Transparency and Policy Implementation in the Public Sector in Singapore

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Abstract

Transparency is a crucial element in the successful implementation of policies within the public sector. It ensures accountability and fosters trust between the government and the citizens it serves. By providing clear and accessible information about policy decisions, objectives, and outcomes, transparency allows for greater public participation and input. It also enables the evaluation of policy effectiveness and the identification of areas for improvement. Ultimately, a transparent approach to policy implementation in the public sector enhances governance and promotes a more inclusive and responsive government. The Singapore has implemented various transparency measures in its public sector. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) allows citizens to access government-held information, promoting accountability and trust. The government's proactive release of information on policies, budgets, and public services enhances transparency and public participation. Singapore's government employs evidence-based decision-making to drive policy implementation. The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population was 110 Governments' parastatals in Singapore. The study did sampling of 90 respondents that were chosen from the target population of 110 Governments' parastatals in Singapore. Questionnaires were used to gather the data. The study concluded that stakeholder engagement during policy formulation ensures diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more inclusive and legitimate policy outcomes. Public awareness and understanding of policies are vital for meaningful citizen participation. The study recommended that to further improve transparency, the Singaporean government should focus on enhancing information accessibility to the public. Efforts should also be made to simplify complex policy language to enhance public understanding. The Singaporean government should prioritize efforts to streamline interagency coordination and clarify roles and responsibilities during policy implementation. There should also be implementation of comprehensive communication and public education strategies to enhance public awareness and understanding of policies.

Keywords: *Transparency, Policy Implementation, Public Sector, Singapore*

1.0 Background of the Study

Transparency and policy implementation play crucial roles in the public sector of Singapore, known for its efficient governance and effective public administration (Abdou, 2021). The Singaporean government places great emphasis on transparency to foster public trust, accountability, and efficient policy implementation. Transparency is a fundamental principle guiding the public sector in Singapore. The government believes that transparency enhances accountability and fosters public trust. It ensures that information is accessible to the public, enabling citizens to make informed decisions and hold the government accountable for its actions. Sofyani, Pratolo and Saleh (2022) mentioned that the Singaporean government promotes transparency through various means. One of the key mechanisms is the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which provides citizens with the right to access government-held information. The government proactively releases information on policies, budgets, and public services, making it readily available to the public. Another important aspect of transparency is financial accountability. The government of Singapore maintains a high level of fiscal transparency by publishing its annual budget and providing detailed information on revenue, expenditures, and government projects. This helps citizens understand how public funds are allocated and spent.

To ensure effective policy implementation, the Singaporean government follows a comprehensive approach (Vandevijvere, Barquera, Caceres, Corvalan, Karupaiah, Kroker-Lobos & Swinburn, 2019). Policies are formulated based on extensive research, consultation, and analysis. The government engages in open dialogue with various stakeholders, including businesses, civil society organizations, and citizens, to gather diverse perspectives and feedback. The government employs evidence-based decision-making to implement policies successfully. Rigorous data collection, analysis, and evaluation are conducted to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of proposed policies. This evidence-based approach helps minimize risks and enhance the chances of policy success. Singapore has a strong meritocratic system, which plays a crucial role in policy implementation (Gore, 2019). The civil service is highly competent and professional, consisting of skilled individuals who are selected based on merit. This ensures that policies are executed efficiently and effectively. The Singaporean government has established a robust regulatory framework to support policy implementation (Tay, Whitton, van Dam, Chia, Swinburn, Vandevijvere & Rebello, 2021). Various regulatory bodies oversee specific sectors and enforce regulations to ensure compliance. These bodies operate with transparency, ensuring that their actions and decisions are publicly accountable.

The government actively engages in public consultation during policy formulation and implementation (Petkovic, Riddle, Akl, Khabsa, Lytvyn, Atwere & Tugwell, 2020). This participatory approach allows citizens to provide feedback and suggestions, making them feel involved in the decision-making process. The government considers public input and adjusts policies accordingly, enhancing their acceptance and effectiveness. Singapore employs technology and digital solutions to improve policy implementation and enhance transparency. The government has embraced e-governance initiatives, such as online portals and mobile applications, to provide accessible and convenient services to citizens (Tang, Hou, Fay & Annis, 2021). These digital platforms also facilitate information sharing and feedback collection. Regular monitoring and evaluation are crucial aspects of policy implementation in Singapore. The government establishes

performance indicators and conducts assessments to measure the progress and impact of policies. This evaluation process helps identify areas for improvement and informs future policy decisions. The public sector in Singapore maintains high standards of integrity and ethics. The government has established stringent codes of conduct and anti-corruption measures to ensure the transparency and accountability of public officials. Whistleblower protection mechanisms are in place to encourage reporting of any misconduct or irregularities. Singapore's public sector also embraces international best practices and benchmarks. The government actively participates in global transparency initiatives and anti-corruption campaigns (Najid, Mohd Noor, Yaacob, Zulkifli, Rahim & Fathiyah, 2020). It collaborates with international organizations to exchange knowledge and experiences, further enhancing transparency and policy implementation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Transparency and policy implementation in the public sector of Singapore face a set of challenges that need to be addressed for the continued success of the governance system. While Singapore is widely recognized for its efficient and effective governance, there are still areas where improvements can be made to enhance transparency and optimize policy implementation. Despite efforts to promote transparency, there may still be instances where information is not readily accessible to the public. This lack of accessibility can hinder citizens' ability to fully understand and participate in policy discussions, limiting the effectiveness of public feedback and accountability. Although Singapore engages in public consultation during policy formulation, there is room for further improvement in engaging diverse stakeholders. Enhancing the inclusivity of the consultation process by involving a wider range of voices, including marginalized communities and civil society organizations, can help ensure that policies address the needs and concerns of all citizens.

While Singapore emphasizes evidence-based decision-making, there may be challenges related to data availability and utilization. In some cases, limited data may hinder policymakers' ability to fully assess the impact and effectiveness of implemented policies. Enhancing data collection and analysis processes can contribute to more informed policy decisions. While Singapore has a robust regulatory framework, challenges may arise in ensuring consistent enforcement and compliance across different sectors. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms and penalties for non-compliance can help maintain the integrity of policies and regulations, enhancing transparency and accountability. The implementation of policies in Singapore may involve multiple government agencies, leading to potential coordination challenges and delays. Streamlining and simplifying the implementation processes, as well as clarifying roles and responsibilities among various agencies, can help enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Despite efforts to promote transparency, there may be instances where citizens have limited awareness or understanding of implemented policies. Insufficient communication and public education initiatives may hinder the public's ability to fully comprehend policies and engage in informed discussions. Enhancing public outreach and communication strategies can bridge this gap.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

Principal-Agent Theory: Principal-Agent Theory is highly relevant in the context of transparency and policy implementation. The theory focuses on the relationship between principals (e.g., government or citizens) and agents (e.g., bureaucrats or public officials) who are entrusted with implementing policies on behalf of the principals (Wang, 2021). Transparency plays a critical role in addressing the information asymmetry between the principals and agents, ensuring that agents act in the best interests of the principals. In many cases, principals lack complete information about the actions and decisions of their agents. This information asymmetry can lead to adverse outcomes, such as agents pursuing their own interests or engaging in corrupt practices. Transparency helps to mitigate this problem by providing the principals with access to relevant information about policy implementation. When agents are transparent in their actions, it becomes easier for principals to monitor and evaluate their performance, ensuring that agents are aligned with the principals' objectives. Transparency enhances accountability in policy implementation. When agents are aware that their actions are visible and subject to scrutiny, they are more likely to adhere to the desired policy objectives. Fontaine, Carrasco & Rodrigues, 2022) argued that transparency enables principals to monitor the progress of policy implementation, assess the efficiency and effectiveness of agents' actions, and take corrective measures when necessary. It fosters a sense of responsibility among agents, knowing that their actions are transparently observed and evaluated.

Transparency contributes to building trust and legitimacy between principals and agents. When principals have access to information about policy implementation, they can assess whether agents are acting in their best interests. Transparent actions create a perception of fairness, integrity, and ethical behavior, enhancing the trust between principals and agents (Janning, Khlif & Ingley, 2020). Trust and legitimacy are essential for effective policy implementation, as they facilitate cooperation and collaboration between the two parties. Transparency in policy implementation allows citizens to participate effectively in the governance process. When information about policies and their implementation is readily available, citizens can hold agents accountable, provide feedback, and actively engage in decision-making. This engagement not only enhances transparency but also leads to better policy outcomes by incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing citizen needs. Transparency acts as a deterrent against corruption and misconduct in policy implementation (Rasheed & Jothimuni, 2021). When actions and decisions are transparent, it becomes more challenging for agents to engage in corrupt practices or misuse their authority. Transparency mechanisms such as open procurement processes, public disclosure of financial transactions, and reporting mechanisms can help expose any potential wrongdoing and discourage unethical behavior.

Street-Level Bureaucracy theory: Street-Level Bureaucracy theory is highly relevant to understanding the role of transparency in policy implementation. The theory emphasizes the significance of frontline bureaucrats who directly interact with citizens and communities in implementing policies. Transparency plays a crucial role in ensuring accountability, fairness, and the effective functioning of street-level bureaucrats (May & Winter, 2009). Street-level

bureaucrats exercise considerable discretion in interpreting and implementing policies. Transparency enables greater accountability by making their actions visible and subject to scrutiny (De Laat, 2018). When their decisions and behaviors are transparent, it becomes easier to hold them accountable for their actions. Transparent practices allow policymakers, supervisors, and citizens to assess whether street-level bureaucrats are acting within the bounds of the policies and procedures established by the government. Transparency helps ensure consistent and fair treatment of citizens by street-level bureaucrats. When the decision-making process and criteria are transparent, citizens can better understand the basis on which decisions are made. This reduces the potential for arbitrary or biased decision-making, promoting equal treatment and fairness in policy implementation. Transparent actions and processes enhance trust and legitimacy between street-level bureaucrats and the citizens they serve (Davidovitz & Cohen, 2023). When citizens have visibility into how policies are implemented, they can develop a better understanding of the bureaucratic system and its practices. Transparency creates a perception of fairness and integrity, fostering trust in the bureaucracy and its ability to serve the public interest.

Transparency enables street-level bureaucrats to provide accurate and relevant information to citizens. When the process and requirements for accessing services or benefits are transparent, citizens can better navigate the system and make informed decisions. Transparent communication helps citizens understand the rights, entitlements, and responsibilities associated with policies, enhancing the effectiveness of policy implementation (Li, Sun, Tao & Lee, 2021). Transparency facilitates feedback loops between citizens and street-level bureaucrats. When citizens have access to information about policy implementation, they can provide feedback on their experiences and suggest improvements. Transparent mechanisms for feedback enable street-level bureaucrats to learn from citizen perspectives, identify bottlenecks or issues in implementation, and make adjustments to improve service delivery. Transparency acts as a deterrent against corruption and misconduct at the street level (Smart, 2018). When the actions and decisions of street-level bureaucrats are transparent, it becomes more difficult for them to engage in corrupt practices or abuse their authority. Transparent processes, such as clear guidelines for decision-making, public disclosure of information, and reporting mechanisms, help identify and prevent potential corruption or misconduct.

2.2 Empirical Review

Sofyani, Riyadh and Fahlevi (2020) conducted research to establish the effect of transparency on the public sector's ability to implement policies in Australia. Ten government ministries and 70 government parastatals and organizations served as the focus of this descriptive correlation study. The census method was used since the government was the unit of analysis. The primary tools for data collection were questionnaires that were pilot tested for validity and reliability. We used both descriptive and inferential statistics to examine the data. A linear positive association was discovered between transparency and public policy implementation, suggesting that more transparency would result in even more widespread policy change. It was determined that Transparency is a governance component that affects the efficient execution of public policy in Australia's public institutions. In order to better execute policies, the research suggested that the public sector embrace good governance methods.

According to Sabani (2021), access to information legislation have been enacted by governments throughout the globe at a pace never seen before in the previous two decades. Governments throughout the world are adopting more open information policies in response to pressure from international organizations and NGOs. Business leaders and donor countries argue that access to information is crucial for effective markets, and the competitive nature of the global economy has created a strong incentive for governments to display openness. In light of the expanding relationship between governments and transnational firms and the worldwide push for greater access to information, this comparative study looks at how executives' views on government transparency relate to various indicators proposed in the literature as ways to improve the free flow of data. The research concluded that nations with high levels of openness have more robust access-to-information laws, telecommunications infrastructure, E-Government, free press, and greater incomes than those with low levels of transparency. According to the results of our regression analysis, citizens' views on government openness are significantly influenced by the availability of reliable communications networks and an independent media. The data suggest that democracy did not help public views of openness. The research also suggests that countries with an interest in openness may send a message to businesses about their awareness of the international norm of transparency by enacting access-to-information laws and implementing E-Government.

Supriati and Pangalila (2019) discovered that to organize open and accountable local administration in compliance with Law No. 14 of the Year 2014 on public information disclosure, the Manado City Government has adopted a policy of transparency as a tool for performing its civic obligations effectively. The research will help the government decide on and execute a policy of openness. The descriptive qualitative method was used to gather data, and it was determined that the existing implementation process involves several steps when seen from the content of the policy at hand, which makes it less efficient and prone to a wide variety of roadblocks. The goal of this research is to develop a policy of openness that makes relevant information readily available to the public. The study recommended the following. In order to fully understand the policy its players, its implementers, and its goals it is necessary to create a legal framework for local control. Second, it is answerable under laws governing the release of government data.

Cahlikova and Mabillard (2020) performed study to analyze the problems and claims made by NEO proponents on the phenomena of government transparency. This is accomplished by examining the practical application of Mexico's federal transparency statute via an empirical research of 16 federal agencies. According to the data, some businesses are establishing internal dynamics that go well beyond what is required by law, while others are content with only meeting the bare minimum. It was argued that the NEO overlooks an important dynamic of transparency 'internalization' in these organizations, which influences the design and execution of transparency legislation, and that there is a fundamental conflict in the formulation of the NEO theory. To find a solution, we'd need to shift the worldview that supports transparency changes. Effective transparency reforms require trustworthy public officials to endorse and implement successful organizational transformations that foster public openness and transparency, as opposed to taking opportunism, selfishness, and a profound distrust attitude toward public servants as starting points.

Lopez and Fontaine (2019) noted that demands in the structure of NGO governance go hand in hand with efforts to increase NGOs' legitimacy in their role as community servants and aid

providers. Public accountability and openness is a cornerstone of good government. Responsibility is directly proportional to the internal and external risks faced by a business. Nongovernmental organization (NGO) activists are likely already aware with the notion, and it might be argued that NGOs are the most vocal proponents of public accountability and transparency. The government, however, is the target of the public's push for accountability and openness. The public, in fact, requires that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) implement the principles of public accountability and transparency as the institutional context changes. It would be fascinating to know what the NGO reaction was after hearing the speech. This study was carried out at the YCM Citra Mandiri Foundation because of this. Because YCM has been around since the New Order and is still going strong now. The West Sumatra Civil Society Empowerment Consortium (KPMM) has rated YCM as a "healthy NGO" in terms of its institutional governance. Local non-governmental organizations in West Sumatra were rated as mostly unhealthy. These two considerations make YCM an appealing and workable example of the use of open government ideas. Research shows that YCM has improved institutional governance in response to the expectations of responsible and transparent NGOs. For YCM, achieving these principles involves four main areas of focus: Improvements to the organization's vision, goal, and strategy; enhanced human resources; development of an open information system; and planning of the management structure.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The target population was 110 Governments' parastatals in Singapore. The study did sampling of 90 respondents that were chosen from the target population of 110 Governments' parastatals in Singapore. Questionnaires were used to gather the data.

4.0 Research Findings and Discussion

4.1 Correlation Analysis

The findings presented in Table 1 shows the correlation analysis

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

		Policy Implementation	Transparency
Policy Implementation	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Transparency	Pearson Correlation	.212 **	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000

The correlation results from Table 1 indicate that the transparency was positively and significantly related with policy implementation (r=.212, p=.000). This concurs with Cahlikova and Mabillard (2020) mentioned that effective transparency reforms require trustworthy public officials to

endorse and implement successful organizational transformations that foster public openness and transparency, as opposed to taking opportunism, selfishness, and a profound distrust attitude toward public servants as starting points.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The section includes model fitness, analysis of variance and regression of coefficient. The results in Table 2 show the model fitness

Table 2: Model Fitness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.212a	0.218	0.161	0.0001132

The results from Table 2 reveal that transparency was found to be satisfactory in explaining the policy implementation of Governments' parastatals in Singapore. This was supported by the coefficient of determination, which is R square of 0.218. It indicates that transparency explain 21.8% of the variations in the policy implementation of Governments' parastatals in Singapore.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6.81	1	6.81	74.84	.000b
	Residual	9.98	110	0.091		
	Total	16.79	109			

The findings in Table 3 reveals that the overall model was statistically significant. The findings indicate that policy implementation is a good predictor in explaining the transparency among the Governments' parastatals in Singapore. This was supported by an F statistic of 74.84 and the reported p-value of 0.000 which was less than the conventional probability significance level of 0.05.

Table 4: Regression of Coefficient

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.435	0.103		4.223	0.071
Transparency	0.677	0.211	0.812	3.209	0.014

Based on the findings in Table 4, it was discovered that transparency was positively and significantly associated to policy implementation ($\beta=0.677$, $p=0.014$). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 3.209 that is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96. These results indicates that when transparency increases by one unit, the policy implementation of Governments' parastatals in Singapore will increase by 0.677 units while other factors that influence the policy implementation of government parastatals remain unchanged. Sofyani, Riyadh and Fahlevi (2020) articulated that transparency is a governance component that affects the efficient execution of public policy in most of the public institutions. In order to better execute policies, the study suggested that the public sector should embrace good governance methods.

5.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, transparency and policy implementation are fundamental pillars of Singapore's public sector governance. The government has implemented various measures to promote transparency, such as the Freedom of Information Act and proactive information release, fostering accountability and public trust. Stakeholder engagement during policy formulation ensures diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more inclusive and legitimate policy outcomes. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of accessibility to information and engaging underrepresented groups. Singapore's commitment to evidence-based decision-making is evident in its rigorous data collection, analysis, and evaluation processes. This approach enhances the feasibility and effectiveness of policies, minimizing risks and maximizing positive outcomes. Nevertheless, challenges related to data availability and utilization highlight the need for continuous investment in data infrastructure and capabilities.

The robust regulatory framework in Singapore supports policy implementation, with various regulatory bodies ensuring compliance and enforcement. However, consistent enforcement across sectors remains a challenge that requires attention. Streamlining implementation processes and clarifying interagency coordination can enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Public awareness and understanding of policies are vital for meaningful citizen participation. While Singapore emphasizes transparency, efforts should be made to improve communication strategies and public education initiatives. Leveraging digital platforms and targeted campaigns can bridge the gap between policy implementation and public comprehension.

6.0 Recommendations

To further improve transparency, the Singaporean government should focus on enhancing information accessibility to the public. This can be achieved by developing user-friendly online portals and platforms that provide easy access to government-held information, policies, and public service data. Clear guidelines should be established to ensure timely and comprehensive information release, including both proactive and reactive disclosure. Efforts should also be made to simplify complex policy language to enhance public understanding. Singapore should strive for more inclusive stakeholder engagement by actively seeking input from a wider range of groups, including marginalized communities and civil society organizations. Implementing mechanisms to capture diverse perspectives will ensure that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of all citizens. The government should establish channels for ongoing dialogue, such as regular town hall meetings, public consultations, and online platforms, to encourage meaningful engagement

and participation. To support evidence-based decision-making, Singapore should invest in strengthening its data infrastructure and capabilities. This includes enhancing data collection methodologies, data quality assurance processes, and data sharing mechanisms across government agencies. The establishment of a centralized data repository can facilitate easier access to comprehensive and reliable data for policymakers. Additionally, promoting data literacy and providing training for civil servants on data analysis and interpretation will enhance the utilization of data in policy formulation and implementation.

The Singaporean government should prioritize efforts to streamline interagency coordination and clarify roles and responsibilities during policy implementation. Establishing clear protocols and communication channels will help minimize delays and ensure efficient execution. Additionally, strengthening monitoring mechanisms and enforcement consistency across sectors will reinforce the integrity and effectiveness of policies. Regular evaluations should be conducted to assess the progress and impact of policies, with findings shared transparently with the public. The government should implement comprehensive communication and public education strategies to enhance public awareness and understanding of policies. Utilizing various communication channels, including digital platforms, social media, and public awareness campaigns, can effectively disseminate information to a wider audience. These efforts should focus on translating complex policy language into easily understandable terms, providing real-life examples, and highlighting the benefits and rationale behind policies. Engaging citizens through workshops, seminars, and educational programs can empower them to actively participate in policy discussions.

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