizens and the private sector, are all indicative of a heightened level of trust (OECD, 2013).

## DISCUSSION

The primary goal of public administration, which is to serve residents, is reflected in the recognition of public

service responsiveness as a driver of trust (OECD, 2017a). Responsiveness measures how much individuals believe that the government will act quickly to address their concerns about current issues and the subpar quality of public services (Murtin et al., 2018). Government responsiveness is a phrase used by political scientists to describe how well a government responds to the demands and worries of its constituents (Broockman, 2013; Distelhorst & Hou, 2017; Greg & Hou, 2014). Improved public satisfaction and, ultimately, trust in the government, can be achieved through efforts to better match services with citizens' needs and expectations (OECD, 2017a). In the Covid-19 scenario, governments are required to act quickly in response to public mood during crisis policymaking in addition to specific demands from individual citizens (Dai et al., 2021).

Overall, a medium level of trust, with a percentage of 64.3 percent, led the survey results on the public's level of trust in the Surabaya City Government for the responsiveness dimension, while a high level of trust, with a percentage of 50 percent, dominated the results for Banyuwangi Regency. The findings indicate that the Surabaya City Government has faced



challenges in effectively addressing various aspects of Covid-19 management, including the speed and sensitivity of their response, accuracy in handling the pandemic, policy outcomes that meet community needs, accessibility of public services, and responsiveness to public feedback. In several news reports, for example, the Surabaya City Government was considered late in responding to the handling of the Covid-19 transmission cluster at the HM Sampoerna cigarette factory (Perdana, 2020). There are also complaints about the late assistance from the Surabaya City Government to communities affected by Covid-19 (BPK Jatim, 2020).

In contrast, the Banyuwangi Regency has demonstrated overall success in these areas. The development of the 'Smart Kampung' system initiated by the Banyuwangi Regency Government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has attracted several Asian leaders, who see Banyuwangi as a model for agility in addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic. Through 'Smart Kampung', social problems due to Covid-19 are trying to be responded quickly by the Banyuwangi Regency Government through a social assistance data collection program for residents. The Smart Kampung initiative has implemented an online reporting system for social assistance (bansos) to aid residents who have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and have not been enrolled in the social safety net programmed provided by the central, provincial, or district governments. Furthermore, residents can

verify the beneficiaries of welfare aid provided by the central, provincial, and local administrations. In addition, 'Smart Kampung' also provides data on Isolation Houses that can be used by every resident (Wijoto, 2020).

Reliability is the dependable and accurate delivery of pledged services (Pakurár et al., 2019; Schmidt, 2006). It reflects the public's evaluation of the government's performance in providing the expedient services they require (Mentzas & Papadomichelaki, 2012; Omar et al., 2011). The concept of reliability pertains to the ability of governmental institutions to efficiently fulfill their delegated responsibilities in anticipating needs, thereby reducing uncertainty in the economic, social, and political landscape that individuals face (OECD, 2017a). The public's perception of reliability is significantly associated with their trust in the government's ability to provide sufficient assistance during natural disasters, including the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (Murtin et al., 2018, p. 46). In terms of the reliability dimension, the level of public trust in the Surabaya City Government is primarily characterized by a moderate degree of trust, as evidenced by a 66.5% proportion. This suggests that the Surabaya City Government has encountered challenges in adapting to and anticipating the impacts of Covid-19 and has not been successful in effectively managing the social, economic, and political uncertainties that have arisen during this period. The Covid-19 outbreak has resulted in inadequate

protection for the residents of Surabaya, and the government's efforts to address the pandemic have been characterized by inconsistent implementation. The Banyuwangi Regency Government exhibits a predominant level of public trust, with a percentage of 61.8%. The observation indicates that the Banyuwangi Regency Government has demonstrated competence in adapting to and proactively addressing the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, while efficiently managing the associated social, economic, and political uncertainties. Furthermore, the government has taken measures to ensure the protection of Surabaya residents and has consistently implemented policies aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic.

The concept of "trust" is closely associated with integrity, and is considered a fundamental value (Kumagai and Iorio, 2020). The concept of integrity in governance pertains to the observance of ethical and moral standards by individuals who occupy public positions, which embody the principles of honesty, accountability, and dedication to serving the public interest (Hoekstra et al., 2023; Modise & Modise, 2023). The integrity of politicians, who serve as policy makers, is a crucial determinant of public trust in the government. Values upheld by the government play a significant role in shaping public trust (Murtin et al., 2018). In terms of the integrity dimension, the Surabaya City Government exhibits a significant level of public trust, accounting for 51.3% of the total percentage.

Meanwhile, the Banyuwangi Regency Government exhibits a higher level of public trust, accounting for 71.5% of the total percentage. The evidence presented demonstrates the unwavering dedication of Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency in eliminating corruption amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Their actions align with the legal framework and relevant statutes governing the management of the pandemic, including the proper management of conflicts of interest, judicious exercise of authority, and accountability in pandemic management. Furthermore, their conduct reflects a commendable standard of ethical behavior in navigating the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The concept of openness pertains to the degree to which individuals believe they will be afforded the chance to voice their apprehensions in situations where actions carried out by government authorities have an impact on their respective neighborhoods (Murtin et al., 2018). Openness has become a crucial factor for government administrators to gain, build, and maintain public trust. The concept of openness has gained significant traction across multiple platforms, leading to the emergence of an open government paradigm. This paradigm entails a greater degree of transparency in public processes, widespread availability of public information through online channels, and the encouragement of citizen and non-governmental organization engagement with public through novel forms of platform-based participation and collaboration (Schmidhuber et al., 2021). Even according

to González-Gallego and Nieto-Torrejón (2021), the level of openness and coverage of data sets issued by the government has a significant impact on citizens' trust in public institutions. Government efforts to provide greater openness to the public can send a clear signal about the government's commitment to fostering trust while improving the quality of policy decisions designed (Matasick, 2017).

In terms of the openness dimension, the Surabaya City Government is perceived to have a significantly higher level of public trust, with a percentage of 63 percent, compared to the Banyuwangi Regency Government, which is perceived to have a relatively lower level of public trust, with a percentage of 53.5 percent. The findings demonstrate the capacity of Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency to provide extensive and clear information regarding Covid-19. The information disseminated is lucid, comprehensive, and readily accessible to the general public. The community has evinced a willingness to embrace the policies implemented by the local government to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the local authorities have ensured transparency in their handling of the pandemic and have provided avenues for stakeholder participation from various sectors such as the community, private enterprise, academia, and media in the decision-making process and policy formulation for managing the Covid-19 outbreak in the respective regions.

Fairness, within the framework of public trust is a crucial aspect, can be delineated as the perception that institutions and their

representatives administer equitable and impartial treatment to individuals and groups (Freedman, 2019; Khan et al., 2022), by the government, as well as safeguarding the welfare of the broader community. It is imperative that citizens perceive themselves as having a voice, are accorded with respect, and are provided with requisite explanations (OECD, 2017a). The level of public trust in the Surabaya City Government regarding the fairness dimension is predominantly high, with a percentage of 66.3%. Similarly, the level of public trust in the Banyuwangi Regency Government is also predominantly high, with a percentage of 63.5%. Both Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency have demonstrated equitable treatment towards their citizens and the private sector amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. These regions have effectively addressed the needs of their communities during this crisis and have actively worked towards improving living conditions as a way to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prior research conducted by the OECD indicates that while the majority of governments are perceived as being relatively transparent, equitable, and dependable, individuals tend to hold a more negative outlook regarding institutional accountability and ethical conduct. The majority of respondents hold the view that government officials are more susceptible to accepting bribes, which are essentially political incentives, rather than compromising their integrity (Murtin et al., 2018). Whereas Silalahi (2011), posits that The phenomenon of

public distrust towards the government can be attributed to a discrepancy between the anticipated expectations and the actual outcomes in terms of responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness. Nevertheless, the present investigation reveals a distinct pattern, as evidenced by the survey findings indicating that rural populations exhibit a propensity for placing significant trust in their municipal authorities. In the interim, urban localities are frequently associated with contemporary (progressive) civilization (Jamaludin, 2017). They exhibit moderate levels of trust in the domains of responsiveness and reliability, while displaying elevated levels of trust in the domains of integrity, openness, and fairness. The present study is subject to limitations as its findings may not be readily generalizable to other regions due to its utilization of a singular city/district (regency) as a sample, specifically Surabaya City as a representation of urban areas, and Banyuwangi Regency as a representation of rural areas.

During the pandemic, Indonesians have reactively and expressively expressed their opinions, for example regarding policies to limit public activities, from PSBB to various kinds of PPKM and vaccination plans (Ikfina, 2023; Saadah et al., 2022; Suratnoaji et al., 2020). Opinion is a natural thing to develop, assumptions about it all are narrated pro and con on social media massively. Protest, rejection, and acceptance will always be an interesting debate among the public. This is the basis of public trust in Covid-19 and the government. Therefore,

it is the government's job to straighten out misinformation and try to show its best performance in order to be trusted by the public. The results of this research reflect public reactions that have been voiced through various social media channels and direct interactions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on a survey conducted among 800 respondents belonging to the Millennial Generation (Y) and Generation Z from Surabaya City and Banyuwangi Regency, it can be inferred that the level of public trust in the Banyuwangi Regency Government is comparatively higher than that in Surabaya City. The evaluation of public trust in the Surabaya City Government is based on a five-dimensional framework. The dimensions of responsiveness and reliability are perceived to have a moderate level of trust, whereas the dimensions of integrity, openness, and fairness are perceived to have a high level of trust. In contrast to the Banyuwangi Regency, there is a significant level of trust observed across all dimensions, including responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness.

The establishment of a robust level of trust is contingent upon the political determination of regional leaders, as evidenced by their policies and tangible actions aimed at mitigating the Covid-19 pandemic. This is achieved through the implementation of the five fundamental dimensions or constructs that underpin the cultivation of public trust. The presence of a high level of public trust is typically

associated with the provision of accessible, efficient, and community-oriented public services by a competent government. Such services are designed to effectively address the needs and expectations of the community, while also being adaptable to changing circumstances. An effective administration will additionally guarantee a significant level of dependability and consistency, reducing ambiguity in the economic, societal, and political milieu of its populace. A government that is grounded in values will prioritize integrity by ensuring that public institutions adhere to elevated standards of behavior and demonstrate a dedication to safeguarding the public interest. This type of government will also exhibit a strong commitment to combatting corruption and will endeavor to ensure that public policy processes and outcomes are equitable. A government that is based on values will exhibit a significant degree of transparency. In situations where trust is lacking, the converse holds true.

The Banyuwangi Regency Government's high level of public trust has significant implications for public opinion, resulting in a favorable image. Conversely, in cases where the Surabaya City Government is perceived to have a moderate level of trust in terms of responsiveness and reliability, the prevailing public sentiment within the community tends to be unfavorable. Hence, it is imperative for the Surabaya City Government to effectively manage public perception regarding governmental operations by regulating the dissemination of polarizing content, misinformation, derogatory language, and

fraudulent information on social media and other digital platforms.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all cities and regencies in Indonesia since the sample size only represents a specific urban and rural area. In order to achieve more representative results, a larger sample from various cities and regencies would be required. The level of public trust will also differ according to the performance of local governments and the political commitment of their leaders. Secondly, the research location is still too narrow at the city level, researchers hope that there will be further research to measure the level of public trust in the government at the national level to obtain macro data. Finally, with the online survey method, this research could not reach a proportional number of participants/respondents. Therefore, further research that addresses these limitations and provides a more comprehensive analysis is warranted to enhance the overall validity and generalizability of the findings.

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