

# The Role of The People Representative Council of Pematang Siantar City, Indonesia, in Supporting Community Welfare

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Regional People's Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah/DPRD) of Pematang Siantar City in supporting community welfare within the framework of regional autonomy as mandated by Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. As a local representative institution, the DPRD plays a strategic role in shaping welfare-oriented public policies through its legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. However, empirical studies that explicitly analyze the contribution of these functions to community welfare at the city level remain limited. The findings show that the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City primarily performs its legislative function by discussing and approving draft regional regulations proposed by the executive. In contrast, regulations initiated by the DPRD remain limited. In the budgetary function, the DPRD plays a crucial role in approving the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) and directing allocations toward welfare-related sectors. However, improvements are needed in terms of transparency and timeliness in budget deliberations. Meanwhile, the oversight function is carried out through working meetings, field visits, and recess activities; however, the absence of systematic follow-up mechanisms limits its effectiveness in ensuring the implementation of welfare-oriented policies. This study concludes that while the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City has fulfilled its formal institutional functions, its contribution to community welfare has not yet reached an optimal level. Strengthening the capacity of DPRD members, enhancing transparency in legislative and budgetary processes, and increasing community participation are essential to improving the effectiveness of the DPRD in supporting sustainable community welfare. The findings of this study make significant empirical contributions to the literature on regional governance and provide policy-relevant insights for strengthening the role of local legislative institutions in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Regional Representative Council, Legislation, Oversight, Duties and Authorities.

## I. Introduction

Community welfare represents the ultimate objective of public administration and regional governance, particularly within decentralized political systems. In the Indonesian context, the constitutional mandate to "advance public welfare" as stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution is operationalized

through a decentralized governance framework that grants substantial authority to regional governments and their representative institutions. Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government formalizes this decentralization by positioning regional governments and Regional People's Representative Councils (DPRD) as central actors in planning, implementing, and supervising development policies aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens. In this framework, welfare is not merely treated as an abstract constitutional ideal, but as a concrete development objective that must be translated into policies, programs, and measurable outcomes. The achievement of community welfare, therefore, requires the alignment of legal mandates, institutional capacity, and political commitment at the regional level. Without adequate governance mechanisms, decentralization risks becoming a procedural reform rather than a transformative instrument for improving citizens' living standards. Consequently, the role of regional institutions becomes critical in ensuring that decentralization genuinely contributes to sustainable welfare improvement.

Decentralization is theoretically justified on the premise that local governments possess better information about community needs and are therefore more capable of delivering welfare-oriented policies. (Oates 1972). However, empirical evidence demonstrates that decentralization does not automatically translate into improved welfare outcomes. Its success depends heavily on institutional quality, political accountability, and the effectiveness of representative bodies in translating public aspirations into policy action. (Bardhan & Mookherjee 2006). In this regard, the DPRD plays a pivotal role as a political institution that connects citizens with the policymaking process. Through its representative function, the DPRD is expected to articulate social demands, mediate competing interests, and ensure that local policies reflect the collective priorities of the community rather than narrow political agendas. When this role is effectively performed, decentralization can enhance democratic accountability and social responsiveness. Conversely, weak legislative performance may lead to policy capture, limited public participation, and welfare outcomes that fail to address the actual needs of the community.

From a governance perspective, welfare-oriented development requires strong legislative institutions capable of performing three essential functions: enacting legislation, managing budgets, and conducting oversight. The DPRD's legislative function enables it to formulate regional regulations (Perda) that define the legal framework for social services, economic development, and public welfare programs. The budgetary function allows DPRD to determine the allocation of public resources through the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), which directly affects welfare sectors such as education, health, and social protection. Meanwhile, the oversight function ensures that policies and budgets are implemented in accordance with legal provisions and in the best interests of the public. These functions are interdependent and collectively determine the effectiveness of regional governance. Weakness in one function can undermine the others, resulting in ineffective welfare policies. Therefore, the institutional balance and functional performance of the DPRD are essential for ensuring that development policies are not only legally valid but also socially beneficial.

Scholarly literature emphasizes that effective legislative institutions are a cornerstone of good governance and social welfare. Sen (1999) Argues that welfare should be understood as the expansion of human capabilities, which requires public institutions to actively remove structural barriers to education, health, and economic participation. Complementing this perspective, Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi (2009) Assert that institutional performance, rather than economic growth alone, determines whether development leads to equitable welfare outcomes. These theoretical insights highlight the significance of DPRD as an institution that influences both policy content and the quality of implementation at the regional level. Legislative institutions are therefore not merely procedural bodies but normative actors that influence the distribution of opportunities and resources within society. In this sense, the DPRD's role extends beyond formal regulation to encompass broader responsibilities related to social justice and inclusive development.

Empirical studies on decentralization in Indonesia reveal mixed welfare outcomes across regions. Firman (2010) finds that some regions have successfully improved access to public services following decentralization, while others have experienced stagnation or an increase in inequality due to weak institutions and elite domination. Lewis (2017) further demonstrates that local political dynamics have a

significant influence on budget allocation and service delivery performance. These findings suggest that regional welfare outcomes are not merely administrative products but are profoundly shaped by the political and institutional behavior of local legislative bodies. Variations in legislative commitment, technical capacity, and political accountability contribute to uneven welfare achievements across regions. This empirical diversity highlights the importance of examining specific local contexts to understand how legislative institutions operate in practice.

In Pematang Siantar City, community welfare remains a strategic development challenge. As a medium-sized urban area, Pematang Siantar faces complex issues including limited fiscal capacity, urban poverty, uneven access to public services, and increasing demands for social protection. While the local government has implemented various welfare-oriented programs, discrepancies persist between policy formulation and actual outcomes. This situation places the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City in a critical position to ensure that public policies are not only formally enacted but also substantively oriented toward improving community welfare. The DPRD's ability to prioritize welfare issues within legislative agendas and budget discussions is, therefore, central to addressing these structural challenges. Failure to do so may exacerbate existing social inequalities and undermine public trust in regional governance.

Despite the normative importance of DPRD, academic studies that explicitly examine its role in supporting community welfare remain limited, particularly at the city level. Existing research tends to focus on legislative productivity, political conflict, or executive–legislative relations without systematically linking DPRD functions to welfare outcomes. Yani (2018) highlights the institutional tension between DPRD and regional executives, while Hermanto (2024) Emphasize the role of civil society participation in legislative effectiveness. However, these studies stop short of explaining how DPRD performance directly influences welfare indicators. As a result, a significant analytical gap exists in understanding the substantive impact of legislative institutions on community welfare. Addressing this gap is essential for developing more effective governance frameworks at the regional level. Moreover, filling this research gap can provide policymakers, academics, and civil society with empirically grounded insights into how legislative practices shape the quality, equity, and sustainability of welfare provision, particularly in decentralized governance contexts where local legislatures have discretionary authority over social and economic policies.

The World Bank (2018) Stresses that subnational legislative institutions play a decisive role in ensuring that public spending translates into improved service delivery. Without effective legislative scrutiny, welfare programs risk inefficiency, misallocation, and policy failure. In this context, examining the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City offers an important empirical opportunity to understand how regional legislative institutions function as drivers or obstacles to community welfare. Such an examination enables a more comprehensive evaluation of institutional practices, accountability mechanisms, and governance outcomes. It also provides insights into how legislative reforms can enhance the welfare impact of decentralized governance. Additionally, exploring the DPRD's role in local welfare enables the identification of institutional best practices and lessons that can be applied to similar city-level legislatures across Indonesia, thereby contributing to broader debates on improving legislative responsiveness and social policy effectiveness in decentralized systems.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the role of the Pematang Siantar City DPRD in supporting community welfare through its legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. By adopting a qualitative descriptive approach, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these institutional functions are exercised in practice, the challenges encountered, and the extent to which DPRD actions contribute to welfare-oriented governance. This study is expected to enrich the literature on decentralization and legislative studies while offering practical recommendations for strengthening DPRD performance in Indonesia. Ultimately, the findings are intended to support the development of more responsive, accountable, and welfare-oriented regional governance practices. Furthermore, the research outcomes may inform training programs, institutional reforms, and policy interventions that enhance the capacity of DPRD members to formulate, implement, and oversee policies that effectively address the evolving

social, economic, and development needs of their constituencies. By linking theoretical insights with empirical evidence, this study also aims to bridge the gap between academic research and actionable policy guidance.

## II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Community welfare is a multidimensional concept encompassing economic well-being, access to public services, social security, and the fulfillment of basic human needs. Sen (1999) Argues that welfare should be understood as the expansion of individual capabilities, emphasizing freedom, opportunity, and social inclusion. This perspective highlights the role of public institutions in creating environments that enable citizens to lead fulfilling lives. In regional governance, welfare outcomes are closely linked to the effectiveness with which local institutions design and implement policies that address these dimensions. From this conceptual standpoint, welfare must be viewed as a holistic condition that reflects both material and non-material aspects of human life. Economic growth alone is insufficient if it is not accompanied by equitable access to education, healthcare, and social protection. Therefore, public institutions are required to adopt integrated policy approaches that simultaneously address economic, social, and institutional determinants of welfare. In this sense, welfare-oriented governance demands long-term planning, cross-sectoral coordination, and sustained political commitment. The capacity of regional institutions to internalize this multidimensional understanding of welfare ultimately determines the inclusiveness and sustainability of development outcomes. Furthermore, measuring welfare solely through economic indicators such as GDP can obscure significant disparities within populations, leading to misinformed policy decisions. Comprehensive assessment frameworks that incorporate qualitative measures, such as citizen satisfaction, perceived security, and social cohesion, are necessary to capture the full spectrum of welfare outcomes. Integrating these measures into local governance systems enables policymakers to identify specific areas of deprivation and to tailor interventions that effectively target vulnerable groups. The establishment of participatory monitoring mechanisms can also enhance accountability, ensuring that welfare programs are responsive to the community's needs and can adapt to evolving social dynamics.

Decentralization theory suggests that bringing decision-making closer to citizens can improve welfare outcomes by increasing policy responsiveness and accountability (Oates, 1972; Shah, 2006). However, empirical evidence indicates that decentralization alone does not guarantee welfare improvement. Its success depends on institutional arrangements, political incentives, and the capacity of local governments and legislatures. Bardhan & Mookherjee (2006) Consequently, the role of regional legislative bodies becomes central in ensuring that decentralization translates into tangible welfare gains. Legislative institutions provide a formal arena for articulating local preferences and reconciling competing social interests within policy processes. When functioning effectively, they can mitigate information asymmetries between citizens and policymakers. Conversely, weak legislative engagement may result in policies that are disconnected from local needs and social realities. This condition underscores that decentralization is not merely an administrative reform but a political process whose welfare impact depends on the quality of representative institutions. Thus, the DPRD's role becomes crucial in determining whether decentralization serves as a mechanism for empowerment or reinforces existing governance deficiencies. In addition, the effectiveness of decentralization is often intertwined with broader social and economic factors such as public awareness, civic engagement, and intergovernmental coordination, which collectively shape the potential for legislative institutions to enhance local welfare outcomes. As such, fostering institutional capacity and accountability mechanisms within DPRD can serve as a critical strategy for realizing the broader goals of decentralized governance and ensuring that policy interventions reflect the genuine needs of the community.

The legislative function of DPRD involves the formulation and enactment of regional regulations (Peraturan Daerah/Perda) that establish legal frameworks for public service delivery, economic development, and social protection. Legislative institutions serve as arenas for policy deliberation and interest aggregation, shaping the content and direction of public policies (Lijphart, 2012). In welfare-oriented governance, proactive legislative initiatives are essential to ensure that regulations address social needs and protect vulnerable

groups. Through legislative authority, DPRD has the institutional capacity to formalize welfare priorities into enforceable legal norms. Regulations that are grounded in social realities can strengthen access to basic services and reduce social exclusion. Moreover, welfare-oriented legislation can provide legal certainty for social programs and enhance their sustainability beyond the scope of political cycles. The absence of such proactive initiatives may result in fragmented policies that fail to address structural welfare issues. Therefore, legislative quality has a direct influence on the effectiveness of regional welfare governance. Beyond legal enactment, DPRD's oversight function can further ensure that policies are implemented effectively and adaptively, allowing for corrective measures in response to emerging social challenges. Engaging with stakeholders such as civil society organizations, academic institutions, and local communities can also enrich the legislative process, creating a dynamic feedback loop that enhances both policy relevance and social trust in governance institutions.

Empirical studies show that strong legislative participation at the subnational level enhances policy responsiveness. Rauschendorfer and Vetter (2020) Find that active regional legislatures increase policy congruence with citizen preferences. However, studies in Indonesia reveal that DPRD's often rely heavily on executive-initiated draft regulations, limiting their influence over policy agendas. Yusriadi, Saharuddin, and Awaluddin (2021) This dependence may weaken the DPRD's ability to initiate innovative and welfare-oriented regulations. When legislative bodies act primarily as formal approvers, their deliberative and representative roles become constrained. This situation may reduce policy diversity and inhibit the emergence of alternative welfare solutions tailored to local contexts. Over time, executive dominance can marginalize legislative input and weaken democratic checks and balances. Consequently, strengthening DPRD legislative initiative is essential to enhance welfare-oriented policymaking at the regional level. Furthermore, capacity-building programs for legislators, including training in policy analysis, social budgeting, and stakeholder engagement, can improve their ability to evaluate proposals and advocate for citizen-centered reforms independently. Encouraging transparency and public participation in legislative deliberations may also reinforce democratic legitimacy and ensure that welfare policies are not only administratively sound but socially responsive, reflecting the evolving needs of local populations over time.

The budgetary function enables the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) to exert substantial influence over community welfare through its authority to deliberate on and approve the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget. As the primary fiscal policy instrument at the regional level, the APBD reflects the political priorities and policy commitments that determine how public resources are allocated across key sectors, including education, healthcare, social assistance, and basic infrastructure. These sectors constitute the fundamental pillars of community welfare, as they directly shape citizens' access to essential services and opportunities for social and economic advancement. Budget allocations, therefore, serve as concrete expressions of political choices regarding welfare priorities. The extent to which fiscal resources are directed toward welfare sectors reflects the commitment of legislative institutions to social development. Consequently, DPRD's role in budget deliberation is central to ensuring equitable and inclusive development outcomes. Furthermore, the effectiveness of budgetary decisions is closely linked to institutional transparency, participatory mechanisms, and the capacity of DPRD members to analyze complex financial data. Engaging local communities in budget planning and prioritization can further ensure that resource allocation aligns with citizens' most pressing welfare needs, thereby enhancing the legitimacy of policy outcomes.

Budget decisions made by the DPRD are therefore not merely technical or administrative in nature but represent critical political choices that affect the equity, quality, and sustainability of welfare provision. When legislative deliberation is conducted effectively, budget allocations can be directed toward programs that address structural social problems, reduce inequality, and enhance long-term human development outcomes. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2019) emphasizes that active legislative engagement in budgeting contributes to greater transparency, stronger fiscal discipline, and improved allocative efficiency, thereby increasing the likelihood that public spending generates meaningful welfare impacts. Legislative scrutiny also enhances public accountability by exposing budgetary decisions to

democratic debate. This process helps prevent rent-seeking behavior and misallocation of public funds. In welfare governance, such accountability mechanisms are crucial to ensure that limited fiscal resources yield the maximum social returns. In addition, systematic monitoring and evaluation of budget implementation can provide DPRD with evidence-based insights into program effectiveness, helping to refine future allocations and strengthen the overall governance framework. By integrating participatory budgeting, oversight, and performance evaluation, DPRD can create a more responsive fiscal environment that systematically supports social welfare improvements and reduces the risk of policy inefficiencies.

In Indonesia, however, regional budget processes are frequently characterized by intense political bargaining and the dominance of short-term interests, particularly those related to electoral considerations and factional negotiations within local legislative bodies. Rather than being guided primarily by evidence-based planning and long-term welfare objectives, budget deliberations often become arenas for political compromise, where resource allocation is influenced by distributive politics and the need to satisfy specific political constituencies. Lewis (2017) Demonstrates that local budget politics in Indonesia tend to prioritize the distribution of funds across sectors or electoral districts over the effectiveness and sustainability of development programs, thereby reducing the overall welfare impact of public spending. This pattern weakens the strategic function of budgeting as an instrument for social transformation. It also highlights structural challenges in aligning political incentives with welfare outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires institutional reforms that promote performance-based budgeting and strengthen legislative capacity for fiscal analysis.

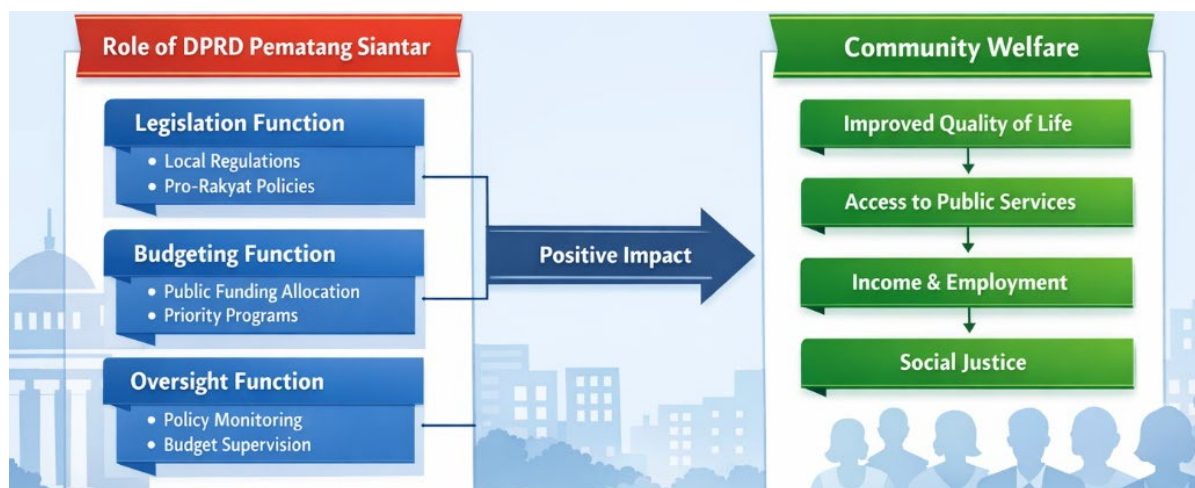
Oversight constitutes the third core function of DPRD, serving as a mechanism to ensure accountability in the implementation of policies. Effective legislative oversight reduces the risks of corruption, misallocation, and policy deviation, thereby safeguarding public welfare. (Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999). Schillemans and Bovens (2015) Argue that oversight effectiveness depends not only on formal authority but also on access to information, technical expertise, and follow-up mechanisms. Oversight enables DPRD to monitor whether policies and budgets are implemented in line with welfare objectives and legal standards. Through systematic evaluation, legislative institutions can identify implementation gaps and demand corrective actions. Effective oversight thus strengthens the link between policy intent and welfare outcomes.

Empirical studies in Indonesia highlight persistent weaknesses in legislative oversight. Suryanto and Thalib (2020) Identify limited technical capacity, weak coordination with executive agencies, and low public participation as significant constraints. These limitations reduce the DPRD's ability to ensure that welfare-oriented policies are implemented effectively and equitably. As a result, oversight practices often focus on procedural compliance rather than substantive performance evaluation. This condition undermines accountability and weakens the protection of public welfare. Strengthening oversight capacity, therefore, requires not only institutional authority but also technical expertise, access to data, and active community involvement. Without these elements, oversight cannot function as an adequate safeguard for welfare-oriented governance.

Drawing on institutional governance theory and empirical findings, this study conceptualizes community welfare as an outcome influenced by the effectiveness of DPRD's legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. These functions are interrelated and collectively shape policy quality, fiscal accountability, and service delivery performance at the regional level. Understanding the interplay of these functions provides insight into how local governments can prioritize public needs and respond effectively to community challenges. The study further emphasizes that enhanced coordination among legislative bodies, executive agencies, and civil society stakeholders can significantly improve welfare outcomes, ensuring that policies are both inclusive and sustainable. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The effectiveness of the DPRD's legislative function has a positive effect on community welfare in Pematang Siantar City.

- H2: The effectiveness of the DPRD's budgetary function positively influences community welfare in Pematang Siantar City.
- H3: The effectiveness of the DPRD's oversight function significantly contributes to the improvement of community welfare in Pematang Siantar City.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

### III. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the role of the Regional People's Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah/DPRD) of Pematang Siantar City in promoting community welfare. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the research seeks to understand institutional roles, political processes, and governance practices that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone. Qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of meanings, perceptions, and interactions among political actors within their real-life context. (Creswell & Poth 2018). Moreover, qualitative methods are instrumental in exploring complex governance phenomena where human behavior, organizational culture, and social norms interact in nuanced ways, making them essential for understanding how DPRD shapes welfare outcomes in a context-sensitive manner. This approach enables researchers to uncover not only formal procedures but also informal practices, negotiation dynamics, and power relations that significantly influence policy effectiveness at the local level. The descriptive orientation of this study aims to systematically describe how DPRD functions—legislative, budgetary, and oversight—are carried out in practice and how these functions relate to welfare-oriented policies. This approach is widely used in public administration and governance studies to analyze institutional performance and policy implementation at the subnational level. (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña 2014). By providing a detailed account of DPRD activities, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the procedural and substantive aspects of subnational governance, highlighting both achievements and challenges. Furthermore, descriptive research facilitates the identification of patterns, gaps, and best practices that may inform policy recommendations and institutional reforms, thereby increasing the practical relevance of the study for both scholars and policymakers. This study relies on both primary and secondary data sources to ensure analytical depth and triangulation. Triangulation enhances the credibility and validity of research findings by integrating multiple perspectives and sources of evidence. It allows the study to capture the complexity of institutional interactions and provide a robust basis for concluding DPRD's role in supporting community welfare.

### 3.1. Primary Data

Primary data were obtained through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key informants, including:

- a. Members of the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City,
- b. Officials of the DPRD Secretariat,
- c. Representatives of local government agencies (OPD),
- d. Community leaders and civil society representatives.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide flexibility to explore predefined themes while allowing informants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives. (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015). This method enables the researcher to probe deeper into responses, clarify ambiguities, and capture contextual nuances that are essential for understanding the practical challenges and strategies employed by DPRD members. In addition, semi-structured interviews facilitate a balance between comparability across respondents and richness of qualitative data, ensuring that diverse viewpoints are systematically documented and analyzed.

### 3.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data include regional regulations (Perda), DPRD meeting minutes, APBD documents, government reports, and relevant policy documents. Additionally, academic journals, books, and institutional reports were utilized to contextualize the findings and support the theoretical analysis. The use of documentary data is crucial in governance research for tracing policy decisions and institutional practices over time. (Bowen 2009). It allows researchers to cross-verify interview insights, identify consistencies or discrepancies between official records and practical implementation, and construct a comprehensive understanding of how legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions interact to influence welfare outcomes. Moreover, secondary data provide historical context that helps situate current institutional performance within broader trends of decentralization and subnational governance reforms. Data collection was conducted using three main techniques:

#### 1. In-depth Interviews

Interviews focused on the implementation of DPRD functions, decision-making processes, challenges faced in promoting welfare-oriented policies, and perceptions of DPRD performance. Each interview was conducted face-to-face and audio recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accuracy. In-depth interviews enable researchers to capture subjective experiences and uncover the underlying motivations, attitudes, and perceptions that shape legislative behavior and policy outcomes. They also provide opportunities to explore informal practices and the tacit knowledge that often guides decision-making in political institutions, which cannot be fully captured through formal documents or observation

#### 2. Observation

Non-participant observation was conducted during DPRD meetings, public hearings, and recess activities to capture interactions among legislators, executive officials, and community members. Observation helps researchers understand institutional behavior beyond formal statements. (Patton 2015). By systematically recording interactions, negotiation dynamics, and the use of procedural rules, observation complements interview data and reveals how power, communication, and collaboration manifest in practice. This technique also allows the researcher to identify gaps between policy intentions and actual implementation, offering insights into how institutional constraints and social dynamics influence welfare-oriented decision-making.

### 3. Documentation Review

Relevant documents were systematically reviewed to corroborate interview findings and identify patterns in policy formulation and oversight practices. Documentation review provides a reliable and verifiable source of evidence that strengthens the analytical rigor of the study. It enables the researcher to construct a detailed chronology of policy initiatives, budget allocations, and legislative deliberations, providing context for interpreting qualitative insights. In addition, combining documentation review with interviews and observation ensures methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity, credibility, and comprehensiveness of the research findings.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña (2014). First, data reduction involved coding interview transcripts and documents to identify key themes related to DPRD functions and community welfare. Second, data display was conducted by organizing findings into thematic matrices to facilitate comparison and interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn through iterative analysis, continuously comparing empirical findings with theoretical frameworks and previous studies. This interactive process enables the identification of patterns, relationships, and deviations, offering a structured yet flexible approach to qualitative analysis. Additionally, iterative comparison enhances the analytical rigor by ensuring that interpretations are grounded in empirical evidence and aligned with broader theoretical perspectives, enabling the study to generate meaningful insights into institutional performance and welfare outcomes.

### 3.4. Validity and Reliability (Trustworthiness)

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were employed:

- a. Triangulation, by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documents;
- b. Member checking, by confirming key findings with selected informants;
- c. Peer debriefing, through discussions with academic peers to reduce researcher bias.

These strategies are consistent with established qualitative research standards for credibility, dependability, and confirmability. (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Additionally, employing multiple trustworthiness strategies enhances the overall robustness of the research findings and minimizes potential sources of error or bias. Careful documentation of methodological procedures and reflective analysis also contributes to transparency, enabling other researchers to assess and replicate the study if necessary. By systematically addressing validity and reliability concerns, the study ensures that its conclusions regarding DPRD's role in supporting community welfare are both accurate and defensible.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research process. Informants were informed about the purpose of the study, their voluntary participation, and the confidentiality of their identities. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection, in line with ethical guidelines for social science research. (Israel & Hay 2006). Beyond formal consent, the research also emphasized respect for participants' perspectives, cultural norms, and professional roles, ensuring that interactions were conducted with sensitivity and integrity. Ethical adherence enhances the credibility of the research, fosters trust between the researcher and participants, and ensures that findings reflect genuine experiences and institutional practices without compromising the privacy or dignity of respondents. Furthermore, ethical rigor enhances the broader

societal relevance of the study, as insights derived from the research can inform policy and governance improvements while upholding responsible research conduct.

## IV. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Legislative Function of the DPRD and Welfare-Oriented Policies

The findings indicate that the legislative function of the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City is primarily exercised through deliberation and approval of draft regional regulations (Rancangan Peraturan Daerah/Ranperda) proposed by the executive branch. Empirical data from interviews reveal that DPRD-initiated regulations remain limited, particularly those explicitly oriented toward improving community welfare. This pattern reflects the broader condition of local legislative performance in Indonesia, where executive dominance continues to shape the legislative agenda at the regional level (Yusriadi et al., 2021). This limitation underscores the structural and procedural constraints that local parliaments face in advancing welfare-focused legislation, highlighting the importance of institutional reforms, capacity building, and the promotion of independent legislative initiatives to align policies with the needs of citizens better. From a governance perspective, this limitation restricts the DPRD's capacity to translate community needs into welfare-oriented legal frameworks proactively. Although several regional regulations indirectly address welfare concerns, such as those related to public services, education, and social order, the absence of strong DPRD legislative initiatives weakens the institution's representative role. This finding is consistent with comparative studies showing that strong regional parliaments are more likely to produce policies congruent with citizen preferences. (Rauschendorfer & Vetter 2020). Additionally, the gap between community expectations and legislative output points to a broader challenge in fostering participatory lawmaking processes, where stakeholder engagement and evidence-based policy design could enhance the responsiveness and legitimacy of legislative interventions.

Theoretically, the results align with representative democracy theory, which emphasizes that legislative bodies should function as channels for citizen interests and social demands. (Przeworski, Stokes, & Manin 1999). However, the empirical evidence from Pematang Siantar suggests that this representative function has not been fully realized in the legislative domain, particularly in relation to the formulation of welfare policies. This discrepancy highlights the need to bridge normative expectations with practical legislative performance, emphasizing institutional strengthening, procedural transparency, and active civic engagement as critical factors for translating representative principles into tangible welfare outcomes.

### 4.2. Budgetary Function and Its Implications for Community Welfare

The budgetary function constitutes a central mechanism through which the DPRD influences welfare outcomes. The results show that the DPRD actively participates in the discussion and approval of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), with a particular focus on allocations for education, health services, infrastructure, and social assistance programs. Informants acknowledged that welfare-related sectors consistently receive a significant portion of the budget, indicating a formal commitment to community welfare. Moreover, budget allocations serve as concrete indicators of political priorities and reflect the institution's recognition of the importance of social investment for long-term community development.

Nevertheless, the analysis reveals that budget deliberations are often dominated by political bargaining and short-term considerations rather than systematic assessments of program effectiveness. This finding corroborates previous empirical research, which demonstrates that local government spending in Indonesia does not always translate into improved service delivery or welfare outcomes. (Lewis, 2017). Furthermore, the influence of partisan politics, resource competition, and procedural rigidity can limit the strategic allocation of funds toward programs that maximize social impact, underscoring the need for evidence-based and outcome-focused budget planning.

Furthermore, the limited technical expertise among DPRD members hinders their ability to evaluate budget proposals and performance indicators critically. As a result, budget approval tends to focus on sectoral distribution rather than outcome-based budgeting. The OECD (2019) emphasizes that meaningful legislative engagement in budgeting enhances transparency, fiscal discipline, and allocative efficiency, thereby increasing the likelihood that public spending generates tangible welfare benefits. Strengthening the DPRD's capacity in fiscal analysis, program evaluation, and strategic planning could therefore enhance its ability to align fiscal decisions with community welfare objectives, ensuring a more effective and equitable use of public resources. In the context of decentralization, these findings align with fiscal federalism theory, which posits that subnational governments are better equipped to respond to local needs when fiscal decisions are aligned with community priorities. (Oates, 1972). However, without adequate legislative capacity and analytical support, the potential welfare gains of decentralized budgeting remain underutilized. Institutional reforms, technical assistance, and participatory budgeting mechanisms can help realize the promise of decentralization by ensuring that fiscal resources are deployed efficiently and equitably in support of social and economic development goals.

#### 4.3. Oversight Function and Accountability in Welfare Governance

The oversight function of the DPRD is carried out through working meetings, field visits, hearings with executive agencies, and recess activities. The results indicate that these mechanisms provide important opportunities for monitoring policy implementation and capturing community feedback. Recess activities, in particular, serve as a direct channel for citizens to convey welfare-related concerns to their representatives. Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of oversight remains limited due to weak follow-up mechanisms and coordination challenges between the DPRD and executive agencies. Similar constraints have been identified by Suryanto and Thalib (2020), who highlight limited technical capacity and weak inter-institutional coordination as significant obstacles to effective DPRD oversight. These findings suggest that oversight is not merely a procedural formality but a substantive activity that requires institutional commitment, adequate resources, and systematic evaluation mechanisms to be truly effective in enhancing welfare outcomes.

From an accountability perspective, these findings suggest that oversight activities have not yet proven to be robust instruments for enforcing welfare-oriented policy commitments. Schillemans and Bovens (2015) Argue that effective public accountability requires not only information exchange but also consequences for underperformance. In Pematang Siantar, the absence of systematic evaluation and sanctioning mechanisms weakens the impact of DPRD oversight on welfare outcomes. Strengthening monitoring systems, establishing clear performance indicators, and ensuring follow-up on audit results could enhance legislative accountability and support more effective implementation of welfare policies.

#### 4.4. Civil Society Participation and Legislative Effectiveness

The study also finds that community participation in DPRD processes remains largely consultative and episodic. Public hearings and aspirational forums are conducted, yet citizen input is not always systematically integrated into legislative or budgetary decisions. This condition limits the potential of participatory governance to enhance welfare outcomes. Previous studies emphasize that active civil society participation strengthens legislative effectiveness and policy responsiveness. (Hermanto 2024). However, consistent with the findings of this study, existing practices often fail to translate participation into tangible welfare improvements. This gap underscores the need to institutionalize participatory mechanisms that directly link citizen input to policy formulation and evaluation. Such mechanisms can promote transparency, strengthen democratic legitimacy, and ensure that legislative priorities reflect substantive social and economic concerns, thereby enhancing the overall welfare impact of DPRD activities.

#### 4.5. Discussion

The results demonstrate that while the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City formally performs its legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions, its substantive contribution to community welfare remains constrained by institutional, political, and capacity-related factors. These findings reinforce the argument that decentralization alone does not guarantee improved welfare outcomes unless supported by strong local legislative institutions. (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006). Addressing these constraints requires a comprehensive approach that includes capacity-building programs, procedural reforms, and mechanisms to strengthen institutional autonomy and effectiveness. From a broader governance perspective, the study supports the view that welfare should be understood not merely as economic growth but as the expansion of substantive freedoms and access to public services. (Sen, 1999). Therefore, strengthening DPRD capacity, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and deepening citizen participation are critical steps toward ensuring that regional governance effectively supports sustainable community welfare. Integrating these strategies with evidence-based policymaking and participatory governance practices could maximize the social returns of decentralized administration and promote more equitable and inclusive development outcomes.

## V. Conclusion

This study offers an in-depth analysis of the Regional People's Representative Council of Pematang Siantar City's role in supporting community welfare within the framework of regional autonomy in Indonesia. Grounded in qualitative empirical evidence and supported by theories of decentralization, representative democracy, and public accountability, the findings demonstrate that the DPRD occupies a strategically important position in shaping welfare-oriented governance, although its practical contribution remains suboptimal. In terms of the legislative function, the study finds that the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City has largely fulfilled its formal role in discussing and approving regional regulations. However, DPRD-initiated legislation, particularly regulations that explicitly address social welfare, poverty reduction, and inclusive development, remains limited. This reflects a broader structural pattern in Indonesian local governance, where executive dominance constrains the agenda-setting capacity of regional parliaments. As a result, the DPRD's representative role as a channel for translating community aspirations into binding legal frameworks has not been fully realized. Strengthening legislative initiative capacity is therefore crucial to ensure that regional regulations are more responsive to local welfare needs.

Regarding the budgetary function, the DPRD plays a decisive role in approving the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), which directly determines the allocation of public resources to key welfare sectors, including education, health, infrastructure, and social assistance. The findings indicate that welfare-related sectors consistently receive budgetary attention, signaling a normative commitment to community welfare. Nevertheless, budget deliberations are frequently characterized by political bargaining and short-term considerations rather than evidence-based assessments of program effectiveness and long-term social impact. The limited technical capacity among DPRD members further restricts their ability to evaluate budget performance critically. Consequently, the welfare potential of decentralized fiscal authority has not been fully harnessed.

The oversight function of the DPRD is implemented through working meetings, hearings, field visits, and recess activities, which provide mechanisms for monitoring policy implementation and absorbing community complaints. However, the effectiveness of oversight is weakened by the absence of systematic follow-up mechanisms, limited coordination with executive agencies, and insufficient use of performance evaluation tools. As a result, oversight activities tend to be procedural rather than corrective, reducing their capacity to ensure that welfare-oriented policies are implemented effectively. This condition undermines the DPRD's role as a guardian of public interest and social justice. In addition, the study highlights that community participation in DPRD processes remains largely consultative and symbolic. Although public hearings and recess forums exist, citizen input is not consistently integrated into legislative, budgetary, or oversight

decisions. This limits the potential of participatory governance to strengthen welfare outcomes. Effective community welfare governance requires not only institutional representation but also meaningful citizen engagement that influences policy priorities and decisions.

This study concludes that while the DPRD of Pematang Siantar City has formally performed its constitutional and statutory functions as mandated by Law Number 23 of 2014, its substantive contribution to community welfare has not yet reached an optimal level. Institutional capacity constraints, political dynamics, limited legislative initiative, and weak accountability mechanisms collectively hinder the DPRD's ability to act as a strong driver of welfare-oriented governance. Based on these conclusions, several strategic implications can be drawn. Strengthening the technical and analytical capacity of DPRD members is essential to improve legislative quality, budget scrutiny, and oversight effectiveness. Enhancing transparency and accountability mechanisms in legislative and budgetary processes will increase public trust and policy legitimacy. Furthermore, institutionalizing meaningful community participation can help ensure that welfare policies genuinely reflect local needs and priorities.

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