

Regional Autonomy and Regional Government

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Info Article	Abstract
Article History Received : 2023-09-03 Revised: 2023-09-12 Published: 2023-09-30	Regional autonomy is a crucial pillar of the Indonesian government system, aiming to grant local governments the authority to regulate and manage government affairs based on local potential and needs. The implementation of regional autonomy is expected to improve the effectiveness of governance, the quality of public services, and promote equitable development across regions. However, the implementation of regional autonomy still faces various challenges, particularly in institutional capacity, fiscal independence, and coordination between the central and regional governments. This study aims to examine the concept, legal basis, implementation, and challenges and efforts to strengthen regional autonomy within the Indonesian regional government system. The research method used is library research with a normative juridical approach, emphasizing the study of relevant laws and regulations and scientific literature. The research stages include the collection of primary and secondary legal materials, qualitative analysis through legal interpretation, and the systematic compilation of the study results. The results indicate that regional autonomy has provided space for local governments to exercise authority more independently, particularly in public services and regional development. However, the effectiveness of its implementation is still influenced by limited human resources, fiscal dependence, and weak oversight. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen institutions, increase fiscal capacity, and maintain sustainable synergy between the central and regional governments so that the goals of regional autonomy can be achieved optimally.
Keywords: <i>Regional Autonomy; Regional Government; Decentralization; Fiscal Independence; Public Services</i>	

I. INTRODUCTION

Regional autonomy is a key reform in the Indonesian government system, aiming to grant greater authority to local governments to regulate and manage their own affairs based on local potential and needs. This concept emerged in response to the long-standing centralization of power during the New Order era and was further strengthened by the enactment of Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. Regional autonomy has significant implications for improving the quality of public services and empowering communities at the local level. The implementation of regional autonomy is expected to accelerate economic growth and equitable development across regions. However, the implementation of regional autonomy still faces various challenges, both in terms of fiscal aspects and governance.(Iwan Kurniawan, O. Djunaedi, 2024).

In the context of regional governance, regional autonomy plays a crucial role in creating effective

and efficient governance in accordance with the principles of democracy, accountability, and transparency. Regional governments are expected to design public policies that are responsive to the needs of local communities. However, issues of budget independence, high dependence on central transfers, and constraints on regional government capacity remain. Studies of regional governance demonstrate the need to strengthen institutional structures to improve the quality of public services and accountability. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of regional autonomy is a strategic step towards better governance.(Law, 2024).

The primary focus of regional autonomy lies not only in administrative aspects, but also in the implementation of mandatory functions related to public services to the community. The implementation of mandatory functions reflects how regions exercise their rights and obligations within a decentralized framework. The effectiveness of these functions is greatly

influenced by local policies, the availability of human resources, and the institutional capacity of local governments. Furthermore, community participation is a crucial factor in determining the success of policy implementation. Previous research has shown that suboptimal management of mandatory functions can negatively impact public services.(Ahmad Muksin, Rani Istriani, 2024).

The concept of fiscal decentralization within regional autonomy is a crucial instrument for strengthening the financial independence of local governments. Fiscal independence allows local governments greater flexibility in managing their budgets according to the urgency and priorities of local needs. However, dependence on transfer funds from the central government remains a key issue affecting the effectiveness of fiscal decentralization. Empirical research shows that strong fiscal authority can encourage more independent regional development and improve community welfare. Therefore, a strategy is needed to increase regional fiscal capacity to support the sustainable implementation of regional autonomy.(Pabayo, 2025).

Legal aspects also serve as an important basis for the implementation of regional autonomy, particularly to ensure the compliance of local authority with the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. The legal basis for regional autonomy is regulated in detail in laws and regulations, including Law Number 23 of 2014. The granting of authority to regional governments must continue to consider national interests and maintain the unity and integrity of the state. Normative research shows that the implementation of an effective legal framework can strengthen the implementation of regional autonomy and prevent abuse of power. Therefore, legal studies are an important part of strengthening the foundation for the implementation of regional autonomy.(Firasa, Ida Suryab, 2025).

The implementation of regional autonomy is inseparable from challenges such as disparities in development between regions and issues of abuse of authority that can hinder the achievement of decentralization goals. Various studies show that corruption and weak oversight at the regional level remain significant obstacles to the

implementation of regional autonomy. The disparity between wealthy and less wealthy regions also poses a challenge to realizing effective and competitive local governance. Therefore, concrete steps are needed to improve the oversight and accountability systems of regional governments. With these improvements, it is hoped that the goal of regional autonomy in equitable development can be optimally achieved.(Sommaliagustina, 2019).

Based on various recent studies, it can be concluded that regional autonomy is a crucial foundation of Indonesia's regional governance system, with broad implications for regional empowerment, public services, and community welfare. However, to achieve maximum benefits from decentralization, strong synergy between the central and regional governments is necessary. Strong institutions, independent fiscal capacity, and community participation are key factors for successful implementation. Continuous evaluation and improvement of regional governance regulations and practices are strategic imperatives. Therefore, further research is needed to explore factors that can enhance the effectiveness of regional autonomy implementation in Indonesia.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a library research method with a normative juridical approach, focusing on the study of legal norms contained in laws and regulations as well as relevant scientific literature. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on analyzing the concepts and regulations of regional autonomy and regional government within the Indonesian legal system. The study material was obtained through a review of legal documents and scientific works without collecting field data. This study aims to gain a deeper understanding of the legal basis, principles, and implementation of regional autonomy in the administration of regional government. With this method, the research is expected to provide a systematic and comprehensive legal analysis..

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary legal materials collected through literature review. Primary legal materials include laws and regulations related to regional

government, particularly Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. Secondary legal materials include legal textbooks, accredited national scientific journals, and other scientific publications relevant to the research topic. All legal materials were analyzed qualitatively using legal interpretation and descriptive analysis techniques. The results of the analysis were then systematically compiled to answer the research questions.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Concept and Legal Basis of Regional Autonomy

Regional autonomy is a concept that grants local governments the rights, authority, and responsibility to regulate and manage their own government affairs in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, born from the spirit of decentralization in the Indonesian government system. This definition is explained in various legal studies, which state that regional autonomy is a form of delegation of authority from the central government to the regions to handle local affairs relevant to the needs of the local community. Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government explicitly affirms this concept as a foundation for regional governments to act independently within the limits of their established authority. Conceptually, regional autonomy aims to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government, while optimizing public services based on local conditions. Thus, regional autonomy is not only an administrative aspect but also part of a democratic system that strengthens community involvement at the local level. (Hidayat et al., 2025).

The principle of regional autonomy in governance encompasses principles such as decentralization, deconcentration, and assignment of duties, which form the basis of the relationship between the central and regional governments. The principle of decentralization grants regions broad authority to manage government affairs within their jurisdiction, while adhering to the principle of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Several studies indicate that this principle is intended to enable regions to be more responsive to local needs without neglecting alignment with national policy.

Furthermore, this principle also emphasizes that the implementation of autonomy must be carried out with due regard for the administrative capabilities and human resource capacity of the regions. Therefore, this principle serves as the foundation for effective regional autonomy and is consistent with the goals of good governance.

The legal basis for regional autonomy in Indonesia is rooted in the constitutional provisions enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically Article 18, which regulates the division of government affairs between the central and regional governments. To realize this provision, Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government was enacted, which serves as the primary legal umbrella for the implementation of regional autonomy throughout Indonesia. This regulation replaces the previous provisions in Law Number 32 of 2004, which have been adjusted to address the dynamic needs of modern governance. Law Number 23 of 2014 regulates regional authority, the division of government affairs, and the principles of central-regional relations in greater detail to ensure clarity of implementation. With this legal provision, the state provides a strong legal basis for regions to carry out government functions in accordance with the needs of their communities. (Natsir, 2025).

The primary objective of implementing regional autonomy is to create a more efficient, effective, and democratic government, thereby creating equitable development and improving public welfare across regions. Empirical studies show that regional empowerment through autonomy can accelerate decision-making relevant to the local context, particularly in the provision of public services such as education, health, and infrastructure. The granting of this authority also aims to reduce the development gap between regions, which has been a challenge in a centralized government system. However, the effectiveness of this objective depends heavily on the administrative capacity and human resources at the regional level, as well as the ability to optimally utilize the granted authority. Thus, the objectives of regional autonomy are not merely administrative but also strategic in inclusive national development. (Ahmad Muksin, Rani Istriani, 2024).

Within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, the implementation of regional autonomy must uphold the principles of national unity and integrity, even though regions are granted extensive authority. This unitary state principle emphasizes that granting authority to regions does not mean fragmentation of power, but rather a harmonious division of tasks between the central and regional governments within a unified government system. According to normative juridical studies, the integration of the principles of national unity and regional autonomy is essential for maintaining political stability and justice in governance. This is reflected in Law No. 23 of 2014, which places the principle of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as the foundation behind the division of authority between the central and regional governments. Thus, regional autonomy is positioned as a strategy to strengthen unity while increasing responsiveness to local needs.

Although the principles and legal basis for regional autonomy have been clearly formulated, its practical implementation often faces various obstacles, such as limited resource capacity and inconsistencies in policy implementation between regions. Several studies on regulatory dynamics have shown that regulations related to decentralization sometimes still pose challenges in terms of the allocation of authority and the division of government affairs. This indicates that despite clear legal objectives, practice requires institutional strengthening and harmonization between central regulations and regional policies. Therefore, regular evaluation of the legal provisions for regional autonomy is crucial to ensure effective implementation consistent with the principles of good governance. Therefore, the concept and legal basis for regional autonomy must be continuously reviewed in the context of changing community needs and the dynamics of modern governance.(Risam Purnama, 2025).

B. Implementation of Regional Autonomy in Regional Government

The implementation of regional government authority is at the heart of regional autonomy, which provides regions with the opportunity to manage their own affairs according to the needs of their communities. In practice, this authority

encompasses a wide range of governmental matters, including public services and development, which are regulated based on the principles of decentralization and the responsibility of regional governments to improve community welfare. Studies in the context of local implementation indicate that the strategies and policies implemented by regional governments play a crucial role in the effectiveness of this autonomy. Empirical studies in Cianjur Regency indicate that the implementation of autonomy in public services promotes transparency and accountability in regional governance. This confirms that the implementation of regional government authority is not merely administrative authority, but also a strategic effort to directly address public needs.(Dadang Hidayat et al., 2025).

The role of regional autonomy in public services is reflected in the ability of local governments to design, implement, and evaluate policies that are responsive to community needs. Quality public services are a key indicator of the effectiveness of regional autonomy, with services such as licensing, health care, and education being a benchmark for local government success. Normative research also suggests that regional autonomy can accelerate service delivery processes by bringing decision-making closer to the communities served. However, the quality of public services in various regions still faces obstacles such as limited human resources and the institutional capacity of local governments. Therefore, although autonomy structurally provides space for authority, the effectiveness of public service delivery depends heavily on the capacity and performance of regional officials.(Delisya Fransiska Simamora, Meliana Girsang, Tri Mei Rosalya Purba, 2023).

Regional autonomy also plays a role in regional development by granting local governments the authority to plan and manage development in accordance with the potential and characteristics of their respective regions. Regional governments play a strategic role in formulating more adaptive development policies, particularly in optimally utilizing local potential. Studies have shown that regional empowerment within the context of development can open up space for policy innovations relevant to local conditions. However,

successful development must still prioritize policy harmonization between the central and regional governments to avoid overlapping and contradictory programs. Thus, regional autonomy not only increases community participation in development but also demands strong coordination between levels of government to achieve sustainable development goals.

Regional independence in administrative and fiscal aspects is an integral part of the implementation of regional autonomy, as this independence enables local governments to manage finances and resources effectively. Fiscal decentralization provides space for local governments to design fiscal policies that support sustainable development and responsive public services. Normative legal research discussing fiscal decentralization shows that although financial authority has been granted to regions, the challenge of fiscal independence remains a major issue in the implementation of regional autonomy. Dependence on transfer funds from the central government remains high in many regions due to suboptimal local revenue (PAD) sources. Therefore, increasing fiscal capacity and local resource mobilization strategies are necessary to strengthen regional fiscal independence in order to support effective autonomy.(Ningsih et al., 2023).

The implementation of regional fiscal authority encompasses the management of local revenues, including regional taxes and levies, which play a crucial role in strengthening the local financial base for financing government and development programs. Recent studies indicate that efforts to manage regional taxes and other revenue sources need to be improved so that regions can independently finance public needs without heavy dependence on central government funding allocations. Strengthening the regional fiscal sector is also a crucial instrument in increasing the capacity of local governments to be more responsive to the dynamics of community needs. However, the successful implementation of fiscal authority often depends on the technical and administrative capacity of local governments to manage complex fiscal structures. Therefore, capacity building and reform of regional fiscal policies are crucial agendas in the implementation of regional autonomy.

Overall, the implementation of regional autonomy in local governance demonstrates progress in granting regions the authority to design and execute adaptive and responsive local policies. However, challenges such as limited bureaucratic capacity, fiscal dependency, and obstacles to intergovernmental coordination still need to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of autonomy implementation. Many studies conclude that optimizing the role of regional autonomy depends heavily on a synergistic relationship between the central and regional governments, as well as active community participation in public decision-making processes. By improving administrative capacity and strengthening local fiscal systems, regions can become more independent in exercising their delegated authority. Therefore, measures to strengthen institutions and develop human resources at the regional level are crucial strategies for the success of regional autonomy.(Prabowo, 2019).

C. Challenges and Efforts to Strengthen Regional Autonomy

The implementation of regional autonomy still faces significant structural challenges, particularly related to high fiscal dependency and weak managerial capacity, which often makes it difficult for regions to plan development programs independently. A literature review found that many regions still rely on allocated funds from the central government, resulting in suboptimal fiscal independence and impacting the effectiveness of public services. This has been identified as one of the main problems in the implementation of autonomy, as weak fiscal constraints limit the scope for regional governments to effectively respond to local needs. Furthermore, the lack of synergy between levels of government often leads to overlapping authority, hampering regional government performance. This situation indicates that fiscal and coordination issues are key obstacles that require serious attention in strengthening regional autonomy.(Ramdhani et al., 2025).

Local political dynamics complicate the implementation of regional autonomy, as policy decisions are often influenced by local political interests rather than the real needs of the

community. This is evident in development planning that is sometimes not based on data or community aspirations, resulting in the goal of effective public services not being fully achieved. This problem is reinforced by studies that found low human resource capacity at the regional level, which also weakens the quality of regional autonomy policy implementation. Thus, in addition to fiscal issues, human resource and technical capacity issues in regional governments pose serious challenges that impact the effectiveness of regional autonomy. Improving bureaucratic management and increasing the professionalism of civil servants are crucial to efforts to increase government effectiveness in the era of regional autonomy.(Saragih, 2024).

Furthermore, disparities in development between regions are another negative impact of the suboptimal implementation of regional autonomy, particularly in regions lacking fiscal independence. In practice, some regions are still unable to significantly stimulate local economic growth due to a lack of financial resources and strong institutional frameworks. This situation impacts the performance of regional governments in providing public services that meet the quality standards expected by the public. Literature reviews indicate that fiscal and administrative disparities between regions remain a significant issue affecting the successful and equitable implementation of regional autonomy. Therefore, reducing disparities between regions is an important strategy for improving governance effectiveness under the regional autonomy system.

To address these challenges, systematic institutional strengthening and capacity building of regional government officials is crucial. Improving human resource competency through technical training and developing bureaucratic professionalism will enhance regional governments' ability to plan and implement quality public policies. Furthermore, strengthening coordination between the central and regional governments is necessary to create clear policy synergies and reduce conflicts of authority. A literature review shows that sound coordination is a key factor in ensuring the consistent and effective implementation of regional autonomy. Therefore, developing

administrative capacity and inter-institutional coordination is a fundamental part of future efforts to strengthen regional autonomy.(Directorate, 2021).

Strengthening regional fiscal capacity is also a key component of the autonomy reform strategy, particularly through the development of Regional Original Revenue (PAD) and the optimization of other local revenue sources. Research shows that increasing the PAD base will strengthen regional fiscal positions, enabling them to finance public needs more independently without over-reliance on central transfers. Innovative approaches to fiscal management, including reforming the tax process and diversifying regional revenue sources, can increase the flexibility of local economic policies. Furthermore, the use of information technology in regional financial management systems is considered to improve transparency and accountability in budget use.

Overall, the challenges in implementing regional autonomy demonstrate the need for a comprehensive approach, from institutional reform and fiscal reform to human resource capacity development, to optimally achieve the goals of autonomy. Synergy between the central and regional governments is key to ensuring the successful implementation of policies that are responsive to community needs. Continuous evaluation of regional autonomy policies is also necessary to identify emerging issues and adapt appropriate strengthening strategies. Optimizing the role of communities in public decision-making can increase government accountability and strengthen democracy at the local level. With these steps, regional autonomy has the potential to become an effective instrument in promoting more responsive, participatory, and equitable governance.(Ramdhani et al., 2025).

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

Regional autonomy is a strategic instrument in the Indonesian government system, aiming to grant local governments the authority to regulate and manage government affairs based on local needs and potential. Based on a literature review using a normative legal approach, it can be concluded that regional autonomy has a strong legal basis and plays a crucial role in improving

the effectiveness of regional governance, the quality of public services, and equitable development. This granting of authority allows local governments to be more responsive to community aspirations and the conditions of their respective regions. However, the implementation of regional autonomy has not been fully optimized due to various structural and administrative obstacles.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that the main challenges in implementing regional autonomy include limited human resource capacity, fiscal dependence on the central government, and weak coordination and oversight between levels of government. These conditions have resulted in uneven effectiveness of regional governance across Indonesia. Therefore, the success of regional autonomy is crucially determined by institutional strengthening, increased fiscal independence, and sustained synergy between the central and regional governments. With these improvements, regional autonomy is expected to create a more effective, democratic, and community-oriented government.

B. Suggestion

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the central and regional governments continue to strengthen coordination and harmonization of policies to support the effective and sustainable implementation of regional autonomy. Regional governments need to improve human resource and institutional capacity to manage their authority professionally and accountably. Furthermore, efforts to increase fiscal independence through optimizing regional original revenues should be prioritized to reduce dependence on central transfer funds. For scientific development, further research is expected to examine the implementation of regional autonomy empirically in specific regions to obtain a more comprehensive and applicable picture.

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