

Evaluation of Social Minimum Services: A Case Study in Gorontalo Province, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the Minimum Service Standard policy in the social sector in Gorontalo Province. The implementation of Minimum Service Standards in the social sector in Gorontalo Province has still not reached the expected optimal target. Some of the main factors that affect the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards in this area include budget limitations, lack of adequate service facilities, and weak coordination between related institutions. This study uses a retroactive evaluation approach to assess the extent to which the implementation of this policy is running, focusing on the potential, policy, and impact of the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards in the field. Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that the achievement of the Minimum Service Standards indicator in several categories is still low, especially in services for people with disabilities, abandoned children, and the elderly in social institutions. This shortage is caused by limited regional budget allocation, lack of professionals, and the absence of more detailed derivative regulations to support policy implementation at the operational level. In addition, the synergy between institutions in the implementation of social programs is also not optimal, resulting in the low quality of services provided to the community. The implications of these findings show that there is a need for the preparation of more specific derivative regulations, institutional capacity building, and more adequate budget allocation to support the implementation of Minimum Service Standards in Gorontalo Province. With improvements in these three aspects, it is hoped that the quality of social services in Gorontalo Province can meet national standards and have a more positive impact on the welfare of people in need. This research makes an important contribution to more effective policy-making in efforts to optimize social services in accordance with the Minimum Service Standards.

Keywords:

policy evaluation; minimum service standards; social sector; Gorontalo

Research Context

The government plays the role of a service provider for the community, which is responsible for ensuring quality public services (Yayat, 2017). Along with the implementation of regional autonomy, decentralization of government is the main strategy to create responsive and democratic services (Havianto, 2014). Public services that are in accordance with the principles and standards that have been set serve as the foundation for improving people's welfare. The Gorontalo Provincial Government is faced with the challenge of achieving Minimum Service Standards, especially in the social sector, where performance achievements tend to be low compared to other fields such as education and health.

Based on Government Regulation Number 2 of 2018, the Minimum Service Standards in the social sector include services for people with disabilities, the homeless, the abandoned, and social protection during disaster emergency response. However, the implementation of SPM in Gorontalo Province during the 2019-2022 period showed incomplete achievements, with the average achievement value being under the "Plenary Complete" category. This shows that there are serious challenges in meeting service standards, especially due to budget constraints and lack of supporting infrastructure. Data from the Secretariat of Minimum Service Standards of the Directorate General of Highways (2022) shows that the social sector is the sector with the lowest achievement, especially in social rehabilitation services for people with disabilities and abandoned children.

Evaluation of minimum service standards in social welfare programs is essential to ensure that government initiatives effectively meet the needs of the community. As stated in the research (Aneta & Ali, 2018) regarding the evaluation of organizational infrastructure. Various studies highlight the importance of a rigorous evaluation framework that can assess the effectiveness of these programs in delivering social welfare benefits. For example (Pusnita et al., 2023) discussed how public services in Gandus Regency, Palembang, are aligned with local government policies and minimum service standards, emphasizing the need for effective implementation to improve social welfare outcomes. This is in line with the statement (Orr, 2018) that evaluation is at the heart of the evidence-based policy movement, which seeks to ensure that public programs prove to be effective in achieving their goals.

Moreover (García & Heckman, 2022) outlining three criteria for evaluating social programs, emphasizing the need for assessments that consider the scale and economic implications of these initiatives. This was echoed by Muhlhausen, who argued for the need for a large-scale evaluation of federal social programs to ensure their effectiveness and ensure taxpayer money is spent wisely (Muhlhausen, 2011). The integration of this evaluation framework can help identify successful strategies and areas that need improvement, thereby improving the quality of social services provided by the government as a whole. In addition to the evaluation framework, the role of monitoring and feedback mechanisms is crucial in improving service delivery. Beneficiary feedback can significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of social services, suggesting that governmental and non-governmental organizations should prioritize this aspect in their program management (Shapovalova, 2020).

This is particularly relevant in the context of social protection programs, where administrative burdens can negatively impact the uptake of services, as noted by (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2021). Thus, reducing administrative burden while improving service accessibility

is essential to increase public support for government programs. Furthermore, the relationship between social welfare services and community needs must be considered in policy formulation. Kim's analysis of social welfare services in Korea shows that local governments should be more involved in policy decisions to ensure that services are effectively tailored to the needs of the community (Kim, 2016). This perspective is supported by findings (Milinkovic et al., 2020) who argue that public sector investment in health and social services can create intangible assets that improve people's welfare. Therefore, a collaborative approach involving local governments, community stakeholders, and rigorous evaluation practices is essential to optimize social welfare programs.

The main problems in the implementation of Minimum Service Standards in Gorontalo Province are identified in two main aspects, namely the implementation aspect and the regulatory aspect. In the implementation aspect, budget limitations are the main obstacle. This causes delays in the fulfillment of basic services needed by vulnerable community groups, such as people with disabilities and the abandoned elderly (Gorontalo Social Service, 2023). In addition, coordination between the institutions involved has not been optimal, which leads to unclarity in the determination of service objectives and the monitoring process of the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards.

Several previous studies have shown that the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) requires an integrated policy approach, both in terms of regulations and implementation mechanisms. According to (Kurniawan, 2011), the effectiveness of the implementation of SPM in the context of decentralization can only be achieved through strengthening local capacity which includes three aspects: clear regulations, institutional capacity, and continuous budget support. It is also strengthened by (Rahmawati et al., 2022) who reviewed the implementation of SPM in social services at the Metro City Health Center, which stated that one of the keys to the success of policy implementation lies in consistency in implementation and monitoring based on regular evaluation.

Another study by Khobsah (2022) on the implementation of SPM during the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of policy flexibility to adjust to the dynamics of needs in the field. Policies must be adaptive to changes in the environment and socio-economic conditions that affect the quality of services provided. Therefore, an approach that prioritizes stakeholder participation and cross-sector collaboration can be a strategic solution in overcoming structural and operational obstacles faced by local governments.

Furthermore, research by Mardani (2020) in Malang Regency shows that the implementation of SPM in the social sector faces complex challenges related to service recipient

data that is not well integrated between the central and regional governments. To overcome this, an adequate information system is needed to monitor the implementation of SPM in real-time, as well as cross-sector data integration involving the Social Service, Bappeda, and other related agencies. The use of information technology is also considered to be able to accelerate the decision-making process related to social program interventions that are more targeted and sustainable.

From the review of the existing literature, several researchers highlight that the main challenge in the implementation of SPM in the social field lies in the gap between the standards set and the realization in the field. Existing studies highlight the implementation of SPM in the health and education sectors, while studies on the implementation of SPM in the social sector, especially those focusing on beneficiaries and service quality, are still limited (Khozin, 2010; Widiawari, 2020). The implementation of SPM in the social sector is also faced with the problem of invalid and overlapping data between institutions, which results in inconsistency between program goals and the results achieved (Suharto, 2021).

From some of the studies above, the gap that can be seen is the lack of in-depth studies that link the implementation of SPM policies in the social sector with the achievement of service quality and its impact on the welfare of recipients. In addition, the lack of a thorough retroactive evaluation of SPM policies in the social sector results in a lack of feedback for policy improvement. A more focused policy evaluation approach on outcomes and long-term impacts will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of SPM in the social sector.

This study aims to evaluate the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy in the social sector in Gorontalo Province using a retroactive evaluation approach. The focus of this research includes identifying policy potentials and problems, analyzing policy implementation, and assessing the outputs and outcomes of the implementation of SPM policies in the social sector. This evaluation will comprehensively examine the main indicators in the SPM policy, including service quality, implementation effectiveness, and its impact on service recipients in Gorontalo Province.

The novelty of this research lies in the application of the Kelly Evaluation Model (1997) which integrates five main aspects in policy evaluation: potential, policy formulation, implementation, output, and outcome. This model allows researchers to conduct holistic evaluations that not only focus on program outcomes but also assess processes and determinants that influence policy success or failure. This approach is different from previous studies that tend to emphasize the implementation aspect alone without looking at the relationship between various policy stages.

The hypothesis proposed in this study is that the low achievement of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province is caused by the suboptimal derivative regulations and weak coordination between institutions. In other words, if derivative regulations and institutional coordination are improved, then the achievement of SPM in the social field can be significantly improved. In addition, the fulfillment of the quality of basic services in the social sector requires adequate infrastructure support and increasing the capacity of competent human resources in the field of social services.

Methods

This research was carried out in Gorontalo Province with a focus on the implementation of the Minimum Service Standards (SPM) policy in the social sector, especially at the Gorontalo Provincial Social Service and related institutions such as the Government and Welfare Bureau of the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat and several Child Social Welfare Institutions (LKSA) that act as partners in the implementation of social services. The main materials used in this study are related policy documents, reports on the achievements of SPM Gorontalo Province, and qualitative data from the results of interviews and field observations.

In addition, this study also uses primary data collected through structured and semi-structured interviews with related parties, such as structural officials at the Social Service, the Head of Social Rehabilitation, the Head of Social Protection and Security, and the manager of Social Welfare Institutions in Gorontalo Province. The research sample was selected using **the purposive sampling method**, with the main target of policymakers and technical implementers who are directly involved in the implementation of SPM in the social sector in Gorontalo Province. The selection of the sample was carried out by considering their involvement in the process of policy implementation, social service management, and service quality control in social institutions.

The samples taken were as **Structural Officials of the Gorontalo Provincial Social Service**: Head of Service, Head of Social Protection and Security, and Head of Social Rehabilitation; **Technical Staff at the Social Service**: Policy Analysts, Social Protection and Rehabilitation Staff, and Policy Data Managers; **Social Institution Manager**: Chairman of the Putra Mandiri Foundation, Griya Lansia, and several LKSA leaders who have been officially registered; **Beneficiaries**: Several groups of beneficiaries of social services, including people with disabilities, abandoned children, and the elderly in nursing homes. The total number of informants interviewed was 19 people, consisting of structural officials, policy implementers, managers of social institutions, and beneficiaries.

This study uses **the Kelly Evaluation Model (1997)** which focuses on policy evaluation from six aspects: policy potential and problems, policy maker profile, policy formulation, implementation, output, and policy outcome. This model was chosen because it is able to holistically evaluate each stage of the policy, from planning to the impact of the policy on the beneficiaries. The research procedure starts from the primary and secondary data collection stages, which involve **In-depth Interviews, Direct Observations; and Document Studies**. The measurement of parameters in this study is carried out through a qualitative approach using **content analysis** techniques to assess service quality and compliance with set standards. Data analysis in this study was carried out using a **thematic analysis** approach integrated with **the comparative content analysis** method. Data obtained from interviews and observations are analyzed thematically to identify key patterns in policy implementation. This method is used to compare the targets set in the SPM policy with the realization in the field, as well as to evaluate the impact of the policy on service quality.

To evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy, simple statistical analysis methods such as Average **Achievement** Used were used to assess the achievement of each SPM indicator from 2019-2022. **Input-Output Ratio**: Used to assess budget efficiency. **Correlation Analysis**: To see the relationship between budget allocation and social service output achievement. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of tables, graphs, and qualitative descriptions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of SPM policies in the social sector in Gorontalo Province.

Research Results

The results of the study show that the achievement of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province is still in the **"Incomplete"** category. Based on data from the **SPM Secretary of the Directorate General of Development Bangda (2022)**, in 2022 the average achievement of SPM in the Social Sector only reached **52.01%**. This achievement is far below the minimum standard of 80% required by Permendagri Number 59 of 2021. More detailed findings show that of the five main SPM indicators in the social sector, there are two indicators that are very low, namely social rehabilitation for displaced persons with disabilities (0.47%) and rehabilitation services for the socially handicapped (0%).

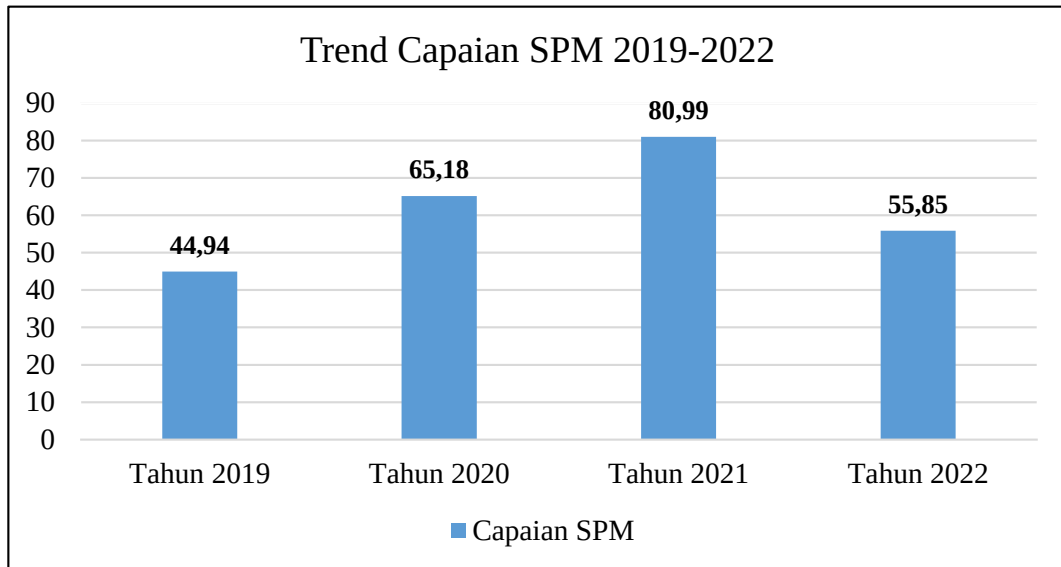
The services that were maximally achieved were only in the category **of Protection and Social Security During and After Disaster Emergency Response**, with an achievement value of 100%, which shows that the local government is able to provide maximum service during emergency response conditions. However, in other indicators, such as social rehabilitation for the

elderly and abandoned children, the achievement is still far from the target, which is 79.31% and 80.28%, respectively.

The low achievement of SPM in Gorontalo Province can be seen in the following achievement picture:

Diagram 1.

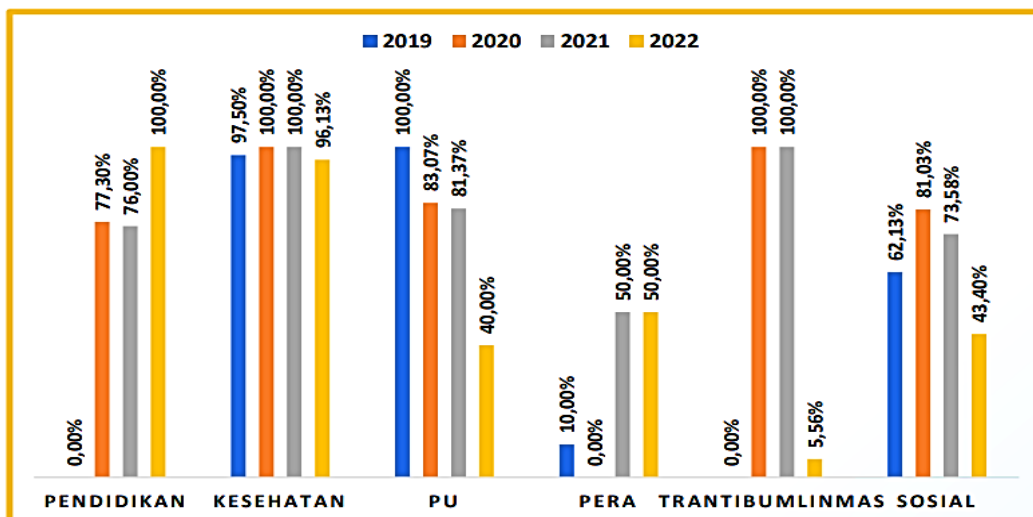
Gorontalo Province SPM Achievement Trends 2019-2022



Source: Sekber SPM Directorate General of Bina Bangda, 2022

Diagram 2.

Gorontalo Province SPM Achievements Per Field in 2019-2022



Source : Sekber SPM Directorate General of Bina Bangda, 2022

From these achievement trends, it is clear that the social sector is one of the fields with the lowest achievement among other fields, such as education and health. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Kurniawan (2011) which shows that the effectiveness of SPM implementation in the social sector is greatly influenced by regulatory factors and coordination between institutions. However, compared to the results of research in Malang Regency by Mardani (2020), the implementation of SPM in Gorontalo faces greater obstacles in terms of budget availability and infrastructure. Meanwhile, in Malang, the main challenge is the data of service recipients that is not well integrated.

Public services play an important role in improving the quality of life of citizens, and standard-setting is essential to ensure their effectiveness and accountability. The integration of digital services into public administration has emerged as a significant trend, with various governments adopting frameworks to improve service delivery through technology. For example, the Australian Government Digital Services Standards were introduced to encourage public sector innovation and improve the quality of digital government services, reflecting the global movement towards standardized digital governance (Patterson, 2023). This is in line with the concept of "Digital Village", which aims to provide standardized digital services for the community, thereby encouraging inclusivity and accessibility in the provision of public services (Irwansyah, 2021).

The application of standards in public services is not just a technical requirement, but also a necessity of governance. Good governance principles, including accountability, transparency, and performance measurement, are essential for effective public service delivery (Msellati et al., 2012). The establishment of clear service standards allows for better monitoring and evaluation of public services, ensuring that they meet the needs and expectations of the community (Chalirafi et al., 2023). For example, the implementation of Standard Operating Procedures has been shown to significantly affect public satisfaction with government services, highlighting the importance of structured processes in service delivery (Situmorang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the existence of an accountability mechanism is essential for fostering trust between citizens and government agencies (Msellati et al., 2012). In addition to traditional governance structures, the emergence of mobile government services is a transformative approach to public service delivery. The "Internet plus government services" model emphasizes the use of mobile technology to improve accessibility and efficiency in service delivery (Liu et al., 2022). This model not only simplifies operations but also addresses the challenges of data barriers and interoperability among various government systems (Li et al., 2017).

The integration of big data and digital technology into public services is essential to meet the evolving demands of citizens and ensure that they are responsive and effective (Wei & Dong, 2023). In addition, a comparative analysis of governance changes in the public service, such as that observed in the fire and rescue service in the UK, underscores the need for an adaptive governance framework that can respond to the complexity of modern public service delivery (Lakoma, 2023). Similarly, local governments are encouraged to adopt efficient practices that are in line with national standards to improve service delivery and meet community expectations (Distor & Khaltar, 2022).

In the context of Gorontalo, the lack of budget and the absence of social institutions as technical units at the provincial level make the implementation of social rehabilitation programs not run optimally. This is different from the context of Widiawati's (2020) study in Bondowoso Regency, where the main obstacle is sectoral egos that hinder cooperation between stakeholders. In Gorontalo, sectoral egos are relatively small, but limited facilities are the main obstacle to SPM achievement. In addition, the findings of this study show that efforts to implement Minimum Service Standards in Gorontalo Province require a more strategic and sustainable approach, especially in terms of strengthening institutional capacity and increasing budget allocation. The scientific implication of this study is the need to develop a policy evaluation model that not only focuses on outcomes, but also considers local contexts and internal factors, such as infrastructure availability and institutional readiness.

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector of Gorontalo Province. The results of the study show that the implementation of SPM in the province still does not reach the optimal target. Some of the main obstacles affecting the implementation of SPM include budget limitations, lack of supporting facilities, and weak coordination between institutions. This study uses a retroactive evaluation approach to assess the potential, policies, and impacts of SPM implementation in the social sector.

The analysis shows that the achievement of SPM indicators in several aspects is still low, especially in services for people with disabilities, abandoned children, and the elderly in social institutions. This is due to the lack of budget allocation, lack of professionals, and the lack of more specific supporting regulations at the operational level. In addition, the lack of data integration of social service recipients causes planning and budget allocation to be not on target. The results of the interview with the Head of Social Protection confirmed that "the validity of service recipient data is still the main obstacle, because the existing data collection system has not been properly integrated."

Field observations show that social service facilities, such as orphanages and social welfare institutions, are inadequate. This condition has an impact on the low quality of services provided to the community. For comparison, research by Fajar Tri Sakti (2018) in DKI Jakarta revealed that the implementation of SPM in the public order sector was hampered by the incompatibility of regulations with field conditions. Meanwhile, in Gorontalo, the problem is more caused by internal limitations such as budget and data.

The practical implication is that local governments can develop more specific derivative regulations and establish an Integrated Social Service Data Center for data integration. Cooperation with the private sector and capacity building of social institutions at the local level must also be a priority so that the implementation of SPM can run more effectively and on target according to the local context.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of a more comprehensive approach in the management and supervision of social institutions in the region. The scientific implication of these findings is that the implementation of SPM in the Social Sector cannot stand alone without good cross-sectoral coordination, including the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and local communities. Non-Governmental Organizations play an important role in community development and coordination, especially in areas where government structures may be lacking or ineffective. The effectiveness of NGOs in mobilizing community resources and advocating for policy change has been well documented. For example, Bashir highlighted that Non-Governmental Organizations are critical in community development efforts in regions such as Balochistan, where they serve as vehicles for local voices and initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life (Bashir, 2016). Similarly, Rahman emphasized the potential of civil society organizations and NGOs in Indonesia to advocate for better policies and provide essential services, despite challenges such as financial constraints and organizational capacity (Rahman, 2023).

Coordination between NGOs and government agencies is essential to maximize the impact of community initiatives. A study by Aburamadan and El-Mougher illustrates that effective coordination between humanitarian organizations and governments significantly improves the efficiency of interventions, especially in crisis situations, such as the May 2021 escalation in Gaza (AbuRamadan & El-Mougher, 2022). This is echoed by the findings of Abdullah et al., who noted that during disasters in Malaysia, NGOs played an important role in coordinating relief efforts with government agencies, thus facilitating a more effective response to the needs of the affected population (Abdullah et al., 2019). In addition, the organizational structure and strategic management of NGOs are essential to their success. Kenzhetayeva and Aliyeva argue that

increasing the effectiveness of NGOs requires a focus on participatory democratic structures, which can increase their authority and impact in communities (Kenzhetayeva & Aliyeva, 2022). This perspective is in line with insights from Malik et al., who discussed the importance of coordination and collaboration among aid providers during disaster response operations, emphasizing that such cooperation is necessary for efficient logistics and effective service delivery (Malik et al., 2020). In addition to operational coordination, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in encouraging community involvement and participation cannot be overstated. Furthermore, the involvement of NGOs in educational initiatives, as highlighted by Yunusov, demonstrates their capacity to improve legal education and promote civic engagement among various demographics (Yunusov, 2021).

An integrated and collaboration-based social service management model must be a policy priority to achieve the SPM target optimally. Practically, the results of this study indicate that the Gorontalo Provincial Government needs to **re-accredit all LKSA and social institutions involved**, in order to ensure that all institutions operating have met the minimum service standards set. In addition, it is necessary to **develop special social institutions** at the provincial level as a long-term solution to ensure the fulfillment of proper rehabilitation services for abandoned children, people with disabilities, and the socially handicapped.

Further analysis shows that the problems faced in the implementation of SPM are not only technical, but also structural. From the results of interviews with several officials at the Social Service, it was revealed that the absence of specific derivative regulations at the provincial level is the main obstacle in the implementation of SPM in the Social Sector. For example, the absence **of a Governor's Regulation** that regulates the implementation of SPM in the social sector causes the implementation of the program to often overlap with other policies, such as child protection programs and social welfare programs funded by the central government. In addition, the lack of understanding among technical implementers about SPM indicators also has an impact on the quality of services provided. The results of the observation show that many employees in the field do not understand well the technical standards that must be met, so there are often deviations in implementation. This can be seen from some of the services provided that are not in accordance with the completion time standards and quality provisions set by the Minister of Social Affairs Number 9 of 2018.

This study has important implications for policymakers in Gorontalo Province. The scientific implication of these findings is that the success of SPM implementation is highly dependent on regulatory clarity and institutional readiness at the regional level. The preparation

of **a Governor's Regulation** that specifically regulates the SPM for Social Sector in Gorontalo Province must be a top priority to clarify the responsibilities of each party involved.

The success of regulatory implementation is a multifaceted process that depends on institutional readiness, organizational commitment, and clarity of the regulation itself. Institutional readiness refers to an organization's capacity to effectively adopt and implement new policies or regulations, which includes having the necessary resources, infrastructure, and skilled personnel. Research shows that the lack of organizational capacity and capability can significantly hinder policy implementation, as seen in the case of the Electronic Local Tax Collection System in Tomohon City, where ineffective structures and inadequate human resources were identified as barriers (Liuw, 2023).

Similarly, regulatory implementation in various sectors, such as environmental management and public health, has shown that institutional readiness is critical to addressing challenges related to regulatory compliance (Hernanda, 2023; Rinfret & Pautz, 2018). In addition, organizational commitment plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of regulations. Ibrada et al. show that a strong commitment to the regulatory framework has a positive impact on the effectiveness of accounting information systems, which shows that when organizations are dedicated to complying with regulations, they are more likely to achieve successful outcomes (Ibrada et al., 2020).

These findings are echoed in the context of environmental regulation, where the willingness of local communities and organizations to engage and prioritize compliance can significantly impact the success of regulatory initiatives (Indrianti, 2023). The interaction between institutional readiness and organizational commitment underscores the importance of fostering a culture of compliance and support within the organization to facilitate effective regulatory implementation. In addition, the clarity and completeness of the regulation itself is essential for successful implementation. Regulations that are well-defined and supported by clear guidelines tend to be adopted more effectively. For example, the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) across the European Union highlights the need for a coherent legal framework that can be applied uniformly across member states (Lopes & Oliveira, 2018).

However, the lack of specific implementation decisions can lead to delays and confusion, as evidenced by the Chilean law on food labeling, which faces significant hurdles during its implementation due to unclear regulatory aspects (Corvalán et al., 2018). As such, the design of regulations must take into account the operational flexibility of the institution while ensuring that the institution provides adequate guidance for implementation. In conclusion, the success of regulatory implementation depends on a combination of institutional readiness, organizational

commitment, and clarity of the regulation itself. Addressing these factors can significantly improve the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks across different sectors, leading to increased compliance and better outcomes.

Conclusion

This study reveals that the implementation of Minimum Service Standards (SPM) in the social sector in Gorontalo Province still faces various obstacles, both in terms of regulations, institutional capacity, and limited infrastructure. Although there are several indicators that show improvement, such as social protection services during disaster emergency response, overall the achievement of SPM in the Social Sector is still under the "Complete" category. The main factors that cause the low achievement of SPM are the absence of specific derivative regulations at the provincial level, the lack of social institution facilities, and the lack of capacity of social workers in providing rehabilitation services that meet the standards. The implications of these findings show that a more integrated policy approach, based on cross-sector collaboration, and strengthening institutional capacity is urgently needed to improve SPM achievement in Gorontalo Province. In addition, the development of derivative regulations, such as the Governor's Regulation on the implementation of SPM in the Social Sector, must be carried out immediately so that the policies implemented in the field have clarity and measurable direction.

For further research, it is recommended to conduct a more in-depth study on the policy implementation model based on a participatory approach, in order to increase the involvement of local communities and social institutions in the implementation of SPM. The use of an integrated information system also needs to be developed to increase the validity of service recipient data and facilitate the process of monitoring and evaluating policies in real-time.

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