

The Relationship Between Regional Autonomy and Bureaucratic Performance: A Social Study on the Effectiveness of Local Government

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Abstract

Regional autonomy is a key instrument for strengthening local government effectiveness, yet its impact largely depends on bureaucratic capacity and the quality of state society relations. This study analyzes how the structure of regional autonomy, institutional capacity, and local socio-political dynamics influence the performance of local governments in Indonesia. Using a qualitative method through a literature-based policy analysis, the study systematically reviews relevant international and national research as well as official reports from organizations such as the OECD, the Ministry of Administrative Reform, and the World Bank. The findings show that autonomy does not automatically improve local service delivery, as variations in bureaucratic capacity including human resource competence, leadership quality, organizational culture, and innovation capability, constitute the primary determinants of governance effectiveness. Furthermore, weak public participation, limited transparency, and inadequate social accountability hinder the realization of the potential benefits of decentralization. These results highlight that effective local governance emerges from the interaction of delegated authority, strong bureaucratic capacity, and democratic state–society relations. The study recommends strengthening civil service capacity, improving accountability mechanisms, and advancing governance reforms to ensure that regional autonomy fulfills its intended purpose and contributes to societal welfare.

Keywords: accountability, bureaucratic capacity, local governance, regional autonomy

1. Introduction

Regional autonomy is one of the most significant pillars of government reform in the development of public governance in Indonesia after 1998. This reform was born as a reaction to the previous highly centralized system of government, which placed the central government as the dominant actor in almost all aspects of state administration. Global trends show that decentralization has become a strategy adopted by many countries to improve the quality of public services, accelerate policy responses, and increase local accountability. An OECD report (2023) notes that more than 70 countries have devolved authority to local governments as a strategy to improve the effectiveness of local bureaucracies and promote territorial economic growth (OECD, 2023). Indonesia, as the third largest democracy in the world, has followed this trend through Law No. 22 of 1999 and its amendments, with the main objective of strengthening regional capacity to manage community needs in accordance with local characteristics.

Over time, the implementation of regional autonomy has given rise to a much more complex system of government. Local governments now have broad authority in planning, budgeting, public service delivery, and resource management. However, the relationship between this expansion of authority and bureaucratic performance is not always linear. World Bank research (2021) shows that decentralization does not



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automatically improve bureaucratic performance, as its effectiveness depends on institutional capacity, the quality of bureaucratic human resources, and internal governance mechanisms (World Bank, 2021). In Indonesia, issues such as overlapping authority, fiscal inequality between regions, poor quality of planning, and a lack of bureaucratic innovation hinder the achievement of decentralization goals. This situation raises a critical question: to what extent does regional autonomy contribute to improving the effectiveness of local government?

National data shows that bureaucratic performance at the regional level still varies greatly between regions. A report by the Ministry of PAN-RB (2023) shows that of 514 local governments, only about 28% received a “Good” rating in the Government Agency Performance Accountability System (SAKIP), while the rest were in the ‘Fair’ or ‘Poor’ categories (KemenPAN-RB, 2023). This uneven bureaucratic performance is also reflected in the public service quality index, where provinces in the Java region consistently score higher than those in Eastern Indonesia. This disparity indicates that regional autonomy has not been accompanied by adequate institutional capacity building, so that the effectiveness of local government is not only determined by the scope of authority, but primarily by the ability of the bureaucracy to utilize it optimally.

One of the fundamental problems is that regional autonomy is often seen only as the delegation of administrative authority, not as a transformation of governance. In fact, public administration literature emphasizes that decentralization must be followed by strengthening organizational structures, bureaucratic culture, apparatus competence, and performance evaluation systems (Peters, 2019). Otherwise, autonomy will only create policy variations without improving the quality of governance. A UNDP study (2020) shows that countries with successful decentralization, such as South Korea and Japan, have similar patterns of adaptive and innovative local bureaucracies with multi-layered evaluation mechanisms that connect the central and regional governments (UNDP, 2020). In the Indonesian context, the mechanism of supervision between levels of government is still not optimal, so that the relationship between regional autonomy and bureaucratic performance does not always run harmoniously.

On the other hand, regional autonomy also provides strong incentives for local governments to innovate. Initiatives such as the “One-Stop Integrated Service (PTSP)”, “Public Service Mall”, and various digital innovations such as smart cities are proof that regional autonomy can encourage the bureaucracy to develop more effective service models. Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs (2023) shows a significant increase in the number of regional innovations, from 3,718 innovations in 2018 to more than 9,000 innovations in 2023 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2023). However, an increase in the quantity of innovations does not always go hand in hand with an increase in service quality.

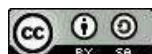
Many innovations are symbolic, unsustainable, or have no significant impact on the quality of public services. From a social perspective, the effectiveness of local government depends on the relationship between the bureaucracy and the community. Decentralization should strengthen public participation, as communities have closer access to decision-making. However, various studies show that public participation in the regions is still low and not institutionalized.

Research by Antlov and Cederroth (2021) shows that although local communities have access to development planning consultation forums (Musrenbang), many of these processes are merely formalities and do not actually influence budget decisions (Antlov & Cederroth, 2021). This undermines one of the main objectives of regional autonomy: to increase the responsiveness of the government to the aspirations of its citizens.

Another issue that cannot be ignored is regional corruption. Since the implementation of regional autonomy, the number of regional heads involved in corruption cases has increased significantly. Data from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) shows that more than 130 regional heads have been named as suspects in corruption cases between 2004 and 2023 (KPK, 2023).

This phenomenon shows that the expansion of authority is not always accompanied by an expansion of bureaucratic integrity. In many cases, autonomy has actually created local oligarchies that strengthen political patronage and weaken accountability, so that bureaucratic performance does not reflect the principles of good governance. Although many studies have discussed the issues of decentralization and bureaucratic performance, there is an important research gap that needs to be filled.

First, Peters' (2019) study entitled The Politics of Bureaucracy emphasizes general public administration theory without analyzing the specific Indonesian context. Second, Antlov and Cederroth's (2021) research on



local participation highlights socio-cultural issues but does not link them to measurable bureaucratic performance evaluations. Third, the World Bank (2021) study only focuses on fiscal capacity and does not examine the relationship between regional autonomy structures and bureaucratic behavior. This gap indicates the need for an analysis that links the variables of regional autonomy, bureaucratic capacity, and local government effectiveness within a single analytical framework.

Thus, this study has the novelty of presenting the conceptual relationship between regional autonomy and bureaucratic performance through a socio-governmental approach that combines institutional dimensions, bureaucratic capacity, and local social dynamics. Not only does this study view autonomy as a structure of authority, it also places regional autonomy as a variable that influences behavior, organizational culture, and patterns of bureaucratic performance. The purpose of this study is to analyze in depth how regional autonomy affects the effectiveness of local government through changes in institutional structure, bureaucratic capacity, public service innovation, and the relationship between the state and society.

2. Method, Data, and Analysis

This study uses a qualitative policy analysis method with a literature-based research approach that examines the relationship between regional autonomy and bureaucratic performance through a synthesis of theories, regulations, and empirical findings published in international and national journals. This approach is considered most relevant to the topic of local government because the effectiveness of regional autonomy is a socio-administrative phenomenon that cannot be understood through quantitative measurements alone, but requires a deep understanding of institutional dynamics, bureaucratic behavior, and the local socio-political context (Peters, 2019). This method is also commonly used in public administration research when researchers focus on the relationship between conceptual variables and the evaluation of governance quality (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2020).

The data collection process was carried out through a systematic literature review (SLR) focused on scientific articles published between 2015 and 2024 from the Scopus, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and ProQuest databases, as well as official government documents such as reports from the Ministry of PAN-RB, OECD, UNDP, and the World Bank. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the three main dimensions of the study: regional autonomy structure, bureaucratic capacity and behavior, and local government effectiveness. The data was then analyzed using thematic content analysis techniques, which grouped findings based on broad themes such as institutional capacity, service innovation, state-society relations, and local political dynamics (Bowen, 2019). This technique allows researchers to compile a comprehensive narrative on the relationship between regional autonomy and bureaucratic performance in the Indonesian context.

3. Results

The Structural Foundations of Regional Autonomy and Their Implications for Bureaucratic Performance

Regional autonomy in Indonesia was originally conceptualized as a strategy to break away from the excessive centralization of the New Order era and to promote a more responsive, accountable, and participatory model of governance. Structurally, the autonomy framework grants local governments authority over a wide range of functions from planning and budgeting to public service delivery under the assumption that decisions made closer to citizens will be more aligned with local needs. This premise aligns with global theories of decentralization, particularly the “decentralization dividend” hypothesis, which argues that devolved powers generate improved bureaucratic performance when institutional capacity is sufficient (Faguet, 2014). However, the Indonesian experience shows that autonomy alone is insufficient to guarantee higher bureaucratic quality, as structural, fiscal, and political variations significantly influence outcomes across regions.

One of the central structural challenges is the variation in government capacity between high-performing and low-performing regions. Many Indonesian districts, especially outside Java, face persistent limitations in human resources, technical expertise, and organizational capability. The World Bank (2021) notes that disparities in regional fiscal capacity remain one of the most influential factors determining local government performance. Regions with strong fiscal independence tend to invest more in administrative modernization, digitalization, and public service reform, while poorer regions struggle to maintain basic governance functions (World Bank, 2021). This divergence demonstrates that autonomy, when not paired with equitable resource



distribution and institutional support, risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than enhancing overall effectiveness.

In addition to fiscal disparities, structural inconsistencies in role division between central and regional governments also contribute to performance challenges. Although regional autonomy theoretically grants broad authority, in practice, the central government continues to intervene through sectoral regulations, mandatory programs, and standardized performance indicators. Peters (2019) argues that unclear division of labor in decentralized systems produces administrative friction, role ambiguity, and “multiple principals” that complicate bureaucratic responsiveness. This phenomenon is reflected in Indonesia, where frequent recentralization tendencies such as the centralization of licensing through Online Single Submission (OSS) limit the operational discretion of local bureaucracies. As a result, the capacity of local institutions to design context-specific innovations often becomes constrained.

Structural autonomy also intersects with political dynamics that shape bureaucratic behavior. Decentralization in Indonesia created fertile ground for local political elites to influence bureaucracy through appointments, budget allocations, and program priorities. Studies show that bureaucratic performance often correlates with political contestation at the local level (Hidayat, 2020). In regions where political patronage remains strong, bureaucratic appointments are frequently driven by loyalty rather than merit, thereby weakening professionalism and administrative capacity. This aligns with broader findings in comparative decentralization research, which highlight risks of “local capture” when institutional checks and accountability systems are weak (Smoke, 2015). Consequently, even though autonomy expands the formal authority of local governments, political distortions often undermine the ability of bureaucracies to perform effectively.

Another structural implication of regional autonomy is the proliferation of innovation initiatives across local governments. Autonomy allows districts to adopt innovative approaches tailored to their needs, such as integrated service centers, digital governance systems, and participatory budgeting mechanisms. The Ministry of Home Affairs reported an increase from 3,718 to more than 9,000 documented local innovations between 2018 and 2023 (Kemendagri, 2023). However, the expansion of innovation quantity does not automatically translate into higher performance quality. Many innovations are symbolic or unsustained due to limited institutionalization, insufficient training, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Denhardt and Denhardt (2020) emphasize that innovation in public administration only improves performance when supported by stable organizational culture, leadership commitment, and cross-agency coordination. Thus, while autonomy encourages experimentation, the absence of structural coherence reduces its impact on bureaucratic effectiveness.

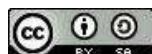
Furthermore, the structural design of autonomy influences the relationship between local governments and their citizens. Ideally, regional autonomy should enhance public participation and accountability by bringing decision-making processes closer to communities. However, empirical evidence shows that participation mechanisms such as Musrenbang remain largely ceremonial, with limited influence on actual policy decisions (Antlov & Cederroth, 2021). The absence of meaningful participation undermines one of the core expectations of autonomy: increased democratic responsiveness. Without active citizen oversight, bureaucracies may prioritize administrative routines over public needs, reducing service quality and weakening public trust.

Finally, the structural challenges of autonomy extend to issues of governance integrity. The Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) recorded more than 130 regional heads involved in corruption cases between 2004-2023 (KPK, 2023). Decentralization has inadvertently expanded opportunities for corruption by creating localized centers of power without proportional strengthening of oversight mechanisms. Corruption distorts bureaucratic priorities, diverts resources, and impairs service delivery, making it a major structural barrier to effective governance.

Taken together, these structural factors demonstrate that regional autonomy does not uniformly enhance bureaucratic performance; rather, its effects vary depending on institutional capacity, political dynamics, fiscal resources, and governance integrity. Autonomy provides the framework, but performance depends on how well local bureaucracies are equipped to utilize their authority.

4. Discussion

The Dynamics of Local Bureaucratic Capacity and Its Impact on Local Government Effectiveness



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Bureaucratic capacity is a key element that determines whether regional autonomy can produce effective local government or actually deepen performance disparities between regions. In the context of Indonesian decentralization, bureaucratic capacity is not only related to the number of employees or organizational structure, but also includes technical competence, adaptability, work culture, leadership, and innovation capabilities. Public administration literature emphasizes that decentralization will only increase the effectiveness of government if the local bureaucracy has sufficient capacity to manage the authority granted (Peters, 2019). Conversely, if bureaucratic capacity is low, regional autonomy has the potential to expand the scope of administrative dysfunction, inefficiency, and non-accountable practices that directly weaken the quality of public services.

One of the main issues in regional bureaucratic capacity is the quality of human resources. Although the number of civil servants in the regions is relatively large, various reports indicate a mismatch between employee competencies and the needs of modern public services. The Ministry of PAN-RB (2023) notes that more than 50% of regional civil servants still work in traditional administrative functions such as administration, rather than in strategic functions such as planning, policy analysis, or digital-based services (KemenPAN-RB, 2023). This imbalance hinders the bureaucracy in responding to increasingly complex community demands. This condition is in line with the analysis of Denhardt and Denhardt (2020), which states that modern bureaucratic transformation requires competent, service-oriented HR with organizational learning capacity. In regions with low human resource capacity, the effectiveness of regional autonomy tends to stagnate because employees are unable to translate their authority into innovation or service improvements.

In addition to human resources, bureaucratic leadership is a factor that greatly determines the performance of public organizations. Transformative leadership can encourage innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and a more responsive public service culture. However, research by Hidayat (2020) shows that regional bureaucracies in Indonesia are still heavily influenced by hierarchical culture and political patronage, so that many structural officials are selected not based on competence but on their proximity to regional heads (Hidayat, 2020). This practice results in organizational instability, especially since changes in regional heads are often followed by massive reshuffling of positions. As a result, policy continuity is disrupted and ongoing innovations are not continued. This phenomenon also makes it clear that bureaucratic capacity is not solely the result of internal structures, but is closely related to the local political ecosystem.

Another dimension of bureaucratic capacity that is highly relevant in the context of regional autonomy is the capacity for innovation. Many regions have shown an increase in the number of innovations in the last five years, from 3,718 innovations in 2018 to more than 9,000 innovations in 2023 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2023). However, analytically, this surge in numbers does not yet reflect the quality or sustainability of the innovations. Many innovations are pilot projects that are not institutionalized, do not have a clear monitoring framework, or depend on certain regional heads. Denhardt and Denhardt (2020) emphasize that public innovation is only effective when it is institutionalized in the work culture and regulations of the organization. Thus, the innovation capacity of the regional bureaucracy has not been fully transformed into performance that has a real impact on society.

Meanwhile, bureaucratic capacity can also be seen through the effectiveness of planning and budgeting. Decentralization gives regions considerable authority to formulate medium-term development plans (RPJMD) and regional revenue and expenditure budgets (APBD). However, various studies show that regional planning is often not data-driven and tends to follow an incremental budgeting pattern, which is copying the previous year's budget without in-depth analysis. A World Bank study (2021) shows that more than 60% of regional APBD is still allocated to personnel expenditure, while productive development expenditure is relatively low (World Bank, 2021). This proportion indicates the limited capacity of the bureaucracy to manage budgets to achieve strategic objectives such as improving health, education, and infrastructure services.

In this subsection, it is important to present an analytical table that illustrates the dimensions of local bureaucratic capacity based on empirical findings. The following table summarizes the three main dimensions of local bureaucratic capacity based on international public administration literature and contextual findings in Indonesia:

Table 1. Key Dimensions of Local Bureaucratic Capacity and Their Implications for Performance.



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Dimension	Description	Description
Human Resource Capacity	Level of competency, expertise, and adaptability of civil servants	Directly affects ability to innovate, provide efficient services, and implement policies effectively
Leadership and Organizational Culture	Leadership style, meritocracy, and stability of bureaucratic structure	Determines coherence of policy direction, sustainability of reforms, and organizational responsiveness
Institutional and Fiscal Capacity	Adequacy of planning systems, budgeting processes, and equitable resource allocation	Influences quality of public services, development outcomes, and organizational resilience

The table illustrates that bureaucratic capacity is not merely a matter of the number of employees or formal structure, but rather an aggregation of human resource competencies, leadership quality, and institutional capacity that interact with one another. In the Indonesian context, these three dimensions show significant variation between regions, resulting in uneven performance. Regions with high capacity, such as several cities in Java and Bali, are able to utilize autonomy to strengthen public services and increase public trust. Conversely, regions with low capacity find it difficult to maximize autonomy and may even exacerbate inefficiency.

The influence of bureaucratic capacity on the effectiveness of local government can also be seen in the ability of regions to respond to change. Adaptive local governments are able to develop innovative solutions and respond quickly to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic through data-driven policies and cross-sector coordination. Local governments with high crisis governance capacity generally perform better in maintaining public order and continuing essential services. UNDP (2020) notes that regions with flexible bureaucratic structures and high technical competence are able to respond to the pandemic more effectively than regions with low capacity (UNDP, 2020). This shows that in the context of a crisis, bureaucratic capacity is a major determinant of local government effectiveness.

However, bureaucratic capacity cannot be separated from regional fiscal conditions. Indonesia's fiscal transfer system through the General Allocation Fund (DAU) and Special Allocation Fund (DAK) aims to reduce interregional disparities, but research shows that the effectiveness of fiscal transfers is highly dependent on the ability of regions to manage their budgets. Regions with low planning capacity tend to produce unproductive budgets, while regions with high capacity can optimize fiscal transfers for infrastructure development and improved public services. Smoke's (2015) research confirms that fiscal decentralization is only effective when accompanied by adequate bureaucratic capacity to manage budgets efficiently. These findings are consistent with the reality in Indonesia, where disparities in bureaucratic capacity have led to sharp development gaps.

In addition, regional bureaucratic capacity is influenced by internal accountability systems. Internal oversight mechanisms such as the Regional Inspectorate are often considered weak in ensuring compliance with good governance principles. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK, 2023) reports that many cases of regional corruption occur due to weak internal oversight and low integrity among regional officials. This weakness in accountability not only has an impact on corruption, but also reduces the performance of public services and hinders the achievement of regional autonomy objectives. Without strong oversight, bureaucratic capacity cannot develop optimally even though the central government provides broad authority.

Analytically, it can be concluded that regional bureaucratic capacity is an intervening variable that determines whether regional autonomy results in effective governance. Autonomy provides the structure, but bureaucratic capacity determines the outcome. In other words, the effectiveness of local government is a function of the interaction between autonomous authority and the capacity of the institutions that implement it. It is this variation in capacity that explains why regions with equal autonomy can show very different performances.

State-Society Relations, Public Accountability, and Their Impact on Local Government Effectiveness

The relationship between the state and society is an important pillar in understanding local government effectiveness under the framework of regional autonomy. Theoretically, decentralization is expected to bring the government closer to its citizens, resulting in decisions that are more responsive, participatory, and tailored to local needs. However, the implementation of regional autonomy in Indonesia shows that bringing the government closer to the community does not automatically improve the quality of public accountability. On the



contrary, immature relations between the state and the community often lead to distortions in governance, such as symbolic participation, the dominance of local elites, and weak social control mechanisms. Public administration literature emphasizes that the effectiveness of local government can only be achieved if regional autonomy is accompanied by meaningful participation, transparency, and strong accountability (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2020).

Public participation is a key element of democratic local governance. In the Indonesian context, participation is usually associated with formal mechanisms such as Musrenbang (development planning consultation forums), public consultation forums, and the submission of aspirations through the Regional Representative Council (DPRD). However, various studies show that public participation in regional development planning is often procedural and not substantive. Research by Antlov and Cederroth (2021) found that Musrenbang is often carried out as an administrative ritual, in which community input does not actually determine budget decisions. This situation is exacerbated by low policy literacy among the community and minimal access to public information. In fact, effective participation requires the community's ability to assess development priorities and oversee their implementation. Limited substantive participation means that policy direction is often dominated by political elites or bureaucratic actors, so that the effectiveness of local government does not reflect public aspirations.

Low public involvement also has an impact on the low quality of social accountability. In governance theory, accountability consists of two main components: vertical accountability (elections and formal control) and horizontal accountability (public and media oversight). Regional autonomy should ideally strengthen both forms of accountability, but in practice only vertical accountability functions in a relatively formalistic manner through regional head elections. Horizontal accountability remains weak, mainly due to the varying capacities of social organizations and local media across regions. A study by Setiawan (2020) shows that regions with active local media and strong civil society tend to have higher quality public services because local officials feel social pressure to behave transparently (Setiawan, 2020). Conversely, regions with weak social institutions are more prone to corruption, abuse of power, and low bureaucratic responsiveness.

In the context of regional autonomy, the relationship between the state and the community is also influenced by local political dynamics. Direct regional head elections (pilkada) create political competition that should encourage local governments to focus on performance. However, research shows the opposite effect in many regions. Local political contests often result in governments dominated by the interests of certain groups, which then creates patronage politics in the bureaucracy. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of local political capture, in which local elites control government resources for personal or group interests rather than for the public interest (Smoke, 2015). In such situations, the bureaucracy tends to be loyal to the elite rather than to the principles of public service, thereby hampering the effectiveness of local government.

In addition to political participation and dynamics, transparency plays an important role in state-society relations. Public transparency in Indonesia is supported by regulations such as the Public Information Disclosure Law, but its implementation remains limited. A report by the Indonesian Ombudsman (2022) shows that many local governments have not been optimal in providing public information, especially regarding budgets and program planning (Ombudsman, 2022). The lack of accurate and easily accessible public information makes it difficult for the public to exercise oversight. In fact, transparency theory states that governments that actively disclose data tend to be more accountable, efficient, and less prone to corruption (Meijer, 2015). Thus, limited transparency is a serious obstacle to strengthening the relationship between the state and society.

In assessing the effectiveness of local government, the aspect of public trust is also a crucial factor. Public trust not only affects the legitimacy of the government but also has a direct impact on the successful implementation of policies. Regions with high levels of public trust tend to find it easier to encourage community participation, implement policies, and manage conflicts. The World Bank (2021) notes that regions that were able to maintain public trust during the pandemic showed a better crisis response because the community was willing to comply with policies and cooperate with the government. Conversely, low public trust leads to resistance to government policies, high levels of misinformation, and weak social support for regional development programs.

Meanwhile, the effectiveness of local government also depends on the strength of internal accountability mechanisms. If internal accountability (e.g., Regional Inspectorate) is effective, the bureaucracy will be more



disciplined in formulating policies, managing budgets, and providing services. However, the Corruption Eradication Commission (2023) found that many regional inspectorates do not have sufficient resources to conduct in-depth audits, so cases of irregularities are often detected too late. This explains why many regions can be categorized as “good” in SAKIP, but still have high cases of corruption. The difference between formal accountability and substantive accountability is one of the factors hindering the effectiveness of regional autonomy.

To understand the relationship between the state and society and the effectiveness of local government, it is important to review the basic assumption of decentralization: the closer the government is to the community, the better its performance. However, based on empirical evidence, this assumption only applies when bureaucratic capacity is high, participation mechanisms are substantive, and transparency is maintained. When one of these elements is weak, regional autonomy actually increases the risk of policy fragmentation and a decline in the quality of public services. Thus, the relationship between the state and the community is not merely a supporting variable, but a major determinant of the effectiveness of local government.

The above analysis shows that the relationship between the state and the community in the context of regional autonomy is multifaceted, involving the dimensions of participation, transparency, accountability, trust, and political dynamics. These dimensions interact with bureaucratic capacity and autonomy, shaping the overall quality of local government. Regions that successfully combine these three aspects show better performance in terms of public services, development, and local political stability. Conversely, regions that fail to balance these aspects experience stagnation or even regression regardless of their autonomy authority.

5. Conclusion, Limitations, and Suggestions

Conclusion

Analysis of the relationship between regional autonomy and bureaucratic performance shows that the effectiveness of local government cannot be understood solely through the granting of authority to regions, but is more determined by institutional capacity, the quality of bureaucratic human resources, and state-society relations. Regional autonomy provides a broad structure of authority, but variations in bureaucratic capacity between regions, ranging from employee competence, leadership, organizational culture, to innovation capabilities, determine the success of its implementation. Regions with high bureaucratic capacity are able to translate autonomy into effective public services, sustainable innovation, and responsive development planning. Conversely, regions with low capacity tend to experience stagnation, inefficiency, and governance irregularities despite having the same normative authority.

In addition to bureaucratic capacity, the effectiveness of local government is also greatly influenced by the dynamics of public participation, transparency, and social accountability. Procedural participation mechanisms, limited access to public information, and weak public oversight often result in regional policies that do not reflect the needs of citizens. On the other hand, local political dynamics, including patronage and local political capture, undermine bureaucratic professionalism and hinder service innovation. These findings confirm that the quality of state-society relations is a key prerequisite for the success of regional autonomy. When these relations are participatory, transparent, and based on trust, local government performs better in maintaining accountability, accelerating policy responses, and improving the quality of public services.

Overall, this study concludes that the effectiveness of local government is the result of the interaction between three main components: the structure of regional autonomy authority, bureaucratic capacity, and the quality of state-society relations. Future regional autonomy reforms must focus on strengthening the competence of civil servants, improving the integrity and accountability of the bureaucracy, and developing substantial participatory mechanisms so that autonomy can function according to its original objectives. By strengthening institutional capacity and the socio-political relations that underpin local government administration, regional autonomy can become an effective instrument for promoting sustainable development and improving the welfare of communities throughout Indonesia.

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