

SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS OF EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT OF REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF REGULATION, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, FUNDING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND TERRITORIAL ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

External oversight of public services in the regions aims to ensure that services operate optimally, effectively, efficiently, transparently, and accountably. This oversight is crucial for maintaining service quality, preventing abuse of authority, and improving public satisfaction. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia is mandated by regulation to carry out this oversight, as outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020 on the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). This study examines the Ombudsman's role in supporting national development planning, evaluates the resolution of public complaints, assesses compliance with public service standards, and explores evidence-based oversight in the regions. A qualitative descriptive approach incorporates literature studies, target and realization data analysis, and focus group discussions (FGD). The findings reveal significant challenges the Ombudsman faces, including regulatory, institutional, funding, operational, and geographical limitations. These constraints hinder target achievement, particularly at the regional representative level, where oversight is often limited to sample-based activities. The study highlights the need for policymakers to prioritize public service oversight system improvements. Strengthening the Ombudsman's resources and authority is essential for fostering a more professional, fair, equitable, and high-quality public service system, supporting and accelerating national public service reform.

INTRODUCTION

Inadequate public service delivery remains a global governance challenge, particularly in welfare-oriented states that are expected to ensure accessibility, quality, and fairness in administrative services. Procedural complexity, fragmented authority, and weak accountability mechanisms frequently result in maladministration, reduced service quality, and declining public trust in public institutions (Gill et al., 2020; Imbaruddin et al., 2021). As public expectations toward service standards increase, governments face mounting pressure to strengthen oversight systems capable of safeguarding citizens' rights while ensuring that public service providers comply with established norms and procedures. In this context, independent supervisory institutions—most notably ombudsman bodies—have emerged as key instruments for promoting accountability, providing non-judicial remedies, and reinforcing the state's responsibility to deliver quality public services.

The international literature widely recognizes the ombudsman as an essential accountability mechanism positioned between the executive and the legislature, with a mandate to investigate complaints, prevent maladministration, and enhance administrative justice (Gill et al., 2020). However, existing studies predominantly focus on legal mandates, institutional independence, or complaint-handling mechanisms at the organizational level. Far less attention has been paid to how ombudsman institutions function within broader national development planning systems, particularly in relation to performance-based planning and budgeting frameworks. As a result, the strategic role of ombudsman institutions in contributing to development outcomes, beyond individual case resolution, remains insufficiently theorized and empirically examined.

This gap is particularly evident in decentralized governance settings, where public service delivery involves multiple layers of government and diverse service providers. While some studies highlight the importance of accountability and transparency in improving service quality (Imbaruddin et al., 2021), there is limited empirical evidence on how supervisory outputs, such as compliance assessments and complaint resolution, are translated into policy-relevant information for development planning. Moreover, performance evaluations of ombudsman institutions often emphasize output indicators without adequately examining implementation constraints, regional disparities, or their implications for future policy formulation. Consequently, the role of ombudsman institutions as knowledge-producing actors within evidence-based planning processes remains underexplored.

Indonesia provides a relevant empirical context to address this research gap, particularly given the expanding authority of the Indonesian Ombudsman following the enactment of Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services and subsequent regulatory frameworks. As an independent state institution, the Indonesian Ombudsman is mandated to supervise public service delivery, conduct compliance assessments, and resolve public complaints through mediation, conciliation, and adjudication mechanisms. Its role is further reinforced within the national development agenda, where public service transformation constitutes a core policy priority. Despite this institutional positioning, systematic evaluations of how the Ombudsman's supervisory functions support national development planning and performance-based governance remain limited.

This study contributes to the literature by examining the role and performance of the Indonesian Ombudsman within the framework of the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the 2024 Government Work Plan (RKP). Specifically, it assesses the Ombudsman's contribution to public service supervision through two priority outputs: supervision of compliance by ministries, agencies, and regional governments with public service standards, and the resolution of public complaints and reports related to service provision. By analyzing achievement levels, policy relevance, and implementation challenges, including regional variations, this research provides evidence-based insights to inform future strategic planning and performance-oriented budgeting. More broadly, the study advances the international discourse on

accountability institutions by demonstrating how ombudsman performance can be systematically integrated into development planning and governance reform.

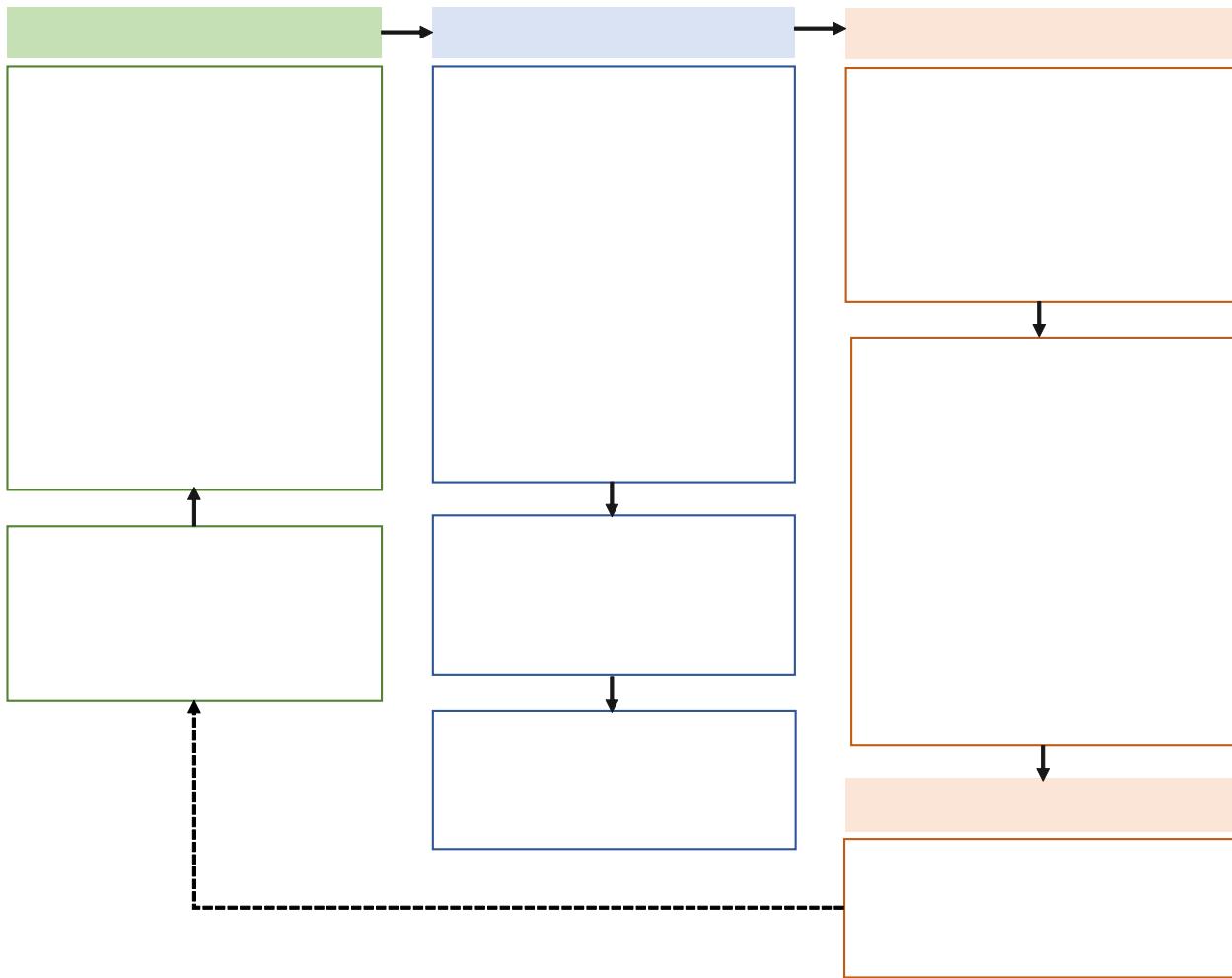


Figure 1. Research Framework

METHOD

The analysis method uses descriptive qualitative methods based on literature studies, analysis of target and realization, and is strengthened by Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to solicit input from parties, both the Central Ombudsman and 34 Ombudsman Representative Offices in the regions. The literature study will analyze policies and regulations related to priority projects in supervising the implementation of public services that are part of national priorities, from prevention to resolution. Determination of selected priority projects based on National RPJM and RKP documents. Target data and realization based on the Indonesian Ombudsman's Work Plan document for the last seven years.

Regarding the performance evaluation of priority output achievements as part of national priorities supported by the Indonesian Ombudsman, target-based and realization can be analyzed through confirmation in Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Problems/obstacles in implementing the supervision program for the

implementation of public services were obtained from discussions with the Indonesian Ombudsman and three picking test locations, namely Bangka Belitung Representatives, South Sulawesi Representatives, and East Nusa Tenggara Representatives. The FGD was carried out virtually through the Zoom application in August and October 2021.

Data analysis was conducted through three stages. First, document and literature analysis was used to examine regulatory frameworks, policy alignment, and priority project mandates related to public service oversight. Second, target and realization data were analyzed descriptively by comparing planned performance indicators with actual achievements across periods and regions to identify performance gaps and trends. Third, qualitative data from Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were analyzed thematically to identify recurring constraints and implementation challenges related to regulation, institutional capacity, funding, operational techniques, and territorial conditions. Triangulation across data sources was applied to enhance validity and ensure consistency of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Performance Evaluation of Priority Outputs in National Priorities Related to the Indonesian Ombudsman

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia is mandated in Law Number 25 of 2009 to carry out external supervision of public service delivery. This mandate is reflected in the output of a compliance survey of Law Number 25/2009 conducted by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. In the Strategic Plan of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia 2020 – 2024, this output is part of the Program for Oversight of the Implementation of Public Services, specifically Activities to Prevent Maladministration. The Ombudsman carried out the Compliance Survey with Law Number 25/2009 to measure the level of compliance of Ministries, Institutions, and Regional Governments with implementing Law Number 25/2009 regarding Public Services. The added value of the compliance assessment carried out by the Ombudsman is that it is carried out independently, without notification, when the implementation is carried out simultaneously, assesses physical appearance, and there is quality control.

From the period of the 2015-2019 National Medium-Term Development Plan (after this referred to as the National RPJM) to the 2020-2024 National RPJM, the best achievement of this compliance assessment is in 2021, which can cover all provinces, districts, and cities in Indonesia. In addition, 2021 assessments will be completed in 24 Ministries and 15 Institutions. In 2024, the public service compliance survey is targeted to be implemented in 591 agencies by accommodating surveys in four new provinces. However, in its implementation, it has not been able to achieve the specified target of 99.32 percent or implemented in 587 agencies. This is because data collection has not been done in the four new provinces. After all, there are no adequate service units.

The Ombudsman's commitment to carrying out this priority output has experienced its lowest point, namely in 2020, with the achievements of only one city and two districts. The city of Bandung received the green zone assessment title, while Karawang Regency and Sukabumi Regency received the yellow zone assessment title. The impact of budget cuts when COVID-19 entered Indonesia made it a national issue. The COVID-19 pandemic is endemic throughout Indonesia, causing a high risk of the spread of COVID-19 for survey officers and public service providers.

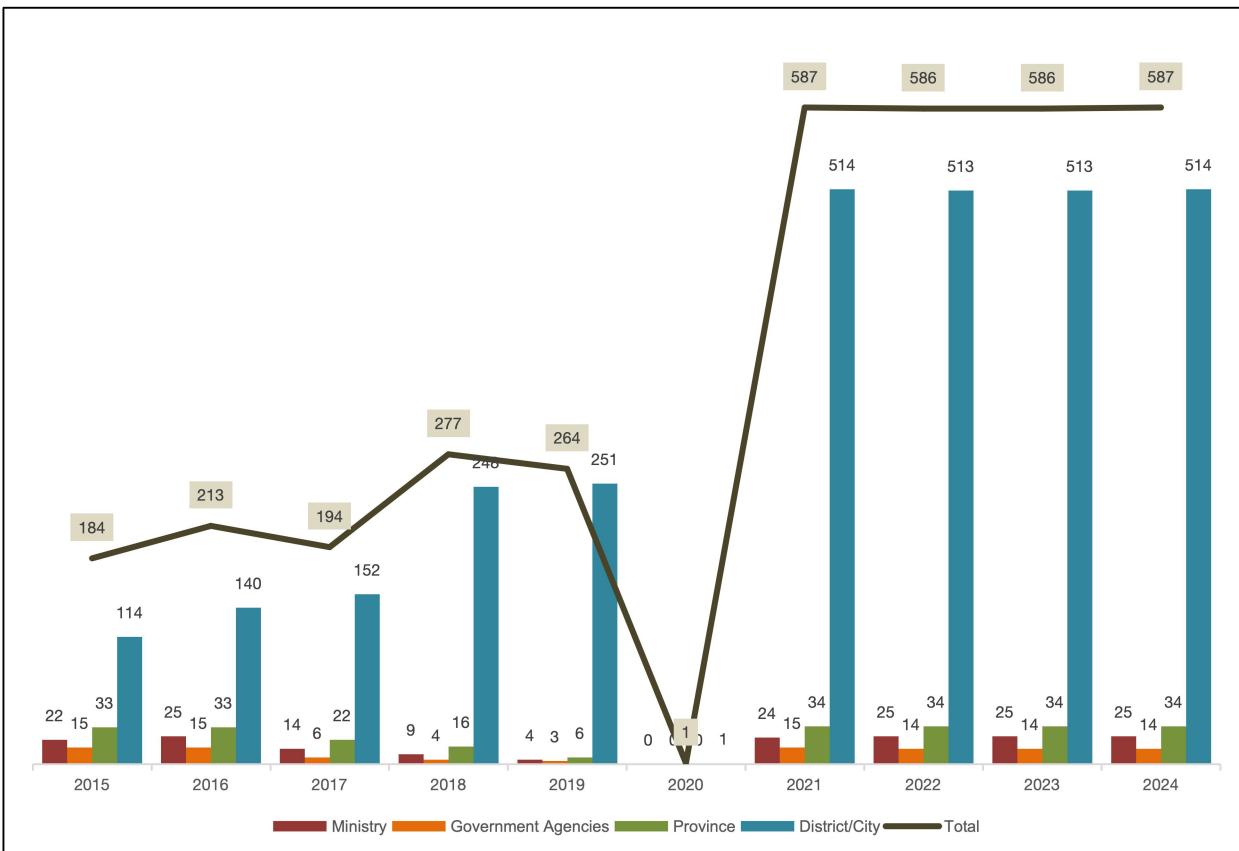


Figure 3. Realization of Ministries/Institutions/Regional Compliance Assessments with the Implementation of Law 25/2009 by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia

Source: Processed from the Ombudsman RI, 2024; Ombudsman RI, 2023; RI Ombudsman, 2022; RI Ombudsman, 2021a

Meanwhile, public complaints in general public services occur when the public as service users are dissatisfied with the services provided, even increasing disappointment when complaints submitted are not managed or responded to appropriately by complaints officers. Completing public reports/complaints about public services is the core business of the Indonesian Ombudsman, both at the center and with representatives. Public service standards that have been made and determined do not guarantee that the implementation of public services is of good quality. Therefore, managing complaints correctly and effectively is important to open the broadest possible access to the public as service users to participate in improving the quality of public services. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia receives not only reports/complaints from the public regarding maladministration by the government but also BUMN, BHMN, BUMD, and other institutions that provide public services with APBN or APBD funding (Izzati, 2020).

The results of the performance evaluation show that during 2015-2024, the number of public reports/complaints against public service providers at the central government and regional governments gives the same pattern between targets and their realization. In 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2024, the completion of public complaints reports exceeded the targets set for the Central Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Representative.

Table 1. Total Targets and Realization of Community Reports/Complaints Complaints against Public Service Providers (external complaint handling) conducted by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia

Office	2015		2016		2017		2018				
	Target	Realization	Target	Realization	Target	Realization	Target	Realization			
Central	950	170	1284	775	1252	1377	1512	1752			
Representative	5216	3422	6882	6487	6536	7744	6304	5794			
Total	6166	3592	8166	7262	7788	9121	7816	7546			
Office		2019		2020		2021		2022			
Central	1321	1913	389	1358	630	1288	530	1069			
Representative	5845	6754	3509	5674	5670	5133	5300	6287			
Total	7166	8667	3898	7032	6300	6421	5830	7356			
Office		2023		2024							
Central	737	1200	737	1193							
Representative	8935	6709	8935	9501							
Total	9672	7909	9672	10694							

Source: Processed from the SIMPeL Application; Ombudsman RI, 2023; RI Ombudsman, 2022; RI Ombudsman, 2021a

Until now, the issue of public services in Indonesia is like an iceberg that cannot melt. Starting from the problem of education and health, which is expensive and closes access for vulnerable groups, to the problem of complicated document processing, although usually, this is part of citizens' rights to obtain identity recognition as citizens. When viewed from a deeper context, four problems are often encountered by the community regarding public services such as 1) Poor quality of public service products; 2) Low/no access to public services for vulnerable groups such as people with low incomes, women, persons with disabilities, and others; 3) Poor quality of public service delivery; and 4) Unclear complaint mechanisms and dispute resolution.

For decades, the Ombudsman has been considered an important element of a country's democratic system. The Ombudsman institution has proven its efficiency as an important mechanism for public oversight authorities and a necessary extra-judicial procedure for resolving conflicts and improving relations between authorities and individuals through mediation and negotiation (Batalli, 2015). The performance of Public Complaint/Report Complaint Completion on external complaint handling can also be seen from the contribution of the Central Ombudsman and Representatives in the last seven years. The central Ombudsman generally achieves the targets set and even exceeds what was planned. The exception occurred at the beginning of the 2014-2019 National RPJM period, where in 2015 and 2016, the realization of performance achievements was far from expectations.

Nonetheless, from 2017 until now, the realization has tended to improve beyond the target set. From a representative (regional) perspective, performance achievements in 2015, 2016, 2018, 2021, and 2023 showed below-target results. Achievements that exceeded the target occurred in 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2024. In 2021, in general (total), the realization of the achievements exceeded the target. However, when detailed in more depth, it was found that the target of external complaint handling at 34 representative offices was not achieved. It needs special attention related to the root cause. The representative office may not achieve the target because the budget distribution is not balanced with the central one. Nonetheless, in general, the average time for completing

reports/complaints at the Indonesian Ombudsman in 2022 is 68.67 days, with details of the central Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia which is 76.85 days and the representative Ombudsman which is 67.53 days (Ombudsman RI, 2023).

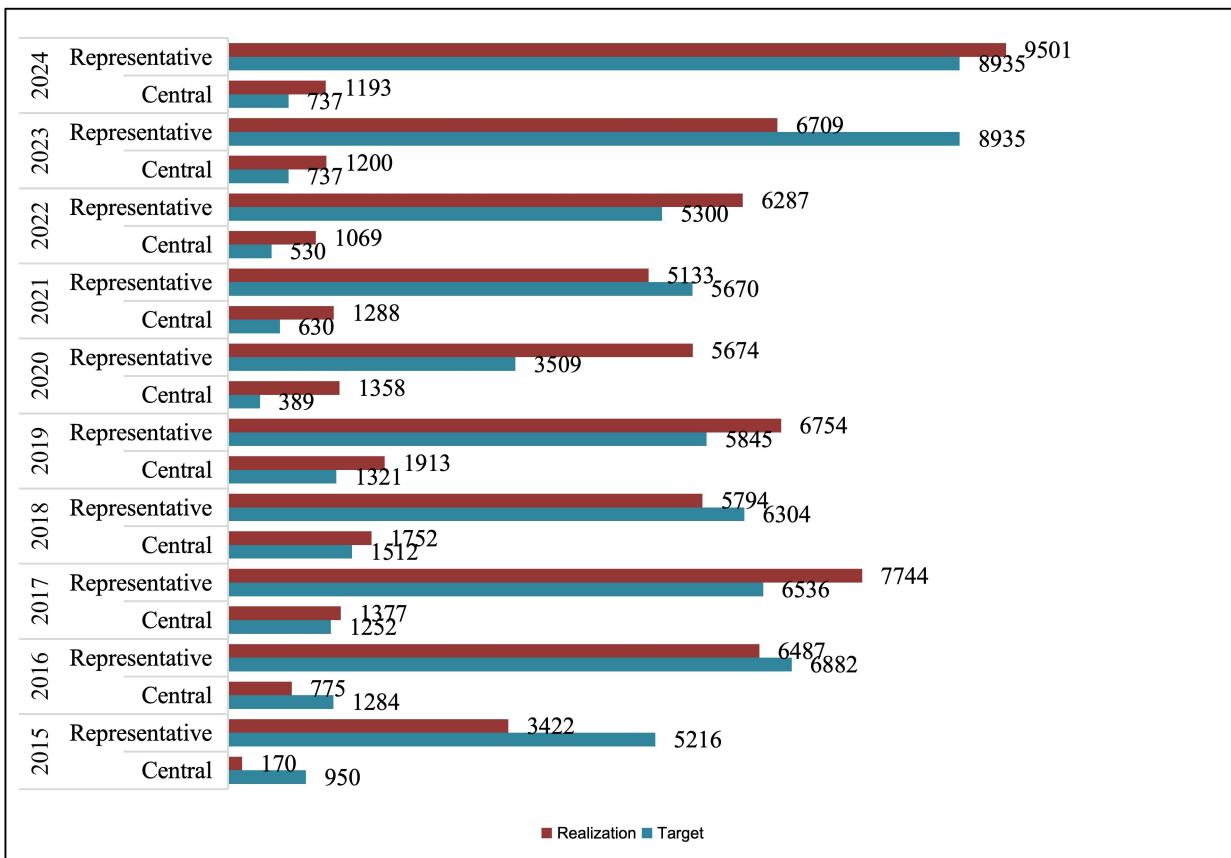


Figure 4. Targets and Realization of Public Complaints/Report Complaints regarding external complaint handling carried out by the Central Ombudsman and Ombudsman 34 Representative Offices (Regional)

Source: Processed from the SIMPeL Application; Ombudsman RI, 2023; RI Ombudsman, 2022; RI Ombudsman, 2021a

Synthesis of the Problems of External Oversight of Public Services by the Indonesian Ombudsman in the Regions

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, both at the central and regional levels, is better known as an institution that resolves public complaints rather than a preventive oversight institution that aims to prevent actions unsuitable to the law. The Ombudsman's oversight leads to recommendations given by the Ombudsman to public officials who commit irregularities or maladministration in the administration of public services. The role of the Ombudsman in promoting good governance faces challenges in terms of the commitment of public officials in government, level of public awareness, leadership, constitutional status, and specialist assistance (Creutzfeldt & Kirkham, 2020; Taumoepeau, 2019). Based on the literature review results and discussion with Media Zoom, several problems were found that needed serious attention in the future. Sample analysis was conducted with several representatives, including Bangka Belitung Province, South Sulawesi, and East Nusa Tenggara.

Table 2. Synthesis of Priority Output Implementation Problems in National Priorities related to the RI Ombudsman in Region

Aspect	Problem Synthesis
Regulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The regulatory framework supporting the Indonesian Ombudsman's role in preventing maladministration remains inadequate. Compliance surveys mandated by Law No. 25/2009 lack a clear legal basis and rely solely on Presidential Regulation No. 18/2020, which prioritizes this initiative under the 7th National Priority of the 2020-2024 RPJMN2) Local governments perceive the Indonesian Ombudsman's assessments as potentially biased, given their frequent discrepancies with evaluations conducted by other agencies. Furthermore, overlapping roles with the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform create confusion among Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) due to inconsistencies in methodologies and outcomes.3) Local governments face shortcomings in complaint-handling mechanisms, relying on regional head decrees rather than formal Governor/Regent/Mayor Regulations. This leads to ineffective implementation, while the absence of accessible channels for complaints and protests hampers efforts to improve governance performance and address public service administration issues.
Institutional	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Ombudsman personnel in the regions face limited training opportunities to improve their skills and institutional performance in supporting national priorities. Moreover, the shortage of assistant personnel in each unit weakens the effectiveness of public service supervision, compromising oversight quality and the achievement of priority outputs.2) The Indonesian Ombudsman struggles with centralization challenges, where prevention budgets are predominantly allocated to representatives but utilized for central-level activities. As a result, regional offices are left with limited resources and funding, restricting their capacity to perform comprehensive systemic reviews of agencies frequently reported for maladministration.3) The significant volume of public reports and complaints highlights persistent issues in implementing public services, indicating gaps in service quality, efficiency, and accountability that require immediate attention.
Funding	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The limited budget allocated for conducting Ombudsman studies poses a significant challenge in preventing maladministration in public services. This issue is particularly evident in the minimal resources provided within the budget framework of each regional representative office.2) Budget constraints faced by Ombudsman representatives have worsened due to policy cuts and refocusing on COVID-19 management. The lack of investigative funding hampers repeated investigations essential for obtaining critical information. Additionally, limited resources have led to inadequate facilities and infrastructure, affecting the performance of representative personnel.3) The quantity and quality of facilities and infrastructure for Ombudsman representatives, including buildings, transportation, and support equipment, remain insufficient. Budget cuts due to the COVID-19 response have further reduced available funds. Despite a bottom-up planning process involving input from representative offices, many proposals remain unaddressed due to persistent budget limitations.
Implementation Technique	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The budget allocated to Ombudsman Representative Offices remains inadequate for effective coordination and collaboration efforts. These financial limitations significantly constrain activities such as publishing advertorials or information in print and online media and organizing thematic discussions with community members ("Sahabat Ombudsman").2) Public reluctance to report issues through the Ombudsman's information system, introduced during the COVID-19 adaptation period, remains challenging. Many prefer expressing grievances directly at the Ombudsman's Representative Offices, highlighting a gap in adopting digital complaint mechanisms.3) Public awareness and participation in public service delivery remain very low, at less than one percent. This is partly due to limited access to information about complaint submission procedures. Despite numerous regional public service issues, few reports are submitted to Ombudsman Representatives, as communities often lack knowledge about reporting channels.

Aspect	Problem Synthesis
Territorial issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The shortage of Ombudsman assistants at representative offices forces them to take on tasks beyond their primary responsibilities. Additionally, the assistants' competencies and infrastructure support remain insufficient in regional contexts, hindering adequate supervision across geographically extensive areas. 2) The limited availability of human resources results in a heavy workload for Ombudsman assistants, particularly when resources must be shared for investigative activities in remote archipelagic regions with challenging geographical conditions. 3) The imbalance between the number of Ombudsman personnel and the breadth of their authority limits the effectiveness of field supervision, which is often reduced to sample projects rather than comprehensive oversight.

The high work target of the Representative Office to date has yet to be matched by an adequate number of human resources. Ombudsman Regulation Number 42/2020 concerning Requirements, Determination of Stages, and Career Development for the Assistant Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia states that if an assistant has reached the position of primary assistant, then he must be transferred to the Center Ombudsman. It can lead to an imbalance in the distribution of human resources between the Central Ombudsman and the Representative Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. The service standard is a benchmark used as a guideline for service delivery and a reference for assessing service quality as an obligation and promise of administrators to the community in the framework of quality, fast, easy, affordable, and regular services. As for the portrait of reports of public complaints about the implementation of public services from year to year, the reports that come in are still repeated regarding agrarian/land substance. This repetition occurs because there are no activities aimed at raising the awareness of the relevant agencies so that the same complaints do not recur. There are continuous incoming reports relating to prevention.

In addition to the above, from the point of view of national development planning, the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the central Ombudsman revealed that until now, there had been no active and planned oversight on technical substance within national priorities, which has a systemic impact on efforts to reduce the recurrence of the same public service maladministration problems. Currently, the Ombudsman's assessment of the context of oversight of public service providers is deemed to have yet to be institutionalized in a comprehensive assessment directly related to this institution's leading authority, particularly in resolving public complaints.

This study introduces conceptual novelty by framing external public service oversight not merely as a compliance or complaint-resolution mechanism, but as an integral component of national development planning and performance-based governance. By systematically linking ombudsman supervisory outputs with regulatory, institutional, funding, implementation, and territorial dimensions, this research extends existing accountability literature and provides a sustainability-oriented framework for evaluating external oversight institutions in decentralized governance contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that external public service oversight in Indonesia is formally aligned with national development planning, particularly under the seventh national priority of the 2020–2024 RPJMN. The Ombudsman's priority outputs—compliance supervision and external complaint handling—provide an important accountability foundation within a performance-based planning

framework. However, the sustainability of these outputs is constrained by fragmented regulatory authority, uneven role distribution between central and regional offices, and fiscal and territorial limitations that affect regional oversight capacity.

The findings further indicate that strengthening external oversight requires reinforcing the Ombudsman's regulatory mandate, improving resource allocation tailored to regional conditions, and adopting adaptive oversight mechanisms, including digital and collaborative approaches. Positioning the Ombudsman as a strategic governance actor within national development planning, rather than solely as a reactive complaint-handling institution, is essential to support equitable, evidence-based, and sustainable public service reform in decentralized governance systems.

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