Research Article

Beyond Attendance: Assessing The Performance of Local Legislators in Polewali Mandar, Indonesia, 2019–2024

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Abstract

Local legislatures in decentralised Indonesia are expected to translate citizens' aspirations into regional regulations, budgets, and effective oversight of the executive, yet their performance is rarely examined beyond attendance and the number of meetings held. This study analyses the performance of members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi, during the 2019–2024 term. A descriptive qualitative design was applied through in-depth interviews with DPRD members, including commission leaders, observation of legislative activities at the DPRD Secretariat, and analysis of planning documents, organisational structures, and the 2024 performance accountability evaluation. Performance was examined through six dimensions: quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and work commitment. The findings show that the formal quality of institutional performance reached a score of 69.15, or grade B, but remained weak in performance measurement and reporting. Quantitative output was sustained by a dense structure of commissions and bodies, yet activity volume was not matched by measurable legislative results. Timeliness was secured for mandatory budget deadlines but not consistently for regulation drafting and follow-up of aspirations. Effectiveness was limited because aspirations were absorbed more successfully than they were converted into policy. Independence was constrained by fragmented party factions, executive-drafted proposals, and limited expert support, while work commitment varied considerably between members. The performance of the DPRD therefore rests more on institutional routines than on individual accountability for results. Individual performance reporting, a legislative timeliness calendar, structured public consultation, and stronger expert support are required to improve legislative performance.

Keywords: Legislative Performance; Local Parliament; Performance Accountability; Legislative Independence; Work Commitment.

1 Introduction

Decentralisation places local legislatures at the centre of democratic governance because they are expected to represent citizens, make regional regulations, approve budgets, and oversee the executive. Indonesia's experience shows that institutional reforms at the local level can strengthen public trust in state institutions, although the effect depends on the quality of local political competition (Al Izzati et al., 2024). The same reforms have also exposed the risks of clientelistic environments, where direct local elections reduced capital spending and access to public services in districts with strong patronage tendencies (Lewis & Dong, 2025). Sociocultural patronage networks continue to shape local elections even as campaigning becomes increasingly digital (Rusta & Kartini, 2026). These conditions make the performance of local legislators a decisive factor in whether decentralisation produces accountable government or merely reproduces local political bargaining.

Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government positions the Regional House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD) as an element of regional government with legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. These functions are reinforced by the obligation to absorb and follow up citizens' aspirations through constituency recess (reses) and the submission of the DPRD's main ideas (pokok-pokok pikiran) into regional development planning. The law also imposes a strict deadline on the budget function, requiring joint approval of the regional budget no later than one month before the fiscal year begins and withholding the financial rights of DPRD members and regional heads for six months if this deadline is missed. Legislative performance in Indonesia is therefore judged against both formal procedural duties and the substantive expectation that representatives act in the interests of those they represent (Pitkin, 1967).

Comparative research shows that the characteristics and behaviour of legislators matter for public outcomes. Districts represented by more highly educated legislators record lower neonatal, infant, and under-five mortality, with effects that vary according to institutional quality and alignment with the ruling party (Anil et al., 2025). Party alignment with higher levels of government increases the bargaining power and stability of local governments (Carozzi et al., 2024), while citizens reward representatives who visibly advocate for the interests

of their communities and engage with organised groups (McKay et al., 2025). Monitoring reforms can raise the attendance of public officials, but political connections often shield those who are absent from sanctions (Callen et al., 2023). Performance, in other words, emerges from the interaction between individual capacity, party relations, and the institutional incentives surrounding legislators.

Public administration research has increasingly placed performance assessment at the centre of its agenda (Wei et al., 2024). Studies of the Indonesian public sector show that strategic leadership and organisational learning raise organisational commitment, while empowerment directly improves performance (Imam et al., 2025). Reviews of sustainable employee performance identify human resource management, leadership, and training as key determinants (Hendri, 2025), and research on work engagement in public administration demonstrates that engagement depends on the balance between job demands and resources (Santosa et al., 2025). In local government, internal control and information systems strengthen performance accountability (Purnamasari et al., 2024), and public sector innovation is positively associated with development outcomes in Indonesian districts (Hilmawan et al., 2023). These findings suggest that legislative performance must be assessed through both the conduct of individual members and the institutional systems that support them.

The DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency in West Sulawesi provides a relevant case for such an assessment. During the 2019–2024 term the council consisted of 45 members from nine factions, organised into four commissions, a deliberation body, a regional regulation drafting body, a budget body, and an honour council. Its work was supported by a Secretariat with 103 personnel, of whom only 34 were civil servants and 69 were non-permanent staff. The 2024 performance accountability evaluation of the Secretariat produced a score of 69.15, or grade B, with weaknesses in performance measurement and reporting. At the same time, problems such as low public participation, limited transparency in decision-making, integrity concerns, and significant variation in performance between members have been identified as persistent challenges.

Previous studies of DPRD performance in Indonesia have generally evaluated the formal implementation of legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions or measured public perceptions of council performance. They have rarely examined the performance of individual legislators through a multidimensional framework that connects the quality, quantity, and timeliness of work with effectiveness, independence, and commitment. This study addresses that gap by applying the six dimensions of individual performance proposed by Robbins and Judge (2008), namely quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, independence, and work commitment. The study aims to analyse the performance of members of the DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency during the 2019–2024 term and to identify the institutional conditions that shape it.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design, which is suited to understanding how actors perform their roles and interpret their work within a natural institutional setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research was conducted at the DPRD and its Secretariat in Polewali Mandar Regency over approximately one month. Informants were selected purposively from members of the DPRD for the 2019–2024 term, including commission leaders, who were considered to have direct knowledge of legislative, budgetary, and oversight activities. Primary data were collected through structured in-depth interviews guided by an interview protocol and through observation of legislative activities and working conditions at the Secretariat. Secondary data were obtained from the Secretariat's strategic plan for 2019–2024, the composition of DPRD bodies, personnel data, the 2024 performance report, and the 2024 performance accountability evaluation.

Data were analysed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were coded according to the six performance dimensions and were then organised into thematic matrices comparing formal requirements, institutional data, and observed practice. Credibility was ensured through source triangulation between members and documents and through method triangulation across interviews, observation, and documentary analysis. Dependability and confirmability were maintained by documenting each analytical step and checking interpretations against official records.

3. RESULTS

The findings are presented according to the six dimensions of performance. The dimensions build on one another: the quality of institutional systems shapes the volume and timeliness of legislative work, these in turn determine whether the DPRD is effective in achieving policy outcomes, and effectiveness depends on the independence and commitment with which members carry out their mandate.

3.1 Quality: Formal Accountability Without Outcome Measurement

The quality of DPRD performance in Polewali Mandar is shaped by the accountability system that supports the council's work. The 2024 performance accountability evaluation of the DPRD Secretariat produced a score of 69.15 out of 100, corresponding to grade B. As Table 1 shows, the strongest component was internal performance evaluation, which reached 75.0% of its weight, followed by performance planning at 72.0%, while performance measurement and performance reporting reached only 65.0% and 62.0% respectively. The institution has a strategic plan for 2019–2024, an annual work plan, a performance agreement, and action plans, and its performance report was submitted on time. Formal compliance with planning and reporting obligations is therefore established, and this provides a minimum standard of quality for the council's work.

The weaker components reveal that quality is defined by procedural completeness rather than by the substantive results of legislative work. The performance tree does not yet describe the causal links between activities and desired outcomes, the work plan, performance tree, and cascading documents are not aligned, and several programmes lack action plans. Performance measurement is not supported by guidelines, standard operating procedures, or an indicator profile, quarterly targets have not been set, and the integrated performance application contained no measurement data for 2024. Reports do not include recommendations or strategies for improving performance. Where policies and obligations accumulate without a framework for monitoring them, administrative capacity becomes overloaded and implementation weakens (Lourenço, 2023). Consequently, the quality of legislators' work is assessed through the existence of documents and the conduct of meetings, while the quality of regulations produced, the depth of budget scrutiny, and the impact of oversight remain largely unmeasured.

Table 1. Performance accountability evaluation of the DPRD Secretariat of Polewali Mandar Regency, 2024

Component assessed	Weight	Score	Attainment of weight (%)
Performance planning	30	21.60	72.0
Performance measurement	30	19.50	65.0
Performance reporting	15	9.30	62.0
Internal performance accountability evaluation	25	18.75	75.0
Total score	100	69.15	69.2
Accountability grade		B	

Source: Performance accountability evaluation of the DPRD Secretariat of Polewali Mandar Regency (2024), processed by the authors.

These findings show that the quality of DPRD performance in Polewali Mandar is formally adequate but substantively unverified. Quality in individual performance refers to the perceived standard of work and the completeness of tasks relative to the skills and abilities of the worker (Robbins & Judge, 2008). The Polewali Mandar case indicates that completeness of tasks has been institutionalised through planning and reporting documents, whereas the standard of work, which would require indicators for the content of regulations, budget deliberations, and oversight recommendations, has not yet been defined. A grade B evaluation therefore reflects the administrative discipline of the support system more than the quality of representation exercised by individual members. The quality of legislative work cannot improve consistently as long as it is measured only by procedural outputs. The DPRD and its Secretariat should develop an integrated performance information system with indicator profiles for legislative, budgetary, and oversight results, supported by internal control procedures, as internal control and information systems have been shown to strengthen performance accountability in Indonesian local government (Purnamasari et al., 2024).

3.2 Quantity: A Dense Structure of Activities

The limited measurement of quality is accompanied by a strong emphasis on the quantity of activities. The 45 members of the DPRD are distributed across a dense set of complementary bodies, as shown in Table 2. Four commissions covering government, economy and finance, development, and people's welfare include between 10 and 11 members each, while the budget body involves 20 members, the deliberation body 14, the regional regulation drafting body 10, and the honour council 5. Most members therefore sit in at least two bodies simultaneously, which produces a high volume of commission meetings, budget deliberations, working visits, hearings with regional apparatus, and plenary sessions. Each member is also required to carry out constituency recess and to submit aspirations as part of the DPRD's main ideas for regional development planning.

The volume of activities, however, is not matched by a corresponding record of measurable legislative output. Attendance at meetings, the number of hearings, and the completion of recess schedules are recorded, whereas the number of regulation initiatives proposed by members, amendments produced during deliberation, and oversight recommendations followed up by the executive are not systematically compiled for each member. Because many members carry multiple assignments, the time available for detailed study of regulation drafts and budget documents is reduced, and the burden of legislative work tends to concentrate on members who hold leadership positions in commissions and bodies. Quantity is therefore expressed in the number of activities rather than in the volume of legislative results, and differences in individual contribution remain invisible to the public. Disclosure of performance information is known to increase the perceived trustworthiness of public organisations (Ripamonti, 2024), so the absence of individual output data also deprives the DPRD of a means to build public confidence.

Table 2. Composition of the bodies of the DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency, 2019–2024 term

DPRD body	Number of members	Main area of work
Leadership (chair and three deputy chairs)	4	Coordination of all DPRD bodies
Commission I (Government)	10	Government affairs and public order
Commission II (Economy and Finance)	10	Economy, revenue, and finance
Commission III (Development)	11	Infrastructure and regional development
Commission IV (People's Welfare)	10	Education, health, and social affairs
Deliberation Body (Badan Musyawarah)	14	Scheduling and agenda setting
Regional Regulation Drafting Body (Bapemperda)	10	Regulation drafting programme and harmonisation
Budget Body (Badan Anggaran)	20	Deliberation of the regional budget
Honour Council (Badan Kehormatan)	5	Ethics and discipline of members

Source: Composition of the bodies of the DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency for the 2019–2024 term, processed by the authors. The Secretary of the DPRD serves as secretary of the bodies but is not a member.

These findings indicate that the quantity of DPRD performance is high in terms of activities but undefined in terms of results. Quantity refers to the amount of work produced, expressed in units of output or in the number of activity cycles completed (Robbins & Judge, 2008). In Polewali Mandar, the activity cycles of meetings, hearings, and recess are completed regularly, yet the units of output that would show legislative productivity, such as regulation initiatives, amendments, and followed-up recommendations, are not recorded for individual members. This gap means that an active schedule can conceal unequal contributions between members and that productivity is attributed to the institution rather than to the individuals who produce it. The dense structure of bodies, intended to distribute the workload, thus also diffuses individual accountability. The DPRD should publish an individual activity and output dashboard showing each member's attendance, regulation initiatives, budget proposals, and oversight recommendations, as monitoring reforms supported by public performance dashboards have been shown to raise the attendance and effort of public officials (Callen et al., 2023).

3.3 Timeliness: Deadlines Met Under Sanction, Delays Elsewhere

The emphasis on activities rather than results is also reflected in how time is managed. Tasks protected by strict legal deadlines and sanctions are completed on time, most notably the joint approval of the regional budget, which must be reached no later than one month before the fiscal year begins to avoid the suspension of members' financial rights. The Secretariat's performance report was likewise submitted on time to the regent. Timeliness in these areas is driven less by internal work planning than by external sanctions, which compel the DPRD and the executive to complete budget deliberations within the prescribed schedule even when discussions are compressed into a few weeks.

Tasks that are not protected by sanctions show a different pattern. The regulation drafting programme depends heavily on drafts submitted by the executive, so its schedule follows the readiness of regional apparatus rather than the DPRD's own legislative calendar, and drafts can be carried over from one year to the next. Delays in

public decisions are explained more by organisational arrangements and procedural complexity than by negotiation itself (He et al., 2023), and in Polewali Mandar the dependence on executive readiness is the main organisational source of delay. The follow-up of aspirations gathered during recess is not tied to time-bound targets, since the planning documents lack quarterly targets and the performance measurement system does not monitor progress periodically. Compressed budget deliberations at the end of each cycle also limit the time available for detailed scrutiny of programmes. Timeliness is therefore selective: it is achieved where deadlines are enforced and weakened where the DPRD is expected to manage its own time.

These findings demonstrate that timeliness in the performance of DPRD members is shaped by external sanctions rather than by internal time management. Timeliness refers to the degree to which an activity is completed at the expected time, coordinated with other outputs, and leaves time available for other activities (Robbins & Judge, 2008). The Polewali Mandar DPRD meets this criterion for the budget cycle, but it does not apply the same discipline to regulation drafting and the follow-up of aspirations, so that work completed on time in one function crowds out the time available for others. The absence of quarterly targets and periodic reviews removes the internal mechanisms that could make timeliness a consistent feature of legislative work. As a result, members are punctual where the law compels them and flexible where it does not. The DPRD should adopt a legislative timeliness calendar with an index that compares planned and actual completion dates for regulation drafting, budget deliberation, and the follow-up of recess aspirations, as delay indices have been shown to make timeliness measurable and improvable in public sector processes (Ottou et al., 2024).

3.4 Effectiveness: Absorbing Aspirations More Than Converting Them

Selective timeliness directly affects the effectiveness of DPRD performance, which is the extent to which members achieve the objectives of their legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. Members of the Polewali Mandar DPRD are effective in absorbing aspirations, as recess activities, hearings, and visits to constituencies generate a large number of requests concerning roads, irrigation, education, health, and social assistance. These aspirations are channelled into regional planning through the DPRD's main ideas and into budget deliberations. Effectiveness in the representative function is therefore visible at the stage of input, where members act as channels between citizens and the regional government. Representative bodies are known to exert influence mainly through relational resources, such as standing with officials and ties with organised groups (Collins & Medrano, 2022), and DPRD members in Polewali Mandar rely on the same resources to move constituents' requests into the planning process.

Effectiveness weakens at the stage of conversion into policy. Many aspirations are accommodated as small-scale physical projects in members' electoral districts, while broader policy problems such as service quality, regulatory gaps, and the performance of regional apparatus receive less sustained attention. Oversight is exercised mainly through hearings and working visits whose recommendations are not systematically monitored, so that the executive's follow-up is difficult to verify. The limited number of permanent support staff, with only 34 civil servants among 103 Secretariat personnel, further restricts the DPRD's capacity to analyse budget documents and regulation drafts in depth. Programme effectiveness improves when targeting and delivery are coordinated across sectors (Kuntjorowati et al., 2024), and digital channels succeed when information quality and trust in government are high (Maktub et al., 2025), yet neither cross-sector coordination nor a public digital channel for tracking aspirations has been institutionalised. Consequently, the DPRD is effective as a channel of demands but less effective as an institution that shapes policy outcomes.

These findings show that the effectiveness of DPRD members in Polewali Mandar is concentrated in the absorption of aspirations rather than in their conversion into policy results. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which organisational resources, including people, funds, and information, are used to maximise the results achieved by each unit (Robbins & Judge, 2008). The Polewali Mandar DPRD uses its resources intensively to gather and transmit demands, but it lacks the analytical and monitoring capacity needed to ensure that these demands produce regulations, budget priorities, and corrective actions. This pattern also reflects a narrow form of representation in which acting for constituents is equated with securing projects rather than with responsiveness in the substance of policy (Pitkin, 1967). The DPRD should institutionalise structured public consultation on regulation drafts and publish the follow-up status of recess aspirations and oversight recommendations, as substantive public input has been shown to be associated with greater changes in the content of public rules (Ingrams, 2023).

3.5 Independence: Fragmented Factions and Executive-Led Agendas

The limited conversion of aspirations into policy is closely related to the degree of independence with which members perform their functions. As Table 3 shows, the 45 seats of the 2019–2024 DPRD were divided among nine factions, with the largest factions, Golkar, PKB, and Gerindra, each holding only 6 seats, or 13.3%, and the smallest holding 4 seats. No faction was able to determine decisions alone, so legislative outcomes depended

on negotiation between factions and with the regent. Members' positions in commissions and bodies were determined by factions, and decisions on regulation drafts and the budget were taken through faction views, which means that individual members exercise their mandate within the boundaries set by party leadership. The growing personalisation of politics, in which evaluations of party leaders weigh heavily in voters' choices (Garzia & Ferreira da Silva, 2021), reinforces the authority of faction leaders over individual members.

Independence is further limited by the DPRD's dependence on the executive for policy initiatives and information. Most regulation drafts originate from regional apparatus, and members respond to drafts and budget documents prepared by the executive rather than producing their own proposals. Members with legal, financial, or technical expertise contribute more independently to deliberations, whereas others rely on the explanations of regional apparatus and the Secretariat. The low share of permanent staff and the absence of dedicated analytical units limit the capacity of members to test executive proposals against independent analysis. Intermediaries act in the public interest when the citizens they serve are organised enough to hold them accountable (Paniagua, 2022), but organised constituent pressure on legislative content remains weak in Polewali Mandar. Independence therefore varies between individuals according to their expertise and position, while collectively the DPRD tends to follow an agenda set by the executive and negotiated among factions.

Table 3. Distribution of seats by faction in the DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency, 2019–2024 term

Faction	Number of seats	Share of seats (%)
Golkar	6	13.3
PKB	6	13.3
Gerindra	6	13.3
PDI Perjuangan	5	11.1
Demokrat	5	11.1
NasDem	5	11.1
PAN	4	8.9
PPI	4	8.9
Nurani Sejahtera	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

Source: Compiled by the authors from the composition of DPRD leadership and commissions for the 2019–2024 term.

These findings indicate that the independence of DPRD members in Polewali Mandar is constrained by party fragmentation, faction discipline, and dependence on the executive. Independence refers to the degree to which an individual can perform work functions without requiring assistance, guidance, or intervention from others (Robbins & Judge, 2008). In the legislative context, this means that members must be able to assess executive proposals and articulate the interests of their constituents on the basis of their own judgement. The Polewali Mandar case shows that such independence is available mainly to members with relevant expertise, while others depend on faction positions and executive explanations. The tension between acting on one's own judgement and following the wishes of those represented, which lies at the core of political representation (Pitkin, 1967), is resolved in practice by deference to faction and executive rather than to either independent judgement or constituents. The DPRD should strengthen expert staff for each commission and faction and invest in continuous capacity building for members, since legislators with higher educational attainment have been shown to deliver better public outcomes, particularly where institutional quality is strong (Anil et al., 2025).

3.6 Work Commitment: Uneven Dedication Within a Collective Mandate

The constraints on independence also shape the work commitment of members, which reflects their dedication, responsibility, and seriousness in carrying out legislative duties. A core group of members, generally those holding leadership positions in commissions and bodies, show strong commitment through regular attendance, active participation in deliberations, and continuous engagement with constituents and regional apparatus. Other members show weaker commitment, attending plenary sessions and recess activities but contributing little to the detailed work of commissions and bodies. Commitment is therefore uneven, and the collective performance of the DPRD depends disproportionately on a limited number of active members.

Several institutional conditions sustain this unevenness. Because attendance and contributions are not reported for individual members, there are few consequences for low commitment, and the Honour Council focuses on ethical violations rather than on the quality of members' work. Electoral incentives encourage members to prioritise visible activities in their districts over less visible legislative tasks, and commitment to party and constituents can take precedence over commitment to the institution. Perceived organisational politics reduces public service motivation and work engagement (Siddique et al., 2025), while the opportunity to voice concerns strengthens trust and performance in public organisations (Iddrisu & Mohammed, 2024); both mechanisms are visible in the way faction bargaining discourages less senior members from investing in legislative work. At the same time, members who are committed to legislative work face heavy workloads due to multiple assignments and limited support. Work commitment is thus shaped not only by personal dedication but also by the absence of institutional mechanisms that recognise commitment and sanction its absence.

These findings show that the work commitment of DPRD members in Polewali Mandar is high among a core group but uneven across the institution. Commitment refers to the degree to which individuals are committed to their institution and accept responsibility toward their office (Robbins & Judge, 2008). The Polewali Mandar DPRD illustrates that commitment to constituents and party can coexist with weak commitment to the institutional work of legislation and oversight, especially when individual contributions are invisible and the costs of low engagement are minimal. This unevenness links back to the previous dimensions: weak measurement of quality, activity-based quantity, selective timeliness, limited effectiveness, and constrained independence all reduce the incentives for sustained commitment. The performance of the DPRD as a whole therefore rests on the dedication of a minority rather than on shared responsibility. Political parties and the Honour Council should institutionalise annual individual performance commitments and public reporting of each member's contributions, as organisational commitment has been shown to directly predict job performance in the public sector (Pham et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

The performance of members of the DPRD of Polewali Mandar Regency during the 2019–2024 term rests more on institutional routines than on individual accountability for results. The quality of performance is formally adequate, as reflected in a grade B accountability evaluation, but performance measurement and reporting do not yet capture the substance of legislative, budgetary, and oversight work. Quantity is expressed in a high volume of meetings, hearings, and recess activities across a dense structure of commissions and bodies, while individual legislative outputs are not recorded. Timeliness is achieved for budget deadlines protected by sanctions but not consistently for regulation drafting and the follow-up of aspirations. Effectiveness is strong in absorbing citizens' aspirations but weak in converting them into regulations, budget priorities, and corrective actions. Independence is limited by fragmented factions, executive-led agendas, and limited expert support, and work commitment is concentrated among a core group of members.

Improving the performance of the DPRD requires shifting the focus from activities to results and from the institution to individual members. An integrated performance information system, an individual activity and output dashboard, a legislative timeliness calendar, structured public consultation with published follow-up status, stronger expert support for commissions and factions, and annual individual performance commitments are needed to make legislators accountable for the substance of their work. This study is limited to a single regency and to qualitative evidence from selected members and institutional documents. Further research should compare DPRDs with different levels of party fragmentation and support capacity and combine qualitative analysis with quantitative records of individual legislative output.

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