



Institutional Capacity for Governmental Protocol Policy Implementation: Evidence from a Regional Bureaucracy

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the institutional capacity of a regional leadership administration bureau in implementing protocol policy and to identify the factors influencing such capacity. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving ten informants representing internal administrative staff, related government agencies, local government officials, and regional leaders. Data were analyzed using the Five Core Capabilities framework, encompassing the capabilities to act and commit, deliver functions, build relationships and secure support, adapt and renew, and achieve coherence. The findings indicate that protocol policy implementation has generally supported the effective execution of leadership activities; however, institutional capacity has not yet been fully institutionalized. Key strengths include staff commitment, operational flexibility, collaborative networks, and adaptive responses to dynamic leadership agendas. Nevertheless, institutional weaknesses remain evident in the absence of detailed internal standard operating procedures, limited organizational learning mechanisms, and system coherence that relies heavily on informal communication and individual experience. These findings imply the need to strengthen internal protocol procedures, institutionalize continuous capacity development and documented post-activity evaluations, and establish formal inter-organizational coordination mechanisms to enhance sustainable institutional capacity.

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INTRODUCTION

Public policy implementation represents one of the most critical stages in public administration because it transforms governmental decisions, regulations, and policy objectives into concrete administrative actions that directly affect society (Capano et al., 2025; Sager & Gofen, 2022). The effectiveness of implementation determines whether public policies are capable of producing

tangible benefits, maintaining public trust, and achieving intended development outcomes (Domorenok et al., 2021; Fernández-i-Marín, Hinterleitner, et al., 2023). Although policy formulation receives considerable scholarly and political attention, successful implementation requires bureaucratic organizations that possess sufficient institutional capacity to translate policy intentions into consistent administrative practices (Vince et al., 2024). Weak institutional arrangements often result in discrepancies between policy design and implementation, thereby reducing policy effectiveness and creating governance inefficiencies. Consequently, institutional capacity has become a central concern in contemporary public administration, particularly in decentralized governance systems where local governments assume greater responsibilities in delivering public services and implementing national as well as regional policies. The complexity of implementation processes involving multiple actors, interests, and coordination mechanisms further reinforces the importance of strengthening bureaucratic institutions to ensure policy success.

The importance of institutional capacity becomes increasingly evident within decentralized governance systems, where local governments are expected to exercise greater administrative autonomy while responding effectively to diverse local conditions (Capano & De Oliveira, 2025; Fernández-i-Marín, Knill, et al., 2023). Decentralization not only transfers authority from central to local governments but also requires regional bureaucracies to manage human resources, coordinate organizational functions, allocate financial resources, and develop adaptive governance mechanisms capable of addressing complex societal demands. Consequently, institutional effectiveness depends not merely on formal organizational structures but also on the collective ability of public institutions to coordinate, learn, innovate, and sustain organizational performance over time (Wang et al., 2024). In many developing countries, however, local governments continue to experience institutional weaknesses that hinder policy implementation, including fragmented coordination, limited organizational learning, inadequate administrative procedures, and uneven bureaucratic competencies. These conditions demonstrate that institutional capacity constitutes a multidimensional organizational capability rather than a simple administrative resource, making it an essential prerequisite for effective local governance and sustainable public sector performance (Mao, 2023).

One area of public administration that heavily depends on institutional capacity is governmental protocol policy. Despite frequently being perceived as a ceremonial or administrative function (Andrews et al., 2020), protocol administration performs strategic responsibilities in supporting regional leaders' official activities, ensuring orderly governmental ceremonies, preserving institutional legitimacy, and maintaining compliance with legal provisions

concerning official procedures, seating arrangements, state ceremonies, and official honors. Because protocol activities involve multiple stakeholders, strict procedural standards, rapid decision-making, and intensive interagency coordination, their successful implementation requires institutional arrangements that extend beyond individual competence (Schulmann et al., 2024). Nevertheless, many local government institutions continue to experience operational challenges, including inconsistent standard operating procedures, varying interpretations of protocol regulations, insufficient coordination among agencies, unclear distribution of responsibilities, and excessive dependence on individual experience. Such conditions create implementation gaps that reduce administrative efficiency and increase the risk of organizational inconsistency, indicating broader institutional problems that require systematic examination from a public administration perspective (Adegbite et al., 2021).

These institutional challenges are particularly relevant in the context of North Kalimantan Province, one of Indonesia's newest autonomous provinces, where governmental institutions continue to consolidate organizational structures, administrative systems, human resource capacities, and intergovernmental coordination mechanisms (Xiao et al., 2025). As regional development progresses, the increasing complexity of governors' official agendas, cross-sector collaboration among Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), coordination with district and municipal governments, and geographical characteristics requiring flexible administrative responses have significantly increased the importance of protocol administration. Within this institutional setting, the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat occupies a strategic position because it is directly responsible for coordinating leadership administration and implementing governmental protocol activities. Although protocol regulations have been formally established, their implementation frequently depends on organizational capacity, standardized internal procedures, effective communication, and sustainable institutional learning rather than merely on regulatory compliance (Agúndez et al., 2022). Therefore, the implementation of protocol policy in North Kalimantan provides a relevant empirical setting for examining how institutional capacity influences policy implementation effectiveness in regional bureaucracy.

Previous studies on institutional capacity in public administration have predominantly focused on policy implementation in sectors such as public service delivery, regional development, healthcare, education, fiscal management, and socio-economic governance. These studies consistently demonstrate that institutional capacity significantly influences organizational performance, policy effectiveness, and governance quality by strengthening administrative coordination, resource management, and organizational learning.

Research on policy implementation has also emphasized that implementation outcomes are shaped by bureaucratic commitment, interorganizational collaboration, and institutional arrangements rather than solely by policy formulation (Steinebach & Limberg, 2021). Likewise, studies on local governance indicate that decentralized administrations require adaptive institutions capable of responding to changing environmental conditions while maintaining organizational coherence and accountability (Faedlulloh & Yulianto, 2023; Lodge & Wegrich, 2020). Although these studies provide valuable theoretical and empirical insights into institutional capacity, they rarely examine administrative functions characterized by highly technical, procedural, and coordination-intensive responsibilities, leaving important dimensions of bureaucratic implementation insufficiently explored (Michel et al., 2022).

Another limitation of existing literature concerns the relatively limited attention devoted to governmental protocol administration as a policy implementation domain within public administration scholarship. Protocol functions are commonly discussed from legal, ceremonial, or operational perspectives, whereas their institutional dimensions remain largely overlooked despite their dependence on organizational coordination, procedural consistency, administrative responsiveness, and continuous institutional learning (Liu et al., 2024). Furthermore, previous studies frequently assess institutional capacity through individual competencies, organizational structures, or resource availability without comprehensively examining the dynamic capabilities that enable institutions to sustain performance over time (Gong, 2022). This limitation suggests that institutional capacity should be analyzed as an integrated organizational system encompassing commitment, operational capability, external relationships, organizational adaptation, and internal coherence (Milki et al., 2026). Accordingly, this study positions governmental protocol administration as an empirical setting to extend institutional capacity literature by employing the Five Core Capabilities framework, thereby addressing an important gap within contemporary public administration research.

This study introduces a different perspective by conceptualizing governmental protocol administration not merely as a ceremonial or technical activity but as an institutional policy implementation process requiring comprehensive organizational capacity. Instead of concentrating exclusively on human resource competence or bureaucratic structures, this research examines protocol implementation through interconnected institutional capabilities that determine organizational effectiveness in dynamic governance environments. The study further highlights the importance of institutional commitment, functional performance, interorganizational collaboration, organizational

adaptation, and systemic coherence as integrated dimensions shaping implementation outcomes. By applying this perspective to the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province, the research expands the scope of institutional capacity analysis into an administrative function that has received limited scholarly attention. Consequently, this study offers a broader understanding of how institutional capacity contributes to effective governance beyond conventional public service sectors and strengthens theoretical discussions regarding policy implementation within regional bureaucracies.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to examine how the institutional capacity of the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province supports the implementation of governmental protocol policy. The central issue is not whether protocol regulations formally exist, but whether institutional arrangements are sufficiently capable of translating regulatory provisions into consistent administrative practices across diverse organizational contexts. This study argues that effective protocol policy implementation depends upon the presence of strong institutional capabilities that enable bureaucratic organizations to coordinate stakeholders, standardize operational procedures, develop organizational learning, adapt to evolving governance demands, and maintain coherence within administrative systems. Accordingly, institutional capacity constitutes the primary determinant of sustainable protocol implementation because it enables organizations to transform formal policy directives into coordinated, adaptive, and accountable administrative actions capable of supporting effective regional governance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a single-case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the institutional capacity of the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province in implementing governmental protocol policy (Brenton et al., 2022). A qualitative case study was considered the most appropriate design because the research sought to explore organizational processes, institutional practices, coordination mechanisms, and contextual factors influencing policy implementation within a specific bureaucratic setting rather than to test causal relationships or generate statistical generalizations (Hall & Liebenberg, 2024). The Bureau of Leadership Administration was deliberately selected as the research site because it serves as the primary organizational unit responsible for supporting the Governor's official activities and coordinating protocol administration across regional government institutions. As one of Indonesia's

newest autonomous provinces, North Kalimantan provides a relevant institutional context for examining how bureaucratic capacity is developed and utilized in supporting policy implementation under conditions of organizational consolidation and administrative adaptation.

Primary and secondary data were utilized to ensure comprehensive understanding and data triangulation. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observations involving ten purposively selected informants based on their roles, responsibilities, and experience in governmental protocol implementation. The informants represented the Bureau of Leadership Administration, relevant Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), district and municipal governments, and regional executive leadership to capture diverse institutional perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences regarding institutional capacity, organizational coordination, operational procedures, implementation challenges, and factors affecting protocol policy implementation (Villamin et al., 2025). Observations were undertaken to examine protocol practices within their natural organizational setting, while secondary data were obtained from documentary sources, including protocol regulations, organizational documents, official assignments, event schedules, activity reports, and other administrative records (Dai, 2025). The integration of interviews, observations, and documentation strengthened the credibility and completeness of the research findings through methodological triangulation.

Data analysis followed an inductive qualitative procedure using the interactive analytical model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data condensation stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were systematically organized, coded, and categorized according to the Five Core Capabilities framework, encompassing the capability to act and commit, deliver on development objectives, relate and attract support, adapt and self-renew, and achieve coherence. Subsequently, the categorized data were presented through thematic matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate pattern identification and interpretation (Villamin et al., 2025). The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuously verifying emerging findings through comparison across multiple data sources and collection methods to ensure analytical consistency and trustworthiness. Data credibility was further enhanced through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants and validating interview findings with observational evidence and documentary records.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings indicate that the institutional capacity of the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province has generally supported the implementation of governmental protocol policy. The bureau has been able to facilitate the Governor's official activities by organizing protocol arrangements, including seating arrangements, ceremonial procedures, and official honors, while coordinating with multiple government institutions involved in official events. Daily implementation demonstrates that protocol activities are conducted effectively and that operational responsibilities are distributed according to organizational functions. Nevertheless, field evidence also reveals that institutional capacity remains largely dependent on individual experience, informal communication, and practical working habits developed over time. Although organizational functions are performed consistently, several institutional processes have not yet been fully standardized, indicating that operational performance continues to rely substantially on tacit knowledge possessed by experienced protocol officers rather than comprehensive institutional mechanisms.

The findings regarding the capability to act and commit demonstrate that protocol personnel exhibit strong organizational commitment in supporting regional leadership activities. Informants consistently reported that protocol officers are capable of responding quickly to schedule changes, adapting to unexpected circumstances, and maintaining service continuity despite demanding workloads and time constraints. Operational flexibility has become an important characteristic of protocol implementation because official agendas frequently change within short periods. The study also found that individual experience significantly contributes to effective decision-making during protocol implementation, particularly when officers are required to resolve technical issues in real time. However, organizational commitment is primarily reflected through the dedication and practical competence of individual personnel. Formal institutional mechanisms that systematically preserve organizational knowledge and ensure continuity across personnel transitions remain relatively limited within the bureau.

The findings on the capability to deliver on development objectives indicate that the Bureau of Leadership Administration has successfully performed its core protocol responsibilities by supporting official governmental activities in accordance with assigned organizational functions. Protocol implementation is facilitated through task allocation, field coordination, and operational collaboration among personnel involved in official events. Informants explained that protocol activities generally proceed according to

established work practices and organizational experience. However, documentary analysis revealed that detailed internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing specific protocol activities remain limited. Consequently, operational consistency frequently depends on officers' practical understanding and accumulated experience rather than documented procedural guidelines. This condition results in variations in operational practices, particularly when activities involve different personnel or require coordination under rapidly changing circumstances.

The capability to relate and attract resources is reflected in the bureau's ability to establish effective coordination with Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), district and municipal governments, vertical agencies, security institutions, and other stakeholders involved in official governmental activities. Protocol implementation requires continuous communication before, during, and after official events to ensure that responsibilities are clearly distributed among participating institutions. The findings show that interorganizational collaboration functions effectively because communication channels remain active throughout protocol implementation processes. Coordination meetings, direct communication, and informal interactions among protocol personnel contribute significantly to maintaining operational continuity. Nevertheless, the coordination process continues to depend heavily on interpersonal relationships and practical collaboration developed through previous experience rather than formalized institutional coordination mechanisms that systematically regulate cooperation across organizations.

The findings on the capability to adapt and self-renew indicate that the Bureau of Leadership Administration demonstrates a considerable capacity to adjust protocol implementation to changing organizational demands. Protocol officers regularly adapt to revisions in the Governor's schedule, modifications to event arrangements, and operational challenges associated with the geographical characteristics of North Kalimantan Province. Informants reported that flexibility and rapid decision-making enable protocol activities to continue despite unexpected circumstances. Observations also revealed that personnel frequently rely on previous experience to resolve operational issues during official events. However, organizational learning remains predominantly informal. Post-event evaluations are generally conducted through direct discussions among personnel and are rarely documented in a systematic manner. Consequently, practical knowledge generated from operational experience is not consistently preserved as organizational knowledge for future protocol implementation.

The findings regarding the capability to balance diversity and coherence show that the bureau has maintained relatively consistent implementation of protocol activities despite the involvement of numerous organizations and

stakeholders. Official events require collaboration among regional government agencies, district and municipal administrations, security institutions, and supporting organizations, each with different responsibilities and operational priorities. Informants indicated that communication and mutual understanding among protocol personnel have contributed to maintaining the continuity of official activities. Field observations further demonstrate that operational coherence is achieved through intensive coordination before and during events, enabling participating institutions to perform their respective roles effectively. Nevertheless, this coherence is sustained primarily through continuous communication and shared practical experience rather than comprehensive institutional mechanisms that formally integrate coordination procedures across participating organizations.

The study identified three groups of factors influencing the institutional capacity of the Bureau of Leadership Administration in implementing governmental protocol policy. Internal factors include the competence and experience of protocol personnel, leadership support, task distribution, and the availability of internal administrative systems and operational procedures. External factors comprise collaboration with Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs), district and municipal governments, vertical agencies, and other institutions participating in official governmental activities. Institutional environmental factors include the administrative characteristics of North Kalimantan as a relatively new autonomous province, the dynamics of regional leadership, geographical conditions, and the continuing process of bureaucratic consolidation. These factors collectively shape the bureau's operational capacity and influence the implementation of governmental protocol activities within diverse administrative contexts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that governmental protocol policy has been implemented effectively in supporting the official activities of regional leaders in North Kalimantan Province. The Bureau of Leadership Administration has performed its organizational responsibilities by coordinating protocol arrangements, facilitating interorganizational communication, and ensuring the continuity of official governmental events. Institutional capacity is reflected in the bureau's ability to respond to operational challenges, maintain collaboration among multiple stakeholders, and adapt to changing administrative demands. At the same time, several organizational processes remain dependent on individual experience, informal communication, and practical working routines. Although protocol implementation has functioned effectively in practice, institutional mechanisms such as standardized operational procedures, systematic organizational learning, and formal coordination arrangements have not yet been fully institutionalized within the organizational system.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of governmental protocol policy in North Kalimantan Province is primarily supported by functional institutional capacity rather than by fully institutionalized organizational systems. This finding reinforces the argument that policy implementation extends beyond regulatory compliance and depends on the ability of public organizations to coordinate actors, manage administrative processes, and respond to operational complexities. The observed reliance on experienced personnel and informal communication indicates that organizational effectiveness can be sustained through practical routines, yet such arrangements remain vulnerable to personnel changes and organizational discontinuity (Belle & Chemen, 2025). These findings are consistent with the implementation perspective proposed by Pressman and Wildavsky, who argue that implementation outcomes are shaped by the interaction of multiple actors, organizational processes, and coordination mechanisms rather than by policy design alone (Steinebach & Limberg, 2021). However, this study further demonstrates that, within protocol administration, operational success frequently precedes institutional maturity, suggesting that effective practice does not necessarily reflect fully developed institutional capacity.

The study further reveals that the bureau's strongest institutional asset lies in its capability to act and commit, as reflected in the professionalism, flexibility, and responsiveness of protocol personnel. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that bureaucratic commitment remains an essential determinant of implementation effectiveness, particularly within decentralized governance systems where public organizations operate under dynamic administrative conditions. Nevertheless, the present findings also indicate that individual commitment alone is insufficient to sustain organizational performance over time. The absence of comprehensive internal procedures and systematic organizational learning means that institutional knowledge continues to reside largely in experienced personnel instead of becoming embedded within organizational systems (Solihin & Wijaya, 2024). This observation expands existing discussions on institutional capacity by highlighting the distinction between individual competence and organizational capability (Vince et al., 2024). While previous studies have frequently associated institutional capacity with human resource quality, this research demonstrates that sustainable implementation equally depends upon the institutionalization of knowledge, procedures, and organizational memory.

Another important finding concerns the bureau's capacity to coordinate multiple governmental actors involved in protocol implementation. Effective protocol administration requires continuous interaction among Regional Apparatus Organizations, district and municipal governments, security

institutions, and other stakeholders responsible for official governmental events. The findings therefore support previous research emphasizing that institutional capacity is strongly influenced by relational capability and collaborative governance, particularly when policy implementation involves multiple organizations with different responsibilities and interests. At the same time, this study identifies an important contextual characteristic that distinguishes protocol administration from many other public policy sectors. Rather than relying predominantly on formal interorganizational arrangements, coordination frequently develops through interpersonal trust, repeated collaboration, and informal communication (Capano et al., 2025). This suggests that relational capacity within protocol administration possesses both formal and informal dimensions that jointly shape implementation effectiveness under dynamic administrative conditions.

The findings also provide important theoretical implications for institutional capacity research by demonstrating that the Five Core Capabilities framework should be understood as an integrated system rather than as a collection of independent organizational attributes. Although the Bureau of Leadership Administration exhibited capabilities across all five dimensions, their level of institutionalization varied considerably. Capabilities related to commitment, operational delivery, and coordination were relatively strong because they were continuously exercised through daily protocol activities. In contrast, capabilities associated with organizational learning and systemic coherence remained less developed due to limited documentation, formalized procedures, and structured knowledge management. These findings complement the Five Core Capabilities framework by illustrating that institutional capacity evolves unevenly across organizational dimensions and that practical performance does not necessarily indicate balanced institutional development (Schulmann et al., 2024). Consequently, institutional effectiveness should be assessed not only through organizational outputs but also through the extent to which institutional capabilities are embedded within sustainable organizational systems.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening institutional capacity requires organizational reforms extending beyond personnel development. While experienced protocol officers have enabled the bureau to maintain effective implementation, long-term organizational resilience depends on institutional mechanisms capable of preserving knowledge and ensuring consistency across administrative transitions. The development of comprehensive internal Standard Operating Procedures, systematic post-event evaluations, structured knowledge-sharing practices, and integrated coordination mechanisms would reduce dependence on individual expertise

while improving organizational continuity (Adegbite et al., 2021). These improvements are particularly relevant for North Kalimantan Province, where institutional consolidation remains an ongoing process following regional expansion. Strengthening organizational systems would also facilitate coordination among Regional Apparatus Organizations, district and municipal governments, and external stakeholders by providing standardized administrative guidance for protocol implementation. Accordingly, institutional strengthening should focus on transforming practical experience into organizational knowledge that can be consistently applied across different administrative contexts.

The principal contribution of this study lies in extending institutional capacity research into the field of governmental protocol administration, an area that has received limited attention within public administration literature despite its strategic role in supporting governmental operations. Existing studies have predominantly examined institutional capacity in public service delivery, regional development, fiscal administration, health, and education, whereas protocol administration has generally been approached from legal or ceremonial perspectives (Brenton et al., 2022). By positioning protocol policy as a public policy implementation process, this research broadens the analytical scope of institutional capacity and demonstrates that administrative functions traditionally regarded as technical or operational also require robust institutional capabilities. Furthermore, the study advances the application of the Five Core Capabilities framework by illustrating how institutional capacity is shaped through the interaction of organizational commitment, operational performance, collaborative relationships, adaptive learning, and systemic coherence within a decentralized regional bureaucracy. This perspective contributes to the broader discourse on policy implementation by emphasizing that sustainable administrative performance depends not only on competent personnel but also on institutional systems that are structured, adaptive, and capable of continuous organizational learning.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the institutional capacity of the Bureau of Leadership Administration of the Regional Secretariat of North Kalimantan Province has enabled the effective implementation of governmental protocol policy by supporting leadership activities through organizational commitment, interorganizational coordination, and adaptive operational practices. The principal lesson derived from this research is that successful protocol policy implementation depends not merely on competent personnel or regulatory compliance but on the institutionalization of organizational systems capable of

sustaining knowledge, coordination, and continuous learning. Although protocol implementation has functioned effectively in practice, the findings reveal that institutional performance remains highly dependent on individual experience, informal communication, and operational routines, indicating the need to strengthen formal organizational mechanisms. This study contributes to public administration scholarship by extending institutional capacity analysis into governmental protocol administration, an area that has received limited scholarly attention, and by demonstrating the applicability of the Five Core Capabilities framework in explaining institutional capacity within a decentralized regional bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the study is limited to a single-case design focusing on one provincial government institution, thereby restricting broader contextual generalization. Future research is therefore encouraged to undertake comparative studies across provinces or governmental institutions, develop measurable indicators of institutional capacity in protocol administration, and further examine the relationships among organizational learning, adaptive governance, and the long-term sustainability of institutional capacity.

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