Policy Implementation in Indonesia: A Systematic Review of Recent Trends and Practices in Public Administration and Governance

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Abstract. This study presents a systematic literature review (SLR) of public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia from 2009 to 2025, following the PRISMA framework. Drawing on 44 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus, the review examines the impact of decentralization, digital transformation, and governance innovation on policy outcomes and administrative reform. The findings indicate that decentralization has enabled local experimentation and improved service responsiveness. However, it has also resulted in uneven policy capacity and governance disparities across regions. Sectoral implementation, especially in health, welfare, and food safety, remains inconsistent, largely due to institutional fragmentation, political interference, and capacity limitations. Although efforts to implement New Public Management (NPM) principles and digital tools have been made, bureaucratic inertia, coordination failures, and limited flexibility hinder reform progress. The rise of e-government and agile governance shows promise in enhancing efficiency and public participation. However, these advancements are still hampered by digital divides and regulatory uncertainties. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed critical vulnerabilities in policy execution, underscoring the need for resilient, adaptive governance models capable of responding to unforeseen crises. This review contributes to the understanding of Indonesia's evolving administrative landscape and offers several practical recommendations. These include strengthening intergovernmental coordination, investing in local administrative capacity, fostering participatory governance, and institutionalizing agile, collaborative practices. The study highlights the importance of integrated, inclusive, and data-driven governance to improve public sector performance and ensure democratic accountability. By focusing on these areas, Indonesia can better address the challenges of public administration and policy implementation, driving long-term sustainable development and effective governance in the country.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Indonesia, Policy Implementation, Public Administration, Systematic Review.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration plays a central role in shaping the effectiveness of governance, particularly in translating political decisions into actionable policies and public services. In developing countries like Indonesia, where governance systems are in constant flux, the quality of public administration significantly influences socio-economic development, democratic consolidation, and public trust in government institutions (Turner et al., 2022). Following the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998, Indonesia embarked on a wide-ranging process of democratic reform that included decentralization, bureaucratic restructuring, and a renewed emphasis on participatory governance (Harun et al., 2019).

The introduction of the **regional autonomy law (Law No. 22/1999, revised by Law No. 32/2004 and later by Law No. 23/2014)** marked a critical transformation in Indonesia's public administration landscape. It shifted authority from the central

government to more than 500 local governments, aiming to bring governance closer to citizens and promote service delivery innovation at the local level (Salim & Hudalah, 2020). While this decentralization process created new opportunities for responsiveness and local participation, it also introduced considerable variation in institutional capacity, policy outcomes, and levels of corruption across regions (Kristiansen et al., 2009).

In addition to decentralization, Indonesia has adopted elements of **New Public Management (NPM)** to modernize its public sector. These reforms include performance-based budgeting, accountability frameworks like **SAKIP**, and managerial tools designed to enhance transparency and reduce inefficiency (Wahyurudhanto, 2020). However, the impact of these reforms has been mixed. Deep-rooted challenges such as patrimonialism, institutional inertia, limited human resource capacity, and sectoral egos continue to impede policy implementation and bureaucratic effectiveness (Danar et al., 2020; Harun et al., 2019).

Recent years have also witnessed the rise of **digital governance and agile administrative practices**, driven by technological change and increasing citizen expectations. Initiatives such as the **100 Smart Cities Program, e-SAKIP**, and village-level digitization (e.g., **Simpledesa**) represent efforts to integrate technology into public service delivery (Anas & Cahyawati, 2023; Kaynanda & Zarlis, 2024).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed both the weaknesses and adaptive potential of Indonesia's public administration system, prompting calls for greater resilience, inter-agency collaboration, and real-time policy responses (Ihsan & Munabari, 2023; Rahmadana et al., 2025).

Although numerous empirical and conceptual studies have examined aspects of public administration and policy reform in Indonesia, there remains a lack of systematic synthesis that brings together the diverse findings from across sectors and regions. Existing literature tends to focus on specific themes, such as health policy, transparency, or decentralization without offering a comprehensive overview of recent trends and practices. This gap limits the ability of policymakers and scholars to identify cross-cutting issues and best practices.

In response to this gap, this study conducts a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** to critically analyze the body of research on public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia. Applying the **PRISMA framework**, the review synthesizes peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and case studies published between 2009 and 2025. The objective is to map out recent developments, identify recurring

challenges, and highlight innovations in governance practices. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to scholarly discourse and practical policy reform by providing a holistic understanding of Indonesia's evolving administrative landscape and offering evidence-based recommendations for enhancing public sector performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Background

Understanding public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia requires an interdisciplinary theoretical foundation that integrates classical governance models with contemporary innovations in public management. This section outlines key theories that frame the analysis of administrative practices and reform dynamics in the Indonesian context, including Classical Bureaucratic Theory, New Public Management (NPM), Governance Theory, Agile Governance, and Collaborative Governance.

a. Classical Bureaucratic Theory and Its Legacy

Max Weber's bureaucratic theory forms the foundational framework for understanding traditional public administration. Weber (1947) conceptualized bureaucracy as a hierarchical, rule-based structure designed to ensure efficiency, predictability, and impartiality in governance. In Indonesia, the influence of this model is evident in the enduring formalism and centralized decision-making processes, a legacy of both Dutch colonial administration and the authoritarian New Order regime under Suharto (Harun et al., 2019). While this structure has provided administrative continuity, it has also contributed to rigidity, bureaucratic inertia, and limited adaptability, especially in decentralized and dynamic governance environments (Danar et al., 2020).

b. New Public Management (NPM)

Since the early 2000s, Indonesia has adopted various elements of New Public Management (NPM), a paradigm that emphasizes efficiency, results-based management, and market-oriented reforms in the public sector. Key components of NPM include performance-based budgeting, managerial autonomy, and customer-focused service delivery (Hood, 1991). In Indonesia, these reforms are reflected in programs such as SAKIP (Performance Accountability System of Government Agencies) and the push for performance indicators in public institutions (Wahyurudhanto, 2020).

However, the impact of NPM in Indonesia has been mixed. Cultural constraints, weak institutional capacity, and political resistance often limit the effectiveness of NPM tools, especially at the subnational level (Harun et al., 2019).

c. Governance Theory

Governance theory shifts the analytical focus from government (as a formal institution) to governance (as a process involving multiple actors). This theory recognizes that modern public administration operates in multi-actor, multi-level, and networked environments, where collaboration, negotiation, and flexibility are critical (Kjaer, 2011; Kooiman, 2003). In the Indonesian context, governance theory is useful for analyzing the interaction between central and local governments, civil society, private sector actors, and international institutions. The country's decentralization reform embodies the principles of multi-level governance, but the varying capacities of local governments and sectoral fragmentation continue to challenge coherent policy implementation (Fossati, 2016; Kristiansen et al., 2009).

d. Agile Governance

Agile governance represents a more recent paradigm that promotes responsiveness, adaptability, and iterative policy-making. Drawing from agile methodologies in the private sector, agile governance encourages public institutions to be more citizen-centered, data-driven, and collaborative, especially in rapidly changing environments (World Economic Forum, 2018). In Indonesia, the importance of agility was made evident during the COVID-19 crisis, which required flexible policymaking and decentralized responses (Ihsan & Munabari, 2023). Lukman & Hakim (2024) argue that agile governance, when combined with digital transformation and political stability, improves service satisfaction and policy responsiveness. However, this model still faces structural limitations due to rigid hierarchies and a lack of performance-based culture in the bureaucracy.

e. Collaborative Governance

Collaborative governance is defined as a process where public agencies engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This approach is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where policy implementation often requires the participation

of civil society organizations, private firms, and local communities. For instance, the Directorate General of State Assets has successfully applied collaborative models in managing government properties by involving multiple stakeholders in decision-making processes (Jiwando & Juwono, 2019). However, collaborative governance remains underdeveloped in many sectors due to weak institutional frameworks, distrust among stakeholders, and limited incentives for cooperation.

f. Implementation Theory

Policy implementation theory distinguishes between top-down and bottom-up approaches in translating policy into practice. Top-down models emphasize centralized control, clear policy goals, and hierarchical compliance (Hupe, 2011). While bottom-up models highlight the role of local actors, street-level bureaucrats, and contextual flexibility (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). In Indonesia, both models coexist uneasily. National-level policies often adopt a top-down approach, while their implementation depends heavily on local interpretation, capacity, and political will (Yulivestra et al., 2025).

This hybrid dynamic frequently results in implementation gaps, especially in sectors like village development, health, and disaster management (Harun et al., 2021; Sufri et al., 2023).

By integrating these theoretical lenses, this study builds a multidimensional understanding of Indonesia's public administration. Classical theories explain the persistence of hierarchical and rule-bound systems, while NPM and governance theories offer insight into reform efforts and innovation. Agile and collaborative models represent emerging paradigms that emphasize adaptability and inclusiveness crucial in the face of complex policy challenges. Together, these frameworks guide the analysis of how institutional design, administrative culture, and contextual dynamics influence policy implementation in contemporary Indonesia.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a **Systematic Literature Review (SLR)** methodology to synthesize and analyze current research on public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia. The systematic review approach was chosen to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability in identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing existing studies.

The review was conducted following the **PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses)** framework, which provides a standardized protocol for reviewing large bodies of academic literature in a structured and methodical manner (Page et al., 2021)
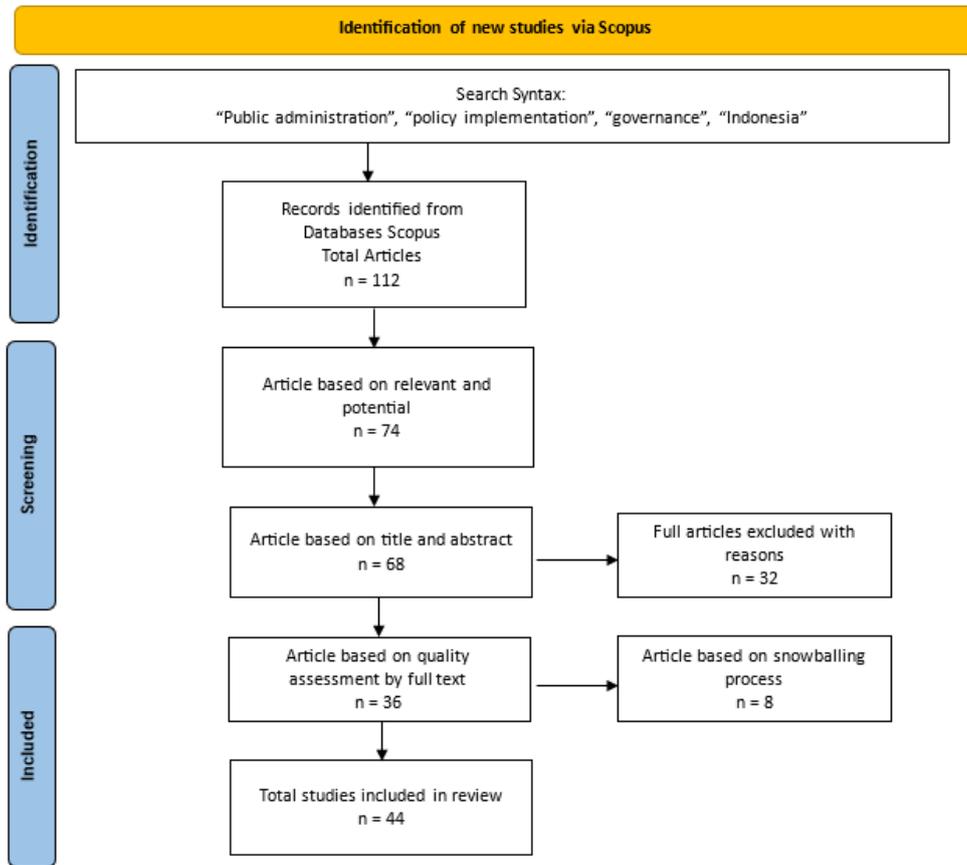
Figure 1. Flow PRISMA diagram of the research
Source: Author's own work, 2025

Data Source and Search Strategy

All data for this review were sourced exclusively from the **Scopus database**, one of the world's largest and most reputable abstract and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature. The search was conducted using a combination of keywords related to the core themes of the study, including: "public administration", "policy implementation", "governance", "Indonesia". Boolean operators such as **AND**, **OR**, and **NOT** were used to refine and broaden the search strategy. The search was limited to English-language journal articles published between **2009 and 2025**, ensuring both temporal relevance and academic credibility. Conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded to maintain the quality and validity of the review.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles included in this review were selected based on specific criteria: they must focus on public administration or policy implementation in Indonesia, be published in peer-reviewed journals, written in English, and indexed in Scopus. Studies that did not concentrate on the Indonesian context, lacked clear relevance to policy implementation, were not research-based, or lacked methodological rigor were excluded. After applying these criteria, 44 out of 112 articles were deemed eligible for final analysis.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data from the 44 selected articles were systematically extracted and analyzed using thematic content analysis. Key information such as publication year, authors, research objectives, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and main findings were recorded. The extracted data were then categorized into thematic areas, including decentralization, digital governance, transparency, and collaborative policy implementation. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used to identify patterns and trends. To support the bibliometric analysis, **VOSviewer** was employed to generate a **keyword co-occurrence density map**, allowing the identification of dominant research themes and emerging issues in the field of public administration in Indonesia.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Landscape of Administrative Reform in Indonesia

Public administration in Indonesia has undergone profound changes since the post-authoritarian transition that began in 1998. The implementation of democratic governance and the adoption of decentralization policies significantly reshaped the bureaucratic structure and governance landscape (Turner et al., 2022). The decentralization law enacted in 2001 enabled the delegation of substantial authority to over 500 regional governments. While this has fostered greater responsiveness and innovation in some localities, it also introduced disparities in governance quality and capacity due to varied political and administrative maturity (Kristiansen et al., 2009; Salim & Hudalah, 2020).

Reform initiatives such as the implementation of performance-based systems (e.g., SAKIP) and the introduction of collaborative governance models aimed to improve accountability and efficiency. However, Indonesia's colonial administrative legacy and authoritarian bureaucracy have limited reform outcomes.

The persistence of hierarchical structures, weak inter-agency collaboration, and limited performance incentives remain key obstacles (Danar et al., 2020; Harun et al., 2019). In this context, Indonesia's adoption of New Public Management (NPM) principles has produced mixed results. While certain managerial innovations have improved public accountability, others failed to gain traction due to institutional resistance, patrimonial culture, and inconsistent leadership commitment (Wahyurudhanto, 2020).

Sectoral Policy Implementation: Uneven Capacity and Results

Policy implementation across sectors in Indonesia presents a varied and fragmented landscape, reflecting disparities in institutional capacity, local political dynamics, and governance readiness. Each policy sector like health, social welfare, and food safety illustrates unique challenges that underscore broader systemic issues in the Indonesian public administration system.

In the **health sector**, decentralization has transferred significant authority to local governments, including the administration of health services. One critical example is the implementation of the capitation payment system under the National Health Insurance. This policy was designed to improve efficiency and ensure adequate compensation for primary healthcare providers. However, in practice, the outcomes have varied significantly across regions. Some local governments, benefiting from higher bureaucratic autonomy and stronger policy capacity, have managed to deliver this service effectively. In contrast, others struggle due to limited administrative resources and weak institutional support, leading to inefficiencies and public dissatisfaction (Tan, 2019). These discrepancies reveal that the mere devolution of authority does not guarantee effective implementation without corresponding capacity-building efforts.

In the **social welfare sector**, significant reforms have been initiated under President Joko Widodo's administration. Flagship programs such as the Family Hope Program (Program Keluarga Harapan/PKH) and non-cash food assistance were introduced to enhance social protection and reduce poverty. These programs signal a shift toward a more structured welfare system. However, despite progress, Indonesia's welfare state remains only partially developed. Deep-seated issues such as **clientelism**, **elite capture**, and **patrimonial governance** continue to undermine equitable distribution of welfare benefits. Yuda et al. (2025) highlights that welfare implementation still depends heavily on political affiliation and patron-client networks, which compromises the state's

ability to uphold fairness and universality in social protection. As a result, some vulnerable populations remain excluded, especially in areas with weak governance and politicized bureaucracies.

The **food safety sector**, particularly concerning micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), reveals another set of implementation challenges. The Indonesian government has introduced mandatory food labeling regulations intended to enhance consumer safety and market competitiveness. However, the implementation of these policies is limited in scope and effectiveness. Studies show that MSMEs frequently lack the technical capacity, financial resources, and institutional support necessary to comply with such regulatory standards (Farida & Ayuningtyas, 2019; Purwaningsih & Hardiyati, 2021). Furthermore, coordination failures among responsible agencies such as between local health departments, the Food and Drug Authority (BPOM), and the Ministry of Industry further hamper the consistent enforcement of food safety standards. This disjointed governance structure contributes to widespread non-compliance and limited policy penetration, especially in rural and informal economic settings.

Across these sectors, it is evident that **the quality of implementation is strongly influenced by local capacity, inter-agency coordination, and the presence of enabling political and institutional environments**. Even when national-level policy design is robust and well-intentioned, its translation into effective action at the subnational level remains inconsistent. These sectoral case studies collectively suggest that policy success in Indonesia is not solely a function of legal and regulatory frameworks, but critically dependent on the **institutional infrastructure, bureaucratic competence,** and **governance culture** within each implementing unit. Without addressing these underlying structural issues, the risk of fragmented and ineffective policy execution will persist across sectors.

Core Challenges in Policy Implementation

Implementing public policies in Indonesia is a complex endeavor shaped by an array of interrelated structural, institutional, cultural, and technical challenges. Despite significant reforms in public administration, the actual translation of policy into practice often falls short of intended outcomes due to systemic barriers that persist across various levels of governance.

A. Institutional Fragmentation and Coordination Deficits

A central challenge in Indonesian policy implementation is the lack of effective coordination among government institutions, both vertically (between central and local governments) and horizontally (among ministries and agencies). The decentralization policy enacted in 2001 granted substantial autonomy to local governments, yet without a robust mechanism for vertical coordination, implementation of nationally designed policies has become fragmented and inconsistent (Fossati, 2016). For instance, efforts to reinstate traditional "nagari" governance systems in West Sumatra have been hindered by insufficient stakeholder involvement and weak commitment at the sub-national level (Yulivestra et al., 2025). Moreover, horizontal coordination is obstructed by sectoral egos and bureaucratic silos, as seen in the implementation of e-government platforms, where ministries often prioritize their own agendas over integrated systems (Matitah et al., 2021). These dynamics reveal a need for a "whole-of-government" approach that fosters collaboration, shared goals, and integrated service delivery.

B. Resource and Capacity Constraints

In many cases, policy failure in Indonesia is not due to flawed design but rather to insufficient resources for implementation. This includes both financial limitations and a shortage of skilled human capital. Local governments in underdeveloped or remote regions frequently lack the necessary budgetary support and technical expertise to deliver public services effectively. Infrastructure deficits such as inadequate roads, limited digital connectivity, and insufficient public facilities exacerbate these challenges, particularly in the outer islands and rural districts (Laksono et al., 2025; Utomo et al., 2025). Moreover, bureaucratic inefficiencies persist due to a lack of administrative training and outdated public service education models that do not align with the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Herawati et al., 2021). These limitations reduce the responsiveness and agility of public organizations, constraining their ability to adapt to emerging needs and technologies.

C. Policy Design and Implementation Gaps

Another persistent barrier is the disconnect between policy formulation and its implementation. Many national programs are designed with top-down approaches that fail to consider local contexts and stakeholder capacities. One prominent example is the Village Funds Initiative, which aimed to empower local development but has been

plagued by complex reporting mechanisms, low financial literacy among village officials, and instances of misuse and corruption (Harun et al., 2021). Similarly, the Smoke-Free Areas regulation in Banda Aceh faces weak enforcement and public resistance due to conflicting interests, limited outreach, and poor communication strategies (Sufri et al., 2023). These examples highlight the tendency of policymakers to focus on legal-formal aspects while overlooking practical, institutional, and cultural factors that influence execution on the ground.

D. Socio-Cultural and Political Barriers

Cultural dynamics also play a significant role in shaping policy outcomes in Indonesia. High power distance, a common cultural trait, reinforces hierarchical decision-making and discourages local innovation and bottom-up feedback. Additionally, collectivist values, while promoting community solidarity, can sometimes conflict with modern policy mechanisms that prioritize individual accountability or rights-based approaches (Rochmansjah & Saputra, 2024). On the political front, many subnational governments are influenced by short-term political interests, especially around election cycles, which often distort policy priorities and undermine consistency in implementation (Christiani et al., 2017; Yulivestra et al., 2025). Political will is frequently lacking at the operational level, particularly when policy outcomes do not align with elite interests or immediate electoral gains. These political dynamics are further complicated by patronage networks that obstruct merit-based appointments and performance-based evaluations in the public sector.

E. Technological Limitations and Knowledge Gaps

Although digital transformation has been prioritized through initiatives such as e-SAKIP and Building Information Modeling (BIM), implementation faces a number of setbacks. Many public officials lack the training and digital literacy necessary to operate new systems efficiently. The availability of digital infrastructure is also uneven, leaving certain regions especially rural and eastern provinces without reliable access to essential technology (Genda et al., 2025; Primasetra et al., 2024). Additionally, knowledge transfer is hindered by the absence of systematic professional development programs within the bureaucracy. Without sufficient technological readiness and policy-relevant research capabilities, public institutions risk failing to meet contemporary expectations of service delivery, transparency, and responsiveness.

F. Crisis Responsiveness: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed many of the vulnerabilities inherent in Indonesia's policy implementation system. The government's "gas and brake" approach designed to balance public health and economic recovery was widely criticized for being inconsistent and poorly coordinated. Local governments interpreted central directives differently, resulting in uneven enforcement of lockdowns and public health measures (Ihsan & Munabari, 2023). Meanwhile, social assistance programs intended to alleviate pandemic-induced poverty faced data inaccuracies, distribution delays, and lack of transparency (Rahmadana et al., 2025). These shortcomings underscore the importance of institutional agility, cross-sectoral collaboration, and reliable information systems in managing crises and ensuring resilient governance.

Digitalization and Technological Transformation

Digital transformation has emerged as a critical pillar in Indonesia's public sector reform agenda, particularly in response to the increasing demand for efficient, transparent, and citizen-centered public services. The Indonesian government has initiated a range of digital governance programs aimed at modernizing administrative systems, improving service delivery, and fostering participatory governance. Among the most notable initiatives are the **Sistem Pemerintahan Berbasis Elektronik (SPBE),** the **100 Smart Cities Program**, and village-level digitalization efforts such as **Simpledesa**. These programs represent strategic efforts to reorient public administration towards technology-driven governance, emphasizing automation, interoperability, and data-based decision-making (Anas & Cahyawati, 2023; Kaynanda & Zarlis, 2024).

One of the most significant outcomes of digital governance in Indonesia is the improvement in **public service accessibility and efficiency**, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Through mobile applications and cloud-based platforms, citizens can now access administrative services such as civil registration, health care enrollment, and financial assistance without having to visit government offices physically. In some cases, this transformation has led to measurable improvements in service delivery times, cost reduction, and citizen satisfaction. For example, the use of the Simpledesa application has enabled village officials to manage citizen data, complaints, and planning documents more systematically, thereby enhancing governance quality at the grassroots level (Kaynanda & Zarlis, 2024).

In addition to operational efficiency, digital transformation has also strengthened **citizen engagement** and participatory governance. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into public platforms has allowed for more interactive communication between government institutions and the public. Social media platforms, government apps, and online consultation tools have provided new avenues for citizens to voice their opinions, lodge complaints, and monitor government performance. Studies have shown that increased **digital inclusiveness** correlates with higher levels of civic participation and public trust in institutions (Kusumasari, 2018; Purwanti et al., 2022). Furthermore, the emergence of **digital democracy** facilitated by e-petitions, online polls, and digital town halls signals a cultural shift in how citizens perceive and participate in governance processes.

However, despite these advancements, Indonesia's digital governance agenda faces considerable challenges that hinder its full realization. One of the most critical barriers is the **persistent digital divide** between urban and rural populations, as well as among different socioeconomic groups. Vulnerable populations including the elderly, women in rural areas, the disabled, and the urban poor—often lack access to digital devices, reliable internet connectivity, and the digital literacy needed to effectively engage with e-government platforms (Jurriëns & Tapsell, 2017; McKirahan, 2017). This digital gap reinforces existing inequalities in access to services and contributes to the exclusion of marginalized communities from participatory governance mechanisms.

Another major issue is the **regulatory and institutional fragmentation** that characterizes Indonesia's approach to digital government. Many digital governance projects are developed in isolation by individual ministries or agencies, with minimal coordination or integration across platforms. For example, different ministries may maintain separate citizen databases or overlapping service portals, leading to inefficiencies and confusion for users. There is also a lack of clear legal and regulatory frameworks governing data governance, cybersecurity, and digital ethics. The absence of a comprehensive and enforceable legal structure undermines public trust, especially when cases of data breaches or misuse of personal information emerge (Setyawan et al., 2025; Wagola et al., 2023).

In addition to institutional issues, **resistance to change** within the public sector continues to slow the pace of digital adoption. Many bureaucrats, especially in older generations, are reluctant to shift from traditional, paper-based processes to digital systems. This resistance is compounded by a lack of adequate training, insufficient change management strategies, and fears about job displacement or increased

performance monitoring (Danar, 2024). As a result, even when digital tools are available, they are often underutilized or implemented only symbolically without transforming core administrative processes.

Data privacy and security concerns further complicate digital transformation. As more government services move online, concerns about the safety of personal data have become increasingly salient. In the absence of robust cybersecurity infrastructure and clear user consent mechanisms, public skepticism about digital platforms can hinder adoption. Transparency in data use, institutional accountability, and citizen empowerment in digital environments must therefore be prioritized to ensure sustainable digital governance (Purwanti et al., 2022).

In summary, while digital transformation in Indonesia's public administration has opened promising avenues for efficiency, participation, and innovation, its success remains contingent on the state's ability to address underlying structural and cultural constraints. Strategic interventions are needed to bridge the digital divide, build institutional capacity, enhance inter-agency coordination, and establish a comprehensive legal framework that supports safe, inclusive, and sustainable digital governance. Without these foundations, the promise of e-government and digital public services will remain partially realized, especially for those who are already disadvantaged by geography, gender, or income.

Transparency and Accountability in Practice

Transparency and accountability are widely recognized as the cornerstones of democratic governance and effective public administration. In Indonesia, the post-reformasi era has witnessed numerous efforts to institutionalize transparency in government affairs, especially following the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime. Legal and institutional frameworks have been introduced to enhance public oversight and reduce corruption, but their practical implementation remains inconsistent and often symbolic. The enactment of **Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure** represents a milestone in institutionalizing transparency, as it guarantees the public's right to access government-held information.

However, empirical findings indicate that the enforcement of this law faces numerous **structural, procedural, and cultural barriers**, limiting its transformative potential (Khadafi et al., 2024; Sjoraida, 2025).

At the heart of these challenges is the **institutional culture of secrecy** and bureaucratic inertia. Many public agencies continue to resist full disclosure due to fears of misinterpretation, loss of authority, or exposure of inefficiencies. These concerns are deeply embedded in the administrative ethos inherited from decades of centralized and hierarchical governance. Studies show that even when legal mandates for transparency exist, public bodies often fail to proactively disseminate information or respond promptly to public requests (Sjoraida, 2025). In some cases, information is technically available but difficult to access due to complicated bureaucratic procedures, unclear digital platforms, or lack of awareness among citizens regarding their rights under the law.

The development of **e-government platforms** has been promoted as a key strategy to enhance transparency and accountability through the digitization of services and real-time access to public data. The government's **SPBE** and other local innovations aim to improve service delivery and reduce opportunities for rent-seeking. However, the actual **transparency performance of e-government websites** remains poor. According to several studies, a significant proportion of local government portals fail to meet minimum transparency criteria, such as publishing budget plans, procurement data, or audit reports (Fathonih et al., 2020; Prahono, 2015; Rosalia, 2022). This underperformance is often due to lack of technical capacity, insufficient monitoring, and the absence of clear sanctions for noncompliance.

The role of anti-corruption institutions, particularly the **KPK**, is also central to Indonesia's accountability framework. Since its inception, the KPK has prosecuted numerous high-level corruption cases and helped build a culture of integrity within public institutions. Nonetheless, its effectiveness has been significantly undermined in recent years due to **political interference, legal weakening**, and public skepticism about the government's commitment to anti-corruption. Scholars have noted that to strengthen transparency and accountability, **either the KPK must be reinforced with stronger legal autonomy**, or a new independent body must be established with constitutional protections to shield it from political manipulation (Anas & Cahyawati, 2023).

Public participation plays a crucial role in promoting accountability mechanisms, particularly through instruments such as **community budgeting forums (musrenbang)**, citizen report cards, participatory planning, and social audits. In practice, however, these tools are often underutilized or ceremonial. Many local governments involve citizens only in superficial consultations without meaningful integration of community input into decision-making processes (Wiwoho & Handayani, 2023).

Strengthening these participatory frameworks requires both legal reinforcement and political will, as well as investments in civic education to empower communities to claim their rights and monitor government performance effectively.

An innovative and increasingly influential channel for enhancing transparency is the **strategic use of digital and social media**. Government agencies and civil society organizations have started using platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to share real-time data, respond to citizen queries, and broadcast budget information or performance metrics. Research suggests that **interactive and user-friendly social media platforms** not only increase trust in public institutions but also enable a two-way flow of communication between citizens and the state (Hutahaean et al., 2024). However, this potential is limited by digital literacy gaps, algorithmic manipulation, and the risk of disinformation, which must be managed through clear digital communication strategies and information verification systems.

Judicial system reforms have also been identified as essential for achieving sustainable accountability. In particular, human resource management practices in the justice sector including recruitment, ethics training, and performance evaluation need significant improvement to support a culture of professionalism and transparency. As Hilal et al. (2024) point out, the quality of judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers directly influences the credibility and legitimacy of anti-corruption and transparency measures. Without a reliable judiciary, public confidence in administrative reform efforts will remain fragile.

Furthermore, **contextual innovations**, such as aligning **fiscal transparency with religious values**, have been proposed to improve public compliance and moral responsibility. For example, involving religious leaders in disseminating information about taxation and budget allocations has shown potential in increasing taxpayer trust and voluntary compliance, especially in regions with strong religious identities (Saptono & Khozen, 2024). These culturally-sensitive approaches could complement technical reforms by embedding transparency in societal norms and values.

While Indonesia has made important strides in establishing a legal and institutional foundation for transparency and accountability, significant challenges remain in operationalizing these principles. A combination of **bureaucratic resistance, technical limitations, political interference**, and **low public awareness** continues to constrain progress.

Moving forward, reform efforts should prioritize the integration of legal frameworks, digital tools, civic participation, and cultural strategies to build a transparent, accountable, and trustworthy public administration system.

Governance Innovation: Agile and Collaborative Models

In recent years, innovation in governance has become an essential strategy for overcoming complex challenges in public administration in Indonesia. The increasing demands for responsive, citizen-centered, and efficient government services have prompted the exploration of governance models beyond traditional bureaucratic systems. Among these, **agile governance** and **collaborative governance** stand out as promising approaches for improving administrative adaptability, service quality, and public trust.

Agile governance refers to a governance approach that prioritizes responsiveness, flexibility, and user-oriented decision-making. It draws inspiration from agile management in the private sector and applies iterative, data-driven, and inclusive strategies in public policymaking and service delivery. In the Indonesian context, agile governance is increasingly seen as a solution to bureaucratic rigidity and procedural inefficiencies. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for rapid and adaptive policymaking exposed the limitations of traditional hierarchical governance and underscored the necessity for more fluid and citizen-responsive mechanisms (Ihsan & Munabari, 2023). A study by Lukman & Hakim (2024) emphasizes that agile governance when combined with digital transformation and inclusive leadership can significantly enhance citizen satisfaction and improve service responsiveness. However, the success of such models often depends on the presence of political stability and institutional support systems that enable quick decision-making without compromising accountability.

The application of agile governance in Indonesia has begun to take shape in several digital initiatives, particularly those aimed at improving real-time service delivery and citizen engagement. Programs such as **e-SAKIP** (Electronic Government Performance Accountability System) have introduced more flexible, output-oriented performance evaluation systems. These initiatives allow for faster feedback loops, iterative policy adjustments, and dynamic resource allocation based on service outcomes rather than rigid input indicators. Nonetheless, the actual implementation of agile models remains inconsistent across different levels of government. Many local administrations continue to rely on traditional command-and-control practices, often due to a lack of digital readiness, limited institutional autonomy, and insufficient human resource capacity (Danar, 2024).

Alongside agility, **collaborative governance** has gained traction as an effective model for addressing cross-sectoral and multi-actor challenges. Collaborative governance emphasizes cooperation among public institutions, private entities, civil society organizations, and citizens to achieve shared policy goals. This model is particularly relevant in contexts where complex social problems such as poverty, environmental degradation, or infrastructure planning cannot be effectively addressed by government actors alone. In Indonesia, one of the notable examples of successful collaborative governance is in the management of state assets by the **Directorate General of State Assets (in Indonesia, call it DJKN)** within the Ministry of Finance. Jiwando & Juwono (2019) document how DJKN adopted collaborative problem-solving approaches involving various stakeholders to resolve issues in the asset management cycle, resulting in improved policy outcomes and reduced inefficiencies.

Despite these promising cases, the institutionalization of collaborative governance remains limited in Indonesia. In many sectors, **inter-organizational cooperation** is hindered by bureaucratic silos, sectoral egos, and fragmented mandates. Government agencies often pursue their objectives independently, without sufficient coordination or shared accountability frameworks. Moreover, collaboration with civil society and the private sector is frequently tokenistic or limited to consultation phases without enabling real co-production of public services. Political will, trust-building, and regulatory clarity are essential for ensuring that collaboration is meaningful and sustainable.

Another dimension of governance innovation lies in the **use of digital platforms to facilitate collaboration and agility simultaneously**. Technology-enabled networks, such as integrated data platforms and digital dashboards, can serve as connectors across agencies and levels of government. These tools allow real-time sharing of information, monitoring of performance indicators, and joint planning. However, these innovations require robust **digital infrastructure, data governance frameworks**, and **interoperability standards** which are still underdeveloped in many Indonesian regions (Wagola et al., 2023).

Moreover, both agile and collaborative governance demand **a shift in administrative culture and leadership orientation**. Traditional mindsets that prioritize procedural compliance, hierarchy, and risk aversion must give way to values of innovation, experimentation, and public value creation.

This cultural transition is particularly difficult in public institutions that are still influenced by authoritarian legacies, centralized authority structures, and weak accountability mechanisms (Harun et al., 2019).

Furthermore, governance innovation through agile and collaborative models presents a viable path for reforming Indonesia's public administration. These approaches offer the potential to break through institutional inertia, respond more effectively to citizen needs, and build more inclusive and adaptive governance structures. However, their adoption requires not only technical innovation but also **deep institutional reform, capacity-building**, and a **cultural shift** toward openness, flexibility, and shared responsibility. Without these supporting elements, agile and collaborative governance will remain peripheral practices rather than becoming mainstream governance paradigms in Indonesia.

Learning from Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a public health crisis but also a governance stress test that exposed structural weaknesses and institutional rigidities within Indonesia's public administration. The sudden onset and wide-ranging impact of the pandemic demanded rapid policy responses, adaptive leadership, and intersectoral coordination capacities that many Indonesian government institutions had not fully developed. One of the most prominent criticisms of Indonesia's pandemic response was the "**gas and brake" policy**, which reflected the government's attempt to balance public health priorities with economic continuity. While the intent was to remain flexible, the frequent shifts in strategy ranging from large-scale social restrictions to rapid reopening created confusion among local governments and the general public (Ihsan & Munabari, 2023). This inconsistency highlighted a lack of clear crisis communication, weak coordination between ministries, and insufficient integration between national and subnational policies.

At the operational level, the crisis revealed deep inefficiencies in public service delivery systems. For instance, during the distribution of **social assistance programs (bansos)**, numerous reports emerged of **data inaccuracies, duplicate beneficiaries, exclusion errors**, and **corruption**. The social protection measures, although expanded rapidly, were hampered by outdated beneficiary databases, limited inter-agency interoperability, and low digital readiness at the local level (Rahmadana et al., 2025). Many village governments lacked the technical infrastructure or personnel needed to verify and distribute aid efficiently, while some regional leaders politicized aid allocation,

further eroding public trust. These shortcomings illustrated the consequences of poor preparedness and underinvestment in integrated social protection systems prior to the pandemic.

Moreover, the pandemic highlighted the critical importance of **adaptive and agile governance**. In highly dynamic contexts such as a global health emergency, traditional bureaucratic procedures characterized by rigid hierarchies and delayed decision-making proved inadequate. The most successful local responses were observed in regions where leadership was able to mobilize resources quickly, engage communities, and coordinate across sectors. This confirms the emerging consensus in the literature that **institutional agility, decentralized flexibility, and data-driven decision-making** are essential features of resilient governance (Lukman & Hakim, 2024). However, in the absence of institutionalized systems that support such agility, much of the effectiveness depended on individual leadership capacity rather than organizational learning or preparedness.

In the health sector, Indonesia's early pandemic response was further challenged by a **fragmented healthcare governance system**. The Ministry of Health, the COVID-19 Task Force, and local governments often issued overlapping or contradictory policies, creating operational bottlenecks in the implementation of testing, tracing, and vaccination programs. Public health communication also lacked consistency and transparency, contributing to misinformation, vaccine hesitancy, and resistance to health protocols. The failure to leverage existing e-health infrastructure and the slow adoption of telemedicine platforms showed that **technological tools alone are insufficient** without institutional alignment, public trust, and digital literacy (Eriza et al., 2025; Setyawan et al., 2025).

At the same time, the pandemic spurred a wave of **grassroots innovation and digital experimentation**. Civil society organizations and local governments piloted digital dashboards for aid distribution, community mapping tools, and contact tracing apps, often in collaboration with universities or the private sector. These experiences point to the untapped potential of **multi-actor partnerships** in crisis response. However, scaling these innovations nationally remains a challenge due to the absence of institutional frameworks for sustaining such collaborations beyond the crisis context.

From a broader administrative perspective, the COVID-19 crisis underscored the need for **institutional resilience** the ability of governance systems to absorb shocks, reorganize, and learn from failure. It revealed that legal compliance, bureaucratic routines, and top-down policy formulation are not sufficient in times of rapid uncertainty.

What is needed is a shift toward **anticipatory governance**: one that emphasizes foresight, scenario planning, and policy agility grounded in real-time data and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed both the vulnerabilities and the latent capacities of Indonesia's public administration system. It has served as a painful but necessary wake-up call, highlighting the urgency of reforming institutional structures, modernizing data systems, and cultivating a governance culture that embraces agility, collaboration, and public accountability. The lessons learned from this crisis should not be viewed as temporary adjustments, but as catalysts for **long-term structural change** in how policies are designed, implemented, and monitored in Indonesia's decentralized and dynamic administrative landscape.

Keyword Co-occurrence and Research Trends

To further map the intellectual landscape of public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer based on the 44 selected Scopus-indexed articles. The keyword co-occurrence density map (Figure X) highlights the most frequently occurring themes in the literature. The densest nodes—represented by brighter colors include **"Indonesia," "policy," "implementation,"** and **"challenge,"** indicating their centrality and interconnectedness in current research discourse. Other frequently appearing terms such as **"digital transformation," "governance," "transparency,"** and **"corruption"** reflect key issues discussed in the reviewed literature. The proximity of **"regulation"** and **"public service"** to the core cluster suggests ongoing scholarly attention toward regulatory reform and service delivery. Meanwhile, keywords like **"policymaker"** and **"digital transformation"** form peripheral clusters, showing their emerging but still underdeveloped roles in the broader debate.

This visualization affirms the findings of this review: while the discourse is increasingly shaped by digitalization and governance innovation, core challenges remain around implementation quality, policy coherence, and administrative capacity. The keyword map reinforces the need for integrated governance approaches and cross-sectoral policy learning to address persistent institutional and structural barriers.
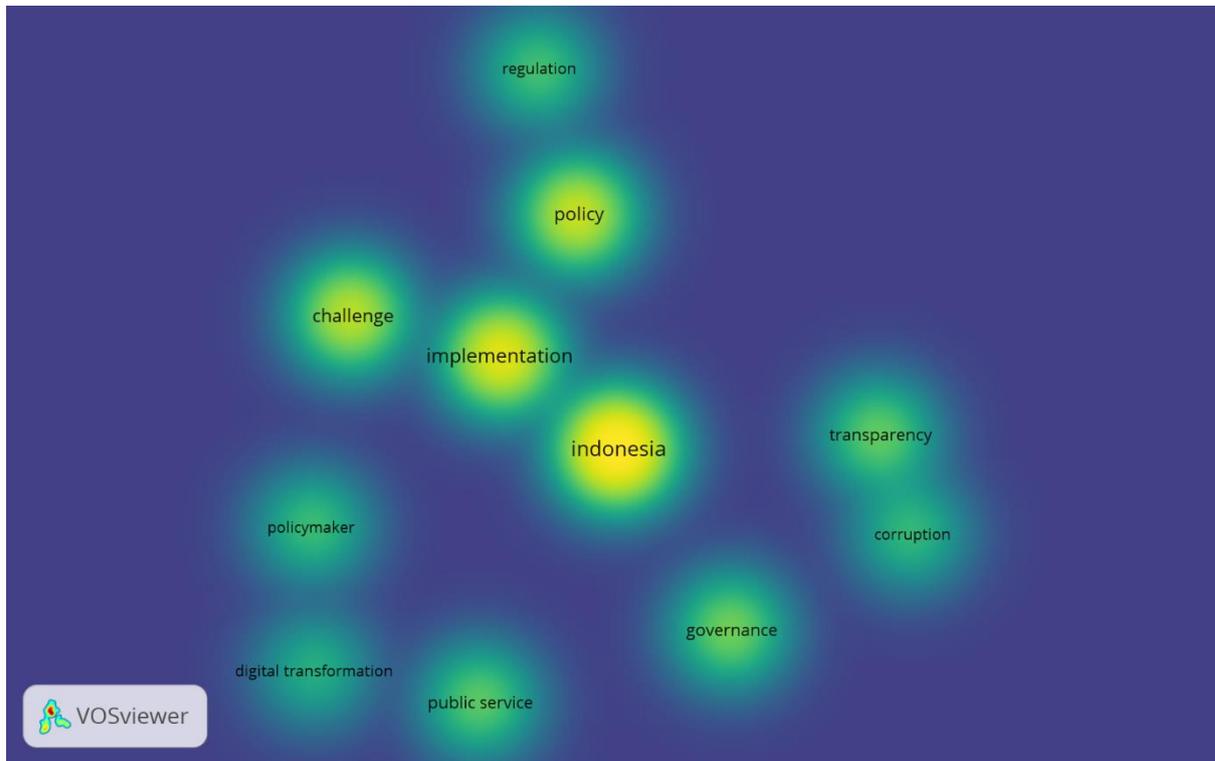
Figure 2. Flow PRISMA diagram of the research

Source: Author's own work, 2025

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This systematic review highlights the dynamic evolution of Indonesia's public administration over the past two decades. Decentralization, democratization, and digital transformation have reshaped the governance landscape, offering both opportunities and challenges. While decentralization has enabled localized innovation and responsiveness, it has also contributed to fragmented capacities and policy disparities. Efforts to implement NPM and digital governance tools have had limited impact due to persistent institutional inertia, weak coordination, and sociopolitical constraints.

Key implementation challenges include inter-agency fragmentation, inadequate resources, low administrative capacity, cultural resistance, and limited crisis preparedness. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of institutional agility and cross-sector collaboration. Notably, innovations such as agile and collaborative governance are emerging but remain marginal and unevenly institutionalized.

To move forward, Indonesia must address these structural barriers through integrated reforms that promote adaptability, inclusiveness, and accountability. Enhancing policy implementation will require not only technical improvements but also cultural transformation, sustained leadership, and systemic resilience.

Recommendations

In light of the findings of this review, several key recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of public administration and policy implementation in Indonesia:

a. **Strengthen Inter-Governmental Coordination**

   To address the problems of institutional fragmentation and policy incoherence, a whole-of-government approach should be institutionalized. This includes developing clear mechanisms for vertical alignment between central and local governments and enhancing horizontal collaboration across ministries and sectors. Special task forces or cross-sectoral units may be established for integrated policy implementation in priority areas.

b. **Invest in Capacity Building and Resource Mobilization**

   Targeted investment in human capital development, digital infrastructure, and administrative capacity at the subnational level is essential. Training programs should be reoriented to reflect the demands of agile governance, data literacy, and participatory planning. Local governments, especially in remote regions, must be equipped with adequate fiscal support and technical assistance to deliver essential services effectively.

c. **Promote Inclusive and Participatory Policymaking**

   Policy design should incorporate bottom-up approaches that involve community stakeholders, civil society, and marginalized groups throughout the planning and implementation stages. Participatory instruments such as musrenbang (community consultations) must be strengthened with binding mechanisms that ensure citizen input is meaningfully considered in decision-making.

d. **Enhance Regulatory Frameworks for Digital Governance**

   A coherent legal and institutional framework must be developed to support e-government systems, data privacy, cybersecurity, and digital ethics. The fragmentation of digital initiatives across ministries should be resolved through interoperable systems and shared digital standards. Incentives for innovation and the institutionalization of digital performance audits will further promote accountability.

e. **Institutionalize Agile and Collaborative Governance Practices**

Government agencies should adopt iterative policy cycles, flexible budgeting mechanisms, and real-time monitoring systems. Public administrators must be empowered to take calculated risks, experiment with policy alternatives, and adapt based on citizen feedback. Collaborative partnerships with non-state actors such as universities, businesses, and NGOs should be formalized to co-produce services and solve complex policy problems.

f. **Build Crisis-Responsive Administrative System**

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic must be translated into reforms that enhance Indonesia's institutional resilience. This includes developing integrated emergency response systems, updating social protection databases, and embedding scenario planning into strategic policymaking. Institutional agility must become a core value across all levels of government.

g. **Foster a Culture of Transparency and Accountability**

Public institutions must move beyond symbolic compliance with transparency laws. This requires developing a culture of openness, reinforcing the independence of oversight bodies like the KPK, and expanding civic education programs to encourage public participation in oversight. Social media and other digital platforms should be utilized strategically to promote real-time transparency and trust-building with the public.

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