



## Capacity of Local Government Policy in Implementing Minimum Service Standards

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: March 23, 2025

Revised: April 20, 2025

Available online: July 30, 2025

### KEYWORDS

Policy Capacity, Minimum Service Standards, Local Government

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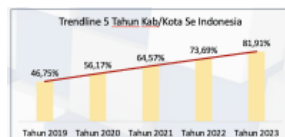
### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes local government policies' capacity to implement Indonesia's Minimum Service Standards (MSS), focusing on enforcing Government Regulation No. 2/2018 and Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 59/2021. These policies encompass six sectors: education, health, public works, housing, public order and safety, and social affairs. The findings reveal uneven and fluctuating MSS achievements. Although mandatory spending—20% for education and 10% for health—is in place, it does not consistently lead to improved outcomes. Similarly, fiscal capacity does not always correlate with MSS performance. Using a qualitative method—through interviews, FGDs, observations, and literature review—this study identifies that the policy capacities of individuals, organizations, and political actors influence the achievement of MSS. Among these, political capacity—particularly weak commitment from implementers—emerges as the most significant barrier. The study concludes that a new model and formula within the policy framework is essential to address service disparities and improve performance across all regions to ensure equitable and effective MSS implementation.

## INTRODUCTION

Decentralization has implications for improving public services by local governments (Ferrazi, 2005; Ostwald et al., 2016; Lewis, 2017). The Ministry of Home Affairs, with several ministries related to minimum services, or Minimum Service Standards (MSS), has developed and tested an appropriate model after implementing regional autonomy (Purwanto et al., 2019). The MSS implementation model and formula have emphasized that the affordability of MSS is a primary concern. However, various problems regarding the capacity of local governments to provide services are always a problem (Setiawan et al., 2022).

The concept of minimum service, which is more firmly regulated through Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning the Regional Government, has brought fundamental changes to implementing MSS in Indonesia. However, decentralization has undeniably created polarization, increasing inequality between regions (Provinces and regencies/cities) due to the capacity and choice of strategies used to implement minimum service standards in the regions (Roudo & Chalil, 2016). The following are the achievements of MSS implementation in Provinces and Regencies/Cities in the last 5 (five) years, as seen in the following graph:



Graph 1. Trends in Achievement of MSS Implementation in Provinces and Districts/Cities in Indonesia

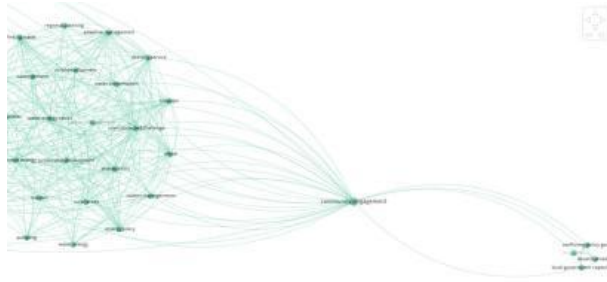
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024.

The increasing trend of MSS implementation in Indonesia at the provincial level in the last 5 (five) years has improved; the MSS achievement in 2019 was 58.84%, then increased to 68.59% in 2020, increased again to 74.84% in 2021, it increased again to 80.19% in 2022, and finally reached 84.68% in 2023 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024). Likewise, the achievement of MSS in the Regency/City has increased. However, the government is considered to have failed in implementing this policy, considering that the achievement of MSS implementation every year should always be 100%. The requirement to allocate 20% of the education budget and 10% of the health allocation from the APBD has also not impacted the achievement of MSS in these two areas.

The opportunity for better MSS implementation with strong fiscal capacity continues to be proven, such as a study conducted by Singh et al. (2024). However, fiscal capacity is not always positively correlated with the provision of public services (Wang et al., 2024). Many regions still have high fiscal capacity but cannot achieve better MSS implementation and vice versa. For example, Papua and West Papua Provinces have very high fiscal capacity, but MSS achievements of only 65% and 52% in 2023 are far from the average national MSS achievement. Meanwhile, with the very low fiscal capacity in West Sumatra Province, MSS achievement can reach even 100%. It can be seen from the following graph:



evaluation studies in general (Sakti, 2018). However, many researchers have not conducted studies directly comparing the SPM field with local government capacity. So, this study has the potential to strengthen the understanding of how policy capacity affects the implementation of SPM, such as the results of the VOSviewer visualization below:



Graph 5. Network Visualization Based on VOSviewer Analysis

This study will evaluate the Minimum Service Standards policy that has not achieved its objectives. This is the initial assumption of this study, as expressed by Wu et al. (2018), where the capacity of policy actors focuses on skills and resources, where Wu et al. divides the skills and competencies of policy implementers into three general types of important skills: analytical, operational, and political. Meanwhile, the level of resources and capabilities is assessed on an individual, organizational, and systemic basis. The author is sure that no one has done a study that specifically examines the capacity of local governments to implement the Minimum Service Standards policy, let alone a study on local government efforts to optimize their capacity in the MSS implementation policy.

The purpose of this study is to develop new models and formulas for implementing SPM policies from the perspective of public policy capacity. The study results are also expected to contribute to the success of SPM implementation policies that are useful for policymakers amidst the limitations of rationality possessed by implementers, especially for local governments. For this reason, this study will answer the question of how the capacity of the policy is for implementing Minimum Service Standards in local governments in Indonesia.

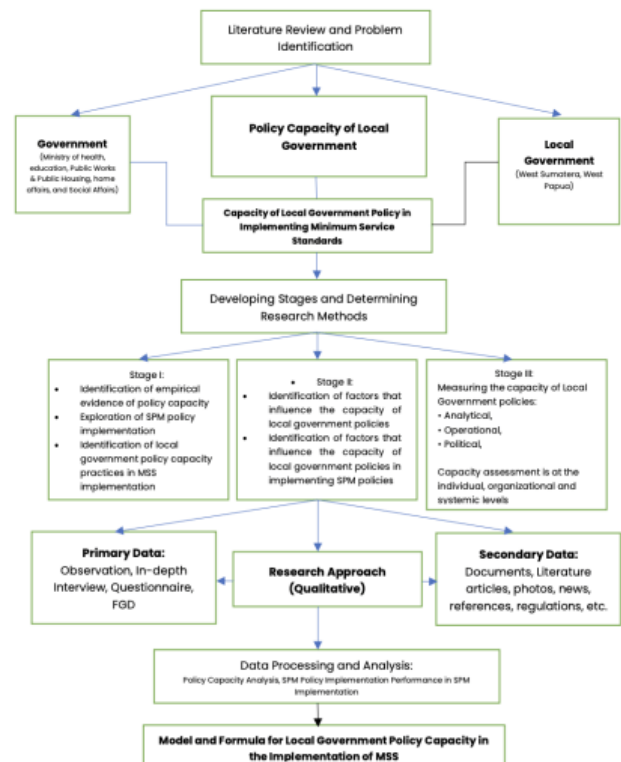
## METHOD

This study conducts an in-depth description and analysis of the policy capacity of local governments in implementing MSS policy in Indonesia. This study is driven by the need to formulate a model and formulation of implementing MSS. This study's qualitative design uses various data collection techniques (Creswell, 2014). The type of research used is explanatory research (Yang et al., 2007) to explore the policy capacity of local governments.

The observation was conducted to determine the occurrence of events or problems in local governments and the involvement of researchers in FGDs between the Ministry of Home Affairs and several local governments, such as the West Sumatra and West Papua Provincial Governments. The observation data was further explored through interviews conducted with the MSS Implementation Team from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Padang City Government, and Mimika Regency, which were selected purposively. This study uses the Miles & Huberman (1994) data analysis technique, which states that qualitative data analysis activities are carried out interactively and continue continuously until data saturation is achieved. The researcher

used the data triangulation technique to test the study's data. Triangulation is using various methods or data sources in qualitative research to comprehensively understand the phenomenon.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the current pattern and trend of Minimum Service Standards research studies, the researcher utilized VOSviewer analysis in literature review and problem identification. The researcher followed the SPIDER framework, which Cooke, Smith introduced, and Both (2012). The keywords/search strings selected or used are as follows: ("policy capacity") AND ("local government") AND ("minimum service standards") and (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("POLICY CAPACITY") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("LOCAL GOVERNMENT") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS")) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 AND PUBYEAR < 2024. More details of the method steps in this study can be seen in the following figure:



Graph 6. Research Flow Chart

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

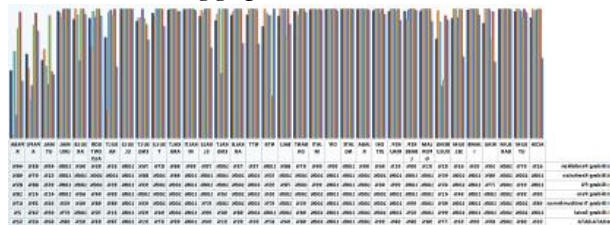
The study of the SPM implementation policy failure in Indonesia (Koeswara & Tjenreng, 2024) was caused by the weak policy capacity of local governments. This study discusses the policy capacity in the implementation of SPM in Local Governments, namely the government's ability to make wise choices in policy (Painter & Pierre, 2004), observe the environment, and set strategic directions (Howlett & Lindquist, 2004), consider and assess the implications of policy alternatives (Bakvis, 2000), and to utilize knowledge appropriately in policy making (Parsons, 2004). Meanwhile, the explanation of policy capacity is also defined by Gleeson, Legge, and O'Neill (2009) as a set of skills, resources, competencies, and abilities needed to implement policies.

The relevance of the MSS implementation policy capacity is closely related to the organization or institution that initiated the policy, in this case, the Government and Regional Government. The MSS implementation policy will be realized according to



expectations if the capacity of the government and regional government is ready in terms of human resources, organization, and systems to face the various challenges that will be faced. For this reason, researchers use the theory formulated by [Xun Wu, Michael Howlett, and M. Ramesh \(2018\)](#), where they divide the competence of policy implementers into 3 (three) general types of important skills: analytical, operational, and political. Meanwhile, policy capability is assessed at the individual, organizational, and systemic resource levels. In this way, an analysis table will be formed that refers to the following nine items: individual analytical capacity, organizational, analytical capacity, systemic analytical capacity, individual operational capacity, organizational, operational capacity, systemic operational capacity, individual political capacity, organizational, political capacity, and systemic political capacity.

The achievement of MSS implementation in the Provincial Government in the latest policy must measure the achievement of MSS (IP MSS/100%) through 2 (two) criteria, namely service recipients (80%) and service quality (20%). The achievement of MSS in the Provincial Government throughout Indonesia can be seen in the following graph:



Graph 7. Trends in MSS Implementation Achievements per Field per Province in Indonesia in 2023

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024

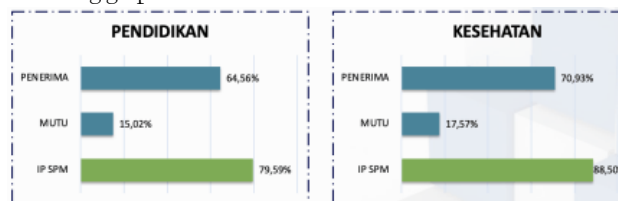
On average, most provinces achieved relatively high MSS levels. Several provinces, such as West Sumatra, DKI Jakarta, West Java, and East Java, had outstanding achievements in almost all areas, approaching or reaching 100% in each service area. It indicates a higher readiness and capacity in these provinces to implement MSS optimally. On the other hand, there are several provinces with lower average achievements, such as West Papua (52%) and Papua (65%). It indicates a significant challenge in implementing MSS in these areas, which can be influenced by geographical factors, limited human resources, limited budget for MSS allocation, or differences in policy priorities at the local level, including the commitment of regional heads as the main factor in achieving MSS. Quoted from an interview with the Secretary of the Directorate General of Regional Development Development, Ministry of Home Affairs:

*One of the main problems in Papua is that the population density is still very sparse. At the same time, the infrastructure in the service center is still very minimal, so building MSS facilities requires large costs. Other things, such as human resource support in education and health, are also still lacking; this is compounded by the fact that the regional head is not committed to achieving this. That is what causes the low MSS achievement; the geographical and demographic conditions of the Region are also added to by communication services, such as the availability of internet networks, which are not yet possible in every city and district.*

Provinces with high MSS achievements, such as DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, and East Java, performed very well in almost all areas. It indicates that regions with better resources and infrastructure can achieve MSS targets. Meanwhile,

provinces with low MSS achievements, such as provinces in Eastern Indonesia, such as Papua, West Papua, East Nusa Tenggara, and Maluku, appear to have lower achievements than provinces in Java. Geographical challenges, accessibility, and the high costs that must be incurred to build MSS facilities are the main factors causing this low achievement.

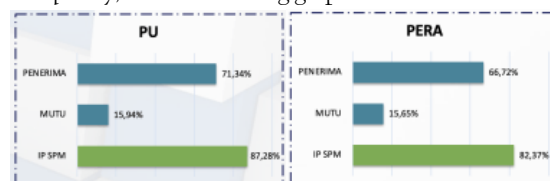
Meanwhile, if examined based on the achievement of the performance of the implementation of MSS in 2023, it varies in each field. For example, the MSS in the Education Sector in several regions has reached 100% (such as West Sumatra, South Sumatra, and the Riau Islands), while others are far below the national average, such as West Papua (52%) and East Nusa Tenggara (73%). It shows that several regions face challenges in providing essential education services according to standards, which limited infrastructure, human resources, or geographical constraints can cause. Then, for the Health Sector, it shows that the level of achievement is more uniform and high in most provinces, with many regions reaching 100%. It shows that essential health services in various provinces are generally more successful in meeting minimum standards, which could result from more significant support for health facilities or a more established system. However, if examined further based on the recipients and quality of services provided, it can be seen from the following graph:



Graph 8. Recipients and Quality of MSS Services in Education and Health Provinces throughout Indonesia 2023

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024

The Public Works (PU) sector shows significant variations in achieving MSS. Several provinces, such as Bengkulu (45%) and North Kalimantan (50%), have low achievements, while many other regions have achieved 100%. It is also due to differences in infrastructure budget allocation, technical capabilities, or geographical challenges. Meanwhile, the Public Housing (Pera) sector also shows significant variations, with several provinces such as North Kalimantan (50%) and West Papua (44%) having low achievements, while others have achieved 100%. Challenges in this sector may be related to limited land, funding, or policies on MSS for public housing at the local level that have not been properly executed at the regional level. For more details on the performance of MSS implementation based on recipients and service quality, see the following graph:



Graph 9. Recipients and Quality of MSS Services in the Public Works and Public Housing Sector in Provinces throughout Indonesia 2023

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024.

Public Order, Public Safety, and Public Protection sector has almost the same phenomenon in all provinces, reaching 100%. It shows strong efforts to maintain public order and tranquility,

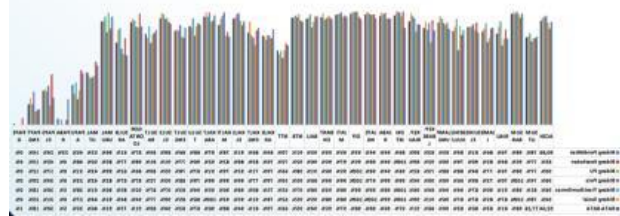
which may also be driven by more stable regulatory support and resources in this sector. Meanwhile, almost all provinces have achieved 100% in the Social Sector. Social services such as assistance for vulnerable groups and poverty alleviation have run quite well in many areas. An overview of the performance of MSS services based on recipients, and the quality of Public Order, Public Safety, and Public Protection, and Social services can be seen in the graph below:



Graph 10. Recipients and Quality of MSS Services in the Field of Public Order, Public Safety, and Public Protection and Social Affairs in Provinces throughout Indonesia 2023

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024.

Meanwhile, the performance achievements of MSS implementation in regencies/cities in Indonesia can be seen in the graph below:



Graph 11. Trends in MSS Implementation Achievements per Sector per Province in Indonesia

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024.

Analytical capacity is collecting, analyzing, and using data in policy-making and implementing policies. In the context of implementing MSS, strong analytical capacity allows local governments, in this case the Regency/City Government, to analyze their needs in providing MSS services. Based on the graph above, the Regency/City that has succeeded in achieving MSS in almost all sectors is in Provinces such as Central Java, East Java, and DKI Jakarta. It shows that the regencies/cities in this Province have analytical capacity at both the individual, organizational, and systemic levels (Wu et al., 2018). Identifying community needs according to each MSS field's indicators and adjusting relevant service policies are the keys to achieving service standards that must be met.

Local governments with adequate analytical capacity can more easily find gaps between existing services and established standards. It can be seen from regions that achieve more than 90% in almost all areas, indicating that they can understand the gaps in services and take appropriate actions to address them. However, limited analytical capacity in remote areas such as districts/cities in Papua, West Papua, and East Nusa Tenggara that show low MSS achievements may have limitations in analytical capacity. Without adequate data or good analytical capabilities, these areas may have difficulty determining service priorities or identifying the best way to achieve the established MSS. This lack of analytical capacity is caused by low budgets and limited human resources, which causes high dependence on national policies without good local adaptation capabilities. As in

the results of an interview with one of the Regional Secretaries of the Provincial Government in Papua:

*This Minimum Service Standard ensures that every citizen, including in Papua, has access to essential services such as education, health, basic drinking water and housing infrastructure, and other social areas. For example, building health facilities in remote areas requires much greater costs than other areas, not to mention ensuring that doctors or nurses are willing to work there. This also applies in education, where access to schools is complicated to reach. As a result, our MSS achievements in several of these areas are still far from ideal. A more precise strategy is needed to overcome this.*

This opinion aligns with previous studies that show the uniformity of policies, incentive problems, and poor supervision (Efriandi et al., 2019). On the other hand, making several strategic choices will impact the government's capacity to achieve the stated policy objectives (Peters, 2004). Local governments with low MSS achievements have not been right in making important decisions in selecting policy instruments that will be used to implement the MSS program. In fact, within the limited resources owned by the government, it is necessary to make wise decisions to determine strategic directions for the public interest (Painter, 2002).

Operational capacity refers to the technical and administrative capabilities to implement policies effectively. It includes financial resources, infrastructure, and competent personnel. The implementation of MSS is closely related to operational capacity, especially in health, education, and infrastructure, which require significant investment and technical capabilities. It also requires a planning and budgeting document that accommodates all programs and activities that support the effectiveness of MSS implementation in the Region, such as the following interview excerpt with the Head of the Padang City Bappeda Service:

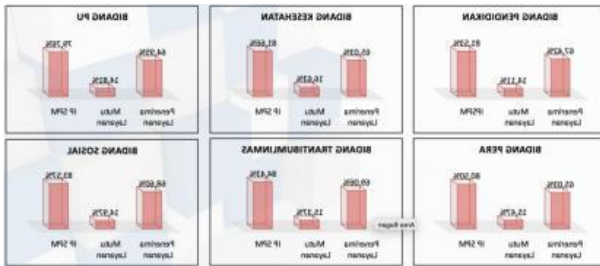
*The role of Bappeda ensures that programs and activities proposed by technical implementers in each field in implementing Minimum Service Standards are accommodated in the RKPD document. So, MSS achievements can be achieved optimally because the relevant agency can carry out each MSS activity.*

It is one of the keys to the success of the implementation of MSS in Padang City, West Sumatra Province. With good policy capacity, it can carry out high operationalization in implementing MSS. The expansion of access to services in education and health carried out by the mayor is a commitment to public services in his first term of office (Lewis et al., 2020). Meanwhile, regencies/cities with high MSS achievements in various fields in the Province, such as DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and West Java, are likely to have strong operational capacity. This capacity includes a sufficient budget, a competent workforce, and adequate infrastructure. DKI Jakarta, still the capital city then, had greater access to a budget and a professional workforce, enabling more effective implementation of essential services.

Meanwhile, operational constraints in provinces with low achievements in regencies/cities in Provinces such as Papua, West Papua, and several provinces in Eastern Indonesia showed far below standard achievements. It is due to operational limitations such as a lack of infrastructure, workforce, and health and education facilities. These limitations often make it difficult for these areas to achieve the same service standards as other provinces. This low operational capability is caused by limited

access to inadequate budgets, geographical difficulties, and low availability of human resources in each MSS service area.

Based on graph 10 (ten), it can be seen that almost all provinces achieved high MSS in the fields of Public Order, Public Safety, and Public Protection, and Social, which may not require complex infrastructure or exceptional workforce compared to health or education. It shows that operational capacity also differs in each service sector. The PU and Pera, Education, and Health sectors require more significant resources than other sectors, so strong operational capacity is needed to achieve high standards in these sectors. For more details, the MSS achievement can also be seen from both recipients and quality in the following graph:



Graph 12. Achievement of MSS Implementation per Sector in Regency/City/Province in Indonesia based on MSS IP

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2024.

Political capacity includes gaining political support (Wu et al., 2018) from internal and external stakeholders, especially the Regional Head, to implement policies. In the context of MSS, high political capacity allows local governments to gain support and budget allocation from the center: Regions that have succeeded in achieving high standards in all areas, such as provinces in Java, have more substantial political support, both from the center and from the regional leaders themselves, and in some regions, there is also support for programs and activities facilitated by international NGOs such as SKALA. This phenomenon reinforces that political decentralization has not been followed by fiscal and administrative decentralization (Basu, 2015), which continues to create regional government dependence on the central budget (Curto & Dias, 2015), and authority that is not accompanied by an adequate budget (Purwanto & Pramusinto, 2018). This support allows them to obtain sufficient budget and technical support to achieve MSS services. Strong political capacity also allows the Region to maintain a policy focusing on essential services according to community needs. It is very different from weaker political capacities, for example, in Provinces and Regencies/Cities such as West Papua, Papua, and Maluku. These limitations in political capacity can occur due to different political priorities, local political instability, or lack of attention from the central government. In addition, there are often changes in priorities when changing regional heads or new officials in charge of MSS, which are factors that inhibit consistency in achieving MSS.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals substantial disparities in achieving Minimum Service Standards (MSS) implementation across Indonesian regions. The most influential factors include fiscal limitations, infrastructure inequality, and gaps in human resources, with political commitment emerging as a critical determinant. Regions in Java benefit from stronger infrastructure and fiscal capacity, resulting in higher MSS achievement, whereas

many areas in Eastern Indonesia struggle due to systemic constraints.

The findings highlight that local governments' analytical, operational, and political capacities are pivotal to MSS success. Strong analytical capacity enables policies responsive to local conditions; operational capacity ensures effective service delivery; and political capacity guarantees institutional support and long-term commitment. Conversely, regions lacking these capacities often show low MSS performance and depend heavily on central government support.

To bridge these disparities, there is a need for a differentiated policy approach—one that is evidence-based, tailored to regional contexts, and backed by investments in infrastructure and human capital. Enhancing local political will and intergovernmental collaboration is essential to achieve sustained and equitable MSS outcomes. This study is limited by its reliance on qualitative data from a select number of regions, which may not capture the full complexity of MSS implementation nationwide. Future research should incorporate comparative quantitative analysis across regions and examine the role of sector-specific challenges. Longitudinal studies would also help evaluate the long-term impact of capacity-building interventions on MSS performance.

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