

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND DISCLOSURE AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSPARENCY: EVIDENCE FROM PARLIAMENTARY PROFILES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRAK

Kepercayaan publik dan transparansi kelembagaan menjadi landasan penting dalam tata kelola demokrasi yang sehat. Dalam konteks Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Republik Indonesia (DPR-RI), perhatian publik muncul terkait rendahnya keterbukaan informasi pendidikan anggota parlemen. Penelitian ini menganalisis tingkat pengungkapan pendidikan anggota DPR-RI serta implikasinya bagi tata kelola kelembagaan. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dan analisis isi berbasis data sekunder. Hasil menunjukkan proporsi anggota yang mencantumkan pendidikan lanjutan masih terbatas, sementara sebagian profil tidak lengkap. Hal ini menimbulkan pertanyaan terkait kesiapan anggota parlemen dalam menghadapi kompleksitas kebijakan publik dan menunjukkan perlunya peningkatan transparansi. Minimnya pengungkapan pendidikan berpotensi pada persepsi publik mengenai meritokrasi dan akuntabilitas sebagai landasan bagi kapasitas anggota parlemen di Indonesia. Singkatnya, temuan ini merekomendasikan penguatan regulasi internal untuk mewajibkan pengungkapan latar belakang pendidikan secara komprehensif dan pengembangan kapasitas anggota DPR-RI dalam bidang hukum, kebijakan publik, dan bidang studi lainnya yang korelasinya dapat menjawab isu yang dihadapi oleh negara sehingga unsur ini dapat memperkuat kualitas legislasi serta mendukung tata kelola demokrasi.

ABSTRACT

Public trust and institutional transparency are primary foundations for healthy democratic governance. In the Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI), public concern has arisen over the lack of transparency regarding parliamentarians' educational backgrounds. This essay tested the level of educational disclosure among parliamentarians and its implications for institutional governance. The approach used is descriptive-qualitative, and content analysis based on secondary data. The results indicate that the proportion of members listing advanced education remains limited, and some profiles are incomplete. It raises questions about parliamentarians' readiness to address the complexities of public policy and underlines the need for greater transparency. The lack of educational disclosure has the potential to impact public perceptions of meritocracy and accountability as the foundations for parliamentary capacity in Indonesia. In summary, these findings recommend strengthening internal regulations to require comprehensive disclosure of educational backgrounds and developing members' capacity in law, public policy, and other fields relevant to addressing the country's issues. It can strengthen legislative quality and support democratic governance.

INTRODUCTION

In modern democracies, education is widely recognized as a principal component for establishing the capacity, professionalism, and competence of public officials. Public officials are expected not only to legislate and make policy decisions but also to communicate effectively with citizens, ensuring transparency, accountability, and trust in governance. Yet, a recurring concern is that many officials struggle to manage their competencies to provide clear, meaningful information to the public.

Curry (2022) argues that in legislative institutions such as the parliament, processes can be significantly influenced or hindered by limited transparency and incomplete access to information. The metaphor of “dark” legislative processes captures the reality that some decisions or political maneuvers occur behind closed doors, with a select few having access to crucial information. At the same time, the broader public remains uninformed (Santoso, 1995). This dynamic not only affects policy outcomes but also raises critical questions about the competence of public officials in handling information and ensuring that democratic processes are open, fair, and accountable.

Moreover, in the Indonesian context, members of the parliament (DPR-RI) are elected by the people to represent their interests in shaping national governance (Gunawan et al., 2023; Supriyadi et al., 2024). Their role is strategic, as they draft, discuss, and pass legislation that affects citizens’ daily lives. Consequently, their educational background is more than a personal attribute; it is an indicator of institutional capacity and an essential factor in ensuring effective, evidence-based governance (Feulner, 2024).

Competent and well-educated legislators are better positioned to analyze complex policy issues, engage in substantive debate, and ensure that decisions are grounded in rational, ethical, and empirical considerations.

Meanwhile, the public’s ability to evaluate their representatives depends on the accessibility and transparency of information regarding these qualifications. Data from Kompas.com, based on statistics from BPS and KPU (2024), provide a detailed view of the educational background of Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) members for the 2024-2029 period (Darmawan & Adhi, 2025):

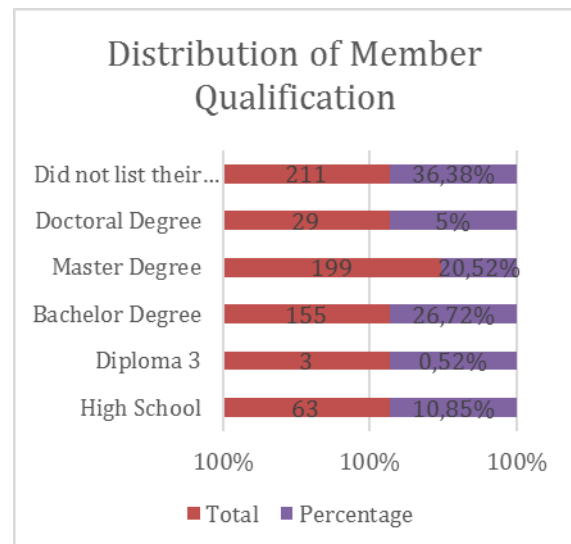


Fig 1: Qualifications of Member

Source: Data processed by author, 2025

The distribution reveals several important patterns. Approximately 36.38% of members (211 individuals) did not disclose their academic backgrounds, indicating a significant transparency gap. Among those who did report their qualifications, the most common level is a Bachelor’s degree, held by 26.72% of members (155 individuals), followed by a Master’s degree at 20.52% (199 individuals).

High School qualifications account for 10.85% (63 individuals), Diploma 3 for 0.52% (3 individuals), and Doctoral degrees for 5% (29 individuals). While a majority of members have pursued higher education, the substantial proportion who did not disclose their education, coupled with the small number of doctoral qualifications, raises questions about transparency, meritocracy, and the legislature’s capacity to address complex policy challenges effectively.

The phenomena stressed above emphasize the broader principles of good governance in public administration, particularly transparency, accountability, competence, and meritocracy. Effective governance institutions rely on public officials’ ability to handle complex policy issues analytically and evidence-based (Addink, 2019; Kjaer, 2023; Santoso, 2025). Educational qualifications directly contribute to these capacities, supporting legislators in producing sound policies, engaging in meaningful debate, and ensuring that legislative decisions serve public interests. On the other hand, disclosure of educational background provides citizens with a mechanism to assess representative quality,

thereby linking institutional transparency with public accountability.

Despite the importance of these issues, empirical studies examining how the disclosure of educational qualifications affects institutional transparency, public trust, and legislative effectiveness remain limited.

Even though it is widely acknowledged that education can enhance analytical skills, policy-making competence, and ethical decision-making, the relationship between educational disclosure and its broader institutional and democratic implications is underexplored.

Existing studies tend to focus on normative arguments about competence or on general assumptions about education and public trust, rather than examining how the availability of information actually affects citizens' ability to evaluate their representatives.

Based on this gap, the current study focuses specifically on how the disclosure of academic qualifications among Indonesian parliament members may influence transparency and serve as an indicator of accountability in representation. In short, the central research question is: How does the disclosure of educational qualifications by members of the Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) relate to institutional transparency and the accountability of legislative representation?

Hence, addressing this question contributes to a better comprehension of how information disclosure functions as a practical mechanism for enhancing good governance.

Furthermore, it positions educational transparency as a measurable and actionable factor within democratic institutions, linking individual qualifications to collective institutional effectiveness. By examining the description above, the research contributes to both academic debates on legislative governance and practical discussions on improving institutional performance in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This essay employs a qualitative descriptive approach combined with content analysis to investigate how the disclosure of academic qualifications among members of the Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) influences institutional transparency and legislative accountability.

The research design follows Creswell & Báez (2020) scheme, focusing on a detailed,

systematic description of observable phenomena. Content analysis is applied to ensure the study's objectivity, rigor, and replicability, enabling the data to be scrutinized in a clear, consistent manner aligned with the research objectives.

Data for this essay were obtained from secondary sources, selected based on four main criteria: (1) the data must come from official, publicly verifiable sources; (2) it must specifically relate to the educational background of Indonesian parliament members; (3) it should be accessible to the general public; and (4) it should have been published within the 2024-2025 period to ensure that the findings are based on the most current available information.

The primary sources of data include the official profiles of Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) members, electoral data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), and the General Elections Commission (KPU) for the 2024-2029 period. Additionally, reports and data summaries published by Kompas.com, which compiled educational qualifications of members, were used as supplementary sources.

In more detail, educational background information was manually extracted from publicly available profiles of the members. Each member was coded based on the highest educational qualification disclosed, categorized into one of five groups: High School, Diploma 3, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Doctoral degree. To ensure data accuracy and consistency, a structured coding sheet was developed that outlined the specific categories and rules for classifying educational qualifications.

The data were coded in three stages: first, the initial classification of the educational qualifications and disclosure status; second, a verification step, where available alternative official documents (such as press releases, or supplementary data) were cross-checked for accuracy; and third, a consistency check, in which a second independent coder reviewed a sample of the data to confirm the reliability of the coding process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Any discrepancies in the coding were discussed and resolved by consensus, ensuring consistency and accuracy across the entire data.

The test of the data focused on two key aspects: (1) the distribution of educational qualifications across the members and (2) the proportion of members who failed to disclose their academic background. The essay also

explores how patterns of educational disclosure may signal transparency gaps and influence perceptions of institutional accountability. The results are presented in a descriptive format, with key findings interpreted through the lens of institutional transparency and meritocracy, and with potential implications for public trust in the legislative process.

Overall, this methodological design, which emphasizes clear data selection criteria, a structured coding process, and rigorous consistency checks, ensures that the findings are transparent, replicable, and grounded in systematic analysis of publicly available data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Educational Qualification Disclosure on Public Trust

The inspection of the educational qualifications of members of the Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) for the 2024-2029 period, based on data from Kompas.com (BPS & KPU, 2024), reveals a concerning lack of transparency in the disclosure of educational backgrounds. A significant 36.38% of DPR-RI members (211 individuals) did not disclose their educational qualifications. This omission raises serious concerns about the openness of the legislative process and public accountability. Among those who disclosed their qualifications, the data show that 26.72% hold a Bachelor's degree, 20.52% hold a Master's degree, and only 5% hold a Doctoral degree.

Additionally, 10.85% of members have only a High School qualification. Even though many members have pursued higher education, the data points to a troubling trend: a relatively low proportion of advanced degrees, especially Doctorates, which are crucial for handling complex legislative matters. This low level of advanced academic achievement suggests that the members may lack the expertise to address the increasingly sophisticated policy challenges arising in governance effectively. The results also point to a significant gap in the transparency of the selection process for public officials. The failure of over a third of members to disclose their academic backgrounds compromises the public's ability to assess their qualifications and, consequently, their ability to make informed decisions about the competence of their elected representatives. This lack of transparency undermines the very principles of

accountability that underpin democratic governance.

In addition, the low proportion of members with advanced degrees, specifically Doctorates, raises additional questions about the depth of expertise within the legislature, suggesting that many members may lack the specialized knowledge needed to engage with complex legislative issues.

Moreover, the findings raise two key issues related to the educational qualifications of members: a lack of transparency and limited expertise among those who have disclosed their qualifications.

First, the failure of 36.38% of legislators to disclose their educational qualifications is a major concern. Transparency in the legislative process is crucial to building public trust and ensuring accountability. As Curry (2022) argues, the withholding of essential information, such as educational qualifications, can undermine the legitimacy of the legislative process. The absence of such disclosures could be seen as an attempt to conceal information, thereby eroding public confidence in the competence of elected officials. When voters are unable to assess their representatives' qualifications, they may be less likely to trust the legislative body's decision-making processes, potentially leading to a decrease in overall public trust in democratic institutions.

Second, the relatively low number of members with advanced degrees, especially Doctorates, suggests that expertise within the Indonesian parliament is limited. While a substantial number of members hold a Bachelor's degree (26.72%) and a Master's degree (20.52%), only 5% have earned a Doctoral degree. Given that governance, public policy, and law often require specialized knowledge and critical thinking, the low representation of advanced degrees signals a potential gap in the legislature's capacity to engage with the increasingly complex issues it faces.

On the other hand, public administration, economics, and law are fields that often demand higher levels of education to navigate the technical details of legislation. The absence of sufficient advanced qualifications could thus hinder the member's ability to effectively inspect and address complex policy obstacles within a critical aspect of governance.

These findings also bring into question the meritocratic nature of the legislative selection

process. Ideally, a meritocratic system would prioritize selecting representatives based on their qualifications and abilities. However, the lack of disclosure of educational qualifications makes it difficult for the public to assess whether elected officials have the necessary expertise to perform their duties effectively.

Besides, the limited number of advanced degrees among legislators challenges the notion that the selection process reflects merit, suggesting that educational qualifications may not be adequately considered when choosing candidates for public office. It raises concerns about the fairness and effectiveness of the legislative body, as a merit-based system is fundamental to ensuring that the most qualified individuals are in positions of power to make decisions that affect the public. The issues identified in the Indonesian parliament also resonate with broader concerns about transparency in governance. As Santoso (1995) argues, transparency in the legislative process is critical for ensuring democratic accountability. The concealment of educational qualifications, therefore, directly undermines this principle. The public should be able to assess the competency of their representatives, and withholding such information diminishes the transparency of the entire legislative process (Budi Santoso, 2024). As Lund et al. (2025) assert, transparency ensures that decisions are made openly, allowing citizens to hold representatives accountable for their actions. Without this, the effectiveness of the legislative body could be compromised, as the public may lack the confidence that their representatives are acting in their best interests.

In sum, the educational qualifications of Indonesian parliament members raise important concerns about transparency and the legislative body's capacity to address complex policy issues. The fact that over a third of members have not disclosed their academic backgrounds undermines transparency and diminishes public trust in the legislative process. The relatively low proportion of advanced degrees among members also suggests that the legislative body may lack the expertise necessary to navigate the complexities of governance effectively.

These issues call for reforming transparency in educational qualification disclosures and promoting higher education among lawmakers. Moreover, the findings align with theoretical concepts related to meritocracy and transparency. As Charron et al. (2017); Cho &

Choi, (2025) suggest, a meritocratic system should ensure that public officials are selected based on their qualifications and abilities, rather than other non-merit factors. The lack of transparency regarding educational qualifications undermines this principle.

Likewise, the low number of advanced degrees among legislators reflects a gap in the expertise necessary for informed governance, as highlighted by Miao & Nduneseokwu (2024); Yeh et al. (2025). These gaps hinder legislative bodies' effectiveness in addressing complex governance issues.

To strengthen public trust and the overall legitimacy of the legislative body, efforts should be made to ensure that all Indonesian parliament members disclose their educational qualifications. It would not only improve transparency but also align the legislative body more closely with democratic principles of accountability and meritocracy.

Additionally, encouraging members to pursue advanced degrees in fields relevant to governance could enhance decision-making quality and improve the legislative body's capacity to address the increasingly complex policy issues facing Indonesia.

Educational Background and Legislative Effectiveness

The relationship between lawmakers' educational qualifications and the effectiveness of their legislative work has long been a subject of political inquiry. Various studies have emphasized the centrality of educational backgrounds in shaping legislative decisions, policy development, and lawmakers' ability to represent their constituents effectively.

This section tests the influence of legislators' academic qualifications on their performance in the Indonesian parliament and explores whether their educational backgrounds contribute to more informed legislative decisions. While this discussion draws on substantial theoretical perspectives, it also draws on empirical evidence to stress key issues within the current legislative scheme.

In the Indonesian parliament, lawmakers' educational backgrounds vary widely. A significant number of legislators hold undergraduate degrees, primarily in law, economics, and political science. These disciplines provide a foundational understanding of political processes, legal

frameworks, and economic principles that are crucial for engaging in legislative affairs.

However, a relatively small proportion of lawmakers hold advanced degrees, such as master's or doctoral degrees, which are often associated with deeper, more specialized knowledge of policy issues. Even a law or economics degree is valuable in understanding the political environment, specialized degrees in fields like public health, environmental science, or technology might offer a more comprehensive understanding of complex policy areas.

A key finding of this test is that the absence of advanced education in specialized fields limits lawmakers' ability to address highly technical policy matters. For instance, policy areas such as healthcare reform, climate change, or digital economy regulation often require specific technical knowledge that may be beyond the scope of a law or economics degree. Lawmakers without specialized training may struggle to comprehend the full breadth of these issues, thereby leading to suboptimal policy design and implementation.

In such cases, lawmakers often rely heavily on external advisors, such as lobbyists, experts, or think tanks, to fill knowledge gaps. This reliance on external sources, however, raises concerns about decision-making independence and the potential for conflicts of interest. The presence of such gaps in expertise may compromise the quality of decision-making, as external advice might be influenced by partisan or corporate interests, rather than reflecting the public good.

The inspection also indicates a significant relationship between educational background and legislative effectiveness, although this relationship varies across different policy areas. Lawmakers with higher academic qualifications, particularly in policy-related disciplines such as public administration, economics, or environmental studies, often demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of intricate policy challenges.

These legislators tend to contribute more meaningfully to legislative debates, offering well-reasoned arguments grounded in empirical evidence. For example, advanced degrees in economics or public policy equip lawmakers with the tools necessary to analyze complex socioeconomic issues and to evaluate the long-term implications of proposed policies more thoroughly. However, the lack of advanced

qualifications among many legislators underscores a broader knowledge gap in the legislature, particularly in technical policy areas. An undergraduate degree in law or political science might provide a strong foundation for understanding the legislative process. Still, it may not be sufficient to tackle highly technical issues such as healthcare reform, environmental policy, or international trade agreements. Lawmakers without advanced training may struggle to engage meaningfully with technical reports, expert testimonies, or scientific data, limiting their ability to make informed decisions on these issues. Despite this limitation, it is essential to note that a lack of formal education does not necessarily equate to legislative ineffectiveness.

Many legislators possess considerable practical experience and a deep understanding of the issues that matter most to their constituents. They may excel in areas such as community outreach, constituent services, or local governance, where specialized knowledge is less critical.

However, in policy areas that require in-depth technical expertise, the absence of advanced education can result in subpar decision-making. This lack of specialized knowledge among lawmakers can also lead to an overreliance on external advisors, who may influence legislative decisions. Lobbyists, think tanks, and other interest groups often provide expertise in complex policy matters, but their specific interests may skew their advice. For instance, lobbyists representing the oil and gas industry may provide legislators with information on climate change policies that disproportionately favor industry interests over public health or environmental sustainability.

This situation poses risks to legislative decision-making when lawmakers lack the technical expertise to evaluate expert testimony or policy recommendations critically. The theoretical framework behind this test builds upon the work of Bucchianeri et al. (2024); Mugambwa et al. (2024), who argue that education and skills are essential for individual success in any professional role.

According to this perspective, legislators with higher levels of formal education are better positioned to understand complex policy issues and contribute to informed decision-making. Advanced degrees in fields such as economics, public administration, or environmental science equip legislators with the analytical skills to

assess the broader implications of policy decisions and engage with expert testimony more effectively. In turn, this contributes to more effective governance and better outcomes for society.

Other scholars, such as Cheng et al. (2025); Holyoke (2025), further support the view that educated lawmakers are better equipped to ensure that political decisions are made in the public's best interests. When lawmakers lack the necessary educational background, they may fail to adequately represent their constituents' needs, leading to suboptimal governance outcomes. According to Oldham, (2024); SoRelle & Fullerton (2024), the policies enacted by legislators can, over time, impact their future effectiveness. When policymakers lack the knowledge to understand the long-term implications of their decisions fully, they risk implementing policies that fail to address critical issues or create new problems, leading to public dissatisfaction and demands for reform.

On the other hand, the connection between educational qualifications and legislative effectiveness also aligns with a theoretical perspective on political elites, as discussed by Benson (2024); Christensen (2024); Volden et al. (2025). According to this theory, lawmakers with advanced degrees or specialized expertise are more likely to hold positions of power and influence within legislative bodies. As a result, the absence of advanced qualifications among a significant number of lawmakers may contribute to the concentration of power within a small elite, thereby marginalizing those without such expertise. This concentration of power could lead to a disconnect between the legislature and the broader public, as the policy priorities of a politically educated elite may not always align with the needs of the general populace.

Based on these findings, several policy recommendations emerge to address the educational gaps in the Indonesian parliament and enhance legislative effectiveness. First, capacity-building initiatives should be introduced to help lawmakers develop specialized knowledge in critical policy areas such as healthcare, climate change, or economics. These initiatives could take the form of ongoing professional development programs, specialized training sessions, or partnerships with universities. Such programs would equip lawmakers with the necessary

skills and knowledge to navigate complex policy areas more effectively.

Second, lawmakers should be encouraged to collaborate more closely with experts and academics to deepen their understanding of specialized issues. Facilitating opportunities for legislators to engage with think tanks, research institutions, and universities would help them stay informed about the latest developments in their areas of focus and enable more informed decision-making.

Third, encouraging lawmakers to pursue advanced degrees could help address the knowledge gap. Scholarships, incentives, and partnerships with academic institutions could make advanced education more accessible to legislators, particularly in fields relevant to contemporary policy challenges. Finally, broadening the pool of candidates in legislative elections could help ensure a more diverse range of educational backgrounds and expertise within the legislature. By promoting candidates with specialized knowledge, the legislative body would be better equipped to address the increasingly complex challenges of modern governance.

In conclusion, legislators' educational backgrounds play a significant role in shaping their ability to craft effective public policy. While advanced degrees alone do not guarantee legislative success, they provide lawmakers with the knowledge and skills necessary to address complex issues and make informed decisions.

To improve legislative effectiveness, it is essential to prioritize capacity-building, ongoing education, and collaboration with experts to ensure that lawmakers are well-equipped to meet the demands of modern governance. By addressing educational disparities within the Indonesian parliament, it is possible to foster a more informed, effective, and accountable legislative body that is better equipped to serve the public interest.

Institutional Transparency and Meritocracy

In analyzing the educational qualifications of members of the Indonesian parliament (DPR-RI) for the period 2024-2029, a critical issue of transparency in lawmakers' educational backgrounds has emerged. This analysis focuses on the significance of educational qualifications for institutional transparency and meritocracy, which are foundational to democratic governance. As an essential aspect

of democratic accountability, transparency enables the public to scrutinize the qualifications of its elected officials.

On the other hand, meritocracy emphasizes selecting individuals based on their abilities and qualifications rather than political favoritism or personal connections. The relationship between these two principles is pivotal in assessing the competence and effectiveness of public officials. The lack of disclosure of educational qualifications among members raises concerns about both the transparency of the legislative process and the functioning of meritocratic ideals in governance. In more detail, the data reveals troubling inconsistencies in the disclosure of educational backgrounds among members.

According to a comprehensive analysis of publicly available data from Kompas.com (2024), approximately 36.38% of members failed to disclose their educational qualifications. This significant disclosure gap raises questions about the transparency of the legislative process and the public's ability to evaluate their representatives' qualifications. Transparency is a critical factor in ensuring that elected officials are held accountable for their decisions. The lack of clear, accessible information about legislators' educational backgrounds further complicates the assessment of their competence. The lack of full disclosure diminishes public confidence in the legislative system, leading to a perception of opacity and undermining the legitimacy of democratic governance.

Likewise, among the members who did disclose their educational backgrounds, the distribution of qualifications was varied. A substantial proportion, 26.72% of members, hold only a Bachelor's degree, which reflects a common level of education for many elected officials. 20.52% possess a Master's degree, indicating a relatively high level of education among some lawmakers. However, only 5% hold a Doctoral degree, and an unexpected 10.85% of members possess only a High School qualification. While a majority of members have attained higher education, the low percentage of those holding advanced degrees, especially Doctorates, raises concerns about the level of specialized knowledge available within the legislative body. This finding suggests that while many members may have foundational qualifications, the limited number of individuals with advanced degrees may reflect

a gap in the technical expertise needed to address complex governance issues, which is increasingly critical in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

In addition, the findings also connect to meritocracy, the principle that individuals are selected for roles based on their abilities and qualifications, which is directly impacted by the lack of educational transparency. The failure to disclose educational qualifications undermines the meritocratic system by obscuring citizens' ability to assess the competence of their representatives. In a system where merit is supposed to be the guiding principle for selecting public officials, the lack of transparency in disclosing educational backgrounds makes it difficult for the public to determine whether those in power possess the qualifications to perform effectively. This situation poses a major concern because meritocracy depends on clear, accessible information about qualifications. The lack of clear data on educational qualifications makes the legislative selection process appear arbitrary, suggesting that political affiliation or other non-meritocratic factors may play a larger role than merit in determining who holds office. If educational backgrounds are not disclosed or are inconsistently reported, the selection process becomes opaque, leaving room for subjective criteria, such as political connections, to dominate. It erodes the integrity of the meritocratic system and raises significant concerns about the quality of governance (Hansen & Treul, 2025; Sánchez-Hernández, 2024).

Meritocracy assumes that officials are selected based on demonstrated competence, often evidenced through education, experience, and expertise. When these credentials are hidden or unclear, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether lawmakers meet these standards, thereby undermining the public's ability to evaluate their competence (Tong, 2024).

Hence, the correlation also links to transparency and accountability in democratic governance. As scholars such as Kantorowicz-Reznichenko & Kantorowicz, (2021); Lourenço (2023) assert, transparency enables citizens to evaluate their representatives' actions and hold them accountable for their decisions. In the case of the Indonesian parliament members, the lack of transparency in disclosing educational qualifications creates a significant barrier to this

process. When educational qualifications are not clearly disclosed, the public is left without the information necessary to assess the competence of their lawmakers and hold them accountable for their actions. This lack of transparency undermines democratic legitimacy. Without transparency, the public cannot properly assess whether lawmakers are capable of making well-informed, effective decisions that reflect their constituents' best interests. It also makes it more challenging for citizens to trust the legislative process and the decisions made by their representatives (Oliveira et al., 2024; Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024).

As a result, the failure to disclose members' educational backgrounds impedes the public's ability to make informed judgments about the competence and accountability of those in power. The failure to disclose educational qualifications also underscores a larger issue: the disconnect between meritocracy and transparency in Indonesia's political system. The meritocratic principle assumes that public officials are selected based on their competence, which can be assessed, in part, by their educational qualifications.

However, when these qualifications are not disclosed or are inconsistently reported, it becomes impossible to evaluate whether lawmakers possess the expertise necessary to govern effectively. This lack of transparency creates a disconnect between the meritocratic ideal and the reality of the legislative process. Moreover, this issue underlines a potential vulnerability in the selection process. Without transparent educational qualifications, the selection of lawmakers can be influenced by factors unrelated to their abilities, such as party loyalty or political connections. It undermines both the meritocratic principle and the ideal of equal opportunity in democratic governance. If lawmakers are not selected based on their qualifications, it risks compromising governance effectiveness and undermining public confidence in the democratic system.

This analysis supports several theoretical implications related to the functioning of democracy. First, the lack of transparency regarding educational qualifications challenges the meritocratic system. Scholars such as Joshi & Joshi (2023); Landa & Pevnick (2025); Miller & Keiser (2021) argue that meritocracy ensures that public officials are selected based on their qualifications, abilities, and

performance. When educational qualifications are not disclosed, it becomes difficult to assess whether elected officials possess the expertise needed to navigate complex policy issues. It compromises the meritocratic foundation of governance, as it is unclear whether lawmakers are selected based on merit or other, less objective criteria.

Second, transparency is crucial to ensuring democratic accountability, as emphasized by scholars such as Kantorowicz-Reznichenko and Kantorowicz (2021). Without transparency in educational qualifications, the public cannot properly hold their elected representatives accountable for their decisions. It creates a significant barrier to accountability, as citizens cannot assess whether lawmakers are qualified to make informed policy decisions. Lastly, education plays a critical role in the effectiveness of public officials. As noted by Niari (2024) and Yeh et al. (2025), the role of education in enhancing public officials' decision-making capabilities is well established. Lawmakers with advanced educational qualifications are better equipped to understand complex policy areas and make informed decisions. The lack of advanced educational qualifications among many Indonesian parliamentarians suggests a potential gap in the expertise needed to address contemporary governance challenges.

As the legislative body deals with increasingly complex issues, the need for lawmakers with specialized education and training becomes more pressing. To conclude, the failure to disclose educational qualifications among Indonesian parliament members severely undermines both institutional transparency and meritocracy.

Transparency in educational qualifications is critical for enabling the public to assess the competence of their representatives and for ensuring that lawmakers are held accountable for their actions.

Additionally, the lack of transparency compromises the meritocratic ideal by making it difficult to determine whether elected officials possess the necessary qualifications to perform their duties effectively.

To strengthen democratic governance and improve the effectiveness of the Indonesian parliament, it is essential to prioritize transparency in the disclosure of educational qualifications. By doing so, the legislative body

can foster public trust, improve accountability, and enhance the overall quality of governance.

This approach will not only restore faith in the democratic process but will also contribute to the development of a more competent and effective legislative body. The future of Indonesia's democracy depends on ensuring that lawmakers are selected not only on merit but also that their qualifications are transparent, so the public can hold them accountable for their actions.

CONCLUSION

This essay underscores the critical role of educational transparency in promoting institutional accountability, meritocracy, and public trust within democratic governance.

Analysis of Indonesian parliament members (DPR-RI) reveals significant gaps in educational disclosure: 36.38% fail to disclose their academic backgrounds. This lack of transparency complicates the public's ability to assess lawmakers' qualifications, raising concerns about their competence and accountability.

Moreover, the low percentage of lawmakers holding advanced degrees further highlights potential gaps in their ability to address complex policy issues. The absence of educational disclosure obstructs democratic accountability by preventing the public from evaluating whether representatives possess the necessary qualifications. It undermines the meritocratic ideal that public officials be selected based on merit and expertise rather than political affiliations or personal connections. Without clear educational information, the selection process risks becoming opaque, undermining trust in the legislative system.

To address these issues, it is essential to implement reforms that mandate the full disclosure of educational qualifications for all public officials. Standardizing the publication of educational backgrounds through official channels, such as the General Elections Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, KPU), would ensure consistency and accessibility, enabling the public to evaluate lawmakers' qualifications transparently. Such reforms would enhance democratic accountability and reinforce the meritocratic foundation of the legislative process.

This essay also acknowledges its limitations. Trust in the legislative system was not directly

measured, and the analysis relied on secondary data. Moreover, the categorization of educational qualifications does not directly capture the substantive expertise necessary for effective governance, as formal education alone does not encompass the full range of competencies required of lawmakers.

In conclusion, prioritizing educational transparency and standardizing the disclosure of qualifications is essential for strengthening democratic governance. These reforms would not only improve public trust and accountability but also align the legislative process more closely with meritocratic principles, ensuring that lawmakers are selected and evaluated based on their capabilities and qualifications.

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