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Abstract

This research analyzes how open government policies generate citizen participation in a district municipality in the province of Ascope in the year 2025. A qualitative, interpretive approach was employed through semi-structured interviews with municipal officials and social actors associated with participatory spaces. The findings demonstrate that active transparency, publication of open data, and accountability are prerequisites for citizen engagement when accessible channels and mechanisms for direct interaction are in place. Similarly, participation increases when the municipality implements deliberative spaces, such as hearings, town halls, and dialogue tables, which strengthen social trust. Semantic networks and Sankey diagrams demonstrate that transparency and access to information are linked to participatory practices, creating a direct path to citizen collaboration. In conclusion, open government significantly contributes to building institutional legitimacy and strengthening local governance.

Keywords: Open government; Citizen participation; Transparency; Open data; Local governance

Resumen

La presente investigación analiza cómo la política de gobierno abierto genera participación ciudadana en una municipalidad distrital de la Provincia de Ascope durante el año 2025. Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo interpretativo, mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a funcionarios municipales y actores sociales vinculados a espacios participativos. Los hallazgos muestran que la transparencia activa, la publicación de datos abiertos y la rendición de cuentas son condiciones habilitantes para el involucramiento ciudadano, siempre que existan canales accesibles y mecanismos de interacción directa. Asimismo, se evidencia que la participación incrementa cuando la municipalidad implementa espacios deliberativos como audiencias, cabildos y mesas de diálogo, fortaleciendo la confianza social. Las redes semánticas y el diagrama Sankey evidencian que la transparencia y acceso a información se enlazan con prácticas participativas, generando un flujo directo hacia la colaboración ciudadana. Se concluye que el gobierno abierto contribuye significativamente a construir legitimidad institucional y fortalecer la gobernanza local.

Palabras clave: Gobierno abierto; Participación ciudadana; Transparencia; Datos abiertos; Gobernanza local

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, citizen participation in public management has become one of the strategic pillars for strengthening democratic governance in Latin America. Institutional transformations promoted by organizations such as the OECD, ECLAC, and the World Bank have led to the adoption of policies that promote transparency, access to information, and collaboration to reduce asymmetries between the state and its citizens (ECLAC, 2022). In this context, the open government approach has emerged as a paradigm that redefines the relationship between the public and society. This approach aims to promote a management model that focuses on openness, active participation, and shared responsibility in decision-making.

The Peruvian case is no exception to this trend. Since the enactment of the Transparency and Access to Public Information Law in 2002 and the subsequent approval of the National Open Government Policy through Supreme Decree No. 016-2017-PCM, the importance of establishing accessible, accountable, and participatory institutions has been acknowledged. However, municipal implementation presents structural challenges related to limited use of digital platforms, a low culture of active transparency, and insufficient citizen training for exercising social control (Ombudsman's Office, 2023). Added to this is a scenario of institutional distrust where the public frequently associates state management with bureaucracy, slowness, and a lack of openness to dialogue (López & Santillán, 2021). Citizen participation, defined as the direct involvement of the population in decision-making, oversight, or co-management processes, expands democratic legitimacy and improves the quality of public spending. However, such participation does not arise spontaneously. Studies show that enabling factors such as clear information, open processes, accessible channels, and digitalization, as well as political will to incorporate the voice of citizens in local management, are necessary (Ramírez, 2020; Villanueva & Ríos, 2022). Open government acts as a policy that promotes transparent practices with verifiable public data, generating conditions that allow citizens to be informed and actively participate in municipal decisions.

In district municipalities, where the government is closer to citizens, the impact of open government is more visible and measurable. The Province of Ascope is a socially dynamic territory with organized participation through communal committees, neighborhood councils, and civil organizations. However, these participation channels are usually formal and underutilized, showing a gap between the regulatory framework and the actual exercise of the right to participate (Provincial Municipality of Ascope, 2024). The challenge is not only to publish documents or open web portals but also to ensure that the information is understandable, timely, and usable for collective decision-making. Recent scientific evidence indicates that open government can significantly increase citizen participation when institutions prioritize active transparency, accountability, and open data in accessible formats (OECD, 2020; Delgado, 2023). However, a recurring limitation of the literature is that most research is oriented toward normative or technical analysis. Few studies examine the perceptions of municipal actors and citizens at the district level, especially in regions outside the capital. Therefore, this research addresses an academic gap by examining the phenomenon through the direct experiences of those involved and interpreting how open government translates into real participatory practices in the territory.

From an institutional perspective, open government policy can strengthen local governance, promote social control of public resources, and consolidate the relationship between the state and its citizens. When information flows, the population can oversee, propose, and co-decide. Conversely, when information does not circulate, management becomes a closed process that limits co-responsibility and reduces public value (Zapata, 2019). With this in mind, evaluating the implementation of open government policies in Ascope allows us to understand the factors that enhance or restrict participation, especially in contexts with technological and cultural gaps.

This research aims to answer the following question:

How does open government policy generate citizen participation in a district municipality of the province of Ascope in 2025?

The general objective is to analyze how open government contributes to strengthening municipal citizen participation by considering transparency, open data, accountability, public deliberation, and social control. To this end, we conducted a qualitative interpretive study through semi-structured interviews and analysis with ATLAS.ti. This allowed us to obtain semantic networks and interpretive Sankey diagrams of emerging categories.

The article is structured as follows: the Materials and Methods section presents the design, sample, and instrument; the Results section presents findings based on categories, networks, and semantic flows; the Discussion section contrasts these findings with current literature; and the Conclusions and Recommendations section develops conclusions and recommendations aimed at designing sustainable local participatory policies.

This research provides useful empirical evidence for local governments seeking to implement open government policies to stimulate citizen participation and trust. This contributes to the fulfillment of SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. The research also proposes practical, scalable guidelines for other municipalities in the country, demonstrating that institutional openness is a viable path toward more inclusive, collaborative management.

II. Materials and Methods

The research was conducted using a qualitative, interpretive approach aimed at understanding how open government policies promote citizen participation in municipal management. This approach allowed for the interpretation of the perceptions, discourses, and experiences of those involved in participatory spaces, emphasizing the significance of open information and the relationship between the state and its citizens. A case study design was selected because it allows for analysis of the phenomenon in its real context. This design considers institutional interactions, local dynamics, and transparency practices in the district municipality of the province of Ascope during the year 2025.

2.1. Study Context

The analysis focused on a district municipality in the province of Ascope in the La Libertad region of Peru. This municipality is characterized by formal processes of citizen participation, such as participatory budgeting, public hearings, and neighborhood councils. However, documentary evidence shows low citizen

attendance, limited dissemination of information, and a weak culture of social control. This makes the territory an ideal place to study the impact of open government as a public participation policy.

2.2. Techniques and instruments

The semi-structured interview was used as the main instrument, composed of 18 open questions, validated through the judgment of experts in governance and public policies. The guide was organized into three thematic blocks:

Transparency and access to public information.

Participatory practices and interaction mechanisms.

Perception of trust, collaboration and social control.

Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, was recorded with authorization and was later transcribed for discursive analysis.

2.3. Collection procedure

The interviews were conducted in previously coordinated institutional spaces. Informed consents were signed and confidentiality was guaranteed. The data was collected between January and April 2025. The transcripts were uploaded to ATLAS.ti v9 for coding and qualitative processing.

2.4. Data analysis

The analytical process was developed in four stages:

Open coding: identification of units of meaning and creation of initial codes.

Axial coding: grouping into conceptual families (transparency, open data, participation, control).

Selective coding: construction of central categories for substantive interpretation.

Interpretive visualization: elaboration of a semantic network and Sankey diagram to represent relationships between open government and citizen participation.

This strategy allowed us to observe discursive patterns, conceptual density, and semantic flows that show how transparency enables participation and trust.

2.5. Research ethics

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and the COPE Code of Conduct for scientific research. All participants signed an informed consent form, their identities were kept confidential, and the data was used exclusively for academic purposes. The study was part of a registered, institutionally authorized doctoral project.

2.6. Originality and traceability of the manuscript

This original, unpublished manuscript is derived from a doctoral thesis. In accordance with the editorial rules of Desde el Sur, it has not been previously published nor is it under evaluation by another scientific journal. The authors guarantee that all content is the product of their own research, analysis, and intellectual elaboration. They have ensured the traceability of the process through collection records, transcription, and qualitative coding in ATLAS.ti software.

Likewise, we certify that the text meets the criteria for academic integrity and respects ethical standards, copyright, and citation in APA 7 style. If accepted, the authors authorize publication and dissemination in open access mode according to the journal's current policies.

III. Results

Through qualitative analysis, we identified direct relationships between open government policy and citizen participation based on discourses collected from municipal officials and social actors. Initial codification generated 83 open codes, which were later grouped into 16 axial codes. Three central categories then emerged from these axial codes: Open Government, Citizen Participation, and Social Trust. These categories present clear connections that explain how the transparency and availability of public information enable citizen involvement in the District Municipality of Ascope in 2025.

3.1. Open Government as an Institutional Enabler

Participants expressed that opening public information increases social interest when it is clear, accessible, and updated. Simply publishing documents is not enough. Effectiveness depends on the availability and readability of the content, which allows citizens to understand municipal management.

Three relevant subdimensions derive from this category:

Subcategory	Evidence in interviews	Implication
Active transparency	Publication of reports, ordinances and budgets	Reduces opacity and information barriers
Open data	Downloadable formats and web portals	Provide independent citizen analysis
Surrender Public	Presentation of progress and works	Generates institutional responsibility

3.2. Citizen participation as a deliberative practice

The study showed that participation is strengthened when the municipality enables spaces for real dialogue in addition to providing information. Direct interaction promotes co-responsibility and positions citizens as active participants in local decision-making processes.

"People participate when they feel heard. If there is no response, people stop coming" (E7).

The interviews cited open town halls, public hearings, participatory budgeting, and working groups as examples of practices through which citizens can express their demands, review projects, and supervise spending.

3.3. Social trust as a consequence of open government

The final category shows that trust emerges when there is coherence between published information and municipal decisions. Sustained transparency generates social recognition, while the lack of institutional response weakens legitimacy.

"If you see that they inform and comply, you trust. If not, no one participates anymore." (E2)

IV. Discussion

The results of the study show that the open government policy constitutes not only a normative guideline but also an enabling mechanism for social interaction as long as accessible transparency, open data, and effective participation spaces are in place. This coincides with Ramírez's (2021) argument that open government only transforms state management when there is institutional will to share information and establish two-way channels with citizens.

Active transparency emerged as the central node of the analysis, supporting the argument of Villanueva and Ríos (2022) that the public availability of budget information reduces asymmetries of information and promotes social control. In this study, the community showed greater interest in participating when the municipality published reports and project progress, confirming that information is the starting point, not the end, of democratic involvement.

Similarly, the relationship between open data and accountability reinforces the OECD's (2020) proposals regarding the necessity of reusable data for citizen auditing. In Ascope, the interviewed individuals stated that having downloadable, understandable formats facilitated monitoring works, budgets, and schedules. This is consistent with Delgado (2023), who describes open data as an input for social empowerment.

However, the literature warns that transparency alone does not guarantee participatory transformation. Martínez and Sepulveda (2020) argue that participation requires deliberative spaces and an institutional response. This condition is confirmed by the study's findings: citizens participate when they perceive active listening and feedback. Otherwise, participation stagnates. This underscores the fact that participation is not a spontaneous act, but rather the result of a cycle:

Information → interest → interaction → collaboration → trust.

The Sankey diagram in the study showed direct flows between transparency and participation. Meanwhile, the semantic network connected participation with institutional trust. This validates what Zapata (2019) revealed: sustained openness transforms citizens from passive observers into actors who are co-responsible for local development.

A significant contribution of this work is its analysis of municipal and citizen perceptions, a dimension that has been under-explored in Peruvian literature, which has traditionally focused on documentary and normative analysis. This approach allows us to visualize the operational side of open government and reveal real barriers, such as

- low digital literacy in rural areas,

- limited culture of participation,

a shortage of training in transparency and open data,

, and institutional technological gaps.

Overcoming these barriers requires sustained action, which aligns with ECLAC's (2022) proposal to strengthen digital skills and promote civic education to ensure inclusive participation.

Therefore, the study confirms that open government is a highly transformative policy, but its impact depends on practical implementation, continuity, an institutional response, and accessible channels. Regulations alone do not activate citizen participation; it requires an experience of closeness, trust, and coherence between discourse and state action.

V. Conclusions

1. The findings of the study allow to conclude that open government policy acts as a direct generator of citizen participation when it is implemented with clear mechanisms of transparency, open data, and accountability. The availability and clarity of public information constitute the starting point for citizens to get involved in deliberative processes and exercise vigilance over municipal management.

2. Secondly, it is confirmed that participation does not arise spontaneously but depends on the existence of formal and real spaces for interaction, such as public hearings, town halls and dialogue tables. Participation increases when citizens perceive institutional listening and effective feedback, which strengthens co-responsibility in decision-making.

3. Likewise, it is evident that sustained transparency promotes social trust, generating legitimacy and openness to collaboration. The relationship found between information → participation → trust validates the strategic role of open government as a tool for inclusive governance. However, challenges related to technological gaps, digital literacy, and participatory culture remain.

4. Finally, the study provides useful evidence for local governments and demonstrates that open government is not reduced to portals or regulations, but requires continuous practices, two-way communication and institutional strengthening to consolidate active and co-responsible citizenship.

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