A Policy Implementation Model in Decentralised Governance: Human Development in West Bandung Regency

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ABSTRAK

Pemekaran daerah sebagai strategi desentralisasi di Indonesia telah memunculkan daerah otonom baru (DOB) dengan harapan meningkatkan pelayanan publik dan kesejahteraan masyarakat, termasuk pembangunan manusia. Namun, dalam praktiknya, banyak DOB justru tertinggal dalam pencapaian Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (IPM). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi kebijakan pemekaran daerah dalam meningkatkan Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (IPM) di Kabupaten Bandung Barat, dengan menggunakan model Van Meter dan Van Horn yang dimodifikasi melalui penambahan dimensi kepemimpinan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam, studi dokumen, dan observasi partisipatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi kebijakan di KBB masih menghadapi berbagai kendala, seperti tidak sinkronnya tujuan kebijakan dengan indikator kinerja daerah, keterbatasan sumber daya, fragmentasi birokrasi, dan lemahnya kapasitas serta motivasi agen pelaksana. Penambahan elemen kepemimpinan terbukti menjadi variabel penting dalam menjembatani kesenjangan antara kebijakan pusat dan realitas lokal, serta meningkatkan efektivitas koordinasi dan komunikasi lintas lembaga. Temuan ini berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan teori implementasi kebijakan dengan memperluas kerangka analisis klasik. Penelitian ini relevan bagi para pembuat kebijakan, terutama dalam merancang strategi implementasi kebijakan daerah yang lebih adaptif, responsif, dan berbasis konteks lokal.

ABSTRACT

Regional division as a decentralisation strategy in Indonesia has created new autonomous regions (DOB) with the hope of improving public services and community welfare, including human development. However, in practice, many DOBs have lagged behind in achieving the Human Development Index (HDI). This study aims to analyse the implementation of regional division policies in improving the HDI in West Bandung Regency, using the modified Van Meter and Van Horn model with the addition of a leadership dimension. The study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, data collection through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participatory observation. The findings reveal that the implementation of policies in KBB still faces various challenges, such as the lack of alignment between policy objectives and regional performance indicators, resource constraints, bureaucratic fragmentation, and weak capacity and motivation among implementing agents. The addition of the leadership element has proven to be a crucial variable in bridging the gap between central policies and local realities, as well as enhancing the effectiveness of cross-institutional coordination and communication. These findings contribute to the development of policy implementation theory by expanding the classical analytical framework. This research is relevant for policymakers, particularly in designing more adaptive, responsive, and context-based local policy implementation strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

Regional autonomy, as the foundation of the administration of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, is realised in part through decentralisation. This decentralisation policy grants local governments the authority to regulate and manage the interests of local communities based on local aspirations, with the hope of achieving political justice, local government accountability, and better democratisation, as local governments are considered to have a better understanding of the issues facing their communities. Along with the reform of the government system from centralisation to decentralisation, various regional restructuring initiatives have emerged, including regional expansion and consolidation, as regulated in Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government.

Regional expansion has become a prominent issue since the enactment of Law No. 22 of 1999, which was later updated by Law No. 32 of 2004 and Law No. 23 of 2014. This regulation provides the basis for the formation of New Autonomous Regions/Daerah Otonomi Baru (DOB) as an implementation of the principle of decentralisation, with the ultimate goal of improving the welfare of the community through more optimal management of regional resources, in accordance with the mandate of Government Regulation No. 78 of 2007 on the Procedures for the Formation, Abolition, and Merger of Regions. Data from the Ministry of Home Affairs shows that between 1999 and 2022, Indonesia has established 226 new DOBs, consisting of 11 provinces, 181 regencies, and 11 cities. West Bandung Regency/Kabupaten Bandung Barat (KBB), which was split off from Bandung Regency, is one example of a DOB whose establishment is expected to bring significant improvements for its community.

Fundamentally, the primary objective of regional restructuring, particularly the creation of new regions, is to achieve effective governance, accelerate improvements in community welfare and public service quality, enhance government administration and regional competitiveness, and preserve the uniqueness of local customs and culture. However, empirical evidence indicates that the implementation of regional restructuring has not fully aligned with its normative objectives. An evaluation by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2022 noted that over 80% of DOBs were deemed unsuccessful in improving governance performance or community welfare. KBB, as one of the DOBs formed under Law No. 12 of 2007, is an interesting case study. On the one hand, KBB was once named the best DOB in Indonesia, but on the other hand, the region continues to face various structural challenges and stagnant human development performance, even below the average of West Java Province.

The benchmark for development success, including the impact of regional expansion policies, is often measured using the Human Development Index (HDI), which is a composite index that measures average achievements in three dimensions covering the pillars of health, education, and economy. The latest data from the West Java Central Statistics Agency in 2023 shows that the HDI of West Bandung Regency ranks 22nd out of 27 regencies/cities, with a value of 70.33, lagging behind its parent regency, Bandung Regency, which recorded an HDI of 73.64. This lag is not only evident in education indicators such as Average Years of Schooling but also in economic and health components, including high stunting prevalence in some remote districts. This situation is exacerbated by internal institutional issues, such as low fiscal capacity, budget deficits, and regional leadership tarnished by corruption cases involving two consecutive regents.

This situation raises a crucial question: does regional expansion truly improve community welfare as mandated by national regulations? Or do new regions like KBB instead become a fiscal burden and a source of new development disparities? Previous studies have explored the impact

of regional expansion policies on government performance and community development. (Tenrini, 2013) highlights the democratic euphoria surrounding regional expansion, which is not always accompanied by institutional readiness, while (Muqoyyidin, 2013) show that expansion often creates new problems, including boundary conflicts and fiscal disparities. (Santika et al., 2018) found that in some regions, such as North Lombok, decentralisation had a positive impact on economic performance and public services. On the other hand, research by (Aminah et al., 2019) and (Rudiansyah, 2024) shows that regional decentralisation has not significantly accelerated improvements in education and health quality. However, most of these studies are still macro and general in nature, not examining in depth the variables of policy implementation, institutional capacity, and their quantitative and qualitative impacts on HDI in the specific context of DOB.

This study fills this gap by focusing on West Bandung Regency as a case study, using a policy implementation model approach to evaluate the effectiveness of decentralisation policies in improving the HDI. Unlike previous studies that only observed general development outcomes, this study systematically examines the factors influencing policy implementation, including resources, implementer characteristics, dispositions, and local socio-political conditions. Thus, this study aims to identify obstacles and opportunities in policy implementation at the local level. Additionally, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of policy implementation models in new autonomous regions and provide evidence-based policy recommendations for local and national governments to optimise decentralisation for the welfare of the people.

Literature Review

Decentralisation and Regional Expansion

Decentralisation is a policy instrument designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public services through the redistribution of authority from the central government to the regions (Smoke, 2015). In the Indonesian context, decentralisation is reinforced through regional expansion policies or the formation of New Autonomous Regions (DOB), which are expected to improve public access to basic services and accelerate local economic development (Fitrani et al., 2005). Law No. 23 of 2014 and Government Regulation No. 78 of 2007 explicitly mention expansion as a strategy to boost regional government performance.

However, empirical studies show mixed results. Some studies found that regional expansion successfully accelerated development, such as in North Lombok Regency (Santika et al., 2018) and East Luwu Regency (Rifdan, 2010). However, other studies highlight the high failure rate of DOBs in achieving service efficiency and improving welfare (Aminah et al., 2019)(Nurliawati, 2014). This highlights the importance of re-examining how the implementation process of decentralisation policies unfolds in various local contexts.

Recent empirical findings further reveal that administrative and digital governance capacity is a crucial component in realising the goals of decentralisation. For instance, a study on bureaucratic reform in the Bandung Regency Department of Culture and Tourism demonstrates how adopting the New Public Service paradigm encourages greater community orientation, participatory governance, and transparency in public institutions (Nubala et al., 2024). These reform efforts are particularly vital in DOBs, where newly formed administrations often struggle with legitimacy and service delivery. Complementing this, Sawir et al. examine the implementation of digital public services in

Jayapura Regency, highlighting how e-government platforms can enhance transparency and access to information, yet also expose disparities in digital infrastructure and administrative readiness (Sawir et al., 2023). Together, these studies underline that decentralisation and regional expansion cannot succeed through structural reforms alone; they must be accompanied by meaningful innovations in bureaucratic culture, leadership practices, and digital governance systems tailored to local capacity and context.

Public Policy Implementation

To analyse the success or failure of decentralisation policies, the public policy implementation model serves as the primary theoretical framework. This model identifies six key variables that determine the success of implementation: (1) Policy size and objectives (standards and targets); (2) Resources (financial, human, technological); (3) Inter-organisational communication and implementation activities; (4) Characteristics of implementing agents (bureaucratic structure, capacity); (5) Attitudes or tendencies (dispositions) of implementers; and (6) Economic, social, and political environment (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975). This framework is considered comprehensive for analysing the various challenges faced in the implementation of regional expansion policies, such as those in West Bandung Regency. This model is widely used in public policy studies because it captures the complexity of policy implementation practices at the local level (Hill & Hupe, 2014).

In addition, (Matland, 1995) approach to the 'ambiguity-conflict model' adds a new dimension to understanding the context of implementation. In this model, policies are classified into four categories based on the level of ambiguity and conflict: administrative, political, experimental, and symbolic. This framework is important for understanding the dynamics of decentralisation implementation, which often involves various actors and interests that are not always uniform at the regional level.

Recent studies have further enriched these theoretical models by examining their application in complex governance settings. For example, Connaughton shows how ambiguity and policy contestation at multiple governance levels hinder the implementation of peatland conservation policies in Ireland, illustrating how similar challenges might emerge in decentralised systems (Connaughton, 2024). Similarly, Andersen et al. highlight how organisational ownership and structure influence implementation outcomes, suggesting that the quality of policy execution is deeply connected to internal dynamics within implementing bodies (Andersen et al., 2024). These findings support the continued relevance of the Van Meter and Van Horn model, particularly when complemented by conflict-sensitive frameworks like Matland's. In decentralised contexts such as Indonesia, where local dynamics, bureaucratic fragmentation, and leadership crises frequently occur, integrating these models provides a more holistic understanding of implementation barriers and offers practical insights for improving policy performance in new autonomous regions.

Human Development Index

The Human Development Index (HDI) was developed by the UNDP as a composite indicator to measure multidimensional quality of life. The HDI consists of three main dimensions, namely health (measured by life expectancy), education (average years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and decent living standards (adjusted per capita expenditure) (UNDP, 2016). This concept is theoretically rooted in the capability

approach developed by Amartya Sen, which emphasises the importance of expanding substantive human freedoms in life (Sen, 1999).

The HDI in Indonesia is often used as a tool for evaluating regional performance and the impact of development policies. Research by (Sjafii et al., 2005) shows that the HDI is more representative than conventional economic indicators in measuring regional development success. However, in the context of new autonomous regions, there is still a lack of research that links decentralisation policies and HDI achievements in depth, particularly those that examine the interaction between policy implementation variables and human development outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-exploratory design to deeply understand the dynamics of regional expansion policy implementation in West Bandung Regency and its relationship with improvements in the Human Development Index (HDI). This approach was chosen because it can capture the social and institutional complexities that influence the success of public policy in a specific local context (John W. Creswell, 2023). The research focuses on analysing the policy implementation process, interactions among actors, and implementers' perceptions of the factors supporting and hindering policy success, which cannot be captured through quantitative approaches alone.

The conceptual framework of this research refers to (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975) policy implementation model, which includes six main variables: policy size and objectives, resources, inter-organisational communication, characteristics of implementing agents, implementers' dispositions, and the external environment. This model was chosen because it is systematic and integrative, and has proven to be applicable in analysing public policy at the local level (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). In addition, understanding the level of ambiguity and conflict in policy implementation was also integrated using (Matland, 1995) ambiguity-conflict model, which enabled the identification of implementation strategies most appropriate to the KBB context. The variables from both models are operationalised in interview guidelines and thematic analysis categories.

Primary data is collected through in-depth interviews with key informants selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, including officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the West Java Provincial Government, and the Bandung Barat Regency Government, as well as sub-district representatives. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format to allow flexibility in exploring empirical experiences and local narratives. Secondary data were obtained from regulatory documents, BPS statistical reports, budget documents, and DOB evaluation reports. All data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques through the interactive model of (Miles et al., 2014), which includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was tested through source, method, and time triangulation to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2002).
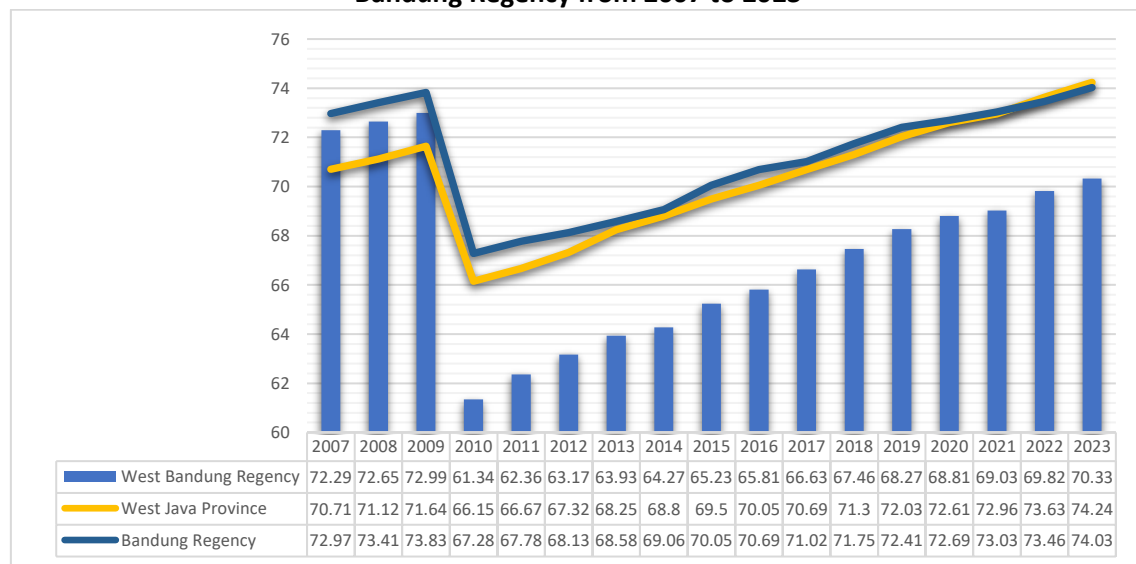
The informants in this study represented a broad range of strategic stakeholders involved in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of regional expansion policies in West Bandung Regency. They included: (1) national-level policymakers, such as the Director of Regional Structuring at the Ministry of Home Affairs, members of the Regional Autonomy Advisory Council, and a Deputy from the Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas); (2) provincial-level officials, including the Acting Governor and the Regional Secretary of West Java Province; (3) the Head of the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) and fiscal decentralisation officers; (4) asset managers from the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency; (5) legislative actors from the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) at both

provincial and regency levels involved in regulatory processes; (6) key implementers at the regency level, including the Regent of West Bandung, the Regional Secretary, and the Head of Regional Governance; (7) sub-district heads from newly established DOBs; and (8) community representatives from the DOB Formation Forum and local opinion leaders. This comprehensive selection aimed to ensure the inclusion of diverse institutional perspectives and to capture a multidimensional understanding of the policy implementation process and its impact on public service delivery.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Human Development Index (HDI) Trends in West Bandung Regency Following Administrative Reorganisation

Graph 1.
Comparison of the HDI Values of West Bandung Regency with West Java Province and Bandung Regency from 2007 to 2023

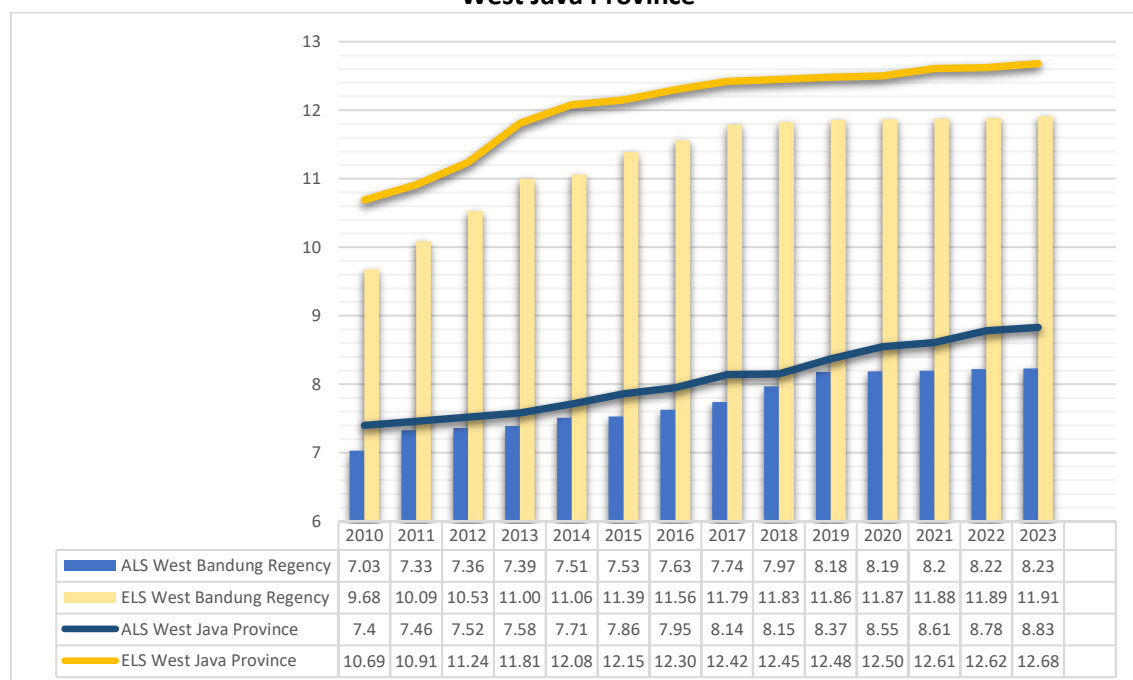|	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
West Bandung Regency	72.29	72.65	72.99	61.34	62.36	63.17	63.93	64.27	65.23	65.81	66.63	67.46	68.27	68.81	69.03	69.82	70.33
West Java Province	70.71	71.12	71.64	66.15	66.67	67.32	68.25	68.8	69.5	70.05	70.69	71.3	72.03	72.61	72.96	73.63	74.24
Bandung Regency	72.97	73.41	73.83	67.28	67.78	68.13	68.58	69.06	70.05	70.69	71.02	71.75	72.41	72.69	73.03	73.46	74.03

Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

Overall, the Human Development Index (HDI) achievements of Bandung Barat Regency have shown a consistent upward trend since the establishment of this new autonomous region in 2007. Graph 1 indicates that while the direction of improvement is clear, the pace of acceleration has not yet reached a competitive regional level. This suggests that the division has indeed brought positive impacts, but they are not yet strong enough to structurally reform the foundations of human development. The increase in the HDI from 69.52 in 2020 to 70.33 in 2022 indicates sustained improvements in education, health, and household expenditure. However, this trend is not yet progressive enough to lift KBB from the 'medium' to 'high' category, let alone catch up with its parent district (Bandung District, HDI 73.64).

Despite the continuous upward trend in HDI scores, the relative stagnation in West Bandung Regency's position compared to the provincial and parent district averages suggests underlying structural and governance-related constraints. One of the main challenges lies in the uneven distribution of development outcomes across sectors and sub-regions, particularly in newly formed districts within the regency. This reflects broader implementation issues linked to regional capacity, including limited fiscal resources, fragmented planning, and bureaucratic inertia. Moreover, the relatively slow acceleration of HDI improvement highlights the need for

more targeted policy interventions that go beyond infrastructure expansion to include human capital development and institutional reform. The data also indicate that while West Bandung has made gains in health and education, it still lags in income-related indicators, which are essential for long-term socioeconomic transformation. These findings underscore the importance of examining how decentralised governance and administrative reorganisation translate into measurable improvements in public service outcomes, especially in the context of new autonomous regions (DOBs).
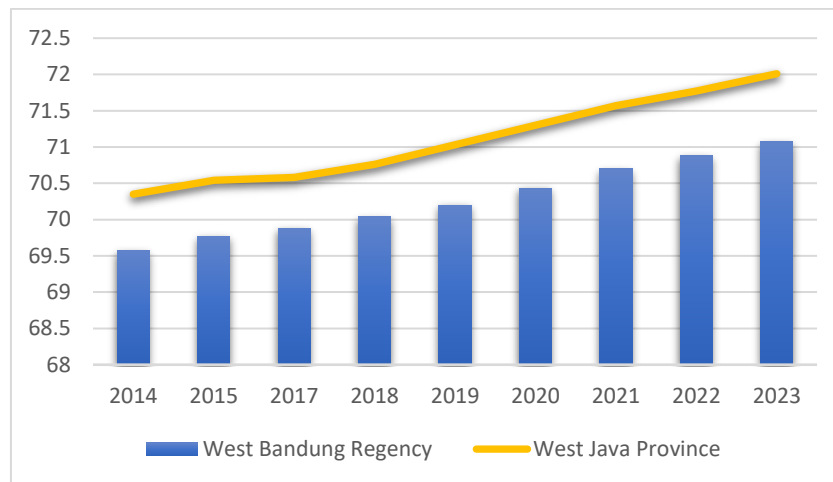
Graph 2.
Average Length of Schooling and Expected Length of Schooling in West Bandung District and West Java Province

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ALS West Bandung Regency	7.03	7.33	7.36	7.39	7.51	7.53	7.63	7.74	7.97	8.18	8.19	8.2	8.22	8.23
ELS West Bandung Regency	9.68	10.09	10.53	11.00	11.06	11.39	11.56	11.79	11.83	11.86	11.87	11.88	11.89	11.91
ALS West Java Province	7.4	7.46	7.52	7.58	7.71	7.86	7.95	8.14	8.15	8.37	8.55	8.61	8.78	8.83
ELS West Java Province	10.69	10.91	11.24	11.81	12.08	12.15	12.30	12.42	12.45	12.48	12.50	12.61	12.62	12.68

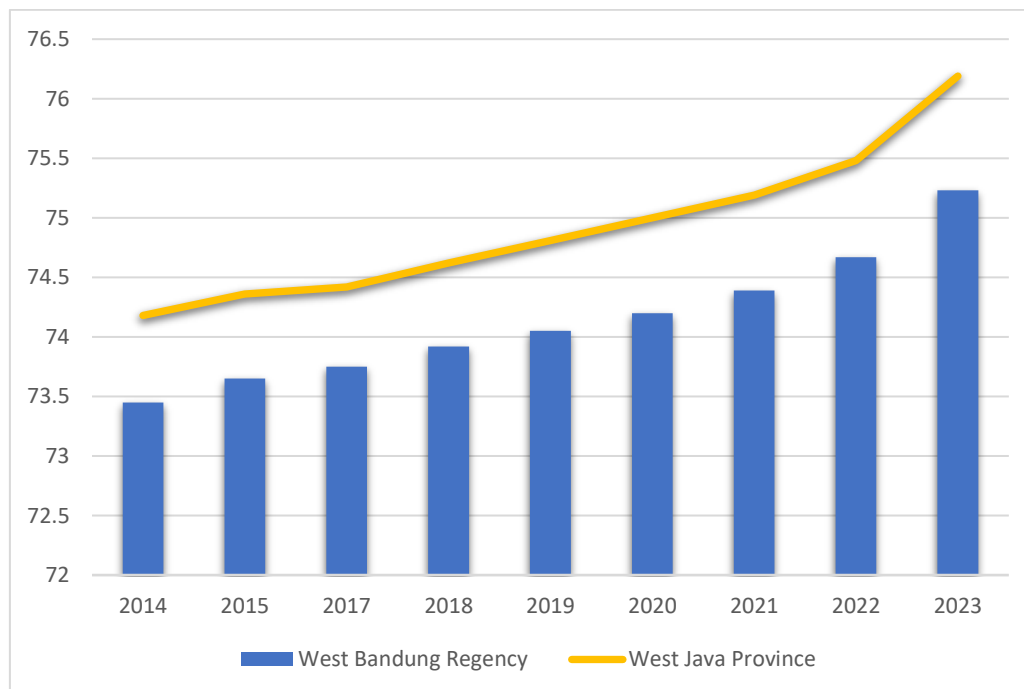Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

In the education dimension (Graph 2), the data shows moderate progress but remains constrained by internal disparities. The Average Length of Schooling (ALS) increased from 7.03 years (2010) to 8.23 years (2023), while the Expected Length of Schooling (ELS) also increased from 9.68 to 11.91 years over the same period. This trend indicates an expansion of access to and participation in education among the school-age population. However, comparison with the West Java Province average (MLS 8.83 years; ELS 12.68 years in 2023) reveals that West Bandung Regency still lags behind in actual achievement. Geographical disparities between the more developed northern regions and the underdeveloped southern regions exacerbate the distribution of educational quality. Uneven school infrastructure, suboptimal teacher distribution, and the socio-economic burden on low-income families are the main obstacles in transforming educational aspirations into tangible achievements.

Graph 3.
Male Life Expectancy in Bandung Barat District and West Java Province

Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

Graph 4.
Female Life Expectancy in Bandung Barat District and West Java Province
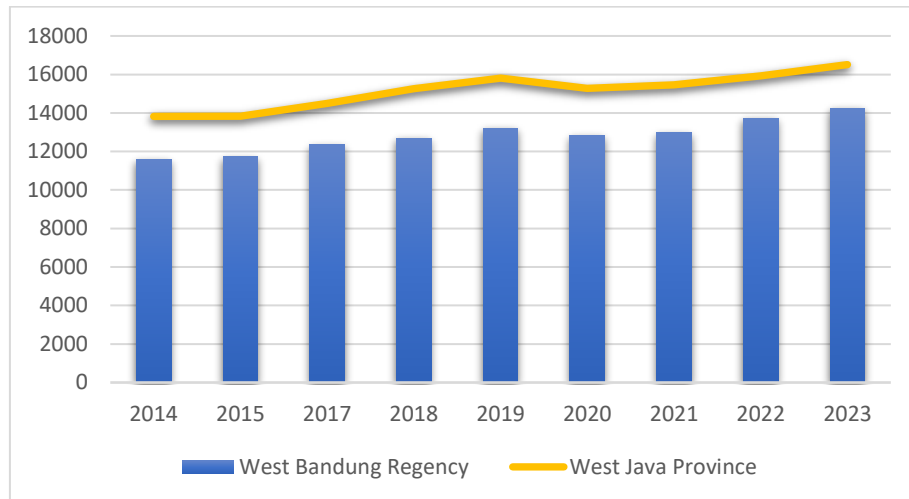

Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

The health sector shows similar dynamics. Although life expectancy increased between 2014 and 2023, from 69.57 years to 71.07 years for men, and from 74.18 to 75.23 years for women (Graph 3 and 4), the gap remains evident when compared to the provincial average (72.01 years for men and 76.19 years for women). Interestingly, the acceleration in HLE occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, likely due to increased health awareness and expanded access to basic services. However, structural challenges still persist: while healthcare facilities such as hospitals and community health centres have increased, they are not yet evenly distributed in remote

areas. Additionally, the high prevalence of stunting indicates that nutrition and maternal-child health interventions are not yet optimal, and there is weak coordination among local government agencies in addressing public health issues.

Graph 5.
Real Per Capita Expenditure for Male in West Bandung Regency and West Java Province

Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

Graph 6.
Real Per Capita Expenditure for Female in West Bandung Regency and West Java Province
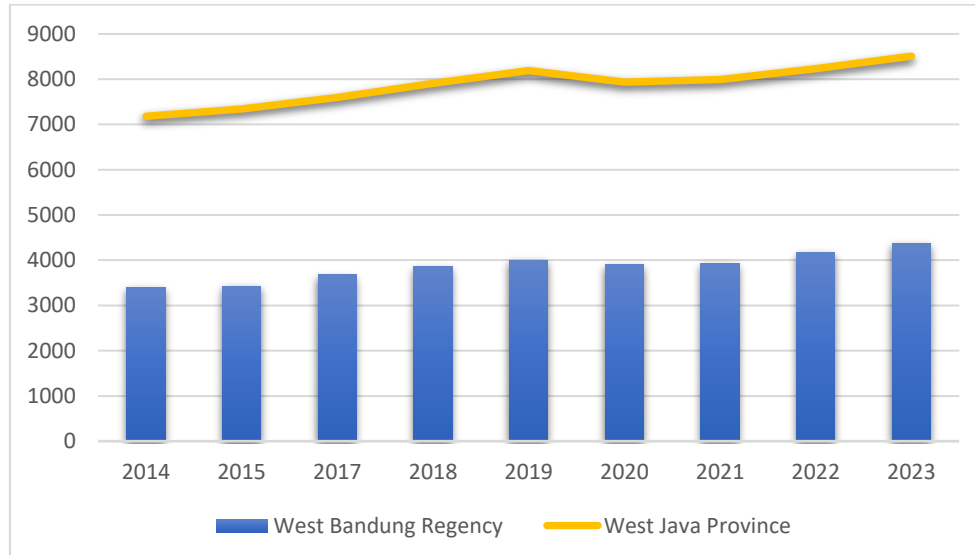
Source: (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023)

The standard of living dimension, represented by adjusted real per capita expenditure, also grew from Rp10.34 million (2020) to Rp11.82 million (2022) (Graphs 5 and 6). However, this growth has not been sufficient to reach the most vulnerable groups, who still experience extreme poverty, particularly in agricultural and mountainous areas. One of the causes is the regional economic structure, which is still dominated by the informal sector and subsistence agriculture, with limited contributions from the service and manufacturing sectors. High fiscal dependence on central government transfers, coupled with a budget composition dominated by personnel

expenditures, limits fiscal space for productive and inclusive development spending. This hinders the acceleration of sustainable improvements in living standards.

Thus, although KBB's HDI achievements show progress, they still do not reflect the results of fully effective policies after the division. Quantitative improvements need to be accompanied by policy reforms based on local microdata, fairer distribution of resources, and consistency in the implementation of strategic human development programmes. KBB's efforts to accelerate HDI growth need to focus on institutional reform, community involvement, and the reformulation of sectoral performance-based budgets that directly address indicators of education, health, and family economics. Without more targeted and evidence-based interventions, KBB's HDI will remain relatively stagnant amid the dynamics of inter-regional development competition in West Java.

Analysis of the Implementation of Regional Expansion Policies and Their Relationship to HDI Achievement in Bandung Barat Regency

Policy implementation is a crucial process in the public policy cycle aimed at translating policy formulations into concrete actions through activities, programmes, and institutions that serve as implementers. This complexity is further heightened in the context of regional decentralisation, where policies designed at the central level must be operationalised at the local level with varying capacity conditions. To systematically analyse this phenomenon, this study employs Van Meter and Van Horn's policy implementation model as the primary analytical framework. This model is deemed relevant as it provides six key variables, policy standards and objectives, resources, inter-organisational communication, implementer characteristics, implementer disposition, and external environment, enabling a comprehensive examination of factors influencing the success or failure of implementation. Using this model, the study can systematically examine how the decentralisation policy in West Bandung Regency affects efforts to improve the Human Development Index (HDI) and identify critical points that need to be improved through more adaptive and contextual policy interventions.

The research findings reveal that one of the fundamental problems lies in the formulation of the policy's measures and objectives. Law No. 12 of 2007 does outline noble goals such as bringing public services closer and improving welfare, but these goals tend to be general and lack specific measurability in regional planning documents such as the 2019–2024 RPJMD. Key human development indicators, such as average years of schooling, per capita expenditure, and life expectancy, have not been positioned as primary benchmarks in performance evaluation or budget allocation. As a result, policy objectives become ambiguous and difficult to evaluate quantitatively, a condition that, according to (Matland, 1995), can hinder the effectiveness of implementation from the outset. The low consistency between abstract goal formulations and concrete programme implementation, as expressed by one Bappelitbangda staff member regarding the focus on physical infrastructure rather than HDI outcomes, confirms the existence of initial obstacles in the implementation cycle, as warned by (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

The next significant obstacle is limited resources, both financial and human. After expansion, new autonomous regions often focus more on governmental transition, such as institutional formation, regulation, and resource management, rather than the realisation of decentralisation goals, so that public services and community welfare are often neglected. Bandung Barat Regency initially showed early progress thanks to effective initial leadership, but this success did not continue due to a corruption case involving the local head, which eroded public trust and hindered development. Resource distribution also remains a challenge. Without adequate and equitable financial management, infrastructure, and human resources, decentralisation

struggles to significantly improve the Human Development Index (HDI) and risks widening socio-economic disparities between regions.

Data from the (West Java Provincial Statistics Agency, 2023) shows that direct spending allocations for vital sectors such as education and health remain below 25% of the total KBB Regional Budget. This situation is exacerbated by a weak Regional Fiscal Capacity Index of 0.25, limiting the fiscal flexibility of the local government to fund strategic human development programmes. The limitations are not only in terms of budget but also in the availability and distribution of professional personnel such as teachers, doctors, and nutrition counsellors, which are still uneven, especially in border areas like Rongga and Cipongkor. Statements from informants at the Health Department regarding the challenges of equitable distribution of medical personnel due to restrictions on hiring and insufficient incentives highlight this issue. Furthermore, the limited availability of human resources with the technical competence to design and evaluate HDI-based programmes is also a serious constraint. This finding is consistent with (Grindle, 1980) view that the success of policy implementation depends not only on funding but also on the availability of trained and competent personnel.

Furthermore, the characteristics of implementing agencies in KBB show significant variations in technical capacity. Officials in technical agencies, sub-districts, and village heads have different levels of understanding of HDI-based planning. In areas such as Lembang and Padalarang, understanding is relatively good, but in other areas such as Sindangkerta and Gununghalu, understanding is still limited, as acknowledged by a sub-district secretary who stated that they only implement programmes from above without the capacity to develop their own indicator-based programmes. This competency gap, exacerbated by the lack of post-decentralisation training, supports (Hill & Hupe, 2014) study on how the heterogeneity of implementing agents' characteristics can explain variations in the performance of decentralisation policy implementation across regions.

In this context, effective leadership is crucial to ensuring the success of government organisations, as competent leaders are able to guide, motivate, and optimise resources to achieve objectives. Hermanu Iriawan and Edyanto emphasise that leadership is the centre of change and a key factor in organisational success, where leaders must excel in knowledge and be able to navigate the dynamics of bureaucratic change. However, since its establishment, West Bandung Regency has experienced a leadership crisis, with three consecutive regional heads implicated in corruption cases. Abubakar was sentenced to prison for fundraising for his wife's candidacy; Aa Umbara was implicated in a COVID-19 procurement case; and Arsan Latif was also named a suspect in a corruption case.

Additionally, communication issues between organisations and implementation activities have also been hindering factors. Coordination between regional agencies on human development issues remains sectoral and has not been optimally integrated. Although forums such as the Musrenbang exist, thematic coordination on education and health issues has not been effective, as evidenced by the stunting prevention programme being implemented partially by each relevant agency. A district head's statement about the lack of knowledge regarding the indicators used by other departments highlights the weakness of horizontal communication. This situation not only causes programme overlap and budget inefficiency but also reflects weak inter-agency networking, which, according to (O'Toole, 2000), is the main cause of policy implementation failure in multilevel government systems. The lack of communication integration also results in information or directives from the central government not being conveyed fully and uniformly at the operational level.

Despite various initiatives aimed at enhancing inter-agency communication and cooperation, fundamental obstacles persist, including data inconsistencies, entrenched sectoral paradigms, and insufficient strategic leadership. In West Bandung Regency, for instance, discrepancies in data across government agencies particularly within poverty alleviation programmes highlight the limitations of coordination. A notable example lies in the underutilisation of data on out-of-school children provided by the Population and Civil Registration Agency, which the Education Agency fails to integrate effectively into its planning. This horizontal fragmentation, where local government units (OPDs) operate in silos, results in diminished policy synergy and efficiency. According to Van Meter and Van Horn's policy implementation model, such weaknesses in organisational communication and coordination critically undermine the effectiveness of public programmes.

While this article highlights institutional and bureaucratic aspects, it could also add broader external factors such as community support, regional economics, and social factors that influence policy effectiveness. The external environment, comprising socio-economic, political, and geographical dimensions, plays a pivotal role in shaping policy outcomes. In the case of KBB, its expansive and mountainous terrain creates logistical challenges in delivering equitable public services. The socio-economic divide between the relatively urbanised northern areas and the more rural southern zones exacerbates inequality. Additionally, political instability fuelled by corruption scandals involving former regents has disrupted the continuity and credibility of development policies, creating further barriers to effective governance (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983).

These environmental and societal factors, often beyond the direct control of policy implementers, must be acknowledged as critical influences on implementation success. For instance, the low level of community participation in the planning and monitoring of development programmes reflects a weakened local accountability mechanism. This absence of citizen engagement not only hampers the responsiveness of public policy but also diminishes the legitimacy of interventions in the eyes of the community. In accordance with Mazmanian and Sabatier's framework, such externalities serve as inhibiting conditions, which, if not addressed, can undermine the long-term effectiveness of policy interventions.

Therefore, improving the HDI in West Bandung Regency requires more than just technical efficiency. It necessitates a holistic and multi-dimensional strategy that incorporates governance reform, capacity-building among implementers, and stronger inter-agency coordination. At the same time, there must be renewed efforts to foster meaningful community engagement, enhance public trust, and account for complex socio-political dynamics. Only by aligning institutional capability with contextual realities can public policy achieve sustainable developmental outcomes in challenging environments.

Overall, both internal and external factors ultimately influence the disposition or attitude of policy implementers. Regional expansion aims to improve community welfare through equitable development, efficient governance, and improved public services. However, in KBB, the success of this policy faces various challenges involving the attitudes and dispositions of policy implementers, leadership commitment, and integrity issues that affect the level of public trust. The perception that human development programmes 'do not yield political results' compared to physical infrastructure development, whose results are more immediately visible, as expressed by a village head, indicates a gap between long-term policy objectives and short-term political pressures. This attitude leads to a tendency for implementation to be symbolic rather than substantive, even though implementers may understand the importance of HDI. As emphasized by (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975), the disposition of implementers that is not

aligned with policy objectives will weaken the quality of implementation. Weak commitment to the development vision and ineffective internal oversight systems not only reflect a leadership crisis but also directly impact low community participation in strategic programmes. Therefore, changes in incentive systems, performance evaluations, and reward mechanisms based on human development outcomes are urgently needed.

Discussion

This study makes an important theoretical contribution to the study of public policy implementation, particularly by developing and modifying the classic model of (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975) for the context of regional expansion policy and improvement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in West Bandung Regency. The novelty lies in the integration of theoretical approaches and practical applications across the three main dimensions of the HDI, education, health, and economy as well as the addition of leadership as a new strategic variable in the implementation process. While the Van Meter and Van Horn model essentially explains the success of implementation as the result of interactions between variables such as policy size and objectives, resources, inter-organisational communication, characteristics of implementing agents, external conditions, and implementers' dispositions, this study incorporates leadership elements to address the complexity of policy implementation in new autonomous regions facing administrative, political, and social challenges. This model becomes increasingly relevant in explaining the reality of Indonesia's decentralised bureaucracy, often characterised by institutional fragmentation and unique local dynamics.

The integration of leadership as a variable within the Van Meter and Van Horn policy implementation model is far from superficial; it is grounded in empirical evidence illustrating that the success or failure of decentralisation policy hinges significantly on the ability of leaders to act as catalysts. Effective leaders are instrumental in formulating operational guidelines, unifying diverse policy actors, and maintaining fidelity to the intended policy objectives. As noted by (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975) and supported by (Dove & Freeley, 2011), leadership is central in bridging the disjuncture between overarching macro-level directives and the specific, context-driven needs at the local level. In West Bandung Regency, the leadership of the Acting Regent at the outset of decentralisation played a pivotal role in managing institutional transformation, demonstrating how adaptive leadership can steer short-term successes. Yet, over time, the erosion of leadership integrity evidenced by recurrent corruption scandals has severely undermined policy continuity and the sustainability of human development initiatives. This lends weight to the assertion that, in the absence of communicative, integrative, and responsive leadership, policy implementation becomes susceptible to disorientation, stagnation, and even resistance.

While the study rightfully emphasises leadership, it does not fully delve into other critical variables such as organisational culture and local political dynamics, both of which significantly influence implementation outcomes. Organisational culture determines how norms, values, and informal routines shape the behaviour of actors within public institutions. In contexts such as West Bandung, where bureaucratic inertia and sectoral ego often prevail, a leadership-driven approach must also consider how entrenched institutional habits can constrain adaptive change. Likewise, the political landscape marked by clientelism and fluctuating alliances can distort policy intentions and compromise administrative neutrality. These dimensions, though not central to the model presented, merit further exploration to enrich the understanding of how contextual variables interact with leadership and influence the policy process.

The model developed in this research does succeed in illustrating a more dynamic interplay among the core elements of the implementation process. For instance, the size and clarity of

policy objectives are often diluted at the operational level when not backed by leaders capable of translating abstract norms into actionable strategies. In West Bandung Regency, sectoral and poorly coordinated communication among institutions has clearly obstructed key strategic programmes, including equitable access to education and the reduction of stunting. In such cases, leadership serves not only as a facilitator of cross-sectoral dialogue but also as the architect of institutional coordination mechanisms (Mavrogordato & White, 2020). The impact of leadership also extends to shaping implementer disposition; participatory and vision-oriented leadership styles have been shown to foster stronger motivation, engagement, and ownership among policy actors, as highlighted by (Gilson, 2016). This underscores how leadership contributes not only to procedural compliance but also to nurturing a constructive organisational atmosphere.

Figure 1.
Modification of the Regional Expansion Policy Implementation Model in Improving the Human Development Index in West Bandung Regency
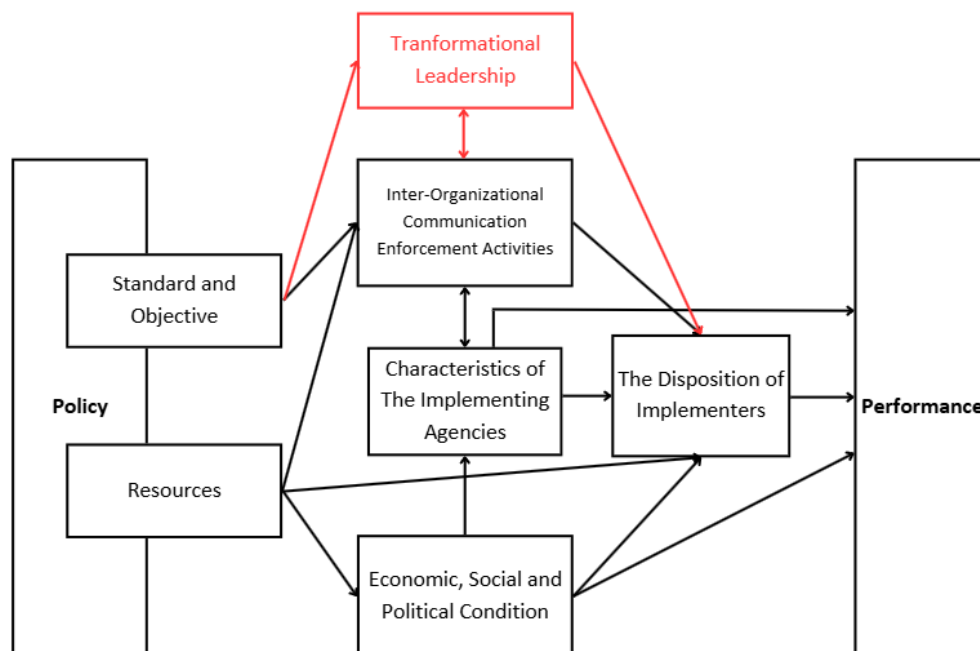
Source: Author Research

In this modification (Figure 1), the leadership element is placed between the characteristics of the implementing agency and implementation performance, and is related to several other variables:

a) **Policy Size and Objectives → Leadership**

Policy scope and objectives determine the direction and standards that must be achieved in policy implementation. However, policy objectives designed at the central level are often difficult to implement directly at the implementation level without effective leadership. Leadership plays a role in bridging policy standards with implementation realities on the ground, ensuring that policies are not merely administrative documents but are translated into actionable strategies. Leaders with a clear vision can help develop technical guidelines, identify obstacles in policy

implementation, and provide more concrete direction to policy implementers. In addition, leaders who understand policy measures and objectives well can more easily adapt policies if obstacles arise in implementation in the field, without losing the essence of the policy.

b) Leadership ←→ Inter-Organisational Communication and Law Enforcement

Effective leadership and inter-organisational communication including law enforcement, exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship, where each influences and strengthens the other. Leaders play a critical role in designing and institutionalising communication mechanisms that ensure coordination among central and regional governments, agencies, and community actors, thereby enabling consistent policy implementation. As (Mavrogordato & White, 2020) highlight, strong leadership enhances clarity and cooperation across institutions, reducing fragmentation and improving outcomes. At the same time, robust communication systems empower leaders with timely information, stakeholder feedback, and early warning signals, allowing them to adapt and lead responsively. This dynamic extends to law enforcement, where leadership ensures the establishment of fair and consistent enforcement mechanisms, while clear inter-agency communication enhances monitoring, compliance, and the legitimacy of leadership decisions. Without this reciprocal interplay, policies risk becoming disjointed, poorly enforced, or misinterpreted across institutions.

c) Leadership → Attitude (Disposition) of Implementers

The disposition of implementers refers to the attitude and commitment of policy implementers in carrying out their duties. This factor is greatly influenced by the leadership style applied. Inspirational and participatory leaders can build the motivation and dedication of implementers in carrying out policies. Conversely, if leaders do not show strong support for policy implementation or fail to build a sense of responsibility among implementers, attitudes of resistance, procrastination, or even policy implementation failure will arise. According to (Gilson, 2016), inclusive leadership can build trust among policy implementers, increase their involvement in decision-making, and create a conducive work environment for more effective policy implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of regional expansion policies in West Bandung Regency has not yet fully succeeded in achieving the intended goal of improving the Human Development Index (HDI), as mandated by national regulations. Although there has been a quantitative increase in HDI, the rate of progress still lags behind that of the parent region and the provincial average. The primary obstacles include unclear formulation of policy objectives, limited resources, weak interorganisational coordination, and low capacity and motivation among implementers. Bureaucratic fragmentation and a leadership crisis, exacerbated by recurring corruption cases among local officials, have further weakened the overall effectiveness of policy implementation. The Van Meter and Van Horn model effectively identified the complex interplay of variables that influence the success of decentralisation policies, particularly in terms of communication, implementer characteristics, and implementer disposition.

As a theoretical and practical contribution, this study develops a modified policy implementation model by incorporating leadership as a strategic variable. Adaptive leadership has been shown

to play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between macro-level policy intentions and micro-level implementation realities in newly established autonomous regions. The revised model strengthens the relationship among key implementation variables and provides an alternative analytical framework for enhancing policy implementation in locally specific contexts. Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed: the reformulation of measurable policy indicators, the reallocation of budgets with a focus on HDI outcomes, capacity building for implementers, and improved cross-agency coordination mechanisms. Thus, this model not only contributes to understanding policy implementation dynamics in West Bandung Regency but also possesses broader applicability to other newly created autonomous regions (DOBs) in Indonesia. The framework can serve as a conceptual and evaluative tool for both central and local governments in designing more responsive, participatory, and sustainable policy implementation systems, especially in regions facing similar challenges related to leadership, interagency coordination, and institutional capacity.

This study is highly relevant within the broader discourse on decentralisation and regional expansion, particularly in evaluating their tangible impact on HDI improvement in new autonomous regions. However, its limitations lie in the geographic scope and data sources, which remain focused on a single regency and do not yet incorporate a wider quantitative approach to enable cross-regional comparison. Future research is encouraged to adopt a comparative, cross-district methodology and employ mixed-method approaches to enhance the generalisability of findings and validate the applicability of this modified model across diverse geographical and political contexts.

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