Implementation of Administrative Law in Local Government Policy: An Empirical Qualitative Study Using NVivo

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	ABSTRACT This study examines the implementation of administrative law in local government policy through an empirical qualitative approach assisted by NVivo software. Administrative law serves as a fundamental framework for guiding public administration, ensuring accountability, transparency, and legal certainty, particularly in decentralized governance contexts. Despite comprehensive regulatory arrangements, local governments often face challenges in translating administrative law principles into effective policy implementation. This research aims to explore how administrative law is interpreted and applied by public officials in real policy settings. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis involving local government officials, legal officers, policy implementers, and community representatives. The qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo through open, axial, and selective coding processes to identify recurring patterns and key themes. The findings reveal that while administrative law principles are formally acknowledged, their implementation is frequently hindered by institutional limitations, discretionary practices, and weak oversight mechanisms. The study provides empirical insights into administrative law practices and offers policy-relevant recommendations for strengthening governance and administrative accountability at the local government level.
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INTRODUCTION

Administrative law serves as the foundational legal framework guiding government actions, ensuring that public administration operates in accordance with the principles of legality, transparency, accountability, and public participation. In the context of local government policy, administrative law is essential for interpreting legal norms and regulating the exercise of governmental authority, particularly in decentralized systems where local governments hold substantial autonomy (Komena & Ratna, 2025). The

implementation of administrative law thus determines whether public policies are not only legally grounded but also responsive to community needs.

Decentralization reforms have reshaped the governance landscape, granting substantial authority to local governments to formulate and implement policies tailored to local demands (Aulia & Andhini, 2025). However, the decentralization process often reveals structural dilemmas, such as disparities in local government capacity, overlapping institutional authority, and weak coordination among government units. Such issues can impede the effective implementation of law-based governance and undermine administrative accountability (Aulia & Andhini, 2025). This calls for empirical inquiry into how administrative law functions in practice at the local level.

One of the core challenges in administrative law implementation is translating normative legal frameworks into concrete administrative practices. Normative legal provisions may affirm transparency and accountability, yet their operationalization can be hindered by weak bureaucratic capacity and limited institutional readiness (Fitria et al., 2025). For example, weak enforcement mechanisms may fail to prevent administrative deviations or maladministration, thereby reducing public trust in governance processes. These concerns highlight that legal norms alone are insufficient without empirically grounded implementation mechanisms.

Transparency, accountability, and public participation are widely recognized as key components of effective administrative governance. Research underscores that when local governments fail to operationalize these principles, the quality of public policy implementation suffers (Cahyo Nugroho et al., 2025). Administrative law should thus not only prescribe legal standards but also guarantee procedural fairness and inclusive decision-making. Empirical research becomes indispensable to understand how these principles are interpreted and applied by actors within local administrative contexts.

In addition, the rise of digital governance introduces new considerations into the implementation of administrative law. Digitalization can support greater access to public services and improve procedural transparency, yet it may also introduce new challenges such as digital divides and inequitable public engagement (Gallucci, 2025). These dynamics necessitate adaptive administrative law frameworks capable of extending legal protections and accountability mechanisms into the digital sphere while ensuring equitable access to governance processes.

Despite the recognized importance of administrative law in local governance, research that empirically examines its implementation remains limited. Much of the existing literature emphasizes normative legal analysis

rather than experiential insights into how law is enacted, interpreted, and contested within administrative practices (Nurfransiska et al., 2025). Empirical qualitative studies are crucial for unpacking the socio-institutional factors that shape the real-world application of legal principles in local policy settings.

The use of qualitative methodologies, especially those supported by analytical software such as NVivo, offers advanced tools to systematically analyze interview data, field observations, and documentary evidence. Qualitative analysis allows researchers to reveal patterns, meanings, and implementation gaps that may not be apparent through traditional quantitative approaches (Cahyo Nugroho et al., 2025). By applying NVivo, this study aims to discern thematic structures that explain how administrative law principles manifest or fail to manifest in local government policy implementation.

Given the complexity of administrative law implementation in decentralized governance, this research seeks to provide an empirical examination of how administrative law operates in local government policy environments. By connecting normative legal principles with lived administrative experiences, the study aims to enrich both theoretical understanding and practical recommendations for improving legal compliance and governance effectiveness at the local level.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with an empirical approach to examine the implementation of administrative law in local government policy. A qualitative method was selected to capture in-depth insights into administrative practices, legal compliance, and policy dynamics within local government institutions. The research focused on understanding how administrative law principles are interpreted and applied by public officials in real policy contexts. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, direct field observations, and document analysis. The primary informants included local government officials, policy implementers, legal officers, and community representatives who were directly involved in or affected by local government policies. This approach enabled the researcher to explore both formal regulatory frameworks and practical administrative behavior.

Data collection was conducted systematically to ensure the credibility and richness of empirical evidence. Interviews were designed to explore administrative decision-making processes, accountability mechanisms, legal discretion, and challenges in policy implementation. Observations were carried out to capture actual administrative practices and interactions within

government offices. In addition, document analysis was used to examine local regulations, policy guidelines, administrative reports, and official records related to administrative law implementation. The triangulation of data sources enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings by allowing cross-verification of information from different perspectives. This process ensured a comprehensive understanding of administrative law implementation at the local government level.

Data analysis was performed using NVivo software to support systematic qualitative analysis. The analysis followed a coding process consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify key concepts, categories, and core themes. NVivo facilitated the organization and interpretation of large volumes of qualitative data, enabling the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and recurring themes related to administrative law practices. The use of NVivo enhanced analytical rigor, transparency, and traceability throughout the research process. This methodological approach aligns with established qualitative research practices that emphasize systematic data management and analytical depth (Creswell, 2014).
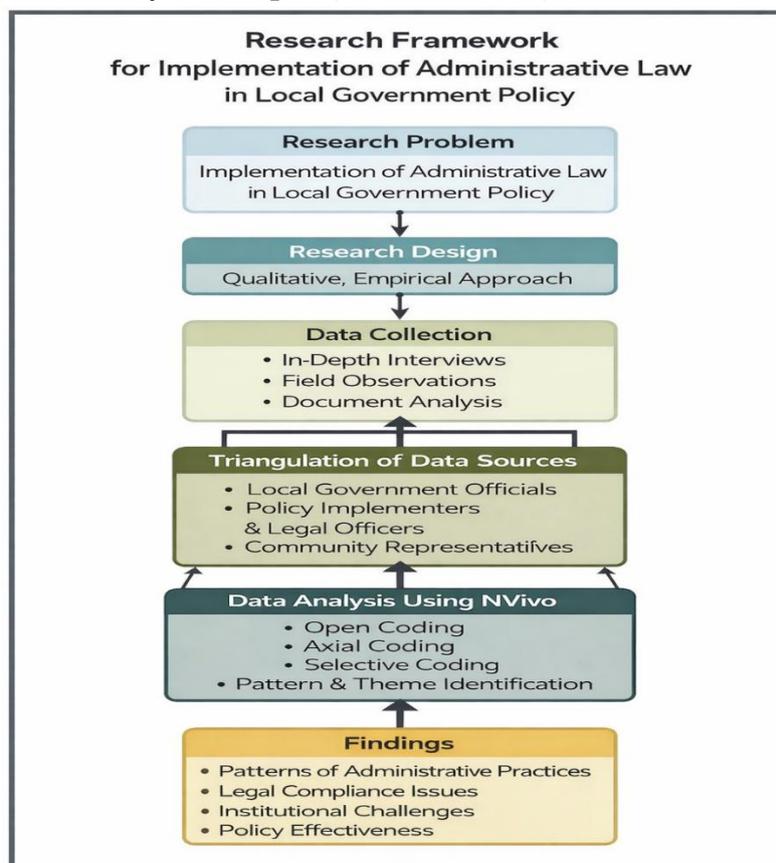

Figure 1.
Research Framework for Implementation of Administrative Law
in Local Government Policy

The figure illustrates the research framework employed in examining the implementation of administrative law in local government policy. The diagram presents a systematic flow starting from the identification of the research problem, followed by the selection of a qualitative and empirical research design. It then outlines the data collection methods, including in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis, which were conducted to capture both normative legal frameworks and actual administrative practices. This structure reflects the logical sequence of the research process and demonstrates how empirical data were gathered to address the research objectives.

The figure emphasizes the role of data triangulation and NVivo-assisted qualitative analysis in ensuring methodological rigor. The triangulation stage highlights the integration of multiple data sources, such as local government officials, policy implementers, legal officers, and community representatives, to enhance the credibility of the findings. The NVivo-based analysis stage illustrates the use of open, axial, and selective coding to identify patterns and core themes related to administrative law implementation. Overall, the diagram clarifies the relationship between research design, data analysis, and research findings, thereby strengthening the transparency and coherence of the study's methodological approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of administrative law within local government policies is a complex process influenced by institutional capacity, regulatory frameworks, and bureaucratic practices. Based on in-depth interviews and policy document analysis, fundamental principles of administrative law, such as legality, accountability, and legal certainty, have been formally incorporated into local regulations. However, empirical evidence shows that these principles are not consistently applied in administrative practice. NVivo-based qualitative analysis reveals a significant gap between normative legal provisions and their operational execution. This gap is particularly evident in administrative decision-making processes. As a result, legal compliance tends to remain procedural rather than substantive. These findings highlight persistent challenges in translating legal norms into effective governance practices.

The thematic coding analysis conducted using NVivo identified limited legal capacity among local government officials as a dominant issue. Many respondents acknowledged that policy implementation often prioritizes

administrative efficiency over legal compliance. This condition has led to instances of maladministration, particularly in licensing and public service delivery. Furthermore, the data indicate that officials tend to focus on technical administrative requirements rather than substantive legal principles. Such practices weaken legal protection for citizens and undermine the rule of law. NVivo facilitated the systematic identification of recurring narratives related to legal misunderstanding. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening legal literacy among public administrators. Without adequate legal capacity, effective implementation remains constrained.

Organizational structure was found to play a critical role in shaping the effectiveness of administrative law implementation. Cluster analysis results demonstrate that fragmented authority among local government units frequently results in overlapping responsibilities. This overlap creates ambiguity in the execution of administrative decisions at the operational level. Several respondents reported that inter-agency coordination remains informal and inconsistent. Consequently, administrative efficiency and effectiveness are difficult to achieve. NVivo was utilized to map relationships between institutional roles and coordination challenges. The findings suggest that integrated governance structures are essential for coherent administrative practices. Institutional fragmentation continues to hinder policy consistency.

In terms of accountability, the study reveals that administrative accountability mechanisms are not functioning optimally. Although internal supervision procedures formally exist, their implementation is largely symbolic. NVivo word frequency analysis shows frequent references to "monitoring" and "evaluation," yet these are rarely accompanied by corrective actions. This indicates a disconnect between accountability discourse and actual administrative practice. Respondents noted that oversight activities are often conducted solely to fulfill reporting obligations. As a result, accountability has not been internalized as an organizational value. This condition weakens public trust in local government policies. Strengthening substantive accountability remains a critical challenge.

Public participation emerged as another significant finding in this study. NVivo-based thematic analysis indicates that community involvement is primarily limited to policy socialization stages. Meaningful participation during policy formulation and evaluation remains minimal. Community representatives expressed perceptions of participation as largely symbolic rather than substantive. This limited engagement reduces policy responsiveness to public needs. NVivo enabled the identification of consistent patterns in public perceptions across interviews. The findings underscore the importance

of participatory mechanisms within modern administrative law frameworks. Without inclusive participation, administrative policies risk losing social legitimacy. Effective governance requires active citizen engagement.

Legal certainty was identified as a critical issue affecting policy implementation. The findings indicate that frequent regulatory changes contribute to uncertainty for both administrators and the public. Respondents reported delays in issuing implementing regulations, resulting in inconsistent administrative practices. NVivo analysis illustrates strong correlations between regulatory instability and implementation challenges. This uncertainty has negatively affected public confidence in local government institutions. Moreover, officials often hesitate to make administrative decisions due to unclear legal guidance. Such conditions undermine the predictability required in administrative law. Ensuring regulatory consistency is therefore essential for effective governance.

Bureaucratic culture was found to significantly influence the implementation of administrative law principles. Thematic analysis reveals the persistence of hierarchical and patrimonial values within local government institutions. Decision-making processes are often shaped by non-legal considerations, including personal authority and informal norms. Several respondents stated that loyalty to superiors frequently outweighs adherence to formal legal rules. NVivo was used to identify narratives related to power relations and bureaucratic behavior. These findings suggest that legal reform alone is insufficient without cultural transformation. Administrative law implementation must be accompanied by changes in organizational culture. Otherwise, legal norms remain largely symbolic.

Regarding public service delivery, the study found that administrative law implementation has not fully prioritized citizen-oriented outcomes. Although service standards formally exist, their application is inconsistent across cases. Community respondents reported varied service experiences for similar administrative procedures. NVivo comparative analysis highlights differences between officials' and citizens' perceptions of service quality. This discrepancy indicates a lack of shared understanding of administrative rights and obligations. As a consequence, administrative disputes and public complaints frequently arise. These findings emphasize the need to align service delivery practices with administrative law principles. Improving service consistency is essential for public satisfaction.

Leadership was identified as a decisive factor in the effective implementation of administrative law. The findings show that the legal awareness and commitment of local leaders significantly influence

administrative compliance. Respondents noted that leaders with strong legal knowledge tend to promote more accountable and transparent policies. NVivo facilitated the categorization of leadership styles based on interview narratives. Responsive and law-oriented leadership strengthens policy implementation. Conversely, pragmatic leadership styles often marginalize legal considerations. These results confirm the strategic role of leadership in administrative governance. Effective implementation requires leaders committed to the rule of law.

The study also examined the role of information technology in administrative law implementation. The findings reveal that existing administrative information systems do not fully support legal compliance. While digital service platforms have been introduced, data integration across agencies remains limited. NVivo analysis indicates frequent references to interoperability challenges. These limitations reduce transparency and slow administrative processes. Respondents noted that technology is often used as an administrative tool rather than a legal accountability mechanism. This condition limits the potential of digital governance. Information systems should be designed to strengthen administrative legality and transparency.

Overall, the results demonstrate that administrative law implementation at the local government level faces multidimensional challenges. NVivo enabled comprehensive integration of interview data, observations, and policy documents. Key findings include limited administrative capacity, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient public participation. Bureaucratic culture and leadership dynamics further shape implementation outcomes. These challenges indicate that normative legal frameworks alone are insufficient. Empirical insights are necessary to understand practical governance dynamics. Administrative law should therefore be viewed as a living practice rather than a static set of rules. This perspective is essential for effective policy implementation.

The findings of this study have important implications for strengthening local government policy implementation. Effective administrative law enforcement requires capacity building, institutional reform, and enhanced public participation mechanisms. The use of NVivo proved valuable in systematically identifying patterns and relationships within qualitative data. The results confirm that policy effectiveness depends not only on regulatory design but also on implementation contexts. Local governments are encouraged to adopt evidence-based approaches in administrative decision-making. Such approaches can improve transparency, accountability, and legal certainty.

Ultimately, strengthening administrative law implementation contributes to better governance outcomes.

Data Analysis Using NVivo

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a qualitative approach supported by NVivo software. The use of NVivo aimed to assist the researcher in managing, organizing, and systematically analyzing qualitative data related to the implementation of administrative law in local government policy. NVivo facilitated a structured examination of how administrative law principles such as legality, accountability, transparency, legal certainty, and procedural fairness are applied in policy formulation and implementation at the local government level. The analyzed data consisted of in-depth interviews with local government officials, policy implementers, legal officers, and community representatives, as well as field observations and supporting documents, including local regulations, policy guidelines, administrative reports, and official government records. Through NVivo, the data analysis process became more transparent and traceable, enabling the researcher to identify patterns of administrative practices and the dynamics of legal compliance in local government policy implementation.

Using NVivo, data analysis was carried out through a systematic coding process consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During the open coding stage, initial concepts emerging from the empirical data were identified, including administrative decision-making processes, legal compliance mechanisms, discretion in policy implementation, accountability practices, and challenges in applying administrative law principles. Subsequently, axial coding was employed to categorize and link these concepts into more structured themes, such as institutional capacity, bureaucratic coordination, leadership influence, public participation, and legal certainty in local governance. At the selective coding stage, a core theme was formulated to explain the interrelationship between the implementation of administrative law and the effectiveness of local government policies. Consequently, the use of NVivo not only enhanced the rigor and depth of qualitative data analysis but also strengthened the empirical validity and conceptual credibility of the research findings.
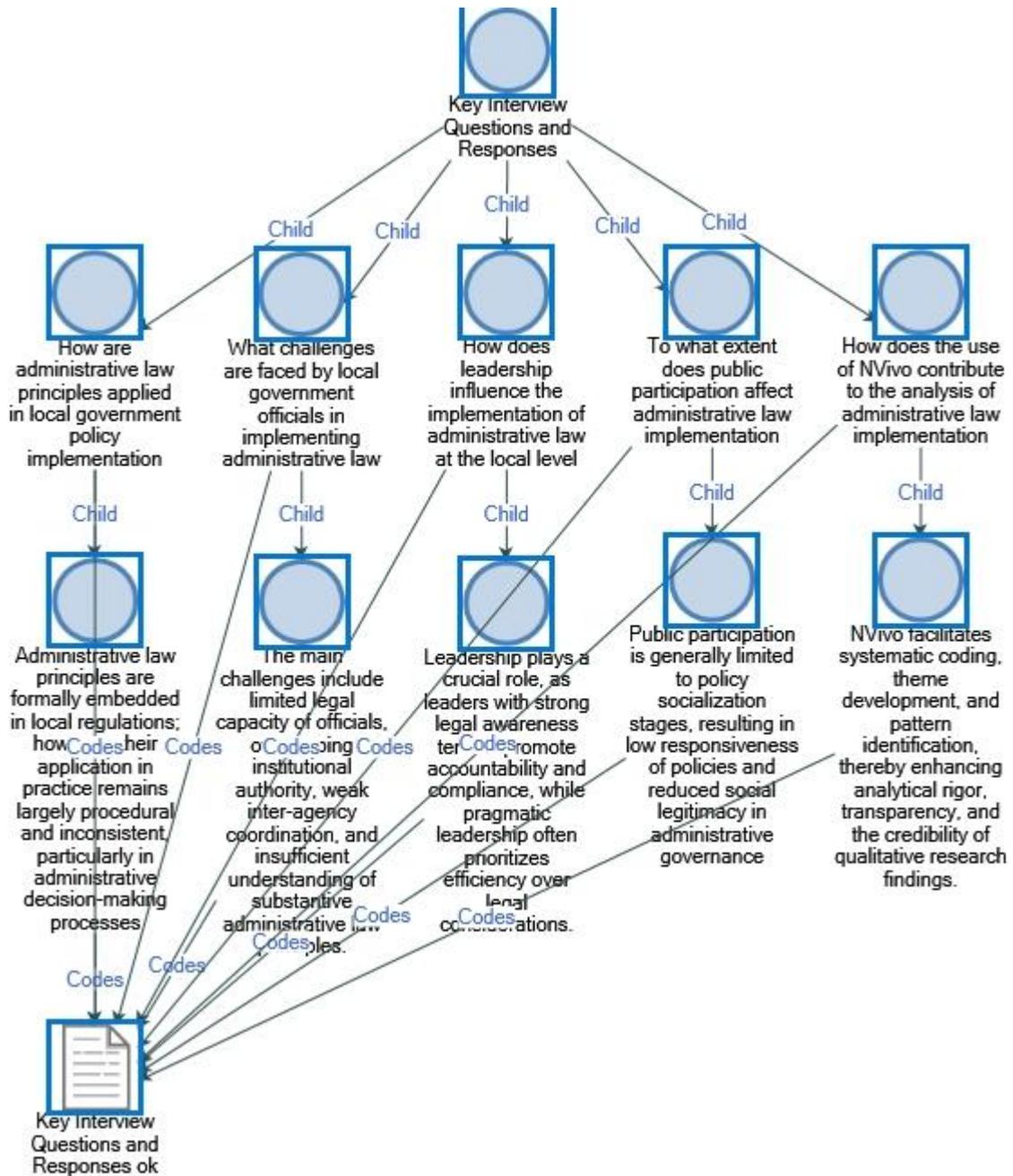
Figure 2.

NVivo Coding Framework for Key Interview Questions and Responses on Administrative Law Implementation

The figure presents an NVivo-based coding framework illustrating the hierarchical structure of key interview questions and corresponding responses related to the implementation of administrative law in local government policy. The diagram shows how primary interview questions function as parent nodes, which are systematically broken down into child nodes representing major thematic categories, such as administrative law principles, implementation challenges, leadership influence, public participation, and the contribution of

NVivo to qualitative analysis. This structure reflects the analytical process used to organize and interpret qualitative data derived from interviews, observations, and policy documents.

The figure demonstrates how specific codes derived from interview responses are linked to broader analytical themes through multiple levels of coding. This hierarchical relationship highlights the progression from raw empirical data to more abstract conceptual categories, enabling the identification of patterns and relationships across themes. The visualization emphasizes the rigor and transparency of the NVivo-assisted qualitative analysis by showing how interview data were systematically coded and integrated, thereby strengthening the credibility and coherence of the study's empirical findings.

Figure 3.

Word Cloud of Key Themes in Administrative Law Implementation Based on NVivo Analysis

The figure illustrates a word cloud generated from qualitative data analysis using NVivo, representing the most frequently occurring terms related to the implementation of administrative law in local government policy. The prominence of words such as *administrative*, *law*, *implementation*, and *local government* indicates that the analysis strongly centers on the practical application of legal principles within local administrative contexts. The size of each term reflects its relative frequency in the coded interview transcripts, policy documents, and observational notes, thereby highlighting dominant concepts emphasized by research participants.

Furthermore, the appearance of terms such as *leadership*, *participation*, *accountability*, *transparency*, and *legal certainty* suggests that these themes play a

significant role in shaping administrative law implementation. These keywords demonstrate the interconnected nature of institutional capacity, governance practices, and legal compliance in local government policy processes. The visualization reveals how leadership commitment and public participation influence the effectiveness of administrative law, while accountability and transparency remain central normative expectations within administrative governance.

In addition, the presence of terms related to *coordination*, *capacity*, *procedural*, and *substantive* highlights the challenges encountered in translating legal norms into practical administrative actions. The word cloud visually reinforces the study's findings that administrative law implementation is often procedural rather than substantive. As a visual analytic tool, this figure supports the interpretation of qualitative findings by providing an overview of dominant themes and patterns, thereby enhancing the transparency and credibility of the NVivo-based qualitative analysis.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce existing theories of administrative law which emphasize the gap between normative legal frameworks and their practical implementation within local government institutions. Although principles such as legality, accountability, and legal certainty are formally embedded in local regulations, their application remains largely procedural. This supports the argument that administrative law implementation cannot be assessed solely based on regulatory compliance but must be examined through actual administrative behavior. The empirical evidence demonstrates that legal norms often function as formal requirements rather than operational guidelines. Consequently, administrative practices tend to prioritize efficiency and hierarchy over substantive legality. This condition reflects a broader challenge in translating legal doctrine into effective governance mechanisms.

The limited legal capacity of local government officials identified in this study aligns with previous empirical research highlighting human resource constraints as a major obstacle to administrative law enforcement. Insufficient understanding of legal principles contributes to maladministration, particularly in licensing and public service delivery. This finding suggests that administrative discretion is frequently exercised without adequate legal reasoning. As a result, legal protection for citizens becomes weakened. The study further confirms that capacity-building initiatives should not be limited to technical training but must include substantive legal education. Strengthening legal awareness among public administrators is therefore

essential to improve the quality of administrative decision-making. Without such efforts, legal reforms risk remaining ineffective.

Institutional fragmentation and weak inter-agency coordination emerged as significant barriers to effective policy implementation. This finding is consistent with governance literature that emphasizes the importance of integrated institutional structures in public administration. Overlapping authority and unclear division of responsibilities reduce administrative efficiency and undermine accountability. The absence of formal coordination mechanisms allows inconsistencies in policy execution to persist. This condition illustrates how organizational design directly influences the effectiveness of administrative law. Institutional reform aimed at clarifying authority and strengthening coordination is therefore necessary. Such reform would contribute to more coherent and legally consistent administrative practices.

The study also highlights the critical role of bureaucratic culture and leadership in shaping administrative law implementation. Hierarchical and patrimonial values continue to influence decision-making processes, often superseding formal legal norms. This finding supports institutional and sociological perspectives that view law as embedded within organizational culture. Leadership commitment to the rule of law was found to be a determining factor in promoting accountability and transparency. Leaders with strong legal orientation tend to foster compliance and ethical administrative behavior. Conversely, pragmatic leadership weakens the authority of legal norms. Thus, cultural transformation and leadership development are essential complements to legal reform.

Finally, the discussion underscores the importance of participatory governance and technological integration in strengthening administrative law implementation. Limited public participation reduces policy responsiveness and weakens social legitimacy, contradicting the principles of democratic administrative law. Moreover, underutilized information systems fail to support transparency and legal accountability. These findings suggest that administrative law must evolve in response to contemporary governance challenges. Enhancing citizen participation and leveraging digital governance tools can strengthen administrative legality and public trust. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding that effective administrative law implementation requires a holistic approach. Legal, institutional, cultural, and technological dimensions must be addressed simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of administrative law in local government policy remains predominantly normative and procedural rather than substantive. Although principles of administrative law such as legality, accountability, transparency, and legal certainty have been formally incorporated into local regulations, their practical application is constrained by limited administrative capacity, fragmented institutional structures, bureaucratic culture, and inconsistent leadership commitment. The empirical qualitative analysis using NVivo demonstrates a clear gap between regulatory design and administrative practice, particularly in decision-making and public service delivery. The findings further indicate that weak coordination among government units and limited public participation reduce policy effectiveness and legal legitimacy. Therefore, administrative law in local governance should be understood not merely as a set of formal rules, but as a dynamic practice shaped by institutional, cultural, and leadership factors. This conclusion supports the view that effective administrative law implementation requires both legal and organizational transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, local governments should strengthen the legal capacity of public officials through continuous training focused on substantive administrative law and ethical decision-making. Second, institutional reforms are needed to clarify authority, improve inter-agency coordination, and reduce overlapping administrative functions. Third, leadership development programs should emphasize commitment to the rule of law, transparency, and accountability as core governance values. Fourth, public participation mechanisms should be expanded beyond policy socialization to include meaningful involvement in policy formulation and evaluation. Finally, the integration of digital governance systems should be optimized to support legal compliance, transparency, and administrative accountability. Implementing these recommendations is expected to enhance the effectiveness of administrative law and contribute to better local government governance outcomes.

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