

Local Government Strategies in Addressing Illegal Parking in Urban Areas: A Case Study of Malang City, Indonesia

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Abstract

The rise of illegal parking attendants in rapidly urbanizing Indonesian cities poses significant challenges for local governance, public service delivery, and revenue generation. This study explores how the local government of Malang City addresses the issue of unregistered parking attendants who operate without official authorization, charge arbitrary fees, and undermine public trust. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through in-depth interviews with transportation officials, direct field observations, and analysis of local regulations. The findings reveal that while enforcement strategies such as patrols and formal registration systems are in place, they are hindered by limited personnel, low public awareness, and weak inter-agency coordination. The study concludes that tackling illegal parking requires not only institutional enforcement but also citizen participation and systemic policy reform. These insights offer valuable implications for improving urban service governance in secondary cities within developing regions.

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1. Introduction

Urbanization in emerging cities across Southeast Asia has intensified demands on public infrastructure and urban services. In Indonesia, cities such as Malang—a regional hub for education, tourism, and commerce—face increasing challenges in managing transportation systems, particularly with regard to parking management. The surge in private vehicle ownership in Indonesian cities, combined with a shortage of regulated public parking infrastructure, has led to the proliferation of illegal parking attendants (IPAs). These actors frequently operate without official identification, fail to provide receipts, and impose informal fees—raising serious concerns about public safety, service accountability, and significant leakage in local government revenue. In cities like Padang and Yogyakarta, the persistence of IPAs reflects deeper governance failures, including weak law enforcement, limited signage infrastructure, and fragmented oversight among municipal departments (Cheisviyanny et al., 2023), (Triputro et al., 2023).

Illegal parking practices are often tied to the informal economy, where public spaces—roadsides, sidewalks, and alleys—are commodified and appropriated for income-generating activities without formal regulation. Research shows that these practices are deeply embedded in urban informality, contributing to spatial disorder, loss of public trust, and institutional ambiguity (Nitisudarmo, 2009), (Anggara, 2019). The unregulated nature of IPA operations also undermines transparency in revenue collection and the accountability of municipal parking systems. Studies in cities such as Pekalongan and Semarang indicate that while regulatory frameworks may exist, implementation is often hampered by understaffed enforcement units, weak coordination, and the normalization of informal practices within

bureaucratic systems (Rumantir et al., 2021), (Anggara, 2019). To address these issues, experts have called for integrated urban parking strategies that include the formalization of informal actors, technological innovations (e.g., e-parking and cashless systems), and multi-stakeholder collaboration in monitoring, design, and enforcement (Cheisviyanny et al., 2023), (Abadi & Ubaidillah, 2024). Without systemic reform, illegal parking will continue to distort urban mobility and weaken the legitimacy of local governance in the eyes of the public.

Illegal parking practices do not merely violate traffic regulations; they also undermine the legitimacy of formal governance structures, distort urban planning efforts, and diminish public trust in local authorities. As public dissatisfaction grows over informal levies and inconsistent enforcement, the perception that the government is either complicit or incapable of addressing these issues becomes more entrenched (Triputro et al., 2023), (Anggara, 2019).

Managing public parking is a key function of local government, requiring not only the enforcement of regulations but also coordinated administration across transportation, revenue, and law enforcement agencies. However, the fragmented institutional structure and limited inter-agency cooperation create operational gaps, enabling illegal practices to persist unchecked (Cheisviyanny et al., 2023), (Rumantir et al., 2021).

Moreover, the urban environment itself presents further challenges. The rapid growth of motor vehicle ownership and competing land uses have intensified pressure on public spaces, making integrated and transparent urban management more difficult to achieve (Abadi & Ubaidillah, 2024). Without effective digital monitoring, participatory planning, or real-time enforcement, cities remain vulnerable to informal appropriation of public resources—at the cost of long-term urban order and accountability.

This study seeks to examine the strategies employed by the local government of Malang City, particularly through the Department of Transportation, in addressing the issue of illegal parking attendants. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, the research explores the interplay between policy enforcement, community participation, and institutional capacity in urban service delivery. The findings aim to contribute to the broader discourse on local governance, inform policy refinement, and offer insights for other municipalities facing similar governance dilemmas in developing urban contexts.

2. Methods

This study applies a qualitative descriptive approach through an instrumental case study design to investigate how the local government of Malang City addresses the persistent issue of illegal parking attendants. A qualitative methodology was chosen to explore the phenomenon in its real-life context, focusing on institutional practices, administrative constraints, and community interactions that shape policy implementation. The research was conducted in Malang, a mid-sized city in East Java Province, Indonesia, which faces increasing urbanization, traffic congestion, and informal practices in the public space, making it a relevant and strategic site for examining urban governance challenges in secondary cities.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key personnel at the Malang City Department of Transportation, including senior supervisors and field-level officers directly involved in the enforcement and oversight of parking regulations. These interviews were complemented by non-participant observations conducted at selected parking zones throughout the city, both in formal and informal settings, to capture actual conditions and behaviors associated with parking management. Additionally, the study analyzed relevant official documents, including regional regulations (Perda), mayoral decrees (Perwali), and internal policy reports, to trace the regulatory framework and institutional mandates.

A triangulated data strategy was adopted to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, whereby insights from interviews were cross-checked with observational data and documentary evidence. All collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This included familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification and review of emerging themes, and refinement of thematic categories. The analysis emphasized recurring patterns related to institutional roles, enforcement practices, citizen engagement, and operational limitations. Ethical clearance was ensured by obtaining informed consent from all respondents, safeguarding anonymity, and

using the data solely for academic purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

Result

Based on data collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis, this study identified four main themes reflecting the local government's strategies and limitations in addressing illegal parking in Malang City: (1) Institutional Enforcement Practices; (2) Formalization and Regulatory Compliance; (3) Public Awareness and Citizen Engagement; and (4) Administrative and Structural Constraints. Each theme is presented below with supporting evidence from field interviews, direct observations, and document review.

Institutional Enforcement Practices

Enforcement is a central mechanism through which the Department of Transportation (Dishub) of Malang City addresses the issue of illegal parking attendants. Interview data from Dishub supervisory officers consistently emphasized the importance of routine field patrols to monitor the presence and practices of parking attendants. One respondent, a senior enforcement officer, explained:

"We conduct 6 to 8 joint patrols per month in collaboration with the police, military police, and municipal security. Our teams check for proper uniforms, ID cards, and the issuance of official tickets."

Document analysis of internal reports confirmed these patrols and their frequency, outlining specific routes and recorded violations per month. However, observational data revealed a mismatch between documented enforcement plans and actual field presence. During non-participant observation at ten designated parking zones, only four had visible supervision, while the remaining six showed no signs of active monitoring. At several sites, attendants operated without uniforms or ID cards, and no official ticketing was observed.

The limited enforcement presence is attributed to resource constraints. As noted in the annual report of Dishub (2023), only 5 to 8 officers are assigned to manage more than 200 active parking locations spread across 57 urban villages. An interviewed officer acknowledged this limitation:

"Our staff is stretched too thin. With such a large area to cover, consistent enforcement is nearly impossible."

While patrols serve as a deterrent in some areas, the inconsistent visibility of enforcement weakens the deterrent effect and allows informal practices to persist in low-surveillance zones. Furthermore, there is no real-time tracking system to coordinate patrols or ensure accountability, as confirmed by both interview and document review.

Formalization and Regulatory Compliance

The city has developed a formal registration and credentialing process for parking attendants to enhance governance and accountability. According to Regional Regulation No. 4/2009 and internal operating procedures reviewed during document analysis, all attendants must apply for registration with Dishub, submit a police clearance letter, provide proof of residence, and obtain recommendation letters from local neighborhood authorities.

Upon registration, attendants are issued standardized equipment including green vests, ID badges, and color-coded tickets—pink for two-wheeled vehicles and blue for four-wheeled ones. Dishub records show that over 700 attendants were formally registered as of 2023.

However, observational data indicated widespread non-compliance in practice. During three consecutive weeks of field visits to multiple locations—including ATM stalls, roadside retail areas, and markets—researchers observed 14 attendants operating without visible identification or uniforms. Only five used printed tickets; others used handwritten notes or collected fees without receipts. These findings were supported by interview responses from Dishub officials:

"Despite being registered, some attendants fail to wear their uniforms or carry tickets. We've issued multiple reminders, but compliance is inconsistent."

This inconsistency was also noted in Dishub's own monitoring documents, which identified several repeat violations but lacked evidence of follow-up sanctions. The enforcement of regulatory compliance appears more reactive than systematic, with little integration between registration records and field-level oversight.

The lack of effective follow-through diminishes the intended benefits of formalization. While registration is meant to protect users and ensure accountability, in practice, the absence of enforcement mechanisms and field supervision leads to gaps in the regulatory process.

Public Awareness and Citizen Engagement

Interviews with residents and service users revealed a low level of awareness about parking regulations and their rights as citizens. Out of 15 community respondents interviewed near high-traffic areas, only 4 individuals were aware that attendants are legally required to issue official parking receipts. One respondent stated:

"I thought getting a ticket was optional. Nobody has ever told us that it's mandatory."

Observational data confirmed this trend. In most of the observed parking zones, there were no visible signs indicating parking tariffs, official ticket requirements, or reporting mechanisms. This lack of visible information contributes to a normalization of informal practices, where attendants collect money without offering receipts, and users rarely question the process.

This issue is compounded by limited public education or outreach efforts. When asked about awareness campaigns, a Dishub official admitted:

"We haven't conducted public socialization in the past year. Our focus has been on internal operations."

Document analysis supported this statement, revealing that the last recorded public outreach campaign related to parking was in 2021. The absence of regular communication with citizens undermines efforts to build trust and cooperation in service delivery. As a result, community oversight remains minimal, and informal systems are allowed to persist.

Furthermore, no formal feedback or complaint mechanism was found at most locations. This was evident from the lack of hotline numbers, complaint boxes, or designated Dishub representatives in the field. Without accessible platforms for user feedback, instances of misconduct by attendants go largely unreported.

Administrative and Structural Constraints

Structural and resource-related limitations significantly affect the implementation of parking governance strategies. As reported in the 2023 Dishub budget report, the agency experienced a 15% cut in its operational funds compared to the previous year. This reduction impacted field supervision activities, recruitment of enforcement personnel, and procurement of uniforms and ticketing materials.

During interviews, several Dishub officials pointed to understaffing and logistical challenges as key barriers. One enforcement supervisor remarked:

"We still have vacancies in field supervision roles. Even when we want to act, we don't have the people or the tools to do it."

This was corroborated during observation, where enforcement officers were rarely present during peak hours. In some areas, researchers noted attendants engaging in confrontational behavior with drivers, without any intervention from regulatory personnel.

Additionally, coordination across government agencies remains limited. Although patrols are conducted jointly with police and military, there is no centralized data system to track violations, repeat offenders, or sanctions. Dishub officials acknowledged the need for integrated systems:

"Right now, data is siloed. We don't share real-time information with the police or the municipal government."

Document analysis further revealed the absence of a unified reporting and monitoring framework. While violations are recorded in monthly reports, these are primarily archived and rarely used for strategic planning or performance evaluation. The lack of digital infrastructure and analytical capabilities constrains the city's ability to design adaptive, data-informed enforcement strategies.

Overall, these administrative constraints limit the scalability and sustainability of existing policies. Without structural investments in human resources, data systems, and inter-agency collaboration, efforts to combat illegal parking will likely remain fragmented and reactive rather than integrated and preventative.

Discussion

This study investigated the local government's strategies and institutional limitations in addressing illegal parking practices in Malang City. Drawing on qualitative data triangulated through interviews, observations, and document analysis, the findings revealed complex interplays between enforcement mechanisms, regulatory formalization, public awareness, and administrative capacity. This section interprets those findings within the broader theoretical frameworks of urban governance, co-production, and street-level bureaucracy. It also discusses the research gaps identified in previous literature and proposes key implications for policy and practice.

The findings indicate that enforcement activities are the cornerstone of Malang's approach to regulating illegal parking. However, the effectiveness of these interventions is hindered by limited personnel, fragmented coordination, and the absence of real-time monitoring systems. This reflects classic patterns identified by Lipsky (1980), where street-level bureaucrats operate with significant discretion due to inadequate institutional capacity. In Malang, a small enforcement team of 5–8 officers oversees more than 200 parking locations—highlighting the structural limitations and burden-shifting common in urban service provision in the Global South (Peeters & Campos, 2022).

Field observation revealed that enforcement is uneven and often concentrated in high-visibility areas, leaving other locations largely unmanaged. Officers frequently rely on selective enforcement, informal routines, and personal judgment to navigate overwhelming caseloads—behaviors that mirror coping mechanisms identified in forest governance and social welfare sectors in Indonesia (Ota, 2022), (Permadi et al., 2022).

This discretionary pattern is not merely a response to policy ambiguity, but also a reflection of governance fragmentation and low accountability. In weak institutional environments, frontline discretion becomes the default mechanism for implementing public policy, often with inconsistent or inequitable outcomes (Martínez, 2023). Enforcement gaps are further widened when street-level officials lack access to clear guidelines, incentives, or professional support, limiting both their authority and motivation to enforce rules systematically.

As highlighted in recent Indonesian studies, discretion at the street level can be “creative” or “passive”—used either to adapt policy for local needs or as a coping strategy for administrative overload (Kubo, 2010). In the case of parking enforcement, such discretion can lead to inconsistent outcomes and reinforce public perceptions of arbitrariness and favoritism. Addressing these challenges requires more than increased staffing—it demands institutional redesign that reduces ambiguity, supports professional autonomy, and fosters transparent enforcement practices.

This study contributes to the relatively underdeveloped body of empirical research on urban informality and governance in medium-sized cities in Indonesia, such as Malang. While much of the existing literature on parking governance emphasizes technical solutions—such as pricing models and spatial optimization in megacities [(Shoup, 2011)]—few studies engage with the governance dimensions of informal urban practices or their intersection with citizen participation.

By applying a governance lens to the seemingly mundane issue of illegal parking, this research reveals broader insights into policy implementation, institutional capacity, and the

citizen–state relationship in service delivery. This resonates with Pattiradjawane et al. (2013), who highlight how informal actors operating in contested urban spaces navigate regulatory ambiguity, and how such practices reflect spatial, social, and institutional tensions in Indonesian cities (Pattiradjawane et al., 2013).

This study also complements emerging research on participatory governance in Southeast Asia, which finds that citizen participation remains uneven and often contingent on digital literacy, institutional outreach, and the presence of enabling infrastructures (Mutiarin & Lawelai, 2023). Without channels for civic feedback or access to co-production platforms, local policies risk becoming top-down and performative.

Methodologically, this study's reliance on triangulated qualitative data—field observation, interviews, and document analysis—offers an in-depth perspective that complements the predominantly quantitative approach common in urban transportation studies. The qualitative richness allows for better engagement with street-level behavior and local institutional logics, which are often masked in broader statistical models.

Overall, this research not only addresses a thematic and methodological gap but also contributes to rethinking urban service governance through the lens of informality, participation, and local capacity—key areas that remain under-explored in the context of Indonesia's decentralized development agenda.

Regulatory Formalization and the Limits of Procedural Compliance (Revised)

The city's formalization efforts—registration, uniforms, ID cards, and printed parking tickets—are designed to enhance transparency and accountability. However, the findings reveal a recurring disconnect between formal compliance and behavioral change. Even officially registered parking attendants often do not wear uniforms or issue receipts, reflecting symbolic adherence rather than functional accountability. This reflects what Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans (2014) refer to as "*ritualistic accountability*", where institutions adopt the appearance of control through procedures, but lack meaningful enforcement or behavioral transformation.

This phenomenon is not unique to Malang. In many decentralized governance settings, including across Indonesian cities, formal structures exist without robust mechanisms for monitoring or sanctioning violations. For example, Din et al. (2022) found that while regulatory frameworks in local governments formally comply with accountability principles, in practice, the absence of follow-up audits and weak internal control systems prevent real improvements in financial integrity and service delivery (Din et al., 2022).

In Malang, enforcement is further weakened by inconsistent sanctioning and the lack of performance tracking for attendants and supervisors. Local Regulation No. 4/2009 (Perda) provides the formal mandate for street parking governance, but without institutional pressure, incentives, or real-time oversight, the policy remains largely symbolic. This mirrors findings from broader studies of Indonesian decentralization, which show that while regional governments possess significant formal authority, they often lack operational coherence and effective enforcement capacity (Fatoni, 2020), (Kristiansen & Pratikno, 2006).

Ultimately, this gap between rule and practice highlights a key risk in procedural reform: formalization without meaningful follow-through can legitimize stagnation, rather than drive accountability. Overcoming this requires more than regulatory instruments—it demands institutional commitment to monitoring, public participation in oversight, and a culture of administrative responsiveness.

Public Awareness, Co-production, and Civic Engagement (Revised)

The low level of public awareness about parking regulations in Malang reflects a critical weakness in co-production and participatory governance. According to Ostrom's (1996) theory of co-production, effective public services require not only top-down regulation but active collaboration between citizens and the state. However, in Malang, service users are largely unaware of their rights or the expected standards of conduct from parking attendants. This civic disengagement hinders public oversight and allows informal practices to become normalized, reducing both accountability and trust.

Furthermore, the absence of signage, user feedback channels, and public outreach campaigns limits opportunities for citizen participation in governance. Bovaird (2007) has emphasized that without visible feedback loops, public service co-production risks becoming

rhetoical rather than substantive. Recent research in Indonesia affirms that where communication infrastructure is weak, citizens lack the capacity to hold officials or service intermediaries accountable, leading to symbolic rather than meaningful engagement (Ackerman, 2005), (Guerzovich & Schommer, 2018).

Studies of co-production in sanitation, education, and digital public services in Indonesian cities show that civic engagement is most effective when embedded through formal platforms, capacity-building programs, and continuous communication strategies. Willetts et al. (2022), for instance, highlight how co-production in climate-resilient sanitation planning was strengthened through multistage engagement between city governments and communities, demonstrating that structured collaboration improves service responsiveness and policy legitimacy (Willetts et al., 2022).

Thus, this study underscores the importance of communicative governance—where citizens are empowered not just as passive users, but as co-monitors and co-enforcers of public norms. Without such mechanisms, service delivery remains vulnerable to informal capture, and reforms risk failing in their intent to produce democratic, accountable urban management.

Administrative Constraints and Organizational Capacity

A recurring theme across the data is the city's limited administrative and organizational capacity, which hinders the implementation of effective parking governance. Budget reductions, staff shortages, and outdated monitoring technologies have created significant bottlenecks. These findings resonate with broader evidence on local governance in middle-income and decentralized countries, where policy ambitions often exceed institutional resources (Setiawan et al., 2022).

In Malang, the absence of integrated data systems, performance-based monitoring, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms significantly weakens both reactive enforcement and long-term strategic planning. The study by Junanto (2018) on Indonesia's performance management system shows that despite formal metrics and frameworks, the lack of political cohesion and data use culture often leads to underutilized information systems in local governance (Junanto, 2018).

Even basic tasks like complaint tracking or staff deployment are hindered by siloed departments and insufficient coordination. The organizational capacity study by Simanjuntak et al. (2021) reinforces this, revealing that infrastructure, leadership strategy, and technical systems are critical for effective service delivery but often underdeveloped at the local level (Simanjuntak et al., 2021).

Ultimately, improving parking governance in Malang will require more than regulatory revision. It demands organizational innovation, particularly in digital infrastructure, human resource development, and cross-sectoral governance reform. As Rahmat et al. (2024) argue, Indonesia's bureaucratic transformation needs to move from rule-bound administration toward more performance-driven, collaborative, and data-enabled governance models (Rahmat et al., 2024).

Policy and Practical Implications

The findings of this study lead to several policy and operational implications for improving parking governance in Malang.

First, there is a pressing need for capacity strengthening in the city's enforcement apparatus. This includes increasing the number of personnel, upgrading to digital monitoring tools, and delivering targeted training for street-level officers. Research shows that digital platforms and geo-tracking systems—such as those used in Washington, DC, and in parts of the UK—can significantly enhance transparency and enforcement effectiveness (Cima & Hildebrand, 1982), (Bryce & Meyer, 2004).

Second, regulatory compliance must be paired with systematic monitoring and the consistent application of sanctions. As Cullinane & Polak (1992) note, without enforcement clarity and clear institutional consequences, illegal parking becomes normalized, reducing the deterrent effect of regulations (Cullinane & Polak, 1992).

Third, public awareness is crucial. The lack of signage, reporting channels, and citizen education programs undermines co-production potential. Civic campaigns through community groups, mobile reporting apps, and street signage can empower users to participate in urban regulation (Kasih & Pratami, 2024). As noted by Cheisviyanny et al. (2023), poor signage and

communication were major factors in the persistence of illegal parking in Padang (Cheisviyanny et al., 2023).

Fourth, cross-institutional coordination must be prioritized. Collaboration between the Department of Transportation (Dishub), Satpol PP, the police, and neighborhood leaders should be formalized through memoranda of understanding and shared databases. This reflects the integrated enforcement models promoted in special parking areas (SPAs) in the UK, where joint systems reduced fragmentation and improved oversight (Pickett, 1999).

Finally, the issue of informal parking should be approached as part of a broader urban mobility strategy. Parking reform cannot be isolated from public transport access, pedestrian needs, or sustainable land use planning. As Circella (2009) argues, aligning parking policies with long-term mobility visions allows for better integration of sustainability, accessibility, and equity considerations (Circella, 2009).

4. Conclusion

This study has examined the strategic and institutional responses of the Malang City Government to the persistent challenge of illegal parking, drawing upon triangulated qualitative data from interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that while enforcement mechanisms and regulatory frameworks are in place, their impact is significantly constrained by limited institutional capacity, low levels of public awareness, and fragmented inter-agency coordination.

Illegal parking, as evidenced in this case, cannot be viewed solely as an issue of rule-breaking at the margins of the law. Rather, it represents a microcosm of broader governance challenges faced by urban local governments in managing public services amid rapid urbanization and limited resources. These practices emerge in the spaces where policy design, institutional capacity, and citizen behavior fail to converge effectively.

The study contributes to the literature on urban governance and street-level implementation by demonstrating how seemingly minor, informal urban practices—such as unauthorized parking operations—are rooted in systemic limitations. It affirms that improving urban service delivery in such contexts requires more than enforcement or procedural compliance. A holistic strategy is needed, one that simultaneously strengthens organizational resources, enhances regulatory monitoring, builds public trust, and promotes civic engagement.

As cities across developing regions continue to expand, the management of informal practices in public spaces will become an increasingly critical indicator of governance quality. This study underscores the importance of localized, context-sensitive solutions that integrate enforcement, education, and institutional reform. It invites policymakers, scholars, and urban managers to rethink how everyday urban practices can serve as entry points for transformative change in public administration.

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