Modernization of the State: The Role of Open Government in the Effectiveness of Municipal Management in San Martín, Peru

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Abstract

The study aimed to establish the relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management in the San Martín region, employing a basic quantitative research approach, a non-experimental design, and a descriptive correlational and cross-sectional scope. The population comprised 926,000 citizens, from which a sample of 1,537 was selected. The survey technique was used with two questionnaires, one for each variable. Regarding the dimensions of open government, the results showed a transparency level categorized as regular at 60%, deficient at 30%, and good at 10%; public sector integrity was rated as regular at 62%, deficient at 27%, and good at 12%; accountability was evaluated as regular at 46%, deficient at 38%, and good at 16%; and citizen and stakeholder participation achieved a regular level of 55%, deficient at 35%, and good at 10%. Concerning the effectiveness of municipal management, the evaluated dimensions showed that equipment and information and communication technologies were classified as regular at 60%, good at 20%, and deficient at 14%; human resources were assessed as regular at 64%, deficient at 21%, and good at 15%; municipal competencies and functions were rated as regular at 67%, good at 17%, and deficient at 16%; and local public services were reported as regular at 63%, deficient at 19%, and good at 18%. Finally, it was concluded that there is a high and significant positive relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management, with a Spearman's Rho coefficient of 0.824 (high positive correlation) and a p-value of 0.000 (p ≤ 0.01), estimating an incidence of 74% between both variables.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, Management, Citizen Participation, Accountability, Transparency.*

Introduction

In Peru, the concern is not only centered on infrastructure, internet access, and the necessary tools or platforms for better public management but also on the limited involvement of citizens, who should be active participants in the administration exercised by their leaders. This lack of participation exacerbates governance problems, as the more distanced citizens are, the greater the freedom for authorities to commit unethical acts and corruption-related offenses, where high budgets are executed but few tangible projects are completed. Additionally, there are perceived difficulties in achieving efficient public management. In this regard, Bruce (2021) notes that inefficiency in state management has caused government spending to exceed its revenues, resulting in mediocre outcomes despite high costs.

Despite the efforts of the Peruvian state to implement policies that strengthen open government and improve the effectiveness of public management, these efforts have not been effective, as the interaction between citizens and the government remains limited. In this context, MINJUSDH (2018), Shack (2022), and the General Comptroller of the Republic (2022) indicate that less than 65% of municipalities have managed to implement and comply with open government principles (such as standard transparency portals and integrity). On the contrary, leaders have been implicated in unethical actions and allegations related to embezzlement and corruption.

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The San Martín region also faces limitations regarding open government and the effectiveness of public management. As of 2023, several municipal and regional authorities are being investigated for alleged irregularities in their management. Although some provincial municipalities have increased citizen involvement and participation to strengthen commitment and collaborative work, thereby improving principles of transparency, participation, integrity, and accountability, significant challenges persist concerning open government and management efficiency. Limited financial resources and restricted infrastructure hinder the implementation of technologies and digital platforms, affecting the transparency of information and citizen participation in public administration. Additionally, the lack of appropriate training initiatives and skills development for public officials limits their ability to apply effective open government practices. Furthermore, social and cultural factors, such as distrust and a lack of civic awareness towards governmental institutions, pose obstacles to meaningful participation; therefore, addressing these local challenges is essential to improving governance and service quality in the region.

San Martín, where the study was conducted, has ten provinces, although not all have the same budget for public investments, which affects their capacity to address needs and solve problems through assertive decision-making. Between 2019 and 2022, acquisitions to improve public management increased, including an 8.9% rise in computer purchases (INEI, 2022), although this does not guarantee adequate access to ICT. Furthermore, there is little perceived open access to transparent information regarding the actions and performance of officials. When undergraduate or graduate students research topics such as corruption, internal control, or auditing, access to information is often restricted, possibly due to fears of exposing irregularities.

Given that there are few studies focused on investigating the principles of open government and their relationship with management effectiveness, the researcher decided to conduct a comprehensive analysis throughout the region, especially considering that open government and efficiency in municipal management face common challenges, such as the implementation and compliance with regulations, institutional weaknesses, lack of accountability in accordance with Law No. 27806, and limited citizen participation. Overcoming these obstacles requires a multifaceted approach, including capacity strengthening, infrastructure improvements, stronger legal frameworks, and the promotion of a culture of transparency and citizen empowerment. With this in mind, the central research question was posed: What is the relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management in the San Martín region?

It is essential to understand the degree of implementation of open government and the effectiveness of municipal management in this region of eastern Peru to conduct a thorough and reflective analysis of compliance with Peruvian regulations. This study is directed at local, provincial, regional, and national governments, as it addresses an issue that affects multiple regions. The expected results will enable the Peruvian state to strengthen oversight and implement mechanisms that encourage greater citizen engagement, involving citizens in decision-making for better management. Moreover, this study seeks to reduce unethical acts at all levels of the public sector, promoting that authorities focus on serving the people and addressing the needs and opportunities of the community.

Theoretical Framework

So far, few scientific studies have focused on the variables under study. Laurenco (2022) states that governments accumulate policies to address social issues; however, they should not focus solely on individual policies or high-level instruments but should adopt a broader perspective that encompasses all sectors and issues. This information should be publicly available to monitor policy accumulation and administrative overload. Matheus, Janssen, and Janowski (2021) noted that, given the diversity of digital transparency scenarios, transparency should be viewed as an organizational challenge and not merely a technical issue. While the proposed principles focus on data-based transparency, these principles can also serve as a foundation for transparency using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, which should be tested in practice, considering economic, human, political, and legal contexts, as well as the importance of leadership, capabilities, and resources.

According to Kempeneer, Pirannejad, and Wolswinkel (2023), it is essential that public officials understand the legal framework, enabling organizations and citizens to demonstrate the democratic principle and develop the necessary competencies to promote and utilize open, transparent, and reusable government practices. Valencia (2022) pointed out disparities between effectiveness and efficiency in public management, noting that both are required in different contexts. Efficiency is particularly linked to public spending, and as organizations face new challenges, they must improve and optimize their services by adopting new technologies and ensuring quality service.

Machin et al. (2019) and Díaz-Canel (2018) highlighted the importance of strengthening citizen participation in public management, integrating it with the capabilities of e-government. Akimov and Kadysheva (2023), in their study on e-government, concluded that youth involvement in politics is essential for strengthening communication through social media. Engaging young people in political issues is fundamental so that, when aspiring to public office, they have the experience and skills needed to make informed decisions. Victoria (2023), in her governance study, emphasized the importance of strengthening State institutions and civil society to build trust and promote the exchange of information and experiences.

Open government is a governance culture aimed at strengthening access to information, integrity in the conduct of public officials, regular compliance with accountability, and the participation of citizens and stakeholders in management, with the goal of achieving inclusive growth (OECD, 2021). The dimensions addressed in this research include the principles of open government: a) Transparency: the Peruvian government has implemented measures to ensure the disclosure of information related to public affairs, budgets, procurement, and services, which must be accessible and public. b) Integrity in the public sector: public servants are encouraged to act according to ethical values, principles, and norms, safeguarding the public interest. c) Accountability: both a right of citizens and a duty of the government, accountability is carried out transparently. Public hearings are key mechanisms that allow local governments to disclose management outcomes in terms of budget and achievements, as well as obstacles that prevented the fulfillment of certain commitments. Local governments hold at least two municipal public hearings per year, one in May and another in September, to assess budget execution and project the institution's progress towards the fiscal year's end (Law No. 27972, 2022).

d) Citizen and Stakeholder Participation: mechanisms have been implemented to allow stakeholders to supervise public managers (PCM, 2021). Open data is essential for promoting transparency and innovation in Peru. Thus, the government has taken steps to publish data sets and make them publicly accessible, promoting data-driven decision-making. Peru's Open Data Portal provides a platform where citizens, researchers, and businesses can access and use government data for various purposes. Although progress has been made, challenges remain in fully implementing open government principles, including bureaucratic obstacles, limited resources, unequal capacity among government institutions, and cultural barriers. Additionally, promoting citizen awareness of their rights and the benefits of open government, as well as ensuring effective compliance at local levels, are ongoing tasks. In conclusion, to achieve a democratic culture based on trust between citizens and public officials, it is essential to uphold the principles of open government. This approach will facilitate better decision-making, reduce corruption rates, ensure compliance with current Peruvian regulations, and, most importantly, strengthen the construction of a more inclusive and democratic society.

Transparent governance principles play a crucial role in fostering a culture that upholds moral and ethical principles, individual beliefs, and alignment with institutional values. These transformations are reflected in the introduction of new policies, services, and public goods. Open government reforms seek to redefine the relationship between the government and its citizens, allowing them and other stakeholders to understand governance's inner workings and collaborate to improve public policies, services, and processes. By providing citizens with access to government affairs, opportunities for gradual changes emerge, which can profoundly influence the functionality of public institutions and even the democratic system itself. Open government fosters iterative cycles that blur traditional boundaries between service providers and users, representatives and the electorate, enabling citizens to contribute actively to the co-creation of policies and services. In turn, the government offers citizens information, data, and collaborative avenues, while citizens contribute innovative ideas, products, and services that continuously reshape government.

According to the OECD, open government is essential for strengthening good governance and promoting inclusive economic growth (PCM, 2021); that is, its success depends on the effectiveness of public institutions in achieving their goals, and on the resources and skills that public officials must possess to satisfy citizens and stakeholders. Sánchez (2003) states that the aim is to build trust among community members and establish solid connections with higher levels of government. Gunn (1996) further emphasizes that information and communication technology is one of the key indicators of effective management and is closely linked to open government.

Efficacy, in this context, refers to the ability to achieve desired results through the appropriate use of institutional resources to reach goals (Mokate, 2001; Chiavenato, 2010). Effectiveness in public management implies characteristics that promote a quality, efficient, and citizen-satisfying administration (Chiavenato, 2010). Furthermore, Law No. 29158 states that administrative systems aim to control resource use in state-administered institutions to ensure both effectiveness and efficiency.

The dimensions considered for evaluating public management effectiveness include: a) Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), with state initiatives implementing fixed and mobile telephony, operational computers, internet access, computer equipment in municipalities, and a standard transparency portal. b) Human resources, that is, the staff working in the municipality. c) Competencies and functions of the municipality, referring to workers' skills to efficiently fulfill their roles, encompassing municipal planning, tax administration, licenses, and urban/rural development to enhance municipal services. d) Local public services, which cover: i) Environmental sanitation and health: including solid waste management from collection to final disposal, as well as operational and technical inspections of public services. ii) Education, culture, sports, and recreation: encompassing municipal libraries, recreational spaces, and sports services administered by the municipality. iii) Social services: integrating programs such as vaso de leche (milk distribution), care for the elderly and disabled, and child and adolescent advocacy. iv) Health: facilities and campaigns for health control and prevention. v) Citizen security: resources, personnel, and actions for citizen protection. vi) Disaster risk management: actions by brigades, resources, and equipment for disaster response. vii) Promotion of local economic development: processes to foster small business entrepreneurship. viii) Environmental protection and conservation: actions for responsible environmental management. ix) Community participation: involving local residents and neighborhood boards in coordination with the municipality.

It is worth mentioning that monitoring is also necessary throughout this process to make timely adjustments and thus ensure its effectiveness. In other words, effectiveness is essential for obtaining satisfactory results from the organization.

In general, the most important and current theories related to the effectiveness of municipal management include: 1. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory: This theory focuses on the role of observational learning, socialization, and the environment. Bandura states that individuals develop efficacy beliefs by observing the behaviors of others, receiving feedback, and evaluating their own performance in social contexts. He emphasizes the relevance of social support, modeling, and vicarious experiences in forming efficacy beliefs. 2. Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner's Attribution Theory: This theory explores how individuals explain the causes of events and outcomes. In the context of efficacy, it suggests that people's beliefs about the causes of success or failure can influence their future efficacy beliefs. Therefore, it focuses on understanding efficacy and its determinants across various aspects of life.

Material and Method

This study was basic in type, with a non-experimental design, a quantitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive-correlational approach. The population consisted of 926,000 citizens from the San Martín region, and the sample included 1,537 citizens. The survey technique was applied, and the instrument, a questionnaire on open government, included four dimensions: transparency and public sector integrity, each with four items; accountability, with three items; and citizen and stakeholder participation, with two items. The municipal public management effectiveness questionnaire also included four dimensions: equipment and information

and communications technology, with three items; human resources, with four items; municipal competencies and functions, with seven items; and public services, with 14 items.

The instruments were evaluated by five experts, and subsequently, the Aiken's V was applied to determine the global average validation score, which exceeded 0.8. Additionally, the reliability of the instruments was assessed through a pilot test with 30% of the sample, using Cronbach's alpha, which exceeded 0.7. The measurement scale for both variables in this study was an ordinal Likert-type scale, with a score range from 1 to 5. It is worth mentioning that this study adhered to ethical research principles, such as the right to freedom of opinion, avoiding maleficence by aiming to benefit the participants, and respecting their freedom to participate at any point in the study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. The Level of Open Government Dimensions in the San Martín Region

Dimension	Level	Range	N°	%
Transparency	Deficient	4 - 9	452	30 %
	Regular	**10- 15**	**927**	**60 %**
	Good	16 - 20	158	10 %
Integrity of the Public Sector	Deficient	4 - 9	409	27 %
	Regular	**10- 15**	**951**	**62 %**
	Good	16 - 20	177	12 %
Accountability	Deficient	10 - 23	577	38 %
	Regular	**24- 37**	**714**	**46 %**
	Good	38 - 50	246	16 %
Citizen and Stakeholder Participation	Deficient	6 - 14	543	35 %
	Regular	**15- 22**	**843**	**55 %**
	Good	23 - 30	151	10 %
Total			1537	100 %

Note: Questionnaire administered to citizens

Regarding the level of open government dimensions, the findings were as follows: for Transparency, the regular level prevails at 60%, followed by deficient at 30% and good at 10%. In terms of Public Sector Integrity, the regular level is at 62%, followed by deficient at 27% and good at 12%. For Accountability, regular is observed at 46%, followed by deficient at 38% and good at 16%. Lastly, for Citizen and Stakeholder Participation, the regular level stands at 55%, followed by deficient at 35% and good at 10%.

In all dimensions, the regular level predominates, followed by deficient, indicating that not all provincial municipalities provide information in a timely manner, lack robust digital transparency, and do not consistently share relevant government data. Additionally, the accessibility, comprehensibility, and consistent alignment of information are not optimal, with citizens perceiving that municipal employees do not always demonstrate ethical practices grounded in values and principles. In terms of accountability, local governments are not fully meeting their obligation to provide clear information and assume responsibility for their actions and performance. Moreover, not all mayors encourage citizens' and stakeholders' right and responsibility to access this information and hold the government accountable through electoral, institutional, administrative, and social channels. There is also insufficient awareness and active involvement of stakeholders in the policy cycle and in the design and delivery of services through information, consultation, and active participation.

Regarding platforms, Díaz-Canel (2018) stated that platform development should allow Cuban citizens to interact with the government and other institutions, as well as find the information they need to establish new forms of government-citizen relations, ensuring efficient and effective service.

Today, to achieve a modern State, digital transparency, citizen and stakeholder participation, accountability, and managers with strong values and integrity are essential. On this point, Matheus, Janssen, and Janowski (2021) emphasized that creating digital transparency is a key challenge for governments, as making data available does not automatically lead to digital transparency and may overwhelm those seeking to analyze it. To achieve effective digital transparency, it is crucial to design a "transparency window" that allows various aspects and perspectives within the organization to be examined. They further noted that, given the diversity of scenarios in using digital transparency, it is necessary to approach it as an organizational challenge and not solely as a systems development issue. While the focus of the proposed principles is on data-driven transparency, they may also serve as a foundation for transparency using artificial intelligence (AI) tools. These principles need to be tested in practice, considering economic, human, political, and legal contexts, where factors such as willingness, leadership, capabilities, and resources play a crucial role.

Kempeneer, Pirannejad, and Wolswinkel (2023) noted that there is no direct answer regarding how Open Government Data (OGD) laws impact OGD practices. This complexity arises from the multidimensional nature of these laws and the varying responses of the authorities involved in OGD practices, as norms are seen as influential drivers in certain contexts but ineffective in others. They also emphasize the importance of public officials understanding the legal framework so that organizations and citizens can exercise fundamental democratic principles and develop the competencies needed to promote and use transparent and reusable open governments.

Regarding integrity and citizen participation, although there are numerous studies on open government, very few have focused on how its principles are being implemented. This study has demonstrated that good practices regarding values and principles are lacking in management. In terms of citizen participation, there is a low level of engagement from citizens in local management. Machin, Sánchez, López, and Puentes (2019) pointed out that it is crucial to promote the democratic participation of citizens in management to strengthen the relationship between the State, through its local representatives, and citizens, as well as to enhance institutional relationships.

Citizen participation is at a regular level, with 55%, indicating that the ten provincial municipalities are not involving young people in activities or decision-making processes within municipal management. Akimov and Kadysheva (2023) concluded that young people's participation in politics is essential, and it is vital to prepare young citizens to assume public office, enabling them to effectively manage the needs and interests of their region, province, district, or settlement. Often, municipal candidates who win elections lack experience and make mistakes in their management because they are just beginning to engage in the functions and responsibilities of a public official.

In summary, the government is at a regular level, indicating that its transparency portal, integrity, accountability, and citizen participation are not well strengthened. Victoria (2023) concluded that it is necessary to articulate efforts between state organs and civil society to build trust. Undoubtedly, to reduce corruption and unethical acts, it is essential to involve civil society in decision-making processes carried out by state organs. Furthermore, this would contribute to complying with the regulations and principles of open government that the Peruvian government seeks to promote.

Table 2. The Degree of Dimensions of Municipal Management Effectiveness**.**

Dimensión	Nivel	Rango	N°	%
Equipamiento, tecnologías de la Información y Comunicaciones	Deficient	3 - 7	227	14 %
	Regular	**8- 11**	**1007**	**66 %**
	Good	12 - 15	303	20 %

Recursos humanos	Deficient	4 - 9	323	21 %
	Regular	**10- 15**	**989**	**64 %**
	Good	16 - 20	225	15 %
Competencias y funciones de la municipalidad	Deficient	7 - 16	244	16 %
	Regular	**17- 26**	**1030**	**67 %**
	Good	27 - 35	263	17 %
Servicios públicos locales	Deficient	12 - 28	285	19 %
	Regular	**29- 44**	**968**	**63 %**
	Good	45 - 60	284	18 %
Total			1537	100 %

Note: Questionnaire applied to citizens.

Regarding the degree of effectiveness of municipal management, the following observations can be made: concerning equipment and information and communication technologies, the level is rated as regular at 60%, followed by 20% rated as good and 14% rated as deficient. In relation to human resources, the level is regular at 64%, followed by 21% rated as deficient and 15% rated as good. With respect to the competencies and functions of the municipality, the level is regular at 67%, followed by 17% rated as good and 16% rated as deficient. Finally, regarding local public services, the level is regular at 63%, followed by 19% rated as deficient and 18% rated as good.

This indicates that in all dimensions, according to citizens' perceptions, provincial mayors demonstrated a regular degree of effectiveness. Provincial municipalities face various shortcomings, such as a lack of computers for their staff to perform efficiently. Additionally, internet service shows deficiencies, and the websites of organizations are not updated, preventing the provision of required information. The occupational categorization of staff is not optimal, and many employees have CAS contracts, which negatively impact working conditions. There is also a lack of technical assistance in key areas that are fundamental for effective management. Without an adequate budget for training, staff must use their own resources, jeopardizing their training in areas such as effective communication, customer service, time management, and administrative processes.

Regarding planning, it is necessary to improve citizen attention channels, such as counters, reception desks, and social media, as well as email communication, among others. Concerning municipal finances, revenues are insufficient to address the province's issues, leading to poor execution of municipal spending and inadequate local economic development due to a lack of strategic planning. Although procedures for granting operating licenses are followed, informality persists. Programs such as the milk glass, communal dining rooms, mothers' clubs, and youth organizations are not receiving sufficient food and nutrients for those in need.

Municipalities are not adequately disseminating information about the management of health establishments, such as health posts and community first aid kits, nor are they effectively implementing health control and prevention programs. Regarding public cleanliness, waste collection services are performed three times a week, but less-trafficked streets are neglected. Although recycling of collected solid waste is promoted, this is done sporadically. Regarding citizen security, although a surveillance service is provided, interventions occur occasionally due to insufficient personnel to patrol and protect citizens.

Concerning disaster risk management, a local emergency operations center has been implemented, although there is poor communication regarding the Disaster Risk Management Unit or Civil Defense Office. Finally, regarding environmental protection and conservation, campaigns for the prevention of environmental pollution and care for the environment are promoted in coordination with the competent institutions.

Table 3. Relationship Between Government and the Effectiveness of Municipal Management in the San Martín Region

			Efficacy of management
Spearman's rho	Open government	Correlation coefficient	,824**
		Sig. (bilateral)	,000
		N	1537

Nota: ata obtained from Spss V.26

The information presented in the table reveals a high and significant positive relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management. The Spearman's Rho value was 0.824, indicating a high positive correlation, and the p-value was 0.000 (p-value ≤ 0.01). These results lead us to reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis, concluding that there is a high and significant positive relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management in the San Martín region in 2023.

The determined coefficient ($R^2 = 0.7421$) suggests that 74% of the variability in municipal management effectiveness can be explained by open government in the San Martín region. This encourages local authorities to focus on transparency, public sector integrity, accountability, and the participation of citizens and stakeholders to ensure citizen satisfaction and achieve more effective management that contributes to the growth and development of their province, region, or country.

Conclusions

A high and significant positive relationship has been identified between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management, evidenced by a Spearman's Rho value of 0.824 (indicating a high positive correlation) and a p-value of 0.000 (p-value ≤ 0.01). These results lead us to reject the null hypothesis and accept the research hypothesis, concluding that there is a high and significant positive relationship between open government and the effectiveness of municipal management in the San Martín region in 2023. Additionally, it is observed that 74% of the variability in public management effectiveness can be explained by open government, indicating that the latter has a considerable impact on the effectiveness of local governments.

The degree of the dimensions of open government is rated as regular across the board: regarding transparency, it stands at 60%; public sector integrity at 62%; accountability at 46%; and citizen and stakeholder participation at 55%. This suggests a lack of significant interest in involving citizens in management, insufficient timely information updates, and poor accountability in the two periods established by the regulations.

As for the effectiveness of municipal management, the dimensions are evaluated as follows: Equipment and information and communication technologies are rated as regular at 60%; Human resources at 64%; Municipal competencies and functions at 67%; and Local public services at 63%. This indicates that many municipalities lack adequate budgets for the purchase of equipment, information and communication technologies, trained personnel, and the necessary competencies to contribute to efficient and effective management.

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