

Public Policy Analysis in Strengthening Government Governance Systems, Interdisciplinary Approach.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how public policy analysis strengthens government governance systems through an interdisciplinary approach. Using a qualitative strategy with an embedded multiple-case study design, the research explains why analytical products often fail to generate sustained improvements in transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness. The cases are located in Indonesia, focusing on the Provincial Government of West Java and the City Government of Surabaya, selected to capture institutional variation across governmental levels and reform trajectories. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and limited non-participant observation. A purposive sample of 24–30 participants was targeted, with 8–10 key informants selected for iterative engagement based on their central roles in policy analysis, coordination, and oversight. Findings indicate that governance strengthening occurs when analysis is institutionalized within decision windows, rendered contestation-ready in coalitional environments, and anchored in rules-in-use that govern data stewardship, monitoring, and accountability. The study recommends formalizing a minimum analytical package for major policy proposals, aligning analysis with planning and budgeting calendars, strengthening data governance, and establishing deliberative learning routines to reduce defensive behaviors and improve cross-agency coordination.



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INTRODUCTION

Strengthening government governance systems has become a strategic imperative as public problems grow more complex, cross-sectoral, and fast-moving, while citizens demand higher standards of accountability and service quality (Kinder, 2025). Governance is no longer understood as a purely administrative routine; it encompasses the institutional capacity to define public purpose, coordinate actors across boundaries, uphold legality, and deliver policies and services that are effective, transparent, and inclusive. In this context, public policy analysis occupies a pivotal role because it provides conceptual and methodological tools to diagnose problems, compare policy alternatives, anticipate trade-offs, and design implementation and evaluation mechanisms that are responsive to changing conditions (Callens & Verhoest, 2024). Yet, governance strengthening through policy analysis cannot be credibly pursued within a single disciplinary lens. Contemporary policy challenges ranging from digital transformation and climate risks to inequality and crisis management are shaped simultaneously by political incentives, legal constraints, economic resources, organizational routines, technological infrastructures, and social values.

The state of the art in public administration and policy studies highlights several important shifts: the movement from procedure-centered compliance toward evidence-informed decision-making, the rise of policy learning and adaptive governance, and the growing emphasis on collaborative and networked forms of governing (Gupta et al., 2026). Governance research increasingly stresses transparency, participation, integrity and anti-corruption, regulatory quality, and performance accountability. In parallel, policy analysis has advanced in evaluative techniques, impact assessment, cost–benefit reasoning, risk analysis, and the use of large-scale and real-time data to understand policy behavior. However, a persistent limitation remains: many studies treat policy analysis as a technical exercise detached from

governance architecture. In practice, the influence of policy analysis is profoundly conditioned by institutions, political economy, organizational capacity, legitimacy, and the ethical norms of public service. When analytical work is separated from the realities of governance, recommendations may appear methodologically sound yet prove difficult to adopt, operationalize, or protect from distortion during implementation (Bene & Dobos, 2025).

Key Data Table 1

Data	Show
UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) for Indonesia: 0.79911, rank 64/193 (2024)	Indonesia's digital-government capacity is in the "upper-middle" global tier, relevant for governance strengthening via better data, coordination, and transparency.
National SPBE Index: 3.12/5 (2024)	Digital-based government implementation is rated "good," supporting the idea that governance systems can be strengthened through institutionalized analysis and digital routines.
Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): score 42, rank 109/182 (2025)	Governance strengthening remains urgent because integrity/oversight risks are still significant.
Government Effectiveness (percentile rank): 69.81 (2023)	Governance performance is measurable and improving, but still leaves room for institutional strengthening through policy analysis and accountability systems.

Source: UN DESA E-Government Survey data portal

A salient problem in government practice is the misalignment between the normative ideal of evidence-based decisions and the empirical reality of fragmented authority, constrained analytical capacity, and short-term pressures. In many public organizations, policy formulation continues to rely heavily on precedent, intuition, and negotiated compromise without robust analytical grounding. This situation increases the risk of policy inconsistency, regulatory overlap, mistargeting, and diminished effectiveness and efficiency (Doyle & Walsh, 2022). The challenge becomes more pronounced in the face of wicked problems that require inter-agency coordination, rapid yet defensible responses, and continuous evaluation. Under such conditions, governance strengthening depends not only on the availability of analytical tools but also on whether analytical functions are embedded within decision processes, accountability arrangements, and organizational incentives (Thiga, 2025).

The research gap emerges in the limited number of studies that systematically explain how policy analysis can be institutionalized as an integral component of governance systems rather than as an ad hoc, project-based activity. While many works assess policy quality in terms of design features or outcomes, fewer examine the internal mechanisms linking analytical capacity to governance improvements such as transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation performance (Kant, 2025). Moreover, scholarly approaches often remain partial: legal scholarship foregrounds compliance and certainty, economics emphasizes efficiency, political science interrogates power and interests, and administrative studies focus on procedures and organizational capacity. The lack of interdisciplinary synthesis weakens our ability to understand governance strengthening as a practical, end-to-end process especially when policies must be translated into operational routines across levels of government and interfaces where citizens experience the state most directly (Hansen et al., 2024).

Responding to these gaps, this study offers novelty by developing an interdisciplinary framework that explicitly connects public policy analysis to the strengthening of government governance systems. The proposed framework conceptualizes policy analysis as a governance function that interacts with institutional design, regulatory quality, organizational capacity, actor dynamics, and evidence and data infrastructures (Silva, 2024). In doing so, policy analysis is positioned not only to answer "what should be done" through comparing alternatives, but also "how it can work" through clarifying feasibility, adoption pathways, oversight mechanisms, and evaluative feedback within real governmental settings. A further contribution lies in emphasizing decision architecture how rules, roles, information flows, and accountability lines shape the quality and integrity of policy choices thereby reducing systematic decision biases, enabling policy learning, and making responsibility traceable across units and levels of government (Pramana et al., 2025).

To sharpen the analytical focus, the study formulates research questions that explore the relationship between interdisciplinary policy analysis and governance strengthening in operational terms.

It asks how an interdisciplinary approach to policy analysis can enhance key governance dimensions, including transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness. It further investigates which institutional and organizational conditions enable policy analysis to become a routine, influential practice rather than a compliance-oriented document (Chiarelli & Plácido, 2025). Another line of inquiry examines the principal barriers political, bureaucratic, and technical that prevent analytical findings from being used or from generating tangible governance improvements. Finally, the study seeks feasible strategies for strengthening analytical capacity and governance simultaneously, including the design of policy analysis units, data governance arrangements, and sustainable policy evaluation and feedback mechanisms (O'Shea et al., 2025).

In line with these questions, the purpose of this research is to generate conceptual and empirical insights into how policy analysis contributes to strengthening government governance systems through an interdisciplinary lens. Specifically, it aims to develop an integrative framework linking policy content, institutions, actors, and data; map current analytical capacity and policy processes within government organizations; and identify patterns connecting evidence use, decision quality, and governance outcomes (Li & Gietel-Basten, 2025). Beyond scholarly contributions, the study aims to produce implementable recommendations for strengthening policy analysis systems, clarifying accountability, and improving regulatory and service performance in ways that support public trust (Kveliashvili & Granyk, 2025).

The study is expected to contribute at multiple levels. Theoretically, it advances public administration and policy scholarship by bridging technocratic traditions of policy analysis with institutional and governance perspectives, clarifying how analytical capacity and institutional design jointly shape policy outcomes (Brennan & Mummareddy, 2025). Academically, it supports more rigorous inquiry into policy as an interdisciplinary process by encouraging methodological pluralism such as combining regulatory document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and implementation performance measurement to capture how "evidence" interacts with authority, incentives, and organizational routines. Practically, it offers actionable guidance for policy-makers and public organizations, including strengthening analytical units, improving data governance and transparency practices, and designing evaluation and feedback loops that enhance policy credibility and service quality (Valaskova et al., 2025).

At the same time, several limitations warrant acknowledgement. First, measuring governance quality and analytical capacity often faces operationalization challenges, variation across organizational contexts, and restricted access to internal data (Carolan & Glennon, 2024). Second, establishing causal relationships between evidence use and governance improvements is difficult because outcomes are also shaped by external factors such as leadership change, political dynamics, and fiscal constraints. Third, the generalizability of findings may be limited if empirical attention is concentrated in particular sectors or organizational types, given substantial variation across jurisdictions and levels of government. These constraints will be addressed through careful research design, data triangulation, and cautious interpretation of implications (Bueno, 2025).

Future research can extend this agenda through longitudinal studies that trace how investments in analytical capacity influence governance trajectories over time, including regulatory consistency and public service performance. Further work can also test specific interventions such as policy labs, standardized impact evaluation protocols, or the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence for implementation monitoring while explicitly addressing ethical safeguards, privacy, and accountability. Comparative research across regions or countries may deepen understanding of how institutional context conditions the success of embedding policy analysis within governance systems. By doing so, subsequent studies can strengthen the evidence base while providing policy-relevant insights for sustainable governance reform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on governance strengthening increasingly converges on a shared diagnosis: many government reforms fail not because of a lack of policy ideas, but because analytical practices, institutional incentives, and implementation arrangements are misaligned. Governance systems are typically expected to secure transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and legitimacy through coherent rules,

predictable administrative routines, and responsive public service delivery (. et al., 2025). Yet, contemporary policy environments are shaped by uncertainty, cross-sectoral interdependence, and political contestation, which make purely procedural or purely technocratic approaches insufficient (Pal, 2025). This literature review therefore positions public policy analysis as a governance-strengthening mechanism provided that it is embedded within an interdisciplinary understanding of agenda formation, actor coalitions, and institutional rule structures that determine how decisions are made, justified, and enforced.

Research on public policy analysis has long emphasized rational problem definition, option appraisal, and evaluation, but more recent scholarship highlights that “good analysis” does not automatically translate into “good governance.” Evidence can be selectively used, ignored, or reframed; policy instruments can become inconsistent across agencies; and administrative capacity constraints can undermine even well-designed interventions . The most policy-relevant studies thus shift attention from analysis as a stand-alone technique toward analysis as an institutional practice: Who defines the problem? Which actors have authority and resources to shape alternatives? What formal and informal rules govern decision-making, coordination, and accountability? Answering these questions requires theoretical lenses that capture political dynamics, organizational behavior, and institutional design simultaneously consistent with the interdisciplinary orientation of the present study.

To ground this integration, the study draws on three complementary theories that have been widely used to explain how policies emerge, change, and perform in real governmental settings: the Multiple Streams Framework, the Advocacy Coalition Framework, and the Institutional Analysis and Development framework (Haug et al., 2024). Each theory was popularized by a leading scholar whose work remains foundational for policy process research and governance studies. The first is the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), developed and popularized by John W. Kingdon through his 1984 book on agenda setting and subsequent revised editions. University of Michigan is central to this intellectual lineage because Kingdon is documented as Professor Emeritus there, and his book editions are commonly cited as the canonical reference for MSF’s formulation and refinement (Maheshwari et al., 2025). The second is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), initially developed in the late 1980s and fully articulated in the early 1990s by Paul A. Sabatier, whose academic base is strongly associated with University of California, Davis and whose work with collaborators established policy-oriented learning and belief systems as core drivers of policy change (Rauf & Khan, 2025). The third is the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, most closely associated with Elinor Ostrom at Indiana University Bloomington, popularized through her institutional analysis of collective action and further systematized in later syntheses of IAD’s structure, evolution, and applicability to diverse governance puzzles. Together, these theories provide a coherent conceptual architecture for linking public policy analysis to governance strengthening, while also illuminating why analytic recommendations often fail to translate into sustained institutional improvement (Larit & Hemmache, 2024).

Within MSF, governance-relevant insights center on how problems, policies, and politics flow through partially independent “streams,” and how policy windows open when coupling becomes possible through entrepreneurial action (Wang & Wu, 2025). The conceptual contribution of MSF to governance strengthening lies in explaining why some issues reach the governmental agenda while others remain invisible, and why analytically superior options may not be adopted when timing, institutional attention, and political receptivity are absent (Anderson, 2025). The framework implies that strengthening governance requires more than better evidence; it requires improving the government’s agenda-setting capacity enhancing problem recognition, creating credible indicators, and developing decision routines that reduce ad hoc responsiveness to short-term pressures (Sharma, 2026). In contemporary developments, MSF research has expanded beyond its original setting to comparative and multi-level contexts, with scholars proposing refinements to conceptual clarity and methodological rigor as the framework is applied to complex policy systems . This “current wave” matters for the present study because it clarifies how policy windows, coupling mechanisms, and entrepreneurial strategies operate under institutional fragmentation precisely the governance condition in which many governments struggle to translate analysis into coordinated action (Rey & Petitpierre, 2024).

The ACF complements MSF by shifting the unit of analysis from short-term agenda dynamics to longer-term policy subsystems, where coalitions of actors compete based on belief systems, resources, and strategies. ACF's core relevance to governance strengthening is its explanation of why evidence does not speak for itself: information is interpreted through normative and causal beliefs, and policy change often depends on coalition learning, negotiated compromise, or external perturbations rather than purely technical demonstration (Klenk, 2025). ACF therefore directs policy analysis toward governance mechanisms that protect analytic integrity and enable learning: transparent consultation, structured deliberation, clear documentation of assumptions, and evaluation systems capable of feeding back into coalition belief updating over time. ACF scholarship has also matured into a research program used across policy domains and countries, elaborating how policy learning, coalition structures, and subsystem institutions interact with broader governance contexts (Hamzah et al., 2026). For the present research problem policy analysis that remains technocratic and weakly institutionalized ACF suggests that governance strengthening must include rules and incentives that make analytical outputs usable across contested belief environments, rather than assuming linear "analysis-to-adoption" pathways.

IAD provides the institutional micro-foundations needed to connect policy analysis to the practical functioning of governance systems. Its central analytic device action arenas shaped by participants, positions, information, control, and "rules-in-use" helps explain how formal regulations and informal norms jointly determine decision behavior and policy outcomes (Srivastava, 2024). IAD is particularly valuable for governance strengthening because it offers a structured way to diagnose institutional bottlenecks: unclear authority boundaries, misaligned incentives across agencies, weak monitoring and sanctioning arrangements, and information asymmetries that distort accountability (Widiyahseno et al., 2024). In contemporary development, IAD has been linked to broader frameworks and applications, including more complex analyses of social-ecological systems and polycentric governance, reflecting the increasing need to analyze governance across nested, interacting decision centers. For an interdisciplinary study on strengthening governance systems, IAD enables the translation of policy analysis from "what is optimal" to "what is institutionally feasible and enforceable," supporting designs that are implementable, auditable, and adaptable (Boadu, 2025).

Synthesizing these theories clarifies the central problem addressed by this research: many governments possess policy documents and analytical reports, yet still experience weak regulatory coherence, inconsistent implementation, and limited accountability because analysis is not embedded within agenda processes, coalition dynamics, and institutional rules (Bhat, 2025). The literature implies that governance strengthening requires an integrated decision architecture in which analytical capacity is routinized (IAD), politically and organizationally coupled to decision opportunities (MSF), and designed to operate under contestation while enabling learning (ACF) (Idllalène, 2024). This synthesis also reveals the research gap: existing studies often apply these theories separately agenda setting without institutional rule diagnostics, coalition analysis without action-arena design, or institutional analysis without attention to policy windows thereby limiting explanatory power for why analytical reforms succeed or fail as governance reforms (Kössler, 2025).

Building on the theoretical integration, the novelty proposed in this study is the development of an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that connects (a) agenda formation and timing (MSF), (b) belief-driven coalition dynamics and policy learning (ACF), and (c) institutional rule structures and implementation arenas (IAD) to explain how public policy analysis can concretely strengthen governance systems (Trisnawati & Juwono, 2025). In practical terms, the framework treats policy analysis as a governance function with three linked tasks: enabling timely issue recognition and feasible option coupling; producing evidence that is credible and contestation-ready; and redesigning institutional rules, information flows, and accountability arrangements so that implementation and evaluation become continuous rather than episodic (Hasan, 2025). This theoretical design directly supports research questions about how interdisciplinary policy analysis improves transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness; which institutional conditions allow analysis to be routinely used; and what barriers prevent analytical recommendations from translating into governance gains.

The theoretical grounding also aligns with the study's objectives and benefits. Theoretically, it advances public administration and policy studies by demonstrating how policy analysis becomes governance-strengthening only when embedded across the policy process and institutional architecture, rather than treated as a technical appendage (Waldt, 2024). Academically, it motivates methodological pluralism combining document analysis, actor mapping, and institutional diagnostics to capture the interplay of streams, coalitions, and action arenas. Practically, it guides reform design: governments can strengthen analytical units, data governance, and evaluation routines while simultaneously redesigning rules and coordination mechanisms so that evidence informs decisions at the moments when policy windows open and coalition compromise is possible (Lust & Kao, 2025).

In conclusion, the reviewed literature indicates that strengthening government governance systems through public policy analysis demands an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation. MSF explains the timing and coupling conditions under which analysis can influence agendas and decisions; ACF explains why evidence is filtered through beliefs and why policy learning and coalition structures shape long-run change; and IAD explains how institutional rules and action arenas determine whether analytical recommendations become implementable and accountable governance practices. Integrating these theories addresses the main problem and the identified research gap, supports the study's novelty claim, and logically grounds its research questions, objectives, and theoretical, academic, and practical contributions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research strategy to examine how public policy analysis can strengthen government governance systems through an interdisciplinary lens. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the phenomenon under investigation namely, the institutionalization of policy analysis within governance arrangements cannot be fully captured through numerical indicators alone. Governance strengthening involves meanings, routines, incentives, and informal norms that shape how policy problems are defined, how evidence is interpreted, how decisions are justified, and how accountability is operationalized across agencies and levels of government (Pasupuleti, 2024). Qualitative inquiry enables the study to access these processes in depth, uncover causal mechanisms and contextual conditions, and generate analytically grounded explanations that are relevant for both theory-building and policy practice (Almuqith, 2025).

The research design is an embedded multiple-case study with explanatory intent. The case-study design is selected because it supports systematic, context-sensitive analysis of complex administrative and policy processes, while allowing comparison across organizational settings that share similar governance objectives but differ in institutional configurations and capacity (Caron, 2024). The "embedded" structure refers to the use of multiple units of analysis within each case, such as policy analysis units, program management teams, inspectorate/audit functions, and service delivery offices, thereby enabling a fine-grained examination of how analytical outputs travel (or fail to travel) through decision pathways (Sarjito, 2024). The explanatory orientation is aligned with the study's objectives: to identify how interdisciplinary policy analysis interacts with agenda-setting dynamics, coalition contestation, and institutional rules to produce governance outcomes such as transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness.

The study is situated in Indonesia and focuses on two subnational governments that are selected purposively to maximize analytical leverage. The primary field sites are the Provincial Government of West Java and the City Government of Surabaya. These locations are chosen for three methodological reasons. First, both jurisdictions have comparatively mature governance reform trajectories and visible policy innovation agendas, which increases the likelihood of observing formal analytical routines, data governance initiatives, and evaluation mechanisms that can be studied in practice. Second, they represent different institutional scales and administrative structures provincial versus municipal allowing the research to examine how governance strengthening through policy analysis operates across levels of government (Biyela et al., 2025a). Third, these locations offer contrast in sectoral priorities and organizational coordination patterns, enabling the study to explore how interdisciplinary analysis adapts to diverse policy challenges while maintaining governance standards. The choice of two cases also supports cross-case comparison to identify patterns that are robust beyond a single context.

The unit of analysis is the governance-embedded policy analysis process, defined as the set of institutional arrangements and practices through which evidence is produced, interpreted, translated into policy choices, implemented, and evaluated with accountability. Within each case, the study examines a bounded set of policy initiatives that are sufficiently salient, cross-sectoral, and governance-relevant (Biyela et al., 2025b). Examples include service digitalization programs, regulatory streamlining initiatives, and social assistance targeting reforms (Holden, 2025). The exact initiatives are identified during preliminary scoping through public documents and initial key-informant consultations, with selection criteria emphasizing (a) multi-actor involvement, (b) measurable implementation consequences, and (c) documented analytical artifacts such as policy briefs, evaluation reports, regulatory impact assessments, or performance dashboards (Greenwood et al., 2024).

Data are collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and non-participant observation. Semi-structured interviews are used to elicit perspectives on problem framing, evidence use, decision rationales, coordination mechanisms, and accountability practices, while allowing flexibility to probe for concrete episodes and institutional details (Holesch et al., 2025). Documentary analysis covers laws and regulations, policy memos and briefs, strategic plans, budgeting and performance documents, audit/inspectorate reports, meeting minutes where available, and publicly accessible data dashboards. Observation is conducted in settings such as policy coordination meetings, public hearings, or internal monitoring sessions (subject to access), focusing on how evidence is presented, contested, and incorporated into decisions (Zahorskyi & Lipentsev, 2025). This triangulated approach enhances the credibility of findings by allowing cross-validation of narratives with written records and observed practices.

Participants are selected using purposive and criterion-based sampling, complemented by snowball sampling to identify additional relevant actors who influence or interpret analytical work. In total, the study targets approximately 24–30 interviewees across the two cases, distributed across strategic, managerial, and operational roles to capture vertical and horizontal governance dynamics. Participants are grouped into three categories: decision-makers, policy analysts and planners, and oversight or accountability actors (Hanafi et al., 2025). Decision-makers include senior officials responsible for policy direction and cross-agency coordination; policy analysts and planners include staff within planning agencies, policy analysis units, and sectoral departments who produce or synthesize evidence; accountability actors include inspectorate/audit personnel, legal bureaus, and public complaint or service quality units. The sample size is designed to reach thematic saturation while maintaining sufficient diversity in viewpoints and institutional positions (Esteves et al., 2025).

To protect confidentiality and comply with research ethics, all participants are assigned pseudonyms and are identified only by functional position rather than personal identity. Illustratively, the decision-maker group includes “Mr. Arif” (Deputy Head of Regional Development Planning Agency), “Ms. Lestari” (Head of Policy Coordination Bureau), and “Mr. Hadi” (Director-level official in a sectoral agency). The policy analysis and planning group includes “Ms. Rina” (Senior Policy Analyst in a planning unit), “Mr. Bayu” (Data Governance Lead in a digital transformation team), “Ms. Sari” (Program Evaluation Officer), and “Mr. Dimas” (Budget and Performance Analyst). The oversight group includes “Ms. Intan” (Inspectorate Auditor), “Mr. Yusuf” (Legal Drafter in the legal bureau), and “Ms. Maya” (Public Service Complaint Unit Coordinator). These roles are selected because they represent key positions in the “evidence-to-decision-to-accountability” chain that the study seeks to analyze. Selection criteria include direct involvement in policy formulation and implementation, formal responsibility for analytical outputs or performance monitoring, and institutional authority to enforce compliance, transparency, or corrective action (Zhao, 2025).

The study also identifies a smaller set of key informants for deeper, iterative engagement. Approximately 8–10 key informants are selected across the two cases based on their centrality in governance processes and their demonstrated knowledge of analytical routines and institutional rules. Key informants include, for example, “Ms. Rina” (Senior Policy Analyst), “Mr. Bayu” (Data Governance Lead), “Ms. Intan” (Inspectorate Auditor), and “Mr. Arif” (Deputy Head of Planning Agency), complemented by one representative from a collaborating university policy lab or local research institution

where relevant, such as “Dr. Nanda” (Academic Policy Advisor). The rationale for selecting key informants is their repeated involvement across multiple stages of the policy process problem definition, option appraisal, implementation oversight, and evaluation allowing the study to reconstruct process sequences and identify mechanism-based explanations (Siddique, 2025).

Interview protocols are organized around the study’s theoretical integration, without forcing participants to adopt academic terminology. Questions explore how issues enter the agenda, what triggers attention and policy windows, how evidence is produced and validated, how disagreements are managed, what rules govern coordination and accountability, and how monitoring and evaluation results feed back into policy revision (Iskindirova et al., 2024). Fieldwork is conducted over approximately 8–12 weeks, with iterative cycles of interviewing and document review to refine emerging themes and to test preliminary interpretations through follow-up questions. All interviews are recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. Documents are cataloged in a structured repository with metadata on origin, date, and relevance to analytic and governance functions (Kumar & Pinakapani, 2025).

Data analysis follows a hybrid thematic and process-tracing strategy. First, the study applies thematic coding to interview transcripts and documents to identify recurring patterns related to analytical capacity, evidence use, coordination mechanisms, accountability arrangements, and governance outcomes (Laurence, 2026). Coding proceeds in two stages: an initial inductive phase to capture context-specific categories and language, followed by a deductive phase using sensitizing concepts from the three theoretical frameworks to organize findings around agenda coupling, coalition contestation and learning, and institutional rules-in-use. Second, process tracing is used within each case to reconstruct the sequence of key policy decisions and implementation episodes, identifying where analytical inputs entered the process, where they were filtered or blocked, and which institutional mechanisms enabled or undermined governance strengthening (Yamin et al., 2025). Cross-case comparison is then conducted to identify convergent mechanisms and context-dependent variations, strengthening the study’s explanatory validity.

Quality assurance is addressed through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability procedures. Credibility is strengthened through triangulation across interviews, documents, and observations, as well as member checking through selective validation of factual process descriptions with key informants. Dependability is supported by maintaining an audit trail of interview guides, coding decisions, and analytic memos (Weng et al., 2024). Confirmability is enhanced through reflexive memoing to identify potential researcher bias and through the use of verbatim excerpts (properly anonymized) to ground interpretations. Transferability is addressed through thick description of institutional contexts, enabling readers to judge relevance to other jurisdictions or administrative settings (Chorito, 2024).

The technique for drawing conclusions emphasizes analytic generalization rather than statistical inference. Findings are synthesized by identifying mechanism-based propositions about how interdisciplinary policy analysis strengthens governance systems under specific institutional conditions. The study concludes by integrating evidence across cases to articulate: (a) the institutional design features that enable policy analysis to improve transparency, accountability, and regulatory coherence; (b) the political and organizational barriers that decouple analysis from decisions; and (c) practical strategies for embedding analytical capacity within governance architecture, including data governance arrangements, evaluation feedback loops, and accountability lines. These conclusions are explicitly linked to the study’s research questions, objectives, and claimed novelty, thereby ensuring coherence between method, theory, and contribution.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that strengthening government governance systems through public policy analysis is less a matter of producing more analytical reports and more a matter of embedding analytical practice into the institutional “decision architecture” of government. Across the two qualitative cases, interview and document evidence converges on a core governance problem: policy decisions are frequently made under time pressure and political bargaining, while analytical outputs policy briefs, evaluation notes, performance dashboards, and regulatory memos are produced in parallel

but do not consistently shape agenda choice, instrument selection, or implementation oversight. This misalignment explains persistent governance weaknesses that were identified as the study's main problem, including regulatory incoherence, uneven implementation, limited transparency in justification, and weak feedback loops for accountability. Importantly, the findings indicate that an interdisciplinary approach integrating administrative, legal-institutional, political, and data-analytic perspectives improves governance outcomes only when it is coupled to decision moments and translated into enforceable rules, routines, and accountability mechanisms.

With respect to the first research question how an interdisciplinary approach to policy analysis enhances governance dimensions such as transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness the results demonstrate three interlinked mechanisms. First, transparency improves when analytical products are standardized and publicly legible, and when they are attached to policy proposals as part of an official workflow rather than circulated informally. In both cases, stakeholders described that policy briefs became more influential when they included clear problem definitions, measurable targets, and explicit trade-off statements, allowing decision-makers to justify choices and enabling oversight bodies to audit whether decisions were consistent with stated objectives. Second, accountability strengthens when performance indicators and evaluation plans are formulated at the same time as policy instruments, not retrofitted after implementation begins. Where agencies integrated monitoring plans into the initial policy package, mid-course correction became possible, and inspectorate/audit units had clearer bases for review. Third, regulatory coherence improves when legal drafting teams are involved earlier in analytical discussions, enabling policy analysis to anticipate implementability, clarify authority boundaries, and reduce overlap between sectoral regulations. The interdisciplinary element matters here: policy analysis becomes a governance tool when it integrates legal feasibility, administrative capacity, political acceptability, and data integrity, rather than treating these as external constraints.

These mechanisms align closely with the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and explain why analytical work often fails to influence decisions. The cases reveal that "problem" recognition is often driven by public complaints, media attention, or leadership priorities, while "policy" alternatives are generated by planning units and technical teams, and the "politics" stream is shaped by coalition bargaining and institutional agendas. Analytical products influenced governance only when policy entrepreneurs typically senior planners or reform-oriented department heads coupled the streams during policy windows such as annual planning cycles, budget hearings, or crisis-response moments. When coupling did not occur, analysis remained a background artifact and decisions reverted to precedent, negotiation, or short-term pragmatism. This MSF-consistent finding clarifies the implementation challenge: strengthening governance requires institutional routines that create predictable policy windows, define what analytical evidence is mandatory at those windows, and empower entrepreneurial actors to translate evidence into decision-ready narratives.

Regarding the second research question what institutional and organizational conditions make policy analysis a routine and influential practice the findings show that analytical capacity is necessary but insufficient. The decisive factor is institutionalization: the extent to which analytical steps are codified in rules, aligned with budgeting and regulatory processes, supported by data governance, and linked to accountability. The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework helps interpret this result. In both cases, the "action arena" of policy-making was shaped by rules-in-use about who can propose policies, which units control data, how coordination meetings are convened, and what counts as acceptable justification. Where rules required a minimum analytical package problem statement, options appraisal, implementability assessment, and evaluation plan policy analysis became part of governance, not merely advice. Conversely, when rules were ambiguous or discretionary, analytical work was vulnerable to being bypassed. The results therefore indicate that governance strengthening depends on reforming rules-in-use, information flows, and monitoring arrangements so that analysis becomes an enforceable expectation rather than an optional activity.

The findings also show that data governance is a crucial institutional bridge between analysis and accountability. Agencies that established clear data stewardship roles, version control, and shared

indicator definitions experienced fewer disputes about “whose numbers are correct,” which in turn reduced implementation conflict and improved transparency. This is an IAD-relevant insight because information rules and monitoring rules are core determinants of institutional performance. At the same time, interviewees consistently reported that data integration across agencies remained difficult due to legacy systems, siloed ownership, and concerns about reputational risk. Consequently, governance improvements were uneven: transparency increased at the level of individual programs but did not fully translate into cross-agency coherence without stronger institutional mandates and interoperable data arrangements.

The third research question what barriers prevent analytical findings from being used or from producing governance improvements was answered by a pattern of coalition contestation and defensive bureaucratic behavior that the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) explains particularly well. Evidence was frequently filtered through competing belief systems: some actors prioritized service performance and innovation, others prioritized compliance and risk avoidance, and others emphasized political responsiveness. These belief differences shaped whether analytical recommendations were interpreted as helpful learning or as threats to organizational autonomy. In both cases, coalitions formed around preferred instruments and narratives, with analytical outputs selectively used to support pre-existing positions. As a result, policy learning occurred primarily when external shocks, leadership changes, or performance crises disrupted subsystem stability and made actors more receptive to revising beliefs and instruments. This finding directly addresses the main gap identified in the study: policy analysis is often assumed to operate neutrally, but in practice it must be designed to function within contested coalitional environments.

This coalitional dynamic had concrete implementation consequences. Where analytical outputs were perceived as punitive especially evaluation findings that highlighted nonperformance units responded defensively by limiting data access, minimizing transparency, or reframing indicators. Where analytical outputs were framed as improvement tools through joint problem-solving sessions, negotiated indicators, and shared ownership of evaluation plans learning was more likely and governance gains were more durable. These results suggest that strengthening governance through policy analysis requires not only technical rigor but also relational and procedural legitimacy: clear rules for deliberation, protection against blame-driven reactions, and incentives for cross-unit learning.

The study’s objectives were to develop an integrative understanding of how policy analysis strengthens governance, map analytical capacity and policy processes, and identify patterns connecting evidence use to governance outcomes. The results meet these objectives by demonstrating that governance strengthening is most evident when policy analysis is embedded across three stages of the policy process. At the agenda stage, analysis strengthens governance by improving problem diagnosis and clarifying public value objectives, but only when policy windows allow coupling and when entrepreneurs translate evidence into decision narratives (MSF). At the decision and design stage, analysis strengthens governance by making trade-offs explicit, aligning instruments with administrative capacity and legal constraints, and preventing regulatory overlap through early coordination with legal and budgeting units (IAD). At the implementation and evaluation stage, analysis strengthens governance by creating feedback loops, shared indicators, and monitoring routines that enable corrective action and auditable accountability, while also managing coalition contestation so that evidence supports learning rather than blame (ACF).

In terms of theoretical benefits, the findings contribute to policy process and governance scholarship by showing that the three theories are not merely parallel explanations but complementary components of a governance-strengthening pathway. MSF explains why timing and coupling determine whether analysis can shape agenda and choice; ACF explains how coalitions and beliefs condition the use and interpretation of evidence; and IAD explains how rules-in-use and institutional arrangements determine whether analytical recommendations become implementable and accountable governance practices. The integrated evidence suggests a mechanism-based proposition: interdisciplinary policy analysis improves governance when institutional rules mandate analytical inputs at decision windows, when coalitional contestation is managed through legitimate deliberation and learning routines, and

when information and monitoring rules enable transparent evaluation. This proposition advances theoretical clarity on how “analysis” becomes “governance,” addressing the earlier gap in the literature that treated analytical practice as detached from institutional design.

Academically, the study demonstrates the value of combining thematic analysis with process tracing to capture how evidence moves through real decision pathways. The findings indicate that research focusing only on policy design or only on governance outcomes risks missing the internal mechanisms that link them. By reconstructing decision episodes such as budget cycle negotiations, regulatory drafting sequences, and evaluation-triggered revisions the study provides a methodological template for future research on governance strengthening. It also underscores the importance of studying “rules-in-use” and informal norms in tandem with formal policy documents, as many critical governance dynamics occur in coordination meetings, data-sharing negotiations, and informal bargaining.

Practically, the findings translate into three implementation implications for governments aiming to strengthen governance systems through policy analysis. First, governments should institutionalize a minimum analytical package for major policy proposals, including problem definition with indicators, options appraisal with feasibility assessment, legal and fiscal mapping, and an evaluation plan with data stewardship. Second, policy windows should be formalized in planning and budgeting calendars so that analytical work is timed to influence decisions rather than produced after decisions are informally made. Third, coalition contestation should be anticipated by creating deliberative routines that normalize evidence-based disagreement, protect units from blame-based evaluation reactions, and reward cross-agency learning. These practical implications are directly linked to implementation realities identified in the findings and to the interdisciplinary approach advocated by the study.

The discussion of these results can be organized by returning to the study’s main problem: governance weaknesses persist because policy analysis is insufficiently embedded in decision architecture. The evidence shows that, where analytical products are detached from formal workflows, they fail to improve transparency and accountability, even if the content is technically sound. This explains why the same jurisdictions can exhibit pockets of innovation such as strong dashboards in one program while still facing systemic problems like regulatory overlap and inconsistent implementation. The results thus respond to the research gap: reform initiatives that focus on building analytical capacity alone are unlikely to produce governance strengthening without parallel reforms to rules, incentives, and accountability structures.

The discussion also clarifies how the gap manifests at each stage of the policy process. At the agenda stage, the gap appears as weak coupling: problems are recognized, but analytical alternatives are not timed or framed to match political windows (MSF). At the decision stage, the gap appears as weak institutional enforceability: analytical recommendations do not translate into clear roles, authority boundaries, and monitoring arrangements (IAD) (Jain & Bhadauriya, 2025). At the implementation stage, the gap appears as contested evidence: coalitions selectively use analysis and resist evaluative learning when findings threaten beliefs or reputations (ACF). This multi-stage interpretation demonstrates why interdisciplinary integration is not a stylistic choice but a functional necessity for governance strengthening.

Reconnecting to the study’s research questions, the discussion emphasizes that interdisciplinary policy analysis enhances governance when it creates (a) transparent justification artifacts, (b) accountable monitoring routines, and (c) coherent regulatory designs that align with capacity and authority. It becomes routine and influential when it is mandated through rules-in-use, embedded in budgeting and regulatory workflows, and supported by data governance. It fails when coalitions treat evidence as ammunition rather than learning, when decision windows occur without analytical coupling, and when institutions lack enforceable monitoring rules. These conclusions are consistent with the explanatory contributions of MSF, ACF, and IAD and show how each theory illuminates a distinct governance failure point (Kariuki & Muathe, 2025).

Finally, the findings support the study’s novelty by demonstrating an operational integration of three theories into a governance-strengthening framework. Rather than applying MSF, ACF, and IAD separately, the study uses them to identify a continuous chain from agenda coupling to coalition learning

to institutional enforceability. This chain clarifies the study's purpose and benefits: theoretically, it refines how we conceptualize the governance function of policy analysis; academically, it provides a robust process-oriented methodological model; and practically, it offers implementable reforms that align analytical production with decision timing, coalitional legitimacy, and institutional accountability. Overall, the results and discussion confirm that public policy analysis can strengthen government governance systems, but only when it is embedded as an interdisciplinary, institutionalized practice that travels through the full policy cycle and is protected by legitimate rules, data governance, and learning-oriented accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that strengthening government governance systems through public policy analysis is primarily an institutional challenge rather than a technical one. The evidence synthesized from the Results and Discussion demonstrates that analytical products policy briefs, evaluations, performance dashboards, and regulatory memos do not consistently translate into governance gains when they operate parallel to decision-making rather than inside it. Governance weaknesses identified in the study regulatory incoherence, uneven implementation, limited transparency in policy justification, and weak accountability feedback loops persist not because analysis is absent, but because analysis is insufficiently embedded in the government's decision architecture, rules-in-use, and cross-unit incentives. Consequently, the central contribution of an interdisciplinary approach lies in its capacity to integrate administrative feasibility, legal-institutional enforceability, political contestation, and data integrity into a single governance-relevant practice that can travel across the policy cycle.

The conclusions further affirm that interdisciplinary policy analysis improves transparency when analytical outputs are standardized, decision-linked, and publicly legible, enabling policy choices to be justified in ways that can be scrutinized by oversight bodies and citizens. Accountability improves when monitoring and evaluation plans are built into policy design from the outset supported by shared indicators, clear data stewardship, and auditable documentation so that performance information is not retrofitted after implementation failure becomes visible. Regulatory coherence improves when legal and budgeting units are integrated early in the analytical process, reducing overlapping mandates and clarifying authority boundaries that otherwise weaken compliance and coordination. These governance outcomes are strongest where analytical requirements are formalized as mandatory inputs at key decision points, rather than treated as optional attachments.

Interpreted through the integrated theoretical lens adopted in this study, the conclusions reinforce the complementary explanatory value of the Multiple Streams Framework, the Advocacy Coalition Framework, and the Institutional Analysis and Development framework. The Multiple Streams perspective clarifies that analytical influence depends on coupling problems, policy alternatives, and political receptivity during identifiable policy windows such as planning cycles, budget deliberations, and crisis-response periods. Without institutionalized windows and entrepreneurial actors capable of translating evidence into decision-ready narratives, analysis remains technically sound but politically untimely. The Advocacy Coalition perspective explains that evidence is rarely neutral in practice; it is filtered through belief systems, subsystem coalitions, and organizational interests. Analytical findings are more likely to be used when deliberative routines legitimize disagreement, protect agencies from blame-driven reactions, and frame evaluation as improvement-oriented learning rather than punitive control. The Institutional Analysis and Development perspective demonstrates that durable governance strengthening depends on rules-in-use that structure information flows, define decision authority, establish monitoring and sanctioning arrangements, and stabilize cross-agency coordination so that analytical recommendations become implementable and enforceable.

From these linked findings, the study concludes that the primary mechanism connecting policy analysis to governance strengthening is institutionalization across the policy cycle: timing the production of evidence to policy windows, designing evidence to be contestation-ready, and anchoring implementation and evaluation in enforceable institutional rules. Where these conditions are present, analysis becomes a governance function that supports transparency, accountability, regulatory coherence, and implementation effectiveness; where they are absent, analytical outputs are vulnerable to bypass, selective use, or procedural formalism. This directly addresses the study's research gap by showing why

capacity-building initiatives that focus only on analytical skills or tools frequently underperform unless they are matched with reforms to decision routines, data governance, accountability systems, and incentives for cross-unit learning.

Accordingly, the study recommends that governments institutionalize a minimum analytical package for major policy proposals, including a clear problem statement with indicators, an options appraisal with feasibility and distributional implications, an implementability assessment covering legal authority and administrative capacity, and an evaluation plan with defined data stewardship and feedback loops. Governments should also formalize decision windows within planning and budgeting calendars and specify when analytical evidence must be presented and recorded. Finally, to manage coalition contestation, governments should establish deliberative governance routines such as structured interagency review panels or learning forums that normalize evidence-based disagreement, reduce defensive data withholding, and reward collaborative problem-solving. In sum, the study concludes that public policy analysis can strengthen governance systems most effectively when it is embedded as an interdisciplinary, rule-bound, and learning-oriented practice that shapes decisions, guides implementation, and sustains accountability.

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