

## Local Open Government Issues in Austin, United States

### Authors:

Syed Agung Afandi<sup>1</sup>, Rizki Erdayani<sup>2</sup>, Muslim Afandi<sup>3</sup>

### e-Mail:

[syedagungafandi@uin-suska.ac.id](mailto:syedagungafandi@uin-suska.ac.id), [rizkierdayani@uin-suska.ac.id](mailto:rizkierdayani@uin-suska.ac.id), [muslim.afandi@uin-suska.ac.id](mailto:muslim.afandi@uin-suska.ac.id)

### Affiliation:

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Received : Mei, 10, 2025

Revised : Mei 23, 2025

Accepted : June 24, 2025

Available Online: June 30, 2025

### Corresponding author

Rizki Erdayani

Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim

Riau

[rizkierdayani@uin-suska.ac.id](mailto:rizkierdayani@uin-suska.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study aims to analyze key issues of open government in Austin. Austin plays a major role in the United States as the only local government pilot program established by the Open Government Partnership. Qualitative approaches and bibliometric analysis methods are used in this study. The research data were obtained from the official website of the Austin Government and sourced from the Google Scholar database. The findings of this study indicate that the study of Austin's open government is not popular. The topics that dominate the study of Austin's open government are information, collaboration, transparency, communication, development, community, access, framework, service, and communication model. Meanwhile, the latest and potential topics in the study of Austin's open government include network, media, online information, consultative process, implementation, data sovereignty, governance, monitoring, assessment, deployment, infrastructure, data sharing, digital intervention, and innovation strategy. Austin is currently focusing on four main commitments, namely the community climate resilience pilot, inclusion in court contracting, public participation in city anti-displacement efforts, and public safety data analysis. These commitments have the potential to create a more open Austin government.

Keywords: Austin, Key Issues, Local Open Government

## INTRODUCTION

The term open government is not new, but various social contexts and advances in information technology have contributed to the way open government is conceptualized (Sulila et al., 2024; Wirtz et al., 2019). The origins of open government can be traced back to the Greek Athenian codification of law, but the Visigoth Code of the Kingdom of Sweden is considered the beginning of modern open government initiatives that take into account citizens right to information (Afandi, 2024; Moon, 2020). Open government is an interesting agenda promoted by many governments

since the 2000s. Open government initiatives have been widely introduced not only in Western democracies but also in Asian and African countries (Gil-Garcia et al., 2020; Prastya et al., 2021).

Open government has become an important strategy for administrative reform, prompting many countries around the world to design and implement initiatives related to access to information, transparency, participation, and collaboration (Afandi et al., 2023; De Blasio & Selva, 2019; Maenetja & Kgobe, 2024). Many governments have expanded the concept of open government; for example, the Obama administration announced the Open Government Directive in 2009 and, together with South Africa, Brazil, the Philippines, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Norway, took a leading role in founding the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2011, a multinational effort to promote open government worldwide (Moon, 2020; Schmidhuber & Hilgers, 2021).

OGP is an organization of countries, local governments, and civil society organizations that support each other in designing and implementing projects that promote transparency in governance, public engagement, and accountability. Transparency describes the public's ability to not only see but also understand how their government works. Public engagement refers to the public's ability to influence government by engaging in government processes and programs. Accountability reflects the public's ability to hold government accountable for its policies and performance.

The Open Government Partnership is based on the idea that open government is more accessible, more responsive, and more accountable to citizens, and that improving the relationship between citizens and government has long-term and exponential benefits for all (Ruijter & Meijer, 2020). The partnership focuses on the policy areas of anti-corruption and integrity, beneficial ownership, open contracting, civic space, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, digital governance, environment and climate, extractive industries, fiscal openness, inclusion, people with disabilities, youth, justice, land and spatial planning, open parliaments, public service delivery, education, health, water and sanitation, and the right to information (Gao et al., 2021; Ingrams, 2020; Ruijter et al., 2020).

Currently, 73 countries and 110 local governments are members of OGP. Being part of a local OGP provides benefits to encourage open reforms that have become part of the vision and mission of every local government to achieve levels of accountability, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and transparency (Ingrams et al., 2020). Through membership in this global community, every local government can obtain new information on the implementation of open government, as well as being able to share views, experiences, and resources to achieve the principles of open government.

The Open Government Partnership has launched the Local Government Pilot Program, recognizing that much open government innovation and reform is happening at the local level, where governments can engage more directly with citizens and deliver many important public services. The local governments involved in the program are Basque Country, Buenos Aires, Elgeyo Marakwet, Jalisco, Kaduna State, La Libertad, Sekondi-Takoradi, Seoul, South Cotabato, Paris, Madrid, Scotland, Tbilisi, Sao Paulo, and Austin.

Austin is a global American city of nearly two million people in its metropolitan area. Austin joined OGP in 2016 and was a member of the inaugural Subnational Government Pilot Program for local government participants. This program is now a permanent component of OGP, renamed the OGP Local Program. This allows Austin to play a strategic role in the implementation and spread of open government in the United States. Austin has established nine open government commitments including: community climate resilience pilot, inclusion in court contracting, public participation in city anti-displacement efforts, public safety data analysis, ending homelessness, equity assessment tool, open governance operating board, city public meetings, and project tracking.

Austin has a history of concerted efforts to increase transparency, accountability, and citizen participation, and these efforts have yielded remarkable results: a comprehensive thirty-year plan for Austin's future created collectively by its citizens; an innovative online city council discussion board; fundamental changes to the election system; and an annual hackathon with local universities and a brigade of civic volunteers. This research aims to analyze the main issues of local open government in Austin.

## **METHODS**

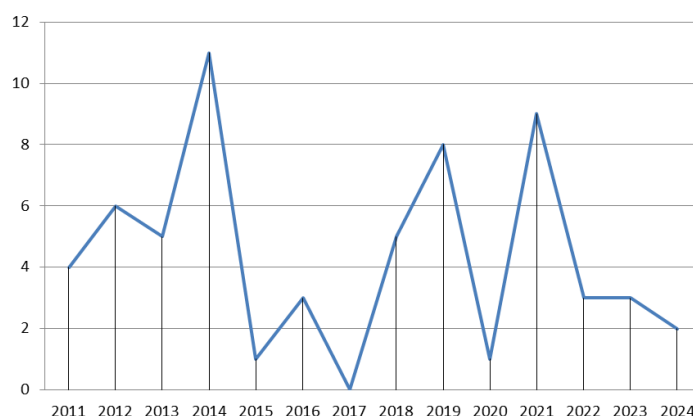
This study uses a qualitative approach with a bibliometric analysis method. Bibliometric analysis is a method for analyzing scientific literature in a particular field of science or topic (Donthu et al., 2021; Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020). This method is used to identify trends/highlight critical insights generated from scientific literature (Gaviria-Marin et al., 2019; Kulsum et al., 2022). The data used were obtained from the Google Scholar database via Publish or Perish with the keywords: Austin information access, Austin transparency, Austin participation, and Austin collaboration. Google Scholar was chosen because it has broader data without certain indexing limitations, while the selection of keywords is based on the main principles of open government.

This study uses data from 2011 to 2024, which is based on Austin's involvement in OGP. One hundred twenty articles were found based on this search and stored in RIS format. The data was selected using Mendeley, including completing keywords, based on the main principles of open government, leaving 61 relevant

articles. The data were then analyzed using VOSviewer to obtain a bibliometric map (type of analysis: co-occurrence; unit of analysis: keywords; counting method: full counting).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Since its involvement in OGP, sixty-one Austin open government articles were published in scholarly journals between 2011 and 2024 (see Graph 1). Eleven were published in 2014; nine in 2021; eight in 2019; six in 2012; five in 2013 and 2018; four in 2011; three in 2016, 2022, and 2023; two in 2024; one in 2015 and 2020; and in 2017, there were no Austin open government articles published in scholarly journals. These trends suggest that Austin's open government studies are not popular despite OGP's designation as a Local Government Pilot Program.



**Graph 1. Publication Trends**

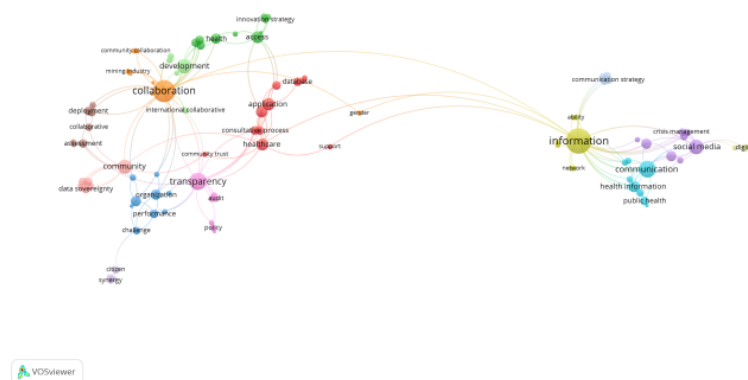
There are ninety-eight topics and fourteen clusters in the Austin open government study (see Figure 1). Cluster one focuses on the topics of application, community trust, consultative process, database, evaluation, framework, healthcare, implementation, quality, society, and support. Cluster two focuses on the topics of access, data sharing, digital intervention, emergency, health, innovation strategy, law, open innovation ecosystem, radical collaboration, and strategy. Cluster three focuses on the topics of challenge, integration, inter-organizational collaboration, organization, organizational transparency, performance, service, skill, and standardization.

Cluster four focuses on the topics of ability, information, media, motivation, networks, online information, personal networks, and political ideology. Cluster five focuses on the topics of communication model, crisis communication, crisis information, crisis management, effect, public communication, public response, and social media. Cluster six focuses on the topics of climate change, communication, finance, financial crisis, health information, national information, public health, and

public information. Cluster seven focuses on the topics of collaboration, community collaboration, corporate social responsibility, cross-sector collaboration, gender, international collaboration, industry, and working together.

Cluster eight focuses on topics of assessment, assessment instruments, collaborative infrastructure, deployment, infrastructure, and instruments. Cluster nine focuses on topics of audit, policy, program, system, transparency, value, and voting system. Cluster ten focuses on topics of community, data sovereignty, environmental data, environmental monitoring, governance, and monitoring. Cluster eleven focuses on topics of collaborative development, collaborative innovation, development, economic development, and international collaboration.

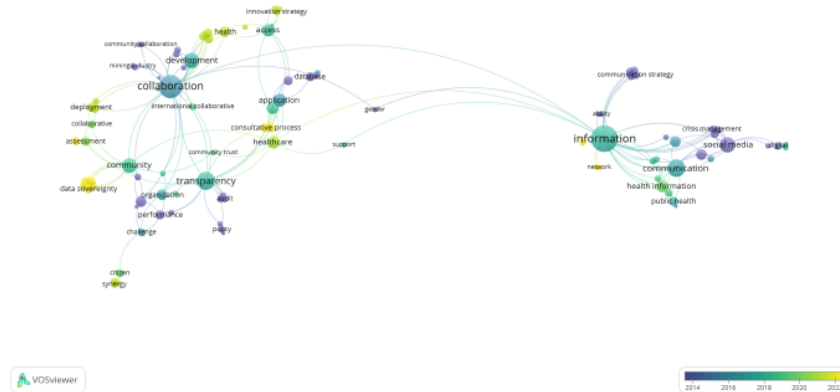
Cluster twelve focuses on the topics of communication strategy, crisis communication strategies, interplay, and public response. Cluster thirteen focuses on the topics of decision process, digital, digital inclusion, and inclusion. Cluster fourteen focuses on the topics of citizen, indigenous, local knowledge, and synergy. All of these clusters show the relationship/connection between topics in the Austin open government study. Meanwhile, the topics that dominate are information, collaboration, transparency, communication, social media, development, community, application, access, framework, health information, organization, service, communication model, and crisis information. These topics are the main focus of the Austin open government study, which shows the urgency and interest of researchers in certain topics.



**Figure 1. Network Visualization**

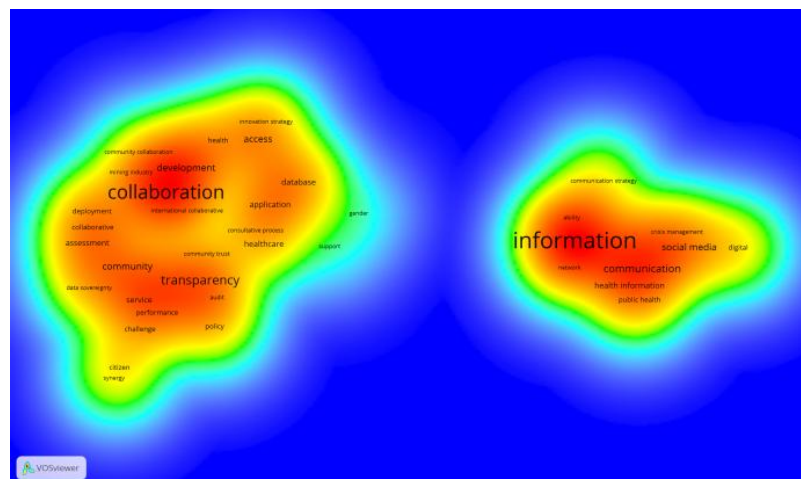
The overlay visualization (see Figure 2) is identical to the network visualization, except for the colors. In this visualization, the colors range from blue (lowest score) to yellow (highest score). Items in yellow indicate the most recent year. The latest and interesting topics in Austin open government studies are network, media, political ideology, online information, consultative process, implementation, data sovereignty, governance, monitoring, environmental data,

assessment, deployment, infrastructure, data sharing, digital intervention, innovation strategy, and open innovation ecosystems. These topics allow for potential future studies of Austin open government.



### Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Open government Austin consists of two main study groups covering topics of collaboration, transparency, development, access, community, and topics covering information, communication, social media (see Figure 3). Topics that can connect the two main study groups of open government in Austin allow for potential strategic studies.



### Figure 3. Density Visualization

The network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization items are synonymous with Austin's current main open government focus. *First*, community climate resilience pilot. To further the city's strategic plan goals of health & environment, safety, and government that works, and the United Nations Goal of

Sustainable Cities and Communities, Austin commits to fostering transparency and civic engagement by co-creating a unified community vision for city-owned land and assets that guides public and private investment and stewardship of the regional green space network in Southeast Austin.

Southeast Austin is home to many passionate, engaged residents and community groups that are working tirelessly to address health disparities and socioeconomic inequities in their neighborhoods. While various related efforts are underway in the area, there is no cohesive framework for city and community projects together to address green infrastructure and the use of public land. This commitment aims to increase transparency and community engagement in city climate resilience planning by developing a model for collaborative planning between departments and communities that results in city efforts that meet community resilience needs.

The City of Austin's Office of Sustainability and community organization Go! Austin / ¡Vamos! Austin is collaborating in Southeast Austin to pilot the creation of a unified community vision for city-owned land and assets that will guide public and private investment and stewardship of the regional green space network. This commitment will create a model for department and community co-creation that results in a city effort that meets community resilience needs. The city and community teams collaborating on this commitment will take a holistic look at aspects of community well-being to address resilience and community connectivity in a co-created manner that can be successfully adapted and repeated in other city neighborhoods, including climate resilience (may include green infrastructure, flood mitigation projects, etc.) and community empowerment (enabling communities to guide investment in their neighborhood).

This effort will result in improved climate resilience and ecological greenways. The work may improve the health of waterways and mitigate the urban heat island effect by improving and expanding the greenbelt of parks, wildlife habitats, urban agriculture, and recreational spaces spanning both Onion and Williamson Creeks. Austin also sees improved neighborhood connectivity that increases use of active transportation and provides safe connectivity to parks, creeks, and other public spaces and facilities by creating an accessible, family-friendly transportation network.

*Second*, inclusion in court contracting. To further the city's strategic plan goals of 'Economic Opportunity & Affordability' and the United Nations Sustainability Goal to Reduce Inequalities, Austin commits to fostering transparency, accountability, and civic participation by co-creating strategies to maximize the community court end-user's experience in services purchased on their behalf. The City of Austin's Downtown Austin Community Court and the community organizations Sunlight Foundation and the Open Contracting Partnership are collaborating to identify how to



effectively include court clients in designing city service contracts and assessing contract outcomes. With an annual budget of \$4,697,956, DACC seeks to identify the contractual portions of its budget that will benefit from a collaborative accountability approach.

This commitment will improve transparency by giving the public access to information at each step of the procurement process; improve accountability by linking city contracting decisions to the feedback provided by the court's clients; and improve civic participation by inviting public feedback at each step of the procurement process and connecting that feedback to city decision-making. The Downtown Austin Community Court contracts with local nonprofits to provide services to court clients, with the goal of assisting them to achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency. Currently, the city purchases services for clients through a closed, one-size-fits-all contracting approach: the end user does not participate in a process that is the same as for purchasing social services or paper. During the contracting process, the city process makes assumptions about what the client needs, values, and what will help them to transition from homelessness to housing. The Downtown Austin Community Court staff wants to develop strategies for including the end user in the procurement and contracting processes.

*Third*, public participation in city anti-displacement efforts. To further the city's Strategic Plan goal of Economic Opportunity and Affordability and the UN Sustainability Goal of Reduced Inequality, Austin is committed to fostering transparency and participation by improving online and in-person access to housing services. The Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development has received over 300 recommendations for actions that could become part of an actionable anti-displacement strategy; however, the city does not know how different strategies will work in different neighborhoods and how each neighborhood can best access available resources. The Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development received community requests for an online portal for housing availability information and a streamlined housing application process. Staff will work with neighborhood community members and citywide to make these technology resources available online and in person with social service agencies, with lessons to be learned for neighborhoods across the city.

The city utilizes resources made possible by the Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded Innovation Team (iTeam) to provide on-the-ground research in the city's Montopolis neighborhood. In this community, at least 199 renters and 144 homeowners are currently at high risk of displacement. City staff will work with the community to develop approaches and solutions that meet community members' needs. The effort will include quantitative and qualitative methods to co-create and test community-driven solutions with residents, community groups, and city staff.



This early collaboration is designed to ensure successful implementation and sustainability of initiatives while building city staff and stakeholder capacity.

*Fourth*, public safety data analysis. To further the city's strategic plan goals for Government That Works and the UN Sustainability Goal of Reducing Inequality, Austin is committed to fostering transparency and civic participation by increasing the usefulness and usability of the police arrest data made available on Austin's city open data portal. The City of Austin is a government leader in offering easily accessible online police data at no cost. Community members and others who utilize the data sets believe the information can be even more meaningful and useful, resulting in better public safety problem solving and policy decisions.

This commitment strives to work with the community to put city statistics and data sets in an improved format that better reflects their everyday usefulness, opportunities for improvement, and additional necessary data. The city's most recent Annual Crime Data file has over 3,500 views and over 3,800 downloads. The data is fully coded and complete; however, the format is not necessarily meaningful to most people. For example, it is not currently possible to discern the data's narrative or easily understand the data legends. The project will take data on the Austin Police Department website and make it meaningful for everyday people in the community. Participants will co-create ways to analyze data and provide interpretations in color-coded, mapped formats that allow users to hover for additional data and see community trends. The goal is to improve the community's quality of life and inform discussions with the community and decision-makers.

**Table 1. Potential Policy**

No	Commitments	Potentials
1	Community climate resilience pilot	Improve transparency and civic engagement with city climate resilience planning by developing a model for department and community plan co-creation that results in a city effort that meets community resilience needs.
2	Inclusion in court contracting	Improve transparency by giving the public access to information at each step of the procurement process; improve accountability by linking city contracting decisions to the feedback provided by the court's clients; and improve civic participation by inviting public feedback at each step of the procurement process and connecting that feedback to city decision-making.

3	Public participation in city anti-displacement efforts	The Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development received community requests for an online portal for housing availability information and a streamlined housing application process. The government will work with neighborhood community members and citywide to make these technology resources available online and in person with social service agencies.
4	Public safety data analysis	The government strives to work with the community to put city statistics and data sets in an improved format that better reflects their everyday usefulness, opportunities for improvement, and additional necessary data.

Source: Processed by the Author

## CONCLUSION

Austin's open government studies are not popular even though Austin is one of the local government pilot programs established by the Open Government Partnership. Austin is designed to encourage innovation and reform of local open government in the United States, where they are directly involved in important public services. In the period 2011-2024, there were sixty-one Austin open government articles published in scientific journals, but the trend shows a decline every year. Austin's open government studies are dominated by the topics of information, collaboration, transparency, communication, development, community, access, framework, service, and communication model. The current and potential topics include network, media, online information, consultative process, implementation, data sovereignty, governance, monitoring, assessment, deployment, infrastructure, data sharing, digital intervention, and innovation strategy.

Currently Austin is focusing on their four open government commitments which have the potential to improve transparency and civic engagement with city climate resilience planning by developing a model for department and community plan co-creation that results in a city effort that meets community resilience needs; improve transparency by giving the public access to information at each step of the procurement process; improve accountability by linking city contracting decisions to the feedback provided by the court's clients; and improve civic participation by inviting public feedback at each step of the procurement process and connecting that feedback to city decision making; the Department of Neighborhood Housing and Community Development received community requests for an online portal for housing availability information and a streamlined housing application process. The government will work with neighborhood community members and citywide to make

these technology resources available online and in person with social service agencies; the government strives to work with the community to put city statistics and data sets in an improved format that better reflects their everyday usefulness, opportunities for improvement, and additional necessary data. These findings are recommendations for stakeholders to continue strengthening their commitment, including a strategic offer for researchers to continue this study so as to contribute more to open government practices in Austin.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is one of the outputs of our main open government study. We express our highest gratitude and appreciation to all parties who have contributed, especially the invaluable support from the Institute for Research and Community Service of the Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.

## REFERENCES

- Afandi, S. A. (2024). *Local Open Government Strategi Reformasi Administrasi Publik*. RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Afandi, S. A., Afandi, M., & Erdayani, R. (2023). Local Open Government: Studies in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. *Jurnal Administrative Reform*, 11(2), 85–98.
- De Blasio, E., & Selva, D. (2019). Implementing Open Government: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis Of Digital Platforms in France, Italy and United Kingdom. *Quality and Quantity*, 53(2), 871–896.
- Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Lim, W. M. (2021). How to Conduct a Bibliometric Analysis: An Overview and Guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 133(1), 285–296.
- Gao, Y., Janssen, M., & Zhang, C. (2021). Understanding the Evolution of Open Government Data Research: Towards Open Data Sustainability and Smartness. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 89(1), 59–75.
- Gaviria-Marin, M., Merigó, J. M., & Baier-Fuentes, H. (2019). Knowledge Management: A Global Examination Based n Bibliometric Analysis. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 140(12), 194–220.
- Gil-Garcia, J. R., Gasco-Hernandez, M., & Pardo, T. A. (2020). Beyond Transparency, Participation, and Collaboration? A Reflection on the Dimensions of Open Government. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 43(3), 483–502.
- Ham, J., Koo, Y., & Lee, J. N. (2019). Provision and Usage of Open Government Data: Strategic Transformation Paths. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, 119(8), 1841–1858.
- Ingrams, A. (2020). Administrative Reform and the Quest for Openness: A Popperian Review of Open Government. *Administration and Society*, 52(2), 319–340.
- Ingrams, A., Piotrowski, S., & Berliner, D. (2020). Learning from Our Mistakes: Public Management Reform and the Hope of Open Government. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(4), 257–272.

- Irfan, M., Septiadi, Y., Rivandra, M. A., & Rakhmawati, N. A. (2023). Analisis Bibliometrik Publikasi tentang ChatGPT. *Journal Information Engineering and Educational Technology*, 7(2), 92–97.
- Kulsum, U., Nurmandi, A., Isnaini, Muallidin, Jafar, M., Loilatu, & Kurniawan, D. (2022). A Bibliometric Analysis of Open Government: Study on Indonesia and Philippines. *Journal of Governance*, 7(1), 133–143.
- Lnenicka, M., & Saxena, S. (2021). Re-Defining Open Government Data Standards for Smart Cities' Websites: A Case Study of Selected Cities. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*, 23(4), 398–411.
- Maenetja, R. E., & Kgobe, F. K. L. (2024). Enhancing Socio-Economic Sustainability in South Africa: A Review of Local Municipalities in Managing Inward Migration from the Periphery to the Core. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik (Public Administration Journal)*, 14(1), 64–76.
- Moon, M. J. (2020). Shifting from Old Open Government to New Open Government: Four Critical Dimensions and Case Illustrations. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 43(3), 535–559.
- Moral-Muñoz, J. A., Herrera-Viedma, E., Santisteban-Espejo, A., & Cobo, M. J. (2020). Software Tools for Conducting Bibliometric Analysis in Science: An Up-to-date Review. *Multidisciplinar*, 29(1), 629–635.
- Prastya, D. E., Misran, & Nurmandi, A. (2021). A Bibliometric Analysis of E-Democracy on Government Research. *Jurnal Ilmiah Mimbar Demokrasi*, 20(2), 71–80.
- Ruijter, E., D tienne, F., Baker, M., Groff, J., & Meijer, A. J. (2020). The Politics of Open Government Data: Understanding Organizational Responses to Pressure for More Transparency. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 50(3), 156–172.
- Ruijter, E., & Meijer, A. (2020). Open Government Data as an Innovation Process: Lessons from a Living Lab Experiment. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 43(3), 613–635.
- Schmidhuber, L., & Hilgers, D. (2021). Trajectories of Local Open Government: An Empirical Investigation of Managerial and Political Perceptions. *International Public Management Journal*, 24(4), 537–561.
- Sulila, I., Ilato, R., & Santoso, I. R. (2024). Bureaucratic Reform through Public Policy Implementing Quality Dimensions in Integrated Licensing Services. *Jurnal Administrasi Publik (Public Administration Journal)*, 14(1), 1–17.
- Wirtz, B. W., Weyerer, J. C., & R sch, M. (2019). Open Government and Citizen Participation: An Empirical Analysis of Citizen Expectancy Towards Open Government Data. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85(3), 566–586.