

# Governance for a greener future: An analysis of compliance with Ombudsman recommendations and its implications for transparency and public service accountability in waste management policy in the Special Region of Yogyakarta

Dyah Adriantini Sintha Dewi<sup>1</sup>, Dilli Trisna Noviasari<sup>1\*</sup>, Alan Kusuma<sup>1</sup>, and Habib Muhsin Syafingji<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Magelang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author's email: [dilli@unimma.ac.id](mailto:dilli@unimma.ac.id)

## Abstract

The waste management challenges in the Special Region of Yogyakarta stem not only from the limited capacity of final disposal sites but also from the weak implementation of regulatory frameworks governing waste governance. These shortcomings have led to increased public complaints submitted to the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta Regional Office, as a corrective mechanism against maladministration in public service delivery. This study examines the local government's compliance with the Ombudsman's recommendations in implementing waste management policies grounded in the principles of transparency, accountability, and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on responsible consumption and production. Employing a juridical-empirical approach, the research integrates normative analysis of relevant regulations and good governance principles with empirical observations of local government public communication practices regarding waste services and responses to citizen complaints. Preliminary findings indicate a persistent gap between regulatory mandates and practical implementation, driven by weak coordination, limited information disclosure, and low responsiveness to Ombudsman recommendations. The study highlights the urgency of strengthening the institutional force of Ombudsman recommendations through derivative regulations and improved waste processing infrastructure to advance more accountable and sustainable waste governance.

## Keywords

Compliance, Ombudsman advice, Transparency, Accountability, Waste management

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## Introduction

Waste management has become one of the most pressing governance challenges faced by local governments, particularly in developing regions where rapid urbanization is not always accompanied by adequate public service capacity. Beyond its environmental dimension, waste management represents a critical issue of public administration, legal compliance, and governance accountability. Ineffective waste governance not only degrades environmental quality but also undermines citizens' constitutional rights to a healthy environment and reliable public services. As such, waste management must be understood not merely as a technical or infrastructural issue, but as a legal and institutional problem closely linked to transparency, accountability, and the quality of public service delivery.

In Indonesia, waste management is legally classified as a mandatory public service under national and regional regulatory frameworks. Laws and regulations governing waste management, environmental protection, and local government authority provide a relatively comprehensive normative basis for implementation. However, the persistence of waste crises in various regions indicates a recurring gap between regulatory design and administrative practice. This gap suggests that the core problem lies not in the absence of legal norms, but in weak governance capacity, poor coordination among institutions, and insufficient accountability mechanisms at the local level.

The Special Region of Yogyakarta (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta) presents a salient example of this governance dilemma. Despite its status as a cultural and educational hub, Yogyakarta has faced recurring waste management emergencies, including the overcapacity of final disposal sites (Tempat Pemrosesan Akhir/TPA), inadequate waste sorting and processing systems, and inconsistent public communication regarding waste services. These challenges have generated significant public dissatisfaction and triggered a growing number of citizen complaints directed at the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta Regional Office. Such complaints reflect not only service failure but also allegations of maladministration, including delays, lack of transparency, and neglect of public participation.

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia plays a constitutionally and statutorily recognized role as an external supervisory body tasked with overseeing public service delivery and addressing maladministration. Through its authority to receive complaints, conduct investigations, and issue recommendations, the Ombudsman functions as an accountability mechanism designed to correct administrative failures without resorting to judicial processes. In the context of waste management, Ombudsman recommendations serve as an important governance instrument intended to improve policy implementation, enhance transparency, and ensure responsiveness to public concerns.

Nevertheless, a fundamental challenge remains regarding the legal and practical status of Ombudsman recommendations. While such recommendations are formally acknowledged within the administrative system, their non-binding nature often results in partial compliance or symbolic follow-up by government institutions. This condition raises critical questions about the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations as tools of administrative accountability, particularly in policy sectors such as waste management that require sustained coordination, institutional commitment, and public trust.

From a governance perspective, compliance with Ombudsman recommendations should not be viewed merely as a procedural obligation, but as a substantive indicator of transparency and accountability in public administration. Transparency entails not only the availability of information but also the clarity, accessibility, and responsiveness of public communication. Accountability, in turn, requires that government institutions assume responsibility for policy outcomes, respond to oversight mechanisms, and implement corrective measures in a timely and measurable manner. Failure to comply with Ombudsman recommendations therefore signals deeper structural weaknesses in governance practices.

This issue gains further relevance when examined in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production. Sustainable waste management constitutes a key component of SDG 12, requiring governments to adopt policies that promote waste reduction, recycling, and environmentally sound disposal. Achieving this goal depends not only on technical solutions, but also on governance frameworks that prioritize accountability, transparency, and public participation. Weak compliance with oversight recommendations undermines these objectives and hampers progress toward sustainable development.

Existing academic studies on waste management in Indonesia have largely focused on technical, environmental, or policy design aspects, such as infrastructure capacity, community participation, or regulatory effectiveness. While these studies provide valuable insights, relatively limited attention has been paid to the role of oversight institutions particularly the Ombudsman in ensuring accountability and improving policy implementation. Moreover, research examining compliance with Ombudsman recommendations as a governance variable remains scarce, especially at the regional level.

This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the compliance of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government with recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, Yogyakarta Regional Office, in the context of waste management policy. By adopting a juridical-empirical approach, this research integrates normative legal analysis of governance principles and regulatory frameworks with empirical examination of administrative practices, public communication, and complaint-handling mechanisms. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive

understanding of how Ombudsman recommendations function in practice and their implications for transparency, accountability, and sustainable waste governance.

## Method

This study employs a juridical-empirical research method, which integrates normative legal analysis with empirical observation of administrative practices. This approach is particularly appropriate for examining governance issues in public service delivery, as it allows the researcher to assess not only the adequacy of legal norms but also their implementation in practice. The juridical-empirical method enables a comprehensive understanding of how Ombudsman recommendations function within the administrative system and how local governments respond to such oversight mechanisms.

The normative legal approach is used to analyze statutory regulations governing waste management, public service delivery, and the role of the Ombudsman in Indonesia. Primary legal materials examined in this study include Law No. 18 of 2008 on Waste Management, Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, and Law No. 37 of 2008 on the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as relevant regional regulations in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This analysis is complemented by secondary legal materials such as academic literature, journal articles, and official policy documents related to governance, transparency, and accountability. The normative analysis focuses on identifying the legal obligations of local governments, the position of Ombudsman recommendations within administrative law, and the principles of good governance that should guide waste management policies.

In parallel, an empirical approach is applied to examine how these legal norms are implemented in practice. Empirical data are obtained through document analysis of Ombudsman reports, records of public complaints related to waste management, and official responses issued by local government institutions in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. These data provide insight into patterns of maladministration, the nature of public grievances, and the extent to which Ombudsman recommendations are acknowledged and followed up by the government. Particular attention is given to the mechanisms of public communication, transparency of information, and responsiveness to citizen complaints.

Data analysis is conducted using qualitative descriptive and interpretative techniques. Normative data are analyzed through legal interpretation and systematic analysis to assess consistency between regulations and governance principles. Empirical data are analyzed by identifying recurring themes, patterns of compliance or non-compliance, and institutional behavior in responding to Ombudsman recommendations. The findings from both normative and empirical analyses are then integrated to evaluate the level of compliance and its implications for transparency, accountability, and sustainable waste governance.

By combining juridical and empirical perspectives, this research method allows for a holistic assessment of governance practices and provides a solid foundation for policy-oriented recommendations aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of Ombudsman oversight and improving waste management governance.

## Results

### *Compliance of the Yogyakarta Special Region Government with Ombudsman recommendations in waste management policy*

The first major finding of this study concerns the level and quality of compliance of the Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) Government with recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in the context of waste management policy. Empirical analysis of Ombudsman reports, public complaint records, and official government responses reveals that compliance remains limited, fragmented, and predominantly procedural in nature. Although government institutions formally acknowledge Ombudsman recommendations, substantive policy changes and institutional reforms are rarely implemented in a consistent and measurable manner.

From the perspective of administrative governance, compliance should be understood not merely as formal acknowledgment but as the implementation of corrective measures aimed at addressing maladministration and improving public service performance [1], [7]. However, findings indicate that Ombudsman recommendations are frequently treated as non-binding moral advice rather than governance instruments capable of triggering institutional change. This perception is reinforced by the non-coercive legal character of Ombudsman recommendations under Indonesian law [11].

Empirical data demonstrate that most recommendations related to waste management focus on improving inter-agency coordination, enhancing transparency of public information, and increasing responsiveness to citizen complaints. Nevertheless, follow-up actions tend to be limited to administrative correspondence, internal meetings, or short-term technical adjustments. Structural issues such as overlapping institutional mandates, inadequate budget allocation, and weak policy integration remain largely unaddressed. Similar patterns of symbolic compliance have been identified in studies on ombudsman institutions in other jurisdictions [7], [8].

The study further reveals that political will plays a decisive role in determining the extent of compliance. Where local leadership perceives Ombudsman oversight as supportive of governance improvement, recommendations are more likely to be followed substantively. Conversely, when recommendations are viewed as external interference, compliance becomes minimal and defensive. This finding aligns with governance literature emphasizing the importance of institutional culture and leadership commitment in accountability mechanisms [2], [3].

In the context of waste management, weak compliance has direct implications for policy effectiveness. Without systematic follow-up, Ombudsman recommendations fail to address the root causes of maladministration, resulting in recurring waste crises and persistent public dissatisfaction. Thus, the effectiveness of Ombudsman oversight in DIY remains constrained by limited institutionalization of compliance mechanisms.

### *Implications of compliance for transparency in waste management public services*

The second subtheme examines the implications of compliance with Ombudsman recommendations for transparency in waste management public services. Transparency is a fundamental principle of good governance, requiring governments to provide accurate, accessible, and timely information to the public [9], [4]. In waste management, transparency encompasses service schedules, waste processing methods, environmental risks, and complaint-handling mechanisms.

Findings indicate that limited compliance with Ombudsman recommendations significantly undermines transparency in waste management services. Although local governments formally commit to transparency, implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented. Public information is often scattered across multiple platforms, outdated, or communicated in a manner that is inaccessible to ordinary citizens. This condition reinforces information asymmetry between government institutions and the public [9].

Ombudsman recommendations frequently emphasize the need for improved public communication and disclosure of information. However, empirical evidence suggests that follow-up measures tend to focus on formal compliance, such as issuing circular letters or uploading information to official websites, without ensuring usability or sustained access. This procedural approach to transparency reflects a compliance-oriented mindset rather than a governance-oriented one [4].

The absence of standardized information systems and clear accountability indicators further weakens transparency. Without measurable benchmarks, transparency obligations become symbolic and difficult to evaluate. Similar challenges have been documented in studies on public service transparency in developing governance systems [2], [10].

From a governance perspective, weak transparency erodes public trust and limits meaningful participation. Citizens who lack access to reliable information are unable to monitor service delivery or hold authorities accountable. Consequently, limited compliance with Ombudsman recommendations perpetuates governance deficits and undermines the legitimacy of waste management policies.

### *Implications of compliance for accountability and the achievement of sustainable development goal 12*

The third subtheme explores the implications of compliance with Ombudsman recommendations for administrative accountability and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on responsible consumption and production. Accountability requires public institutions to assume responsibility for policy outcomes, respond to oversight mechanisms, and implement corrective measures in a measurable manner [1], [14].

The study finds that weak compliance with Ombudsman recommendations undermines accountability in waste management governance. When recommendations are treated as optional, corrective actions lack continuity and measurable impact. This condition limits the effectiveness of oversight institutions as accountability mechanisms [7], [8]. In the context of SDG 12, accountability is essential for ensuring sustainable waste management practices. Achieving responsible consumption and production requires integrated policies, institutional coordination, and long-term commitment [5], [6], [13]. Weak accountability contributes to policy fragmentation and short-term crisis management rather than structural reform.

Empirical findings indicate that limited accountability hinders progress toward SDG 12 targets. Waste management policies tend to be reactive, focusing on immediate crises such as landfill overcapacity, rather than preventive and sustainable solutions. This pattern mirrors global findings that weak governance and accountability impede sustainable waste management [6], [15].

Strengthening compliance with Ombudsman recommendations can enhance accountability by reinforcing institutional responsibility and policy coherence. When recommendations are systematically followed up, they function as catalysts for governance reform and support sustainable development objectives [3], [12].

## **Discussion**

This discussion interprets the empirical findings by situating them within the broader framework of administrative governance, public service accountability, and sustainable development. Rather than merely restating the results, this section explains what the findings mean for the functioning of oversight mechanisms, particularly the Ombudsman, and how compliance with its recommendations shapes transparency, accountability, and waste management governance in the Special Region of Yogyakarta.

The first key insight derived from the findings is that compliance with Ombudsman recommendations in waste management policy remains predominantly procedural. This indicates that compliance is treated as a formal administrative response rather than a substantive governance commitment. From a theoretical standpoint, this finding confirms arguments in accountability literature that oversight mechanisms lacking

binding force tend to be absorbed into bureaucratic routines without generating structural reform. Compliance, in this sense, becomes symbolic—aimed at fulfilling formal expectations—rather than transformative. The results therefore suggest that the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations depends less on their existence and more on how they are institutionalized within administrative practice.

Interpreting this condition through the lens of administrative law, the findings highlight a structural tension between normative governance ideals and institutional behavior. Although public service laws and good governance principles require responsiveness to oversight, the absence of enforceability weakens the corrective capacity of Ombudsman recommendations. As a result, local governments may acknowledge recommendations while avoiding deeper policy adjustments. This explains why maladministration in waste management persists despite repeated oversight interventions. The implication is that accountability mechanisms based solely on moral persuasion face inherent limitations when confronted with entrenched bureaucratic cultures and fragmented institutional authority.

The discussion further reveals that limited compliance has a direct and adverse impact on transparency in waste management services. Transparency, as conceptualized in governance theory, is not confined to the disclosure of information but includes clarity, accessibility, and responsiveness. The findings demonstrate that when Ombudsman recommendations concerning information disclosure and public communication are only partially implemented, transparency is reduced to a formalistic exercise. Information may be published, but not in a manner that enables citizens to understand, monitor, or evaluate public services. This reinforces information asymmetry and weakens the public's capacity to act as an accountability actor.

From an interpretative perspective, this condition reflects a narrow understanding of transparency as an administrative obligation rather than a governance principle. The findings suggest that transparency initiatives lacking sustained follow-up and standardized information systems fail to alter power relations between government and citizens. Consequently, public participation remains limited, and complaints continue to emerge as reactive mechanisms rather than preventive governance tools. This interpretation aligns with broader governance studies emphasizing that transparency without accountability mechanisms risks becoming performative rather than substantive.

The findings also demonstrate that weak compliance undermines administrative accountability more broadly. Accountability requires not only answerability but also enforceability and corrective action. When Ombudsman recommendations are treated as optional, accountability becomes fragmented and episodic. This explains why waste management policies in the Special Region of Yogyakarta tend to prioritize short-term crisis management such as responding to landfill overcapacity over long-term structural reform. The discussion thus interprets accountability deficits as both a cause and consequence of weak compliance with oversight mechanisms.

Importantly, the discussion situates these governance failures within the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on responsible consumption and production. Sustainable waste management demands policy continuity, institutional coordination, and long-term commitment. The findings indicate that limited accountability and transparency obstruct progress toward SDG 12 by encouraging reactive, fragmented policy responses. This suggests that sustainability goals cannot be achieved solely through technical solutions but require governance reforms that strengthen oversight compliance and institutional responsibility.

The discussion further highlights the role of political will and institutional culture in mediating compliance outcomes. Where local leadership perceives Ombudsman oversight as a constructive governance tool, recommendations are more likely to trigger meaningful reform. Conversely, when oversight is perceived as external interference, compliance becomes defensive and minimal. This interpretation reinforces governance theories that emphasize leadership commitment and organizational norms as critical determinants of accountability effectiveness.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study extends accountability and governance scholarship by demonstrating how non-binding oversight mechanisms operate in practice within decentralized administrative systems. The findings challenge the assumption that oversight alone is sufficient to improve governance outcomes, showing instead that institutional design and follow-up mechanisms are decisive. Practically, the discussion suggests that strengthening the institutional force of Ombudsman recommendations—through regulatory follow-up requirements, integration into performance evaluation, or mandatory reporting—could enhance transparency and accountability in waste management governance.

Overall, the discussion interprets the findings as evidence that the effectiveness of waste management governance in the Special Region of Yogyakarta is contingent upon the institutionalization of oversight compliance. Without such institutionalization, Ombudsman recommendations risk remaining symbolic, and governance deficits are likely to persist. This interpretation underscores the urgency of reforming oversight-response mechanisms to support sustainable and accountable public service delivery.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the effectiveness of waste management governance in the Special Region of Yogyakarta is not primarily determined by the availability of regulatory frameworks, but rather by the level of institutional compliance with oversight mechanisms, particularly the recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that although Ombudsman recommendations are formally acknowledged by local government institutions, their implementation remains largely procedural and symbolic, resulting in limited substantive improvements in waste management governance. The research confirms that weak compliance with Ombudsman recommendations has significant implications

for transparency and accountability in public service delivery. Transparency in waste management services tends to be treated as a formal administrative obligation rather than as a substantive governance principle that empowers citizens. As a result, public access to information remains fragmented, and meaningful public participation in monitoring waste management policies is constrained. This condition reinforces information asymmetry between government institutions and the public, thereby weakening social accountability.

Furthermore, the study finds that limited compliance undermines administrative accountability by reducing oversight mechanisms to episodic and reactive responses. When Ombudsman recommendations are treated as optional rather than integral to governance processes, corrective actions lack continuity and measurable impact. This explains the persistence of maladministration and recurring waste management crises, despite repeated oversight interventions. Accountability deficits also encourage short-term, crisis-oriented policy responses rather than long-term structural reforms.

In the context of sustainable development, the findings highlight that governance weaknesses pose a serious challenge to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production. Sustainable waste management requires policy coherence, institutional coordination, and long-term commitment—conditions that cannot be fulfilled without strong accountability and transparency mechanisms. The study demonstrates that technical solutions alone are insufficient to achieve sustainability targets if governance structures fail to support compliance and institutional responsibility.

Theoretically, this research contributes to governance and administrative law scholarship by illustrating how non-binding oversight mechanisms operate in decentralized government systems. The findings challenge the assumption that the mere existence of oversight institutions guarantees improved governance outcomes. Instead, the study emphasizes the importance of institutionalizing compliance mechanisms and integrating oversight recommendations into administrative decision-making processes.

Practically, the study suggests that strengthening the institutional force of Ombudsman recommendations is essential to improving waste management governance. This may be achieved through mandatory follow-up mechanisms, integration of Ombudsman recommendations into local government performance evaluations, and clearer regulatory obligations to report compliance outcomes. Such measures would enhance the corrective capacity of the Ombudsman and transform recommendations from symbolic instruments into effective governance tools.

Overall, this study concludes that improving waste management governance in the Special Region of Yogyakarta requires a shift from formalistic compliance toward substantive accountability. Strengthening compliance with Ombudsman

recommendations is not only a matter of administrative efficiency but also a prerequisite for transparent, accountable, and sustainable public service delivery.

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