



Understanding the Effectiveness of Social Policies Through Public Perception

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Abstract

The effectiveness of social policies has traditionally been evaluated through measurable outcomes; however, increasing attention is being given to public perception as a critical determinant of policy success. Understanding how citizens perceive policies provides deeper insights into their acceptance and overall impact. This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design using a structured questionnaire administered to 80 respondents. Data were collected through an online survey and analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression techniques. Key variables included awareness, trust, transparency, communication, and perceived policy effectiveness. The findings revealed that respondents exhibited moderate levels of awareness, trust, and perceived effectiveness of social policies. Transparency showed a moderate positive relationship with citizen satisfaction, while trust and awareness demonstrated negligible associations with perceived effectiveness. Inferential analysis indicated no significant demographic differences in perception. The results suggest that transparency and effective communication play a more prominent role in shaping public perception than trust or awareness alone. Public perception is influenced by multiple contextual factors, highlighting the need for a multidimensional approach to policy evaluation. Integrating public perception into policy evaluation frameworks can enhance the design, implementation, and acceptance of social policies. A citizen-centered approach is essential for improving governance outcomes.

Keywords: Social policy, Public perception, Transparency, Policy effectiveness, Governance

1. Introduction

Social policies refer to designed interventions by governments concerning major issues in the society like inequality, access to healthcare and sustainability of the environment. These are basic policies of social welfare promotion and equitable development. Objective indicators that have traditionally been used to measure policy effectiveness are economic performance, efficiency of service delivery and decreases in poverty levels. Nevertheless, recent studies indicate that these assessments cannot be complete without looking at the perceptions of these policies by the citizens as they are actually being implemented.

The social opinion has proved to be a key element in policy success. People tend to evaluate policies according to their own subjective needs, such as fairness, inclusiveness and social relevance. There is an indication that individuals perceive the results of policies based on personal and cultural grounds instead of basing on the quantifiable outcomes (Dieckmann et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of incorporating perception-based assessment in policy analysis.

The communication also plays a great role in reception of policies by the people. Research has shown that the manner in which governments package policy outcomes may influence the people to support or oppose the government. Even good policies will not be accepted in case the benefits are not well communicated in a clear and transparent way (Reynolds et al., 2020). Therefore, effective communication and transparency are the key elements of successful governance.

The interaction between the general opinion and the result of the policies is well-documented. As well as the satisfaction with policies, the attitude of the population may affect the changes and adjustments in the policies and develops the mutual relationship between the government and society expectations (Wlezien, 2017). Alongside, theoretical frameworks also underline that the policymaking process is a complicated process and has several stakeholders in it, and the opinions of citizens can play a critical role in affecting legitimacy and implementation (Cairney, 2019).

Perhaps the significance of perception is best seen in areas like welfare, healthcare and environmental governance. The effectiveness of social policies may influence the perception of political efficacy of people, whether it is boosted or strengthens the sense of marginalization based on their experience (Shore, 2020). The participatory methods have demonstrated that engaging citizens in the implementation of policies enhances the beliefs of its effectiveness and legitimacy among them (Herman et al., 2025). In addition, trust is a crucial factor because the more people trust government institutions, the more policies they accept and comply with, particularly in the context of the public health (Chen et al., 2024).

Although the role of the public perception is becoming more accepted, there is still a wide gap between policy formulation and citizen review. Technically sound and evidence-based policies still can be viewed as ineffective and unfair. Such disconnection is usually caused by a lack of exposure to the people, a lack of transparency, and inefficient communication plans.

The other problem is the lack of use of the popular opinion within the system of evaluation of the policies. Even though the citizen feedback is becoming more accessible via surveys and online tools, it is not always integrated into decision-making. According to research, the policy responsiveness and administrative efficiency can be improved with the help of systematic use of survey data (Trautendorfer et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this potential is not exploited to the full.

Additionally, with digital governance, a new facet has appeared to the minds of the people. Citizen satisfaction and trust in e-government services largely depend on the perceived quality of the services, and user experience can determine the quality of policy evaluation (Pham et al., 2023). The policy also becomes complicated by structural reforms that include decentralization, which affects the way policies are executed and experienced in various regions (Xu et al., 2026). These concerns indicate that they should have a more detailed assessment system that includes the social perception and standard performance indicators.

The present study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it adds to the research topic of public administration and policy studies by highlighting the importance of the perception of the people as a potential determinant of the effectiveness of policy. It takes the conventional methods of evaluation to a new level that includes citizen-based views thus providing a more comprehensive view of policy outcomes.

Practically, the study will be of great help to policymakers who would wish to devise more inclusive and

efficient social policies. Knowing the perception of the citizens on the policies allows the governments to enhance their communication strategies, increase transparency, and generate confidence in the institutions of the government. In its turn, it can result in the increased levels of the policy acceptance and compliance. The paper further stresses the necessity of incorporating societal reactions into the policy formulation and assessment, so that the policies could be more in touch with the social demands and expectations. The primary objective of this study is to examine how public perception influences the effectiveness of social policies.

Research Objectives

- Analyze the role of public perception in evaluating policy effectiveness
- Explore the influence of trust, transparency, and communication on citizen attitudes
- Investigate the relationship between policy awareness and perceived effectiveness

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This research follows the quantitative research design based on cross-sectional survey design to investigate social policy effectiveness in the eyes of the populace. The design will facilitate the collection of data at one time, which will permit examining the existing attitudes and opinions. It is a mixture of descriptive and analytical methods, in which descriptive methods will summarize the characteristics of the respondents and the perceptions of the respondents whereas analytical methods will examine the associations between the important variables that determine the perceived policy effectiveness.

2.2 Population and Sample

The study target population is the general citizens, which are the individuals who have been affected by different social policies. A total of 80 respondents were included as the sample size, which is appropriate for preliminary quantitative analysis. The research employs a convenience sampling method, with the respondents being chosen with the help of accessibility and readiness to participate. This approach can restrict the generalizability but it is appropriate to use in exploratory research that aims at perception-based analysis.

2.3 Data Collection Method

The structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data, which were created to measure the perceptions of the respondents about the effectiveness of the social policies. The questionnaire was conducted online, which is an efficient and accessible method of data collection. The questionnaire was divided into several parts such as demographics, social policy awareness, trust in government, perceived effectiveness, and satisfaction and compliance. The tool was designed in a manner that would make it easy to understand and provide consistent responses.

2.4 Measurement Scale

The research adopted a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the attitude and perceptions of the respondents (where 1 was Strongly Disagree and 5 Strongly Agree). This is a scale that can be used to quantify the subjective opinions and analyze the results statistically. It is generally acceptable in social science research to reflect the differences in perception and to assess attitudinal constructs.

2.5 Variables

The research involves the independent and dependent variables to quantify the correlation between the perception of the population and the effectiveness of the policy. The independent variables include trust in government, transparency, awareness of policies and effectiveness of communication, which are important determinants of perception. The dependent variable is the perceived effectiveness of social policies, which will capture the general impression of respondents towards the effectiveness of policies in meeting the needs of the society.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected on 80 respondents. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were selected as descriptive statistics to summarize demographic groups and other significant variables, where the general level of awareness, trust, transparency, and perceived policy effectiveness was moderate. To perform inferential analysis, independent samples t-test demonstrated no significant gender disparities in perceived policy effectiveness. Another test that showed no statistically significant difference between perception and demographic variables was the chi-square test. Analysis of correlation showed that transparency had a moderate positive relationship with satisfaction, and trust and awareness had negligible relationships with effectiveness. Moreover, the multiple regression analysis showed that the perceived policy effectiveness was not significantly predicted by trust, awareness, transparency, and communication, with low explanatory power.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. The process was voluntary and the respondents were notified of the purpose of the research prior to giving their responses. All the participants gave informed consent and all data remained anonymous, which guaranteed the confidentiality of the information. The information obtained was employed purely on academic grounds and privacy of respondents was taken care of in totality.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

In order to know the composition of the sample, frequency and percentage analysis was done on age, gender, education and occupation. Table 1 reveals that the respondents were well balanced in terms of age with majority falling in 2635 years bracket. The largest gender group was made up of male respondents, and postgraduate and undergraduate respondents had a significant proportion in the sample. The most widespread categories were students and employed respondents in the occupational terms.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 80)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	Below 18	14	17.5
	18-25	15	18.8
	26-35	18	22.5
	36-45	17	21.3
	Above 45	16	20.0
Gender	Male	31	38.8
	Female	23	28.8
	Prefer not to say	26	32.5
Education	High School	15	18.8
	Undergraduate	18	22.5
	Postgraduate	19	23.8
	Doctorate	14	17.5
	Other	14	17.5
Occupation	Student	21	26.3
	Employed	21	26.3
	Self-employed	14	17.5
	Unemployed	14	17.5
	Other	10	12.5

The socially mixed sample, as it is shown in Table 1, and it is convenient to investigate the perceptions of the population of various demographics. Figure 1 shows the number of respondents in each category i.e. age groups, education level, occupation, and gender. This figure can be used to learn about the structure of the study sample and the prevalent groups of respondents.

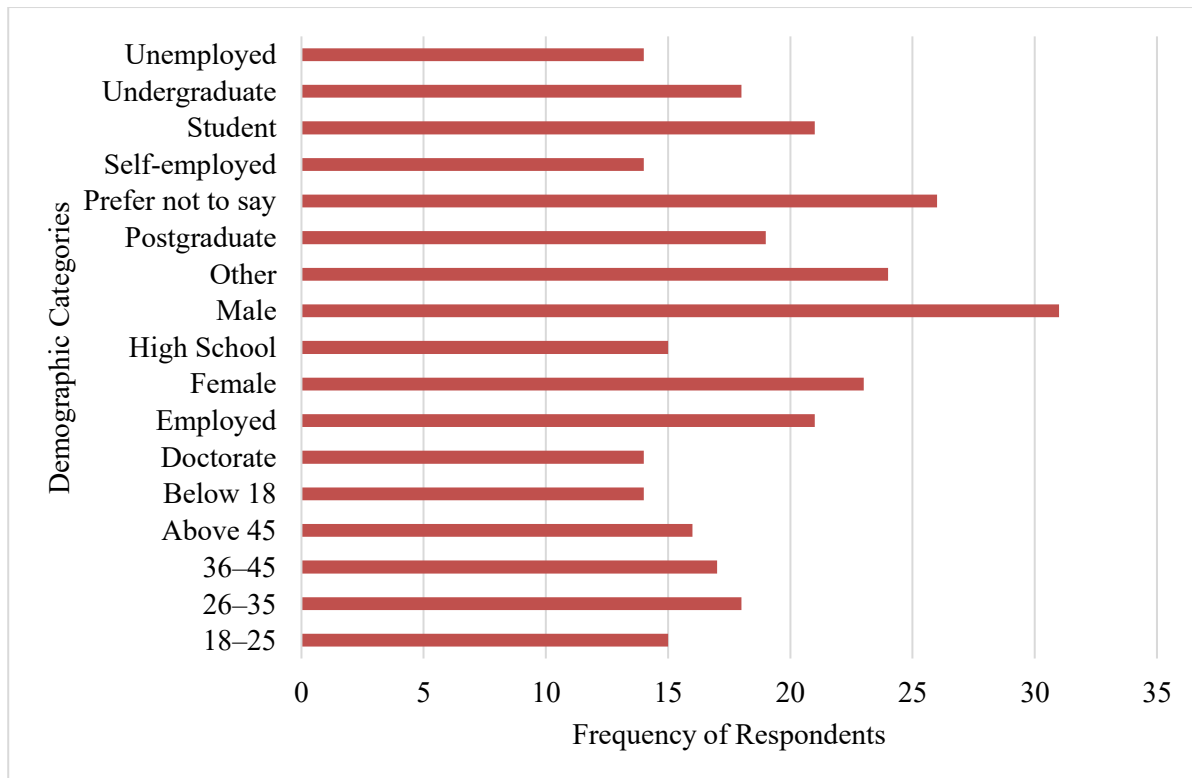


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Categories

As Figure 1 displays, the distribution of respondents through demographic categories is uneven, with some groups, including students, employed, and those who did not want to reveal their gender, being represented rather higher. The age groups seem to be quite evenly distributed, but some categories are somewhat more represented.

3.2 Awareness of Social Policies

The measure of awareness was done using questionnaire questions regarding knowledge of social policies as well as knowledge of their usefulness in everyday life. The descriptive data in Table 2 suggest that the awareness levels were rather moderate, and the mean scores were within the range of the middle of the scale. This implies that the respondents were not complete strangers to social policies but the level of awareness was not so strong.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Awareness of Social Policies

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Awareness	2.93	1.01	1.00	5.00

As shown in Table 2, the mean awareness score of 2.93 indicates a moderate level of knowledge about social policies among respondents.

3.3 Trust in Government and Institutions

Items dealing with confidence on government action, fairness, and institutional conduct were used to measure trust. Table 3 also indicated that the average score of trust was moderate and indicated that respondents did not place a lot of trust or distrust in the institutions of the people. This indicates an indifferent trend of trust in the population.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Trust in Government and Institutions

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Trust	2.97	0.89	1.00	5.00

According to Table 3, the average trust level was 2.97, showing that trust in government and institutions

remained around the neutral point.

3.4 Perception of Policy Effectiveness

The effectiveness of social policies perceived by the respondents was measured using questions related to the policy outcomes, improvement of the quality of life and efficiency of implementation. Table 4 informs that the perceived effectiveness had an average score of 2.99 which is a moderate rating. The respondents therefore considered the policies as a little way effective but not strongly.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Effectiveness of Social Policies

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived Effectiveness	2.99	0.87	1.33	5.00

As indicated in Table 4, the overall perception of policy effectiveness was moderate, which suggests a balanced but cautious public evaluation of government social policies.

3.5 Satisfaction and Transparency

As both satisfaction and transparency are highly interconnected with the public perception, they were also studied in a descriptive manner. As Table 5 indicates, satisfaction was slightly higher in its mean than effectiveness and that transparency was also in the moderate range. This can be a pointer that the respondents felt that there was a certain openness in governance, though not in a very persuasive way.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Transparency, Communication, and Satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Transparency	3.15	1.10	1.00	5.00
Communication	2.86	0.79	1.00	5.00
Satisfaction	3.25	0.91	1.00	5.00

According to Table 5, satisfaction had the most significant mean (3.25) and transparency next (3.15) and communication the lowest (2.86). Figure 2 below, graphically summarises the mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values of each variable.

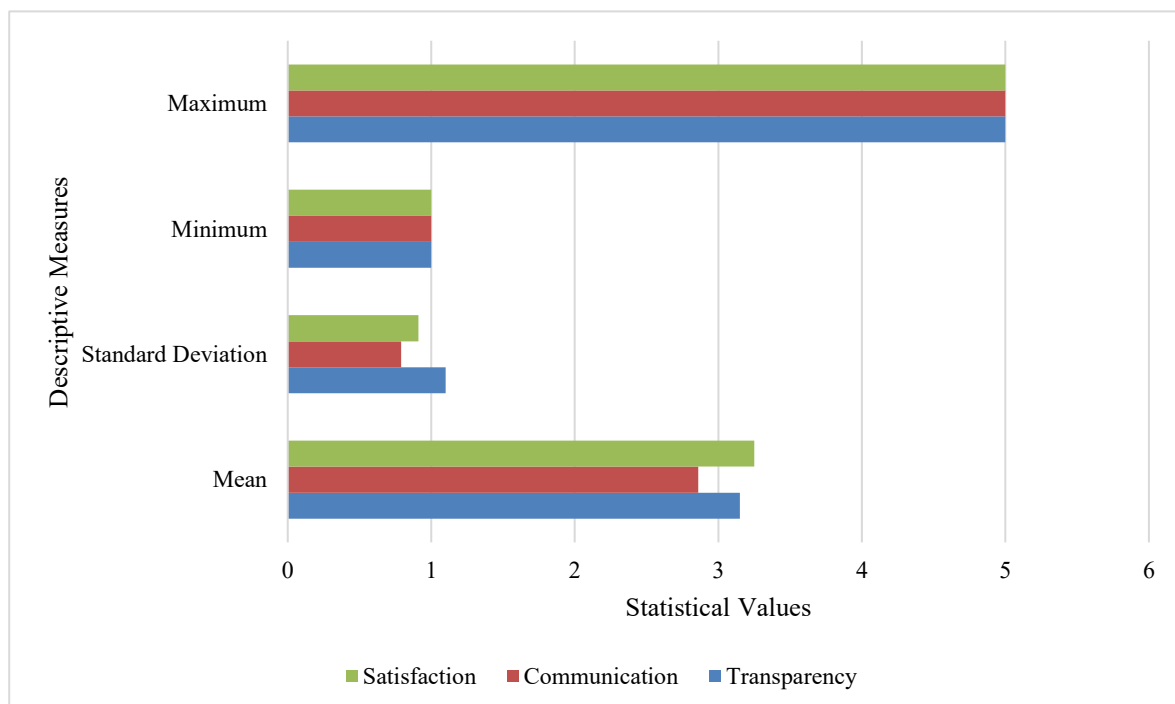


Figure 2. Descriptive Statistics of Transparency, Communication, and Satisfaction

Figure 2 shows that the mean value of the satisfaction was the highest, it was preceded by transparency, and

communication was relatively less. The values of the standard deviation denote an average amount of variability in the responses, and this indicates the existence of some differences in the individual perceptions. The lowest and highest values indicate that the range of respondents to the Likert scale was fully reflected in the responses, indicating the existence of different opinions.

3.6 Comparative Analysis of Perceived Policy Effectiveness Across Demographic Groups

In order to find out whether there was a difference in perceived policy effectiveness between male and female respondents, independent samples t-test was used. Table 6 revealed a slight difference between the mean score of males and females in terms of effectiveness but not statistically significant.

Table 6. Independent Samples t-Test for Gender Difference in Perceived Policy Effectiveness

Group	Mean	t-value	p-value
Male	3.00	0.525	0.602
Female	2.87		

As shown in Table 6, the p-value (0.602) is greater than 0.05, indicating that there was no significant gender difference in perceived policy effectiveness.

3.7 Association Between Demographic Variables and Perceived Policy Effectiveness

A chi-square test was used to assess whether age group was related to the level of perceived policy effectiveness. To this end, scores of effectiveness were classified as low, moderate and high. As it is reported in Table 7, the correlation between age and perceived effectiveness was not significant.

Table 7. Chi-Square Test for Association Between Age Group and Perceived Policy Effectiveness

Test	Chi-Square Value	df	p-value
Age × Perceived Effectiveness	6.059	8	0.641

As indicated in Table 7, the p-value (0.641) exceeds 0.05, showing that age group did not have a significant association with perceived policy effectiveness in this sample.

3.8 Interrelationship Among Key Determinants of Public Perception

Correlation analysis was done to test the association between the significant research variables. Consistent with your area of research, the links between trust and effectiveness, awareness and effectiveness, and transparency and satisfaction were explored. Transparency was found to have the highest correlation with satisfaction as depicted in Table 8 with the other two relationships being insignificant..

Table 8. Correlation Analysis of Key Study Variables

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Trust and Effectiveness	-0.000	0.998	Negligible
Awareness and Effectiveness	0.009	0.938	Negligible
Transparency and Satisfaction	0.290	0.009	Moderate positive

As presented in Table 8, only the relationship between transparency and satisfaction was statistically significant ($r = 0.290$, $p = 0.009$), indicating that higher transparency was associated with greater citizen satisfaction.

3.9 Predictors of Perceived Effectiveness of Social Policies

To establish the extent to which perceived policy effectiveness was determined by trust, transparency, awareness, and communication, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Table 9 results indicate that the overall regression model was not significant and also no single predictors were significant in terms of their contribution.

Table 9. Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Perceived Policy Effectiveness

Predictor	B	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Constant	2.749	0.656	4.194	0.000
Trust	0.002	0.114	0.015	0.988
Transparency	0.089	0.092	0.968	0.336

Awareness	0.000	0.100	0.002	0.998
Communication	-0.015	0.127	-0.119	0.906

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.013$, Adjusted $R^2 = -0.040$, $F = 0.238$, $p = 0.916$

The model, as indicated in Table 9, explained the perceived policy effectiveness by 1.3% and the entire result of the regression was not significant ($p = 0.916$). This implies that predictors were not significantly useful in explaining differences in perceived effectiveness.

4. DISCUSSION

The current research investigated the role played by the social perception in the effectiveness of the social policies, and the researchers paid attention to such aspects like the awareness, trust, transparency and communication. The results suggest that respondents were moderately aware, moderately trustful, and moderately effective in their opinion of the policy, which implies a well-balanced rather than overwhelming positive opinion by the population. This can be seen as an instance of refusing the policies completely or even firmly supporting them, pointing to the ambiguity of the general opinion about the policies. Among the main results of this research is that transparency exhibited a moderate positive correlation with citizen satisfaction with the trust and awareness having negligible correlations with perceived effectiveness. This implies that transparency and transparency in the governance process can be more directly related to the way citizens assess the policies than other aspects. This observation is consistent with the past studies that highlight the significance of transparency to build social confidence and enhance institutional integrity (Handayani, 2025). In cases where citizens feel that the government is acting in a transparent manner, there is a high probability that they will form favorable attitudes despite the fact that policy outcomes will not be optimal.

Conversely, the insignificant correlation between trust and perceived effectiveness that occurs in this study is contrary to certain literature. It has been determined that trust is a key factor of policy acceptance and compliance, especially in welfare and public service (Garritzmann et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the lack of a close correlation in the present results can suggest that the trust by itself is not enough to influence perceptions unless it is supported by any physical changes in the communication and delivery of services. This understanding can also be confirmed by the fact that research indicates that fragmented institutional experiences might undermine the relation between trust and policy outcomes (Schneider et al., 2025).

Equally, the fact that there is no significant correlation between awareness and perceived effectiveness indicates that the simple knowledge about policies does not necessarily translate into more positive judgements. This observation is in line with general studies that suggest that knowledge does not exclusively influence the formation of public opinion but that contextual factors influence the development of the same, including political ideology and narratives in society (Kulin et al., 2021). In other instances, people can have knowledge about the policies but they are not convinced because they feel that there are inefficiencies or other bias towards the implementation. The average general view of policy effectiveness in the current study is consistent with the previous studies that focus on the fluctuation of the view of the citizens on the policy fronts. As an example, climate and welfare policy research show that citizens tend to have ambivalent attitudes, weighing the perceived benefits against perceived unfairness and inefficiency (Fairbrother, 2022). This is an indication that the perception of the people is inherently multidimensional and conditioned by the objective and subjective interpretations.

Communication became another critical contextual variable, but direct statistical significance did not play a significant role in this study. Available literature emphasizes that a successful communication approach improves the public awareness and acceptance of the policies as it helps to explain their goals and anticipated results (Reynolds et al., 2020). Furthermore, recent research points to increased influence of media, including digital media, on perception of the policy and compliance behavior (Zhang et al., 2025). The generally moderate communication scores in this research show that things can be improved on the way the governments communicate with the citizens.

The results also imply overall structural and socio-economic factors on the attitude of the people. Political dynamics and economic uncertainty can influence the individual perception of policies, usually causing uncertainty or lack of trust with the political systems (Gozgor, 2022). Further, administrative problems and bureaucracies can influence the experience of policies by the citizens themselves, impacting their general satisfaction and effectiveness (Masood and Nisar, 2021). This underscores the need to make administration processes easier in order to enhance citizen participation.

The findings in policy terms underline the importance of a more comprehensive policy making and assessment process. Perception-based indicators should be used to supplement traditional outcome-based assessment to understand the full implication of policies. Studies indicate that the policies that focus on the wider social determinants as opposed to service provision are more likely to be accepted by the population (Burchardt, 2025). In addition, improving communication policies and making policymaking evidence-based may help to improve the confidence of the population and enhance the perceived effectiveness (Cattaneo & Mazzoleni, 2026). The significance of citizen involvement is also imperative. Research has demonstrated that communities can enhance preparedness and acceptance when they are engaged in policy making, especially when applied in health and social service settings (Talana et al., 2024). The long-term studies of the peoples opinion also suggest that the attitudes of citizens changes with the time, which is a sign of the transformation of social and political conditions (Eick et al., 2022). This means that constant interaction and feedback systems are the keys to policy relevance.

This study has various limitations in spite of its contributions. First, the sample of 80 respondents is rather small and this could restrict the generalization of the results. Secondly, convenience sampling can result in bias because the sample might not be representative of the larger group of people. Third, the cross-sectional design will only capture perceptions at one time and fails to consider any change in attitudes with time. Also, the use of self-reported data can be prone to response bias. Future studies ought to overcome these shortcomings through the use of larger and more heterogeneous samples, and longitudinal designs to investigate the dynamic of the public perception. The comparative research of various regions and policy areas would also give more insight into the variables that determine policy effectiveness.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the performance of social policies based on the perception of the people with major consideration on the aspects of awareness, trust, transparency and communication. The results indicated that the social policy perceptions of the populace are moderate which implies that the policies are viewed as effective to an extent, but they are not up to the expectations of the citizens. Transparency became the most influential among the factors analyzed, and it was found to have a significant relationship with the satisfaction of citizens, with little direct effect of trust and awareness. These findings indicate that effectiveness of policies is not only based on the objective outcomes but it is greatly influenced by the way policies are communicated, implemented and perceived by the citizens. Lack of robust relationships among certain variables indicates that the perception of the people is multifaceted and depends on a number of contextual and structural factors. The paper underlines the need to adopt citizen-focused approach when designing and evaluating policies. Defining the issue of transparency, refining the communication approach, and establishing meaningful contact with the population can contribute greatly to the acceptance and efficiency of the policy. On the whole, including the social perception in the policy appraisal systems may result in more inclusive, responsive and sustainable social policies more appropriate to the needs of society.

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