

Political Accountability and Disaster Governance in Southeast Asia: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Political accountability is widely recognized as a critical component of effective disaster governance in Southeast Asia, yet its influence on disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and resilience has not been systematically synthesized across the region. This systematic literature review aimed to examine how political accountability mechanisms shape disaster governance outcomes in Southeast Asia, with particular emphasis on Philippine practices and regional governance patterns. Specifically, the review explored how accountability mechanisms are operationalized, their association with disaster risk reduction outcomes, and the governance challenges and best practices evident across Southeast Asian countries. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search was conducted across Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and ProQuest. From an initial 1,000 records, 68 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025 met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed using qualitative thematic synthesis. The analysis focused on four major themes: political accountability mechanisms, disaster governance outcomes, Philippine disaster governance practices, and regional governance patterns. Findings indicate that legislative oversight, transparency, civil society participation, and decentralized governance were generally associated with stronger disaster preparedness, early warning systems, and emergency response effectiveness. However, recovery and long-term resilience remain constrained by institutional fragmentation, uneven local capacities, overlapping responsibilities, and limited inter-agency coordination. Philippine studies underscore the importance of barangay participation, local governance, and community-based disaster risk reduction in strengthening preparedness, public trust, and local responsiveness despite persistent coordination challenges. Regional comparisons further reveal that decentralization enhances local disaster governance only when supported by adequate resources, institutional capacity, and sustained accountability. Overall, the review concludes that political accountability is associated with improved disaster governance when reinforced by transparency, community participation, institutional oversight, and effective coordination across government levels. Strengthening these governance mechanisms can enhance disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience while informing evidence-based disaster risk reduction policies and governance reforms throughout Southeast Asia.

Keywords: community participation; disaster risk reduction; governance resilience; local governance; political accountability

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia is one of the world's most disaster-prone regions, with communities regularly exposed to typhoons, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other climate-related and geophysical hazards. The frequency and severity of these events place considerable pressure on governments and public institutions to establish disaster governance systems that can reduce risk, protect vulnerable populations, coordinate emergency action, and support long-term recovery and resilience. Although technical capacity, infrastructure, and early warning systems remain essential components of disaster risk reduction, the effectiveness of these measures also depends on how public authorities make decisions, allocate resources, coordinate responsibilities, and remain answerable to affected communities.

Current disaster governance research increasingly recognizes that disaster outcomes are shaped not only by hazard exposure but also by political and institutional conditions. Political accountability encompasses the mechanisms through which government officials and institutions are monitored, evaluated, and held responsible for their decisions and performance. These mechanisms may include legislative and administrative oversight, transparency, public access to information, civil society participation, community engagement, media scrutiny, and decentralized governance. Previous studies have shown that fragmented institutional arrangements, weak inter-agency coordination, unclear responsibilities, and limited public participation can reduce the effectiveness of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts (Nowell et al., 2017; Suryaman, 2018; Khunwishit et al., 2018; Izumi & Shaw, 2022; Maly et al., 2022). These challenges demonstrate that formal disaster policies do not automatically produce effective outcomes unless they are supported by accountable institutions, adequate implementation capacity, and meaningful public participation.

These governance concerns are particularly relevant in the Philippines, where recurrent disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan and Tropical Storm Ketsana have exposed persistent weaknesses in decentralization, institutional coordination, policy implementation, and post-disaster recovery. Local government units and barangays hold substantial responsibilities for disaster preparedness, emergency response, and community-level risk reduction. Although decentralization enables local authorities to respond to context-specific needs, its effectiveness varies according to fiscal capacity, administrative competence, political conditions, and coordination with national agencies. Overlapping mandates, fragmented implementation, political patronage, and unequal access to resources can constrain disaster governance, particularly during recovery and resilience-building processes (Domingo & Manejar, 2018; Kammerbauer et al., 2018; Dangcalan et al., 2020; Era, 2021; Panao, 2022; Aoki, 2023). Moreover, lower-income local governments have smaller revenue bases and fewer resources available for disaster risk reduction and management, creating disparities in their ability to perform devolved DRRM responsibilities effectively (Resuello, 2020). These conditions reinforce the need for accountability and coordination frameworks that align national policy requirements with the differing capacities of local governments. Research has also identified limitations in state–civil society relations and the participation of nongovernmental organizations in disaster risk reduction policymaking and implementation (Jovita et al., 2019; Espia, 2025).

At the community level, barangay participation and community-based disaster risk reduction provide important channels through which accountability may be translated into practical action. Localized preparedness programs, community-led communication systems, and participatory planning can strengthen information dissemination, public trust, emergency responsiveness, and awareness of local risks (Florano, 2014; Sepanton & Salvador, 2024; Pasamonte, 2025). However, these initiatives may be weakened by inadequate funding, limited technical support, uneven institutional capacity, and poor coordination between local and higher levels of government (Tanguid & Tanguid, 2023; Moreno & Lopez, 2025). Similar tensions are evident across Southeast Asia, where decentralized governance may improve local responsiveness while also producing inconsistencies in implementation when accountability systems and institutional coordination are weak.

Despite the growing literature on disaster governance, political accountability, decentralization, and community participation, the available evidence remains fragmented across countries, governance levels, disaster types, and institutional settings. Previous studies have generally examined specific accountability mechanisms or individual national and local cases. They also differ in how they define political accountability and assess its relationship with preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and resilience. Consequently, there is limited systematic understanding of how accountability mechanisms are conceptualized and operationalized in Southeast Asian disaster governance research. Comparative evidence regarding the conditions under which decentralization, public participation, institutional oversight, and transparency contribute to effective disaster governance also remains insufficient. In particular, Philippine-focused findings have not been adequately situated within wider regional governance patterns.

To address this gap, this systematic literature review synthesizes empirical research on political accountability and disaster governance in Southeast Asia published from 2016 to 2025. It is guided by the following questions: How is political accountability conceptualized and operationalized in disaster governance research? How are

accountability mechanisms associated with disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and resilience? What recurring governance practices, accountability gaps, and institutional challenges are identified in Philippine-based studies? What comparative patterns and lessons emerge across Southeast Asian countries? By integrating evidence from national, local, and regional contexts, this review seeks to clarify the role of political accountability in disaster risk reduction and provide a stronger basis for policy development, institutional coordination, local governance reform, and community-centered resilience. The study is significant because it connects accountability mechanisms with practical disaster governance concerns and identifies areas in which future research and institutional action are needed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Scope

This study employed a qualitative systematic literature review to examine how political accountability mechanisms influence disaster governance in Southeast Asia. The systematic review design was selected because the available evidence is distributed across countries, governance levels, disaster settings, and research methodologies. This approach enabled the identification, comparison, and thematic synthesis of empirical findings concerning political accountability, disaster preparedness, emergency response, post-disaster recovery, and resilience.

The review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to promote transparency, methodological rigor, and reproducibility in the identification, screening, selection, and synthesis of relevant studies. The geographical scope covered Southeast Asian countries, with particular attention to the Philippines and comparisons with Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and broader ASEAN contexts. The review covered empirical studies published from January 2016 to December 2025.

The units of analysis were published empirical studies rather than individual human participants. Therefore, demographic characteristics and participant recruitment procedures were not applicable to the review as a whole. Where available, information concerning the setting, population, and participants of each included study was considered during data extraction and interpretation.

Information Sources and Search Strategy

A structured literature search was conducted using Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and ProQuest. These sources were selected to provide broad multidisciplinary coverage of political science, public administration, disaster risk reduction, governance, and Southeast Asian studies.

The search strategy combined terms related to disaster governance with terms related to political accountability. Search terms included “disaster governance,” “disaster risk reduction,” “disaster management,” “political accountability,” “institutional accountability,” “transparency,” “civil society,” “public participation,” “community engagement,” “decentralization,” and “local governance.” Country-specific terms, including “Philippines,” “Indonesia,” “Thailand,” and “Vietnam,” were also used to improve the retrieval of studies addressing national and local governance contexts.

The terms were combined using the Boolean operators **AND** and **OR**. A general search structure was applied as follows:

(“disaster governance” OR “disaster risk reduction” OR “disaster management”) AND (“political accountability” OR transparency OR oversight OR “civil society” OR “public participation” OR decentralization) AND (“Southeast Asia” OR Philippines OR Indonesia OR Thailand OR Vietnam)

Search terms were adjusted when necessary to match the functions and indexing systems of the individual databases and search platforms. The search initially identified 1,000 potentially relevant records.

The final database search was conducted on May 17, 2026, and included studies published through December 2025.

Eligibility Criteria

Studies were selected according to predefined eligibility criteria. To be included, a study had to provide empirical evidence relevant to political accountability and disaster governance within Southeast Asia. Eligibility was assessed according to geographical setting, governance context, accountability mechanism, disaster governance outcome, research design, publication period, language, and full-text availability.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Population and setting	Empirical studies conducted in Southeast Asian countries and examining disaster governance, disaster management, or disaster risk reduction	Studies conducted outside Southeast Asia or unrelated to disaster governance
Geographical scope	Country-specific or regional studies reporting relevant findings for at least one Southeast Asian country	Global or non-Southeast Asian studies without relevant or disaggregated findings for the region
Governance context	Studies addressing political accountability within disaster governance or disaster risk reduction	Studies without a political, institutional, or governance dimension
Exposure or phenomenon	Studies examining oversight, transparency, decentralization, institutional coordination, civil society participation, community engagement, public accountability, or related governance mechanisms	Studies unrelated to accountability, governance, or disaster management
Outcomes	Studies reporting outcomes related to disaster preparedness, early warning, emergency response, recovery, rehabilitation, or resilience	Studies that did not address disaster governance or disaster risk reduction outcomes
Study design	Empirical qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, or case study research	Conceptual papers, theoretical papers without empirical data, literature reviews, editorials, opinion articles, and book reviews
Publication period	Studies published from January 2016 to December 2025	Studies published before January 2016 or after December 2025
Language and accessibility	Studies written in English and available in full text	Non-English publications and records without retrievable full text

Peer-reviewed journal articles were prioritized. Studies were excluded when their main focus was technical hazard assessment, engineering, health communication, or environmental management without a clear connection to political accountability or disaster governance.

Study Selection and Screening

Study selection was conducted chronologically through record identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text assessment, and final inclusion. The initial search retrieved 1,000 records. After 96 duplicate records were removed, 904 records remained for title and abstract screening.

During the title and abstract screening stage, 698 records were excluded because they did not satisfy the geographical, empirical, governance, or disaster-related eligibility requirements. The full texts of the remaining 206 articles were retrieved and assessed against the complete inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Following full-text assessment, 138 articles were excluded because of insufficient relevance, non-empirical research design, absence of a clear political accountability focus, or failure to report disaster governance outcomes. The final sample consisted of 68 empirical studies included in the qualitative thematic synthesis. The complete study-selection process is presented in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram in Figure 1.

The screening procedure was conducted by one reviewer.

Data-Extraction Instrument

Data were collected through a standardized extraction matrix developed for this systematic review. The matrix functioned as the primary research instrument and was designed to ensure that comparable information was obtained from every included study.

The following information was extracted:

1. author or authors;
2. year of publication;
3. country or regional setting;
4. disaster type or disaster-management context;
5. research design and methodological approach;
6. political accountability mechanism;
7. governance institution or level of government examined;
8. disaster governance outcome;
9. principal findings;
10. Philippine-specific governance practices, where applicable; and
11. regional or cross-country implications.

The extraction categories reflected the objectives and research questions of the review. They enabled the studies to be compared according to accountability mechanisms, governance outcomes, Philippine disaster-governance practices, and wider regional patterns.

The manuscript does not report the use of a previously validated standardized instrument because the extraction matrix was specifically developed for the present review. To improve consistency, the same extraction categories were applied to all 68 included studies.

The software used to record and organize the extracted information was Google Sheets.

Data-Extraction Procedure

After the full-text studies were selected, each article was reviewed and entered into the standardized extraction matrix. Bibliographic and contextual information was recorded first, followed by the study design, accountability mechanism, governance outcome, and principal findings.

The extracted findings were then examined for repeated concepts and relationships. Studies addressing similar accountability mechanisms or disaster governance outcomes were grouped together. Philippine-based studies

were additionally identified to permit a focused subgroup synthesis of local governance, decentralization, barangay participation, community-based disaster risk reduction, and institutional coordination.

No variables were experimentally manipulated because the study was based entirely on published secondary evidence. Differences in national settings, disaster types, research designs, and governance systems were managed through structured extraction and thematic comparison rather than experimental control.

Data Analysis and Thematic Synthesis

The extracted data were analyzed through qualitative thematic synthesis. The analysis proceeded through four stages. First, the findings and conclusions of each study were reviewed to identify recurring concepts related to accountability and disaster governance. Second, similar concepts were assigned to preliminary categories. Third, related categories were consolidated into broader themes and subthemes. Fourth, the themes were compared across countries and governance levels to identify shared patterns, contextual differences, and Philippine-specific findings.

The synthesis was organized around four major analytical areas:

1. political accountability mechanisms;
2. disaster governance outcomes;
3. the Philippine disaster governance subgroup; and
4. regional governance patterns and comparative perspectives.

Political accountability mechanisms included electoral, legislative, and institutional accountability; transparency, media, and public oversight; and civil society and community participation. Disaster governance outcomes included preparedness and early warning, emergency response, recovery, and resilience. The Philippine subgroup focused on decentralization, local government capacity, barangay participation, community-based disaster risk reduction, and institutional coordination. Regional analysis examined comparative governance structures, accountability patterns, and cross-country lessons.

Descriptive counts were used to summarize the number of studies assigned to each theme, subtheme, and publication year. Because some studies addressed more than one accountability mechanism or governance outcome, an individual study could contribute to multiple subthemes. However, each article was counted only once when calculating the total sample of 68 unique studies.

No meta-analysis, inferential statistical test, significance level, or confidence interval was applied because the included studies were methodologically diverse and the purpose of the review was qualitative thematic synthesis rather than statistical effect estimation.

The thematic coding and synthesis were conducted manually using the standardized extraction matrix.

Ethical Considerations

This review used publicly available secondary research and did not directly recruit or interact with human participants or animals. It did not collect names, personal identifiers, confidential records, or participant-level data. Consequently, institutional review board approval and informed consent were not required.

Ethical research practices were maintained by accurately representing the findings of the included studies, acknowledging all original sources, avoiding fabrication or alteration of reported evidence, and applying the eligibility and analytical procedures consistently. All extracted information was used exclusively for scholarly synthesis and interpretation.

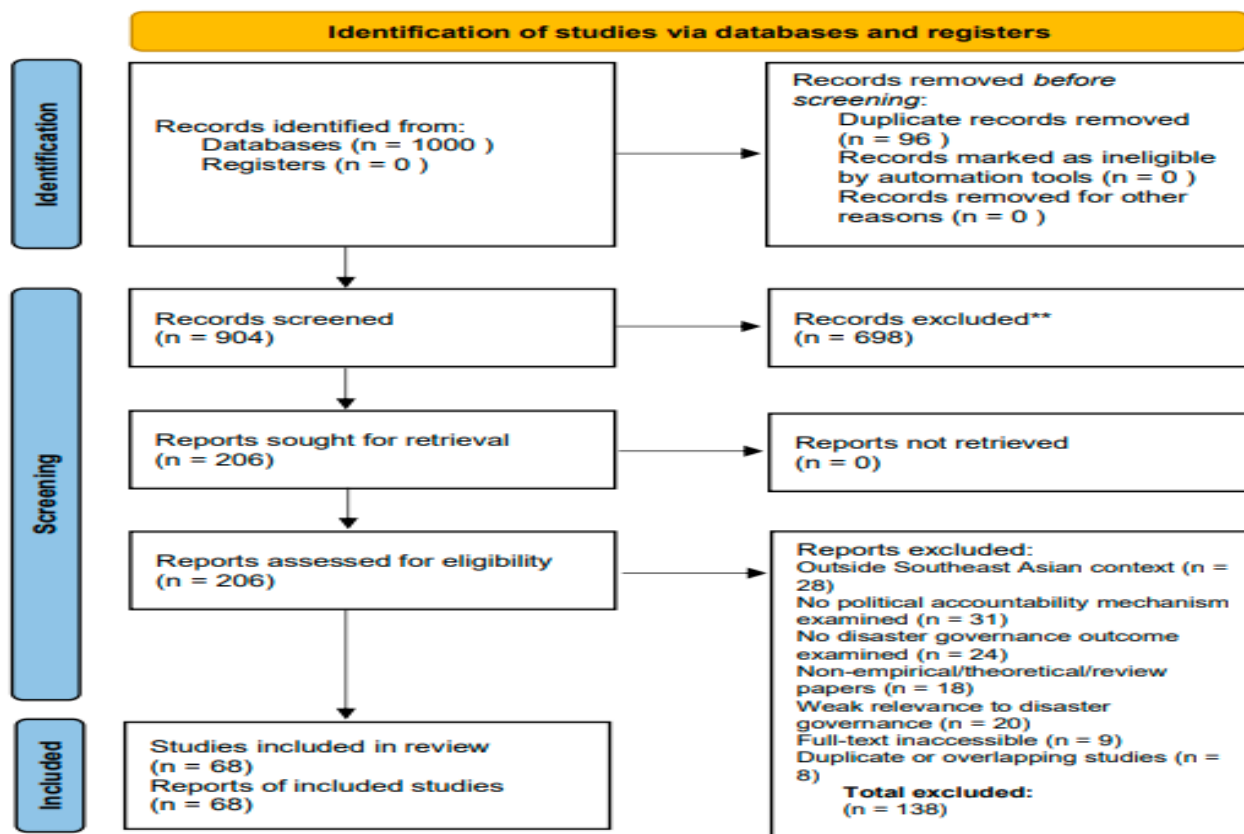
RESULTS

Study Selection

The literature search identified 1,000 records from Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and ProQuest. After 96 duplicate records were removed, 904 records remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 698 records were excluded because they did not meet the geographical, empirical, governance-related, or disaster-related eligibility criteria.

The full texts of 206 articles were assessed for eligibility. Following full-text assessment, 138 articles were excluded because of insufficient relevance, non-empirical research design, absence of a clear political accountability focus, or failure to report disaster governance outcomes. The final qualitative synthesis included 68 empirical studies. The complete selection process is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of the study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion process.



Characteristics of the Included Studies

The 68 included studies were published between 2016 and 2025 and examined political accountability and disaster governance within Southeast Asian settings. The evidence base included studies conducted in the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam, as well as studies addressing broader ASEAN or cross-country contexts.

The included studies used qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, and case study designs. The disaster contexts examined included typhoons, floods, earthquakes, multi-hazard events, public health emergencies, and post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation.

The accountability mechanisms investigated across the studies included legislative and institutional oversight, transparency, media and public scrutiny, decentralization, inter-agency coordination, civil society participation, community engagement, and local government accountability. The principal disaster governance outcomes were preparedness and early warning, emergency response, post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and long-term resilience.

Because the units of analysis were published studies rather than individual participants, participant characteristics such as age, sex, or other demographic variables were not summarized for the review as a whole.

Primary Thematic Findings

The qualitative thematic synthesis generated four major themes: political accountability mechanisms, disaster governance outcomes, the Philippine disaster governance subgroup, and regional governance patterns and comparative perspectives. Table 2 presents the distribution of studies across the identified themes and subthemes.

Table 2. Distribution of the included studies across the major themes and subthemes

Major theme	Subtheme	Studies, n	Percentage of included studies
Political accountability mechanisms	Electoral, legislative, and institutional accountability	7	10.3%
	Transparency, media, and public oversight	5	7.4%
	Civil society and community participation	8	11.8%
Disaster governance outcomes	Preparedness and early warning systems	8	11.8%
	Emergency response effectiveness	12	17.6%
	Recovery and resilience outcomes	16	23.5%
Philippine disaster governance subgroup	Local governance and decentralization	5	7.4%
	Barangay participation and community-based DRRM	4	5.9%
	Institutional coordination and governance challenges	5	7.4%
Regional governance patterns and comparative perspectives	Comparative governance structures	4	5.9%
	Regional accountability patterns	2	2.9%
	Cross-country governance lessons	1	1.5%

Note. Percentages were calculated using the 68 unique included studies as the denominator. Studies could contribute to more than one theme or subtheme; therefore, the percentages do not total 100%.

Political Accountability Mechanisms

Twenty study contributions were classified under political accountability mechanisms. Civil society and community participation was identified in eight studies, electoral, legislative, and institutional accountability in seven studies, and transparency, media, and public oversight in five studies.

Across these studies, accountability was operationalized through institutional oversight, public access to information, media scrutiny, citizen participation, community consultation, and mechanisms for holding government institutions responsible for disaster-related decisions. Studies examining legislative oversight and

transparency commonly reported stronger institutional monitoring and clearer responsibility for disaster-management activities. Studies addressing civil society and community participation reported greater local involvement in preparedness, communication, and response processes.

Disaster Governance Outcomes

Disaster governance outcomes constituted the largest thematic category, with 36 study contributions. Recovery and resilience outcomes were examined in 16 studies, emergency response effectiveness in 12 studies, and preparedness and early warning systems in eight studies.

Preparedness and early warning studies frequently reported that organized communication systems, community participation, and coordinated local planning supported the timely dissemination of warnings and preparedness information. Emergency response studies commonly identified clear institutional responsibilities, coordination among agencies, resource availability, and accountable decision-making as factors associated with response performance.

Findings concerning recovery and long-term resilience were less consistent. Although some studies reported improvements associated with participatory and coordinated governance, others identified institutional fragmentation, overlapping mandates, uneven implementation capacity, political patronage, and resource disparities as continuing constraints on recovery and resilience.

Philippine Disaster Governance Subgroup

Fourteen study contributions were included in the Philippine subgroup. Five studies addressed local governance and decentralization, four examined barangay participation and community-based disaster risk reduction and management, and five focused on institutional coordination and governance challenges.

The Philippine studies reported that local government units and barangays performed central roles in preparedness, risk communication, emergency response, and localized planning. Barangay participation and community-based initiatives were associated with improved information dissemination, community involvement, local trust, and responsiveness to disaster risks.

However, the subgroup findings also identified recurring institutional challenges. These included differences in fiscal and administrative capacity among local governments, insufficient technical resources, overlapping responsibilities, weak coordination between national and local institutions, and uneven implementation of disaster risk reduction policies. These challenges appeared most frequently in studies concerning post-disaster recovery, rehabilitation, and long-term resilience.

Regional Governance Patterns and Comparative Findings

Seven study contributions addressed regional governance patterns and comparative perspectives. Four examined comparative governance structures, two addressed regional accountability patterns, and one focused on cross-country governance lessons.

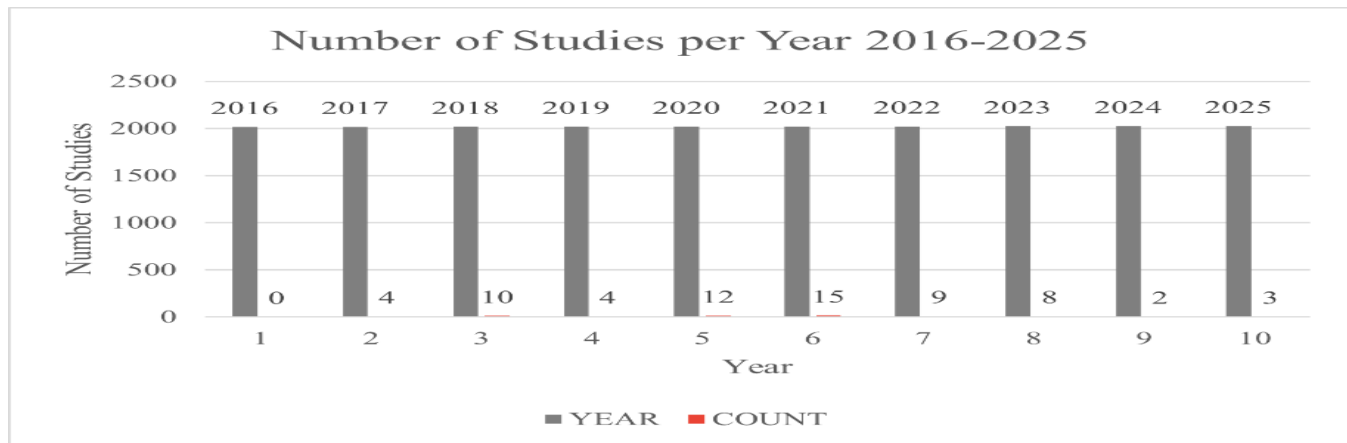
The comparative studies reported that decentralized governance structures could strengthen local responsiveness by allowing institutions to adapt disaster-management activities to local conditions. However, the reported effectiveness of decentralization varied according to institutional capacity, resource availability, accountability mechanisms, and coordination between levels of government.

Studies concerning regional cooperation also identified the role of ASEAN mechanisms and cross-border coordination in supporting shared disaster-response practices. However, the evidence addressing regional accountability and cross-country governance lessons remained limited compared with the evidence concerning national and local governance.

Publication Trends

Figure 2 presents the annual distribution of the 68 included studies published between 2016 and 2025. The distribution shows fewer publications during the earlier years of the review period and an increase in the number of studies around 2020 and 2021. The studies published across the review period addressed accountability mechanisms, preparedness, emergency response, recovery, resilience, decentralization, and community-level disaster governance.

Figure 2. Annual distribution of the included studies published from 2016 to 2025.



DISCUSSION

This systematic review examined how political accountability is conceptualized and associated with disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and resilience in Southeast Asia. The synthesis indicates that political accountability operates through interconnected institutional and participatory mechanisms, including legislative oversight, transparency, public scrutiny, civil society engagement, decentralization, and community participation. These mechanisms were generally associated with stronger preparedness and more responsive emergency action. However, their relationship with post-disaster recovery and long-term resilience was less consistent because outcomes were often constrained by institutional fragmentation, unequal local capacities, overlapping responsibilities, resource limitations, and political competition. Although no formal hypothesis was tested, the evidence supports the central proposition of the review: accountable institutions tend to produce better disaster-governance outcomes when accountability mechanisms are accompanied by sufficient resources, coordination, implementation capacity, and meaningful public participation.

Political Accountability as a Multidimensional Governance Process

The findings demonstrate that political accountability in disaster governance extends beyond formal reporting requirements or the legal responsibility of public officials. It also includes the capacity of legislatures, administrative agencies, civil society organizations, the media, and affected communities to monitor decisions, demand explanations, participate in planning, and influence the use of public resources. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that vertical and horizontal accountability can strengthen disaster preparedness by clarifying institutional responsibility and improving the responsiveness of government agencies (Era, 2021). Similarly, collaborative accountability and public oversight have been associated with improved coordination and reduced governance deficits in disaster-management systems (Suryaman, 2018).

The evidence also emphasizes the importance of civil society and community participation. Studies concerning social capital, local engagement, and disaster communication suggest that community participation strengthens the circulation of information, facilitates collective action, and increases the legitimacy of government decisions (Jovita et al., 2019; Pasamonte, 2025). This supports the view that accountability is both institutional and relational. Formal oversight may identify failures or clarify responsibilities, but public trust and effective local action also depend on sustained interaction between government institutions and communities.

Nevertheless, the reviewed literature does not indicate that accountability mechanisms automatically lead to effective governance. Transparency may provide information without ensuring corrective action, while participation may remain consultative rather than influential. Accountability mechanisms are therefore most effective when institutions possess the authority, resources, and administrative capacity to respond to identified problems. This helps explain why similar mechanisms produced different outcomes across countries and localities.

Differences Across Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Resilience

The synthesis revealed a clearer positive relationship between accountability and short-term disaster-governance functions, particularly preparedness, early warning, and emergency response. Studies of preparedness showed that coordinated planning, clear institutional roles, local participation, and effective communication systems contributed to the timely dissemination of warnings and the organization of community-level action (Era, 2021; Bierens et al., 2020; Gabriel et al., 2021). During emergency response, the availability of resources and the assignment of clear responsibilities supported faster and more coordinated institutional action (Jovita et al., 2019; Ruswandi & Maarif, 2023).

In contrast, findings concerning recovery and long-term resilience were more varied. Post-disaster recovery usually involves multiple agencies, extended implementation periods, competing political interests, large financial allocations, and decisions concerning housing, infrastructure, livelihoods, and relocation. These conditions create greater opportunities for institutional conflict, inconsistent implementation, and unequal distribution of assistance. Studies of post-disaster governance in the Philippines identified mismatches between formal recovery arrangements and their practical implementation, particularly where mandates overlapped or coordinating bodies lacked sufficient authority (Cunanan et al., 2022; Iuchi et al., 2020).

This difference suggests that accountability mechanisms may be easier to activate during highly visible emergency operations than during prolonged recovery. Immediate response activities are subject to intense public and media attention, whereas recovery decisions often become less visible over time. Consequently, sustained monitoring, transparent resource allocation, community participation, and institutional continuity are particularly important after the emergency phase. The findings therefore refine the general assumption that accountability has a uniform effect across all stages of disaster governance. Its influence appears to vary according to the duration, complexity, visibility, and institutional demands of each stage.

These patterns should nevertheless be interpreted as reported associations rather than direct estimates of impact. The methodological diversity of the included studies did not permit the review to determine the magnitude by which individual accountability mechanisms improve preparedness, response efficiency, or long-term resilience. This represents an important empirical gap. Future field-based and comparative research could examine specific mechanisms—such as public audits, citizen monitoring, disaster-fund transparency, and performance-based evaluation—using measurable governance and disaster outcomes to determine whether, how, and under what institutional conditions these mechanisms produce improvements in practice.

Philippine Disaster Governance and Decentralization

The Philippine subgroup illustrates both the potential and the limitations of decentralized disaster governance. Local government units and barangays are positioned close to affected communities and can adapt preparedness, risk communication, evacuation, and emergency response to local conditions. Studies of local governance and accountability indicate that decentralization can support rapid decision-making and stronger community participation when local institutions have sufficient capacity and clearly defined responsibilities (Domingo & Manejar, 2018; Era, 2021).

Barangay participation and community-based disaster risk reduction were particularly important because they connected formal government programs with local knowledge and community networks. Participatory planning, localized communication, and community engagement were associated with stronger trust, awareness, and

responsiveness. These findings are consistent with research emphasizing the role of social capital and local participation in shaping post-disaster conditions and collective action (Jovita et al., 2019; Pasamonte, 2025).

However, decentralization also produced uneven outcomes. Philippine local governments differ substantially in revenue, technical expertise, staffing, infrastructure, and access to external support. Lower-capacity local governments may be assigned extensive disaster-management responsibilities without receiving the resources needed to fulfill them effectively. Resuello (2020) similarly emphasized that disparities in local fiscal and economic capacity affect the ability of Philippine local governments to build disaster resilience.

The findings therefore indicate that decentralization should not be understood simply as the transfer of responsibilities from national to local institutions. Effective decentralization requires a corresponding transfer of resources, technical support, information, and decision-making authority. It also requires mechanisms that clarify the responsibilities of national agencies, local governments, and barangays. Without these conditions, decentralization may reproduce or intensify geographic inequalities in disaster protection.

Regional Governance Patterns

The regional findings show that Southeast Asian disaster-governance systems differ in political structure, institutional capacity, and the role assigned to communities and civil society. Despite these differences, recurring challenges were identified across national contexts, including fragmented authority, weak coordination, inconsistent implementation, and unequal local capacity. Decentralized systems were generally more responsive to local conditions, but their effectiveness depended on mechanisms connecting local action with national resources and regional coordination (Tanesab, 2020; Liu & Anbumozhi, 2021; Prianto & Abdillah, 2023).

Regional institutions may help address these challenges by facilitating information exchange, common operational practices, and coordination during cross-border emergencies. The literature concerning the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management illustrates the potential contribution of regional arrangements to coordinated disaster response (Mardialina et al., 2024). However, the relatively small number of studies categorized under regional accountability patterns and cross-country lessons indicates that this area remains underdeveloped.

The evidence does not support a single governance model that can be applied uniformly throughout Southeast Asia. Rather, the findings suggest that accountability mechanisms must be adapted to national political systems, local administrative capacities, and community structures. Comparative analyses such as those of Howe and Bang (2017) demonstrate that similar disasters can produce different governance responses because political institutions, state–society relations, and administrative arrangements differ across countries.

Policy and Practical Implications

The findings have several implications for disaster-governance policy and practice. First, governments should strengthen accountability throughout the disaster-management cycle rather than concentrating monitoring only on emergency response. Recovery and rehabilitation programs require transparent allocation criteria, publicly accessible progress reports, clearly assigned institutional responsibilities, and mechanisms through which affected communities can question or challenge decisions.

Second, decentralization policies should be matched with adequate financial, administrative, and technical support. Assigning responsibilities to local governments without addressing differences in capacity may widen inequalities between well-resourced and poorly resourced communities. National institutions should establish minimum operational standards while allowing local governments to adapt programs to their specific hazard environments and social conditions.

Third, community participation should be treated as a component of decision-making rather than merely a method of communicating government plans. Barangays, civil society organizations, and community groups should be involved in risk assessment, preparedness planning, monitoring, recovery design, and evaluation.

Meaningful participation can improve the relevance of policies and strengthen public trust, but it requires accessible information and formal channels through which local concerns can influence decisions.

Fourth, inter-agency coordination mechanisms should clearly define authority, information-sharing procedures, resource responsibilities, and accountability during both emergency response and recovery. Temporary coordinating bodies may be insufficient when institutional mandates overlap or when no agency has the authority to resolve disputes. More permanent coordination arrangements may therefore be needed for long-term rehabilitation and resilience-building.

Limitations

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The review included only English-language literature published from 2016 to 2025, which may have excluded relevant studies published in Southeast Asian languages. The exclusion of inaccessible full texts and grey literature may also have introduced publication and accessibility bias, particularly because local disaster-governance experiences are often documented in government reports, institutional assessments, theses, and community publications.

The evidence was geographically uneven, with greater representation from the Philippines and Indonesia than from several other Southeast Asian countries. The regional conclusions may therefore reflect the governance experiences of the most frequently studied countries rather than the region in its entirety. The included studies also used varied definitions of accountability, different methodological designs, and diverse measures of preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience. These differences limited direct comparison.

Because the review used qualitative thematic synthesis, it identifies recurring patterns and reported associations but cannot establish causal relationships or estimate the magnitude of accountability effects. The review also indicates a limited evidence base for determining the direct effects of specific accountability mechanisms on measurable preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience outcomes. In addition, no dedicated subgroup synthesis was conducted for vulnerable populations such as indigenous communities, marginalized households, or other socially and economically disadvantaged groups. Consequently, the review cannot determine whether the benefits and limitations of accountability mechanisms are experienced uniformly across different population groups. Some studies also contributed to more than one theme, meaning that thematic counts represent analytical contributions rather than mutually exclusive groups. In addition, the current manuscript does not report a formal methodological-quality or risk-of-bias appraisal of the included studies. The strength of the conclusions must therefore be considered in relation to the quality and limitations of the original evidence.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should build on systematic evidence synthesis through complementary empirical field studies that can directly examine how political accountability mechanisms affect disaster preparedness, response efficiency, recovery, and long-term resilience. Longitudinal and mixed-methods designs may be particularly useful for determining whether accountability mechanisms remain effective beyond periods of immediate disaster response and heightened public or media attention. Where appropriate, quantitative indicators of preparedness, response performance, resource allocation, recovery progress, and resilience should be combined with qualitative evidence from government institutions, civil society organizations, and affected communities. Such approaches could provide stronger evidence concerning the conditions under which accountability mechanisms contribute to improved disaster-governance outcomes.

Comparative studies involving multiple Southeast Asian countries are also needed to examine how differences in political institutions, decentralization arrangements, administrative capacity, and state–society relations influence the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. The limited cross-country evidence identified in this review suggests a need for studies using common definitions, measures, and governance indicators that permit more systematic comparison across national contexts.

Future studies should further examine specific accountability tools rather than treating political accountability as a single or general governance condition. Particular attention should be given to public audits, citizen-monitoring platforms, disaster-fund and expenditure transparency mechanisms, grievance and feedback systems, publicly accessible progress reporting, and performance-based evaluation of agencies responsible for disaster risk reduction, emergency response, and recovery. Research should assess not only whether these mechanisms formally exist, but also whether they improve transparency, institutional responsiveness, resource use, public participation, and disaster outcomes in practice.

Greater attention should also be given to populations and localities that remain insufficiently represented in disaster-governance research, particularly rural and remote communities, indigenous populations, marginalized and low-income households, and resource-constrained local governments. Examining how these groups experience access to information, participation, disaster assistance, grievance mechanisms, and government accountability would help determine whether accountability reforms produce equitable as well as effective disaster-governance outcomes. Future systematic reviews should additionally incorporate formal methodological-quality or risk-of-bias appraisal and, where sufficiently comparable quantitative evidence becomes available, meta-analysis or structured effect comparison.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review examined how political accountability mechanisms shape disaster preparedness, emergency response, recovery, and resilience in Southeast Asia. Based on the qualitative synthesis of 68 empirical studies published from 2016 to 2025, the review found that political accountability contributes to more effective disaster governance when legislative and institutional oversight, transparency, civil society participation, community engagement, and decentralized governance are supported by adequate resources, clear responsibilities, and coordination across government levels. The objectives of the review were achieved by identifying the principal accountability mechanisms discussed in the literature, examining their relationship with disaster-governance outcomes, synthesizing Philippine-specific practices and challenges, and comparing broader governance patterns across Southeast Asia.

The findings contribute to the existing literature by demonstrating that political accountability is not a single administrative mechanism but a multidimensional governance process linking institutional oversight, public participation, transparency, coordination, and local capacity. Accountability mechanisms were most consistently associated with improved preparedness, early warning, and emergency response. In contrast, their effects on recovery and long-term resilience were less uniform because these stages were frequently affected by institutional fragmentation, overlapping mandates, political constraints, and unequal local capacities. The review therefore clarifies that accountability alone is insufficient unless public institutions can translate oversight and participation into timely decisions, equitable resource allocation, and sustained implementation.

The Philippine evidence further highlights the importance of local government units, barangays, and community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives. Decentralized governance can improve responsiveness and strengthen community participation, but its effectiveness depends on adequate fiscal resources, technical capacity, institutional support, and coordination with national agencies. For policymakers and practitioners, the findings support the development of transparent disaster-fund monitoring systems, clearly defined inter-agency responsibilities, accessible public reporting mechanisms, and formal channels for community and civil society participation throughout preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation.

Future research should complement systematic evidence synthesis with longitudinal, comparative, and field-based studies capable of examining the direct effects of specific accountability mechanisms on disaster preparedness, response efficiency, recovery, and long-term resilience. Attention should be given to cross-country comparisons within Southeast Asia; public audits, citizen-monitoring platforms, disaster-fund transparency, and performance-based evaluation systems; and the experiences of rural communities, indigenous populations, marginalized households, and resource-constrained local governments. Such research would provide stronger

evidence regarding not only whether accountability mechanisms are associated with improved disaster governance, but also how, for whom, and under what institutional conditions they are most effective.

Overall, the review demonstrates that effective disaster governance in Southeast Asia depends not only on policies and technical systems but also on whether institutions remain transparent, coordinated, responsive, and answerable to the communities they serve. Strengthening political accountability across national, local, and community levels is therefore essential to achieving more equitable recovery and lasting disaster resilience.

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Conflict Of Interest Statement

The author declares that there are no relevant financial or non-financial conflicts of interest associated with this study. The author has no employment, consultancy, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent interests, personal relationships, organizational affiliations, or professional commitments that could have influenced the design, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of this systematic literature review.

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