

# DETERMINANTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SERVICE QUALITY: EVIDENCE FROM THE DEVELOPING ECONOMY

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## Abstract

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Public service delivery in Indonesia has been mandated to local governments following decentralization (Lewis et al., 2020). Due to public criticism, this research investigates public service quality determinants from local politics, head, and financial factors. Using the purposive sampling method, we collect secondary data from the authorized government institutions during 2016–2019, analyzed with panel data regression. The findings demonstrate that the average achievement of public service quality in Indonesia is at a high level with Java and Bali regions having better average accomplishments than other geographic regions. However, there still exist several local governments with medium and even low public service quality that requires urgent improvement. Further, we find that local government women's political representation in the legislative board, operational expenditure, and capital expenditure positively affect public service quality while other variables exhibit insignificant effects. Our study provides practical implications to the public for public service quality improvement. Firstly, the public should elect accountable candidates with the best qualifications during local elections. Local government should also improve financial management by allocating adequate expenditure budget for public service delivery. Despite still being limited to using quantitative analysis only that can be improved in future studies by employing a mixed method.

**Keywords:** Local Government, Public Service, Local Politics, Local Head, Financial Factors

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Public service delivery has been regarded as one of the most important aspects of a nation and state (Lane, 2005). As a public servant, the government is responsible for providing general services such as education, healthcare, administration, etc. (Pahala et al., 2016). Public service is the rights of the people that are mandated by the law. Thus, the quality of public service delivered by the government gains great attention from the people (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), especially in a democratic country with freedom of speech and expression (Wainwright & Little, 2009). As a democratic country with a large population, Indonesian people have also been very concerned about public service quality. However, many people are still dissatisfied with the public service delivery in Indonesia, especially in local governments (Dewi, 2020).

Based on the data from the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia survey result, Indonesian public service quality still gets a lot of complaints (Dewi, 2020). Ombudsman records 11,087 complaints criticizing public service delivery by the Indonesian government in 2019, which is higher than 2018 statistics with 10,985 complaints going further, the main subject of public dissatisfaction over public service quality in local government. Public complaints about local government public service are the highest that is 41.03 percent of all complaints recorded. In addition, the local government's compliance with the minimum standard of public service also receives high criticism. The Ombudsman survey also revealed that 26.51 percent of district/city governments have low compliance with the minimum standard of public service. On the other hand, there is 40.47 percent with moderate compliance, and only 33.02 percent of local governments can achieve high compliance with the minimum standard of public service.

Since the 1998 reformation, Indonesia has been seriously implementing many fundamental changes in governance (McLeod & Harun, 2014). As a democratic country, Indonesia implements local autonomy that gives a lot of authority to the local governments (Holzhacker et al., 2016). The various changes implemented are expected to realize a fair, transparent, and accountable government (Rakhman, 2019). However, there are still some significant issues facing Indonesia even after regional autonomy was implemented, one of which is public service quality (Furqan et al., 2020). Rochmansjah (2019) mentions that public service quality in Indonesia is still far from expectations. Moreover, Lanin and Hermanto (2018) state that the public service quality in Indonesian local government is still considerably poor due to the local government's inability to implement public-oriented management that emphasizes public interest.

The description of public service in local governments in Indonesia through the statistics above indicates the need for a comprehensive study of the factors that influence public service quality in local governments in Indonesia. In addition to the limited number of studies examining public service quality in the Indonesian context, previous research in the literature also contains significant limitations and can potentially reduce the generalizability of research results (Hadian, 2017;

Hadiyati, 2014; Lanin & Hermanto, 2018). The majority of previous studies are still limited in data and research objects (Hadiyati, 2014). The results cannot be generalized because the characteristics of local governments are different from one another. The issue of subjectivity also still occurs due to survey methods in collecting research data (Hadian, 2017; Lanin & Hermanto, 2018). In addition, some studies contain endogeneity problems in the research model (Furqan et al., 2020), so the results may be less reliable. This research contributes to the public service literature in Indonesia by filling in some of the gaps that occurred in previous studies, as mentioned earlier, through a comprehensive analysis, both in terms of objects and research factors.

This study aims to comprehensively examine the determinants of public service quality in all local governments in Indonesia. The various factors referred to are regional politics, regional heads' characteristics, and regional finances comprehensively studied as independent variables in this study. In addition, the characteristics of the local government are also considered, including the type, complexity, and geographic location of the local government to the population. This research also provides constructive recommendations for the government and the community to realize local governments with high public service quality.

The remainder of the paper is presented as follows. Section 2, the literature review, provides the fundamental references of the study based on the relevant literature and the development of research hypotheses. Section 3, methodology, illustrates how the study is conducted that explains research coverage, data, and analysis. Section 4 presents the empirical findings generated from the data analysis and discussed based on the supporting literature, references, and phenomena in Section 5. Finally, Section 5 provides a summary of the study equipped with the research limitations, implications, and recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Agency theory and local government in Indonesia

As introduced by Jensen and Meckling (1976), agency theory explains the agency relationship between two parties (principal and agent) in a contract that leads to agency conflict. Lane (2005) and Araujo and Tejedo-Romero (2016a) posit that the concept of agency theory also applies in government, with the public acting as the principal while the government is the agent. This concept applies given that the main characteristic of an agency relationship lies in the contract of delegation of authority and responsibility from the people to the executive. Halim and Abdullah (2006) explain that agency theory can be applied in the local government in Indonesia.

Following Law Number 23 of 2014, local government is the implementation of government affairs under the authority of the autonomous region. Local governments in Indonesia are granted a great amount of authority thanks to the implementation of local autonomy as a part of decentralization in the governing system since

the reformation that marks the end of President Suharto's regime. The local heads that lead the executive function are elected by the people and are responsible for the planning, implementation, and accountability of government programs. This election mechanism is a sign of the delegation of authority from the local people to the local head. The local head is entrusted to manage the local resources and implement government programs to maximize public welfare. However, under the concept of agency theory, the local head is assumed to be maximizing his/her interests that contradict with public interest by doing various misconduct for private benefits such as corruption and bribery (Arifin et al., 2015; Sutaryo & Lase, 2015). To reduce these agency problems, there is a legislative body called the Local People Representative Council that performs the legislative functions as the people's representative by monitoring the implementation of government functions.

There are two types of local governments in Indonesia at the province level which consist of the district and city local governments. Both district and city are at the same level and enjoy great decentralization affairs such as the provision of public services and financial management. The difference between a district and a city lies in demographic, size, and economic characteristics. In general, the district's local government has a larger area than the city, and the city has non-agricultural economic activities. Local governments have their own local head elected by the public through the direct election and a legislative body to supervise the local head.

## 2.2. Public service quality

Public service is one of the most important government functions and becomes a very significant aspect of public governance (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). The law has mandated public service delivery to the government which acts as a public servant. In Indonesian law, public service is defined as a set of activities carried out by the government to provide goods and services to meet public needs. The government is responsible for providing general services such as education, healthcare, administration, etc. (Pahala et al., 2016), especially for the sake of improving public welfare as a part of the national development agenda. In addition, along with the development of facilities, information technology, and people's standard of living, the capability of public service delivery by local government stands at the center of public value (Hilhors et al., 2022). Finally, good public service is also important as a manifestation of public trust in the government (Lanin & Hermanto, 2018).

In practice, public services in Indonesia are delivered both by the central government and local government as practiced by many countries in the developing economy (Lewis et al., 2020). The Ministry of Internal Affairs as the coordinator of decentralization in Indonesia looks after the public service delivery at the local government level. The public services consist of primary and secondary public services. The primary public services cover education, health, environment, public work, and spatial planning, public housing, youth and sport, cooperation and small/medium

enterprises, population and civil registration, manpower, food security, woman empowerment, children protection, population control, and family planning, transportation, land affairs, security and order, people protection, supporting function, community and village development, social services, culture, statistics, archival, and library. Meanwhile, the secondary public services cover marine and fishery, agriculture, tourism, industry, trading, and transmigration.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs also sets the Minimum Service Standards (*Standar Pelayanan Minimal, SPM*) of public service quality and evaluates the achievement every year as a part of the local government administration performance assessment. The assessment measures the technical quality of public services that is emphasized the local government's performance achievement in delivering public services that have specific standards. The assessment result of local government performance achievement in delivering primary and secondary public services is classified into four levels: very high (score 3.00 to 4.00); high (score 2.00 to 3.00); medium (score 1.00 to 2.00); and low (score 0.00 to 0.00).

## 2.3. Local politics and public service quality

Political factors in local government have been a public concern for a long time, especially through the role of the legislative board has the authority to supervise government performance (Araujo & Tejedo-Romero, 2016a). In Indonesia, the legislative board is performed by the Local People Representative Council (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD*). There are several crucial legislative factors that arise in the literature especially the political coalition of the legislative board (Barnes & Jang, 2016; Cohen & Leventis, 2013) and the representation of women in the legislative board (Araujo & Tejedo-Romero, 2016b; Guillamón et al., 2011; Rodríguez-García, 2015). Political coalition illustrates the composition of the legislative board from the parties supporting the local head. It represents the support of the legislative board to the local head that performs executive functions.

With an ideal legislative board composition, the supervision of the legislative board will encourage local governments to meet the needs of the people. A legislative board with a higher proportion of political coalition will give support to the local head in carrying out his/her programs related to public services delivery so that the success of the programs can be monitored properly (Barnes & Jang, 2016). Meanwhile, the role of the opposing parties is also important to ensure accountability as it will prevent the local head from acting opportunistically to fulfill his/her self-interest (Cohen & Leventis, 2013).

The role of women legislative board members has also become a great concern in public sector studies for the past decade (Araujo & Tejedo-Romero, 2016b; Rodríguez-García, 2015). In Indonesia, women's political representation at the local level in the legislative board also gains significant attention from the public media (Susilo et al., 2019). It is believed that the presence of women in public governance is important thanks to several aspects that support good governance implementation.

Women are believed to be more concerned about citizens' participation, communication, opinion, criticism, and suggestion (Rodríguez-García, 2015). Jacob (2014) provides empirical evidence that women play a significant role in improving the performance of the legislative board. Moreover, women are considered to have higher attention to social work (Fine, 2009) so they are more likely to be concerned about public service quality. In addition, previous studies also provide empirical evidence that women's presence on the legislative board has a positive implication on public service outcomes such as education (Clots-Figueras, 2012) and healthcare (Bhalotra & Clots-Figueras, 2014). Based on the description above, we formulate hypotheses:

*H1a: Legislative political coalition positively affects public service quality.*

*H1b: Women's political representation in the legislative board positively affects public service quality.*

#### **2.4. Local head characteristics and public service quality**

Organizational leadership is also an important factor in governance to realize the desired performance (Pastore, 2018; Sun, 2018). In a local government context, the local head holds the highest position in the executive as the leader in implementing local governance. Local government head characteristics certainly play a crucial role in determining public service quality through the programs they propose during the election. The profile of a leader has also attracted the attention of local governance studies specifically education and gender.

Education is an important factor as it is related to the way of thinking, management, and competency. A high level of education tends to be followed by high scientific insight (Guillamón et al., 2016). Higher education level also enables local government heads to have a better understanding of public governance. In addition, higher education level is also related to technological and administrative innovation (Avellaneda, 2012) so it is more likely to support the realization of good public service quality delivered to the people. Further, the level of education also has a significant effect in shaping the working behavior and mindset of an individual hence it has a significant role in working performance implementation. Therefore, it can be expected to support the local head in carrying out the duties of improving the public service quality.

The gender of a leader is also increasingly being considered by public sector scholars to have an impact on leadership (Guillamón et al., 2011; McLaren et al., 2019). The gender factor also gains increasing attention in Indonesia, especially in its relation to local governance (Susilo et al., 2019). Women leaders have been regarded to bring a positive impact on government institutions (Diliani & Susanti, 2015) thanks to several traits that are more pronounced in women such as attention to details and diligence (Fine, 2009). Therefore, these traits may support the female local head in carrying out her function as a local leader in implementing government affairs (Rodríguez-García, 2015).

Fox and Schuchmann (1999) more specifically mention that the commitment to public service

possessed by women city managers tends to be higher than male city managers. Furthermore, a previous study conducted by Tavares and da Cruz (2017) states that the female local head is considered to be more demanding in transparency and accountability than the male local head. Furthermore, Rodríguez-García (2015) found that local governments led by women tend to be more responsive to public service so they are more likely to produce high public service quality. Based on the description above, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H2a: Local head education level positively affects public service quality.*

*H2b: Female local head positively affects public service quality.*

#### **2.5. Local government financial factors and public service quality**

Public service quality in local governments is also potentially influenced by financial resources. Public services are the rights of the people that the government must deliver through certain programs and thus the government expenditure may hold a considerable role. Indeed, public service expenditures have already become a part of budgetary reforms in order to improve local government's performance and accountability (Alsaid & Mutiganda, 2020). Local governments that have large expenditure allocations tend to be better in various aspects of government (Martani et al., 2014). Indeed, local government spending plays a role in financing local government programs to provide services to the community. Lewis (2017) finds that the amount of local government spending positively influences education, health, and infrastructure service access. The greater the expenditure, the more activities are carried out by the local government. Specifically, there are operational expenditure and capital expenditure (Setyaningrum et al., 2017).

Operating expenditure is important to fulfil public service needs, such as paying public servant wages and purchasing required inventories and administration staff. Meanwhile, the capital expenditure is allocated for the procurement of plant, property, and equipment (Muda & Naibaho, 2018) that will result in public infrastructures that are useful for public service delivery (Patience & Nel, 2021). Further, Lewis (2019) encourages local governments to spend more on capital as it can be expected to lead to improved service access for citizens. Along with the advancement of information technology, public service delivery can also be improved with innovations (Ojiako et al., 2022) in which the capital expenditure can help realize the development of public service delivery innovations. Therefore, local governments with significantly higher operational and capital expenditures tend to have better funding for the programs that support public service quality improvement. Thus, local governments can achieve better public service quality (Lewis, 2017). Based on the description above, we formulate the following hypotheses:

*H3a: Local government operational expenditure positively affects public service quality.*

*H3b: Local government capital expenditure positively affects public service quality.*

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Population, samples, and data

The population in this study is all local governments in Indonesia during 2016–2019. This study examines the entire population to produce a comprehensive research coverage to obtain findings with a high level of generalization. In addition, this study uses secondary data obtained from authorized government agencies such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Supreme Audit Board (*Badan Pemeriksa Keuangan, BPK*), the Financial and Development Supervisory Agency (*Badan Pengawasan Keuangan Pembangunan, BPKP*), the Indonesia Statistics Bureau (*Badan Pusat Statistik, BPS*), and the respective local government website. This study finally generates unbalanced panel data with a total of

1877 observations from 508 district/city local governments in Indonesia during the 2016–2019 fiscal years.

#### 3.2. Research variables

The dependent variable of our study is local government public service quality as represented by the assessment of public service standards achievement published by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. We investigate local government head, political, and financial characteristics as the independent variable. In addition, this study also employs several control variables to accommodate the factors outside the independent variables. The summary of research variables along with the measurement is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Operational definition of research variables

| Variable                                   | Symbol              | Measurement  | References   |
|--|---------------------|--|--|
| <b>Dependent</b><br>Public service quality | $PSQ_{it}$          | Local government public service quality score by the Ministry of Internal Affairs                        | Furqan et al. (2020)   |
| <b>Independent</b>                         |                     |  |  |
| <b>Local politics</b>                      |                     |  |  |
| Legislative political coalition            | $POL\_COAL_{it}$    | The proportion of legislative members from political parties supporting the executive                    | Lewis and Hendrawan (2019)   |
| Women's political representation           | $WOMEN\_POL_{it}$   | The proportion of women on the legislative board   | Lewis (2019)   |
| <b>Local head characteristics</b>          |                     |  |  |
| Local head education level                 | $HEAD\_EDU_{it}$    | Dummy:<br>1 = local head has a postgraduate title;<br>0 = local head has an undergraduate title or below | Setyaningrum (2017)  |
| Female local head                          | $FEMALE\_HEAD_{it}$ | Dummy:<br>1 = female local head;<br>0 = male local head  | Araujo and Tejedo-Romero (2016b)   |
| <b>Financial characteristics</b>           |                     |  |  |
| Local government operational expenditure   | $LN\_OPEX_{it}$     | Logarithm (Log) value of local government operational expenditure per capita                             | Harumiati and Payamta (2014), Sutaryo and Sinaga (2018), Utama et al. (2019)           |
| Local government capital expenditure       | $LN\_CAPEX_{it}$    | Natural logarithm value of local government capital expenditure per capita                               | Harumiati and Payamta (2014), Sutaryo and Sinaga (2018), Utama et al. (2019)           |
| <b>Control</b>                             |                     |  |  |
| Local head tenure                          | $HEAD\_TENURE_{it}$ | The number of years the local head in charge since the inauguration                                      | Setyaningrum (2017)  |
| Legislative board size                     | $POL\_SIZE_{it}$    | The number of legislative board members  | Lewis (2019)   |
| Local government human development         | $LG\_HDI_{it}$      | Local government Human Development Index (HDI)   | Dalimunthe, Fadli, and Muda (2015), Martani and Pramudya (2017), Saputra et al. (2018) |
| Local government population                | $LG\_POP_{it}$      | Natural logarithm (Ln) value of total populations in the district/city                                   | Guillamón et al. (2016), Sutaryo et al. (2018)   |

#### 3.3. Data analysis

This research is a causality study that uses quantitative methods. Causality research aims to test the hypothesis by examining whether or not there is a relationship between the variables in the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Data analysis starts with descriptive statistics and correlation. Then,

hypothesis testing is conducted by testing the influence of local politics, head, and financial factors on the public service quality of Indonesian local governments. To accommodate other factors, this study uses control variables consisting of local head tenure, legislative board size, human development quality, and population. The regression formula is formulated as follows:

$$PSO_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 POL\_COAL_{it} + \beta_2 WOMEN\_POL_{it} + \beta_3 HEAD\_EDU_{it} + \beta_4 FEMALE\_HEAD_{it} + \beta_5 LN\_OPEX_{it} + \beta_6 LN\_CAPEX_{it} + \beta_7 HEAD\_TENURE_{it} + \beta_8 POL\_SIZE_{it} + \beta_9 LG\_HDI_{it} + \beta_{10} LG\_POP_{it} + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

For future studies, further research can be conducted by using a qualitative method as an alternative approach. Future studies can employ primary data obtained from the in-depth interviews and/or Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with

triangulation analysis. Moreover, the use of the mixed method will also be very interesting to obtain even more robust findings by combining quantitative and qualitative analysis.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlation

We use univariate analysis to obtain descriptive statistics summary of our research data. We find that the level of public service quality in Indonesian local governments on average is at a high level with an average score of 2.716. Several local governments

can reach a very high level of public service quality as the maximum value is at four. However, there exist local governments with low public service quality in which the lowest score is 0.207. On average, city local governments have slightly higher public service quality as compared to district local governments. In detail, the summary of descriptive statistics results is given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics

| <i>Panel A: All local governments</i>      |            |                  |                   |                  |                   |
|--|------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Continuous variable</i>                 | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Mean</i>      | <i>Std. Dev.</i>  | <i>Min</i>       | <i>Max</i>        |
| <i>PSQ<sub>it</sub></i>                    | 1877       | 2.716            | 0.5               | 0.207            | 4                 |
| <i>POL_COAL<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1877       | 0.386            | 0.198             | 0                | 1                 |
| <i>WOMEN_POL<sub>it</sub></i>              | 1877       | 0.137            | 0.082             | 0                | 0.44              |
| <i>LN_OPEX<sub>it</sub></i>                | 1877       | 14.862           | 0.607             | 11.098           | 17.441            |
| <i>LN_CAPEX<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1877       | 13.713           | 0.782             | 11.194           | 16.852            |
| <i>HEAD_TENURE<sub>it</sub></i>            | 1877       | 2.681            | 1.379             | 0                | 5                 |
| <i>POL_SIZE<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1877       | 34.408           | 10.081            | 19               | 74                |
| <i>LG_HDI<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 1877       | 66.5             | 7.529             | 19.62            | 86.65             |
| <i>LG_POP<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 1877       | 12.654           | 0.967             | 9.644            | 15.266            |
| <i>Dummy variable</i>                      | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Dummy 1</i>   |                   | <i>Dummy 0</i>   |                   |
|  |            | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| <i>HEAD_EDU<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1877       | 483              | 25.7%             | 1394             | 74.3%             |
| <i>FEMALE_HEAD<sub>it</sub></i>            | 1877       | 210              | 11.18%            | 1667             | 88.2%             |
| <i>Panel B: District local governments</i> |            |                  |                   |                  |                   |
| <i>Continuous variable</i>                 | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Mean</i>      | <i>Std. Dev.</i>  | <i>Min</i>       | <i>Max</i>        |
| <i>PSQ<sub>it</sub></i>                    | 1522       | 2.68             | 0.514             | 0.207            | 4                 |
| <i>POL_COAL<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1522       | 0.391            | 0.2               | 0                | 1                 |
| <i>WOMEN_POL<sub>it</sub></i>              | 1522       | 0.131            | 0.08              | 0                | 0.44              |
| <i>LN_OPEX<sub>it</sub></i>                | 1522       | 14.851           | 0.631             | 11.098           | 17.441            |
| <i>LN_CAPEX<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1522       | 13.72            | 0.819             | 11.194           | 16.852            |
| <i>HEAD_TENURE<sub>it</sub></i>            | 1522       | 2.654            | 1.366             | 0                | 5                 |
| <i>POL_SIZE<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1522       | 34.639           | 10.104            | 19               | 74                |
| <i>LG_HDI<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 1522       | 64.675           | 6.77              | 19.62            | 83.42             |
| <i>LG_POP<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 1522       | 12.657           | 0.973             | 9.644            | 15.266            |
| <i>Dummy variable</i>                      | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Dummy 1</i>   |                   | <i>Dummy 0</i>   |                   |
|  |            | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| <i>HEAD_EDU<sub>it</sub></i>               | 1522       | 397              | 26.1%             | 1125             | 73.9%             |
| <i>FEMALE_HEAD<sub>it</sub></i>            | 1522       | 177              | 11.6%             | 1345             | 88.4%             |
| <i>Panel C: City local governments</i>     |            |                  |                   |                  |                   |
| <i>Continuous variable</i>                 | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Mean</i>      | <i>Std. Dev.</i>  | <i>Min</i>       | <i>Max</i>        |
| <i>PSQ<sub>it</sub></i>                    | 355        | 2.863            | 0.4               | 0.809            | 3.788             |
| <i>POL_COAL<sub>it</sub></i>               | 355        | 0.361            | 0.186             | 0                | 0.98              |
| <i>WOMEN_POL<sub>it</sub></i>              | 355        | 0.165            | 0.083             | 0                | 0.4               |
| <i>LN_OPEX<sub>it</sub></i>                | 355        | 14.909           | 0.49              | 12.971           | 16.358            |
| <i>LN_CAPEX<sub>it</sub></i>               | 355        | 13.683           | 0.599             | 11.701           | 15.447            |
| <i>HEAD_TENURE<sub>it</sub></i>            | 355        | 2.797            | 1.43              | 1                | 5                 |
| <i>POL_SIZE<sub>it</sub></i>               | 355        | 33.42            | 9.933             | 20               | 50                |
| <i>LG_HDI<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 355        | 74.322           | 5.272             | 55.75            | 86.65             |
| <i>LG_POP<sub>it</sub></i>                 | 355        | 12.64            | 0.943             | 10.491           | 14.855            |
| <i>Dummy variable</i>                      | <i>Obs</i> | <i>Dummy 1</i>   |                   | <i>Dummy 0</i>   |                   |
|  |            | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
| <i>HEAD_EDU<sub>it</sub></i>               | 355        | 86               | 24.2%             | 269              | 75.8%             |
| <i>FEMALE_HEAD<sub>it</sub></i>            | 355        | 33               | 9.3%              | 322              | 90.7%             |

As for the independent variable, the legislative, political coalition has an average of 38.4 percent of legislative supporting the reigning local head, with

the highest coalition at 96 percent. Meanwhile, the legislative board composition in Indonesian local governments is still dominated by male legislative

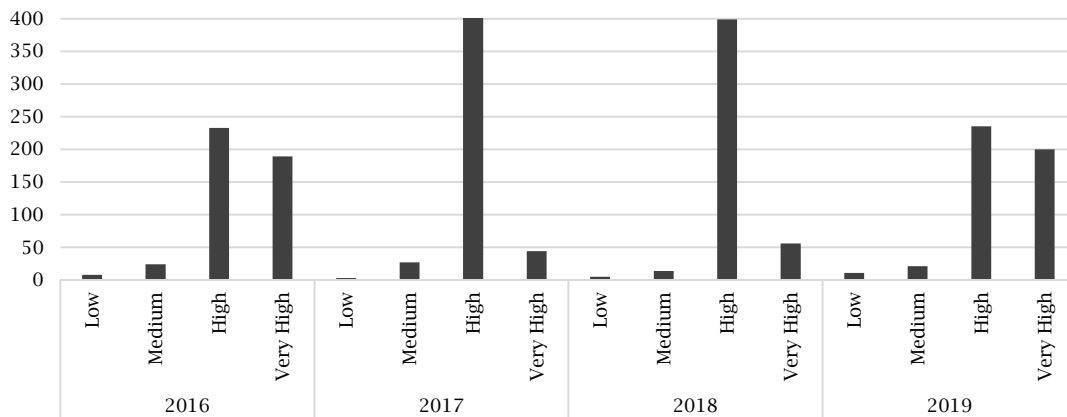
members, in which the average composition of female members in the legislative board is only 13.7 percent. The highest women participation in the legislative is 44 percent while the lowest one is 0 percent. Further, the characteristics of local government heads show that 25.7 percent of local government heads accomplished postgraduate study while the rest only have undergraduate study or even below it. Finally, the average human development index is only 66 that is an intermediate level, indicating an urgent need for improvement in many local governments.

We perform deeper descriptive statistics analysis on public service quality as our dependent variable to obtain a better illustration of the public service quality achievement in Indonesian local governments. Firstly, we analyze the trend of public service quality achievement distribution throughout the observation period. We find that the achievement is considerably better during the 2016-2019 period as compared to the 2017-2018 period in which there are more local governments in the 2016-2019 period

that are able to achieve a very high level. Despite the average public service quality achievement being at a high level, there are still several local governments that have low and medium public service quality achievement.

The public service delivery achievement should be improved by the local governments because the existence of low and medium-level public service quality does not meet the target from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and potentially cause public dissatisfaction over public service delivery in local governments. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has set a specific target that local governments are expected to have at least a high level of administration performance in which the quality of public services is a significant part of it. It is important because the existence of public service quality below the high level will also impede the national development agenda. Hence, the improvement of public service quality is urgent for local governments that have achievement below the high level.

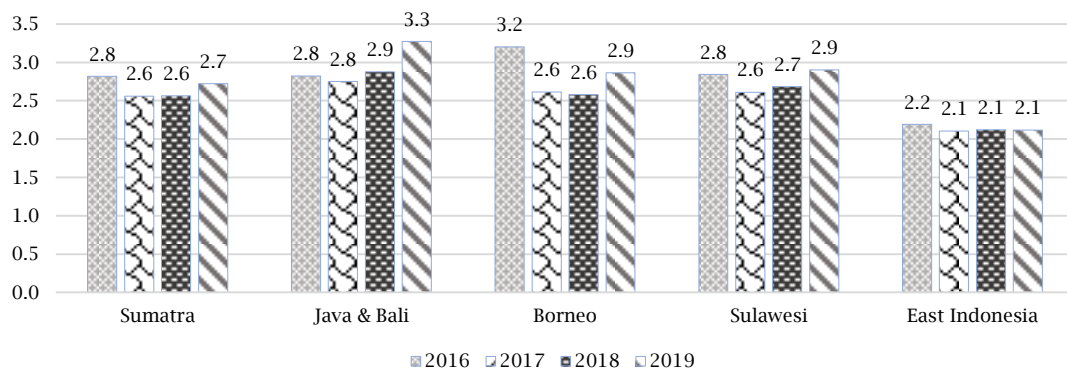
Figure 1. Public service quality achievement in 2016-2019



We further compare the achievement of local governments based on their geographic location. We classify the geographic area based on the island in which the local government is located. The classification consists of Sumatra, Java and Bali, Borneo, Sulawesi, and East Indonesia. Overall, the achievement of public service quality standards in Java is the highest among the other geographic area except in 2016, in which local governments in Borneo have the highest accomplishment.

The majority of the public service quality achievement statistics is dominated at level 3 (high). The statistics in Borneo 2016 and Java 2019 can reach level 4 (very high). In most of the regions, the average public service quality ranges between 2.6 to 2.9 in Sumatra, Java, Bali, Borneo, and Sulawesi. However, East Indonesia's level of public service delivery is significantly lower despite still being at level 3, averaging at 2.1 and 2.2. The illustration is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Public service quality achievement based on geographic regions



The correlation among our variables shows that there are no collinearity issues among our independent variables thus the panel data regression analysis can be performed. Correlation statistics is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Matrix of correlations

| Variables               | (1)    | (2)    | (3)    | (4)    | (5)    | (6)    | (7)    | (8)   | (9)   | (10)  | (11)  |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| (1) $PSQ_{it}$          | 1.000  |        |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |       |
| (2) $POL\_COAL_{it}$    | 0.101  | 1.000  |        |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |       |
| (3) $WOMEN\_POL_{it}$   | 0.117  | 0.023  | 1.000  |        |        |        |        |       |       |       |       |
| (4) $HEAD\_EDU_{it}$    | 0.031  | 0.003  | 0.025  | 1.000  |        |        |        |       |       |       |       |
| (5) $FEMALE\_HEAD_{it}$ | 0.054  | 0.072  | 0.031  | 0.197  | 1.000  |        |        |       |       |       |       |
| (6) $LN\_OPEX_{it}$     | -0.288 | -0.116 | -0.088 | -0.055 | -0.098 | 1.000  |        |       |       |       |       |
| (7) $LN\_CAPEX_{it}$    | -0.300 | -0.044 | -0.105 | -0.056 | -0.117 | 0.868  | 1.000  |       |       |       |       |
| (8) $HEAD\_TENURE_{it}$ | 0.019  | -0.107 | 0.006  | -0.034 | -0.053 | -0.029 | -0.056 | 1.000 |       |       |       |
| (9) $POL\_SIZE_{it}$    | 0.294  | 0.107  | 0.096  | 0.070  | 0.151  | -0.783 | -0.779 | 0.008 | 1.000 |       |       |
| (10) $LG\_HDI_{it}$     | 0.420  | -0.052 | 0.203  | 0.023  | 0.018  | -0.252 | -0.336 | 0.002 | 0.289 | 1.000 |       |
| (11) $LG\_POP_{it}$     | 0.327  | 0.121  | 0.115  | 0.058  | 0.144  | -0.831 | -0.821 | 0.010 | 0.933 | 0.325 | 1.000 |

#### 4.2. Panel data regression analysis

We initially perform panel data regression analysis with all local government observations, followed by subsample analysis divided into district and city local governments observations. The best estimation is a fixed effect for all examination scenarios. The overall results exhibit that local government legislative political coalition does not affect public

service quality while the representation of women in the legislative board positively affects public service quality. The result also demonstrates that local government heads' education and gender exhibit insignificant effects. Finally, both financial characteristics variables that consist of operational and capital expenditure positively affect public service quality. Our panel data regression analysis result is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Panel data regression analysis results

| Dependent           | All                   | District               | City                 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                     | Local governments     | Local governments      | Local governments    |
| $PSQ_{it}$          |                       |                        |                      |
| $POL\_COAL_{it}$    | 0.0204<br>(0.0866)    | 0.0908<br>(0.0952)     | -0.416**<br>(0.207)  |
| $WOMEN\_POL_{it}$   | 0.726**<br>(0.314)    | 0.790**<br>(0.353)     | 1.859*<br>(1.028)    |
| $HEAD\_EDU_{it}$    | 0.0740<br>(0.0538)    | 0.114*<br>(0.0617)     | -0.0398<br>(0.108)   |
| $FEMALE\_HEAD_{it}$ | -0.0194<br>(0.0671)   | -0.0459<br>(0.0776)    | -0.0207<br>(0.124)   |
| $LN\_OPEX_{it}$     | 0.196***<br>(0.0660)  | 0.239***<br>(0.0776)   | 0.423***<br>(0.119)  |
| $LN\_CAPEX_{it}$    | 0.172***<br>(0.0394)  | 0.216***<br>(0.0440)   | -0.0879<br>(0.0949)  |
| $HEAD\_TENURE_{it}$ | 0.00689<br>(0.00653)  | 0.00553<br>(0.00730)   | -0.00598<br>(0.0145) |
| $POL\_SIZE_{it}$    | 0.00140<br>(0.00554)  | -0.000683<br>(0.00594) | 0.0418**<br>(0.0168) |
| $LG\_HDI_{it}$      | 0.0138<br>(0.00995)   | 0.00690<br>(0.0112)    | 0.150***<br>(0.0290) |
| $LG\_POP_{it}$      | -0.344***<br>(0.0923) | -0.427***<br>(0.111)   | -0.339**<br>(0.154)  |
| Constant            | 0.690<br>(1.133)      | 0.962<br>(1.334)       | -10.64***<br>(2.798) |
| Observations        | 1,877                 | 1,522                  | 355                  |
| R-squared           | 0.232                 | 0.156                  | 0.177                |
| F-Statistics        | 4.49                  | 4.71                   | 4.65                 |
| Prob > F            | 0.000                 | 0.000                  | 0.000                |
| Best estimation     | Fixed effect          | Fixed effect           | Fixed effect         |



## 5. DISCUSSION

The local government political coalition does not show any significant effect on public service quality in overall observations and district local government observations. In city local government observations, the variable exhibit a negative effect. This result does not confirm the hypothesis that we propose. When the legislative political coalition is too strong in supporting the local head that runs the executive function, it may open the door for opportunistic behavior although it may support the success of the local head's programs. At the same time, too strong opposition is also not good as it may result in an excessively tight and ineffective oversight (Barnes & Jang, 2016).

The overall insignificant effect of the legislative political coalition may imply that the monitoring function conducted by the legislation on public service delivery implementation has not been performed effectively (Fagbadebo, 2019). Thus, government programs that concern with delivering public service are not correctly implemented. This may also be because the average coalition is at 37.7 percent, meaning that the opposition is significantly stronger. The circumstances may result in tight supervision in which too many interventions by opposing parties (Cohen & Leventis, 2013) and may impede the government programs implementation.

Women's political representation in the legislative board shows a positive effect on public service quality with consistent findings in the subsample analysis. These findings confirm our hypotheses that predict the positive effect. It supports that the presence of women plays a significant role in local governance, specifically on the legislative board. Many studies have underlined that women tend to have better sensitivity and more demanding transparency (Tavares & da Cruz, 2017). Women also tend to be good at communication, collaboration, and democracy (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Thus, the more presence of women on the legislative board should result in better legislative performance (Jacob, 2014) thanks to the better implementation of legislative function activities (Anzia & Berry, 2011). These characteristics should result in better public service quality (Rodriguez-Garcia, 2015). The result also supports a previous study by Araujo and Tejedo-Romero (2016b) in which the higher proportion of women legislative board members positively affects local government transparency.

The education level of the local head demonstrates an insignificant effect on public service quality in overall observations and city local government subsamples. The finding may result from the view that the education level does not really reflect the capability of a leader despite having a higher education level brings general benefits. This result is supported by Nor et al. (2019) who evidence no significant effect of local government head education level on local government performance and transparency. In the district local government subsample analysis, the variable exhibits a positive effect. Despite having a local head with a higher education level does not really affect the quality of public service overall, the education level of the local head remains an important attribute especially in

the district local government. Local head with higher education level matters in the district local governments to lead the local development as the level of education and human development in the districts is relatively lower than in the cities (Saragih, 2022).

Female local head also has an insignificant effect on public service quality. In this case, local governance is naturally never apart from politics in which men are generally more active than women (Jennings, 1983; Verba et al., 1978) and hence women may face difficulties in politics and governance (Feeney & Camarena, 2021). Piotrowski and Van Ryzin (2007) also further state that men have a higher level of political engagement than women, so male politicians possibly have better performance. In addition, based on our data, the participation of women in local government politics in Indonesia as local heads is also still considerably low. The average women's involvement is quite insignificant as there is only a small percentage of women that hold the position of a local head. Therefore, due to limited participation, the positive values that female local government heads can bring to local governance are not pronounced. Finally, women leaders are still unable to bring significant differences (D'Agostino, 2015).

Finally, both financial characteristics show a positive effect on public service quality. A larger amount of operational and capital expenditure per capita will result in better public service quality. Operating expenditure is important to fulfil public service needs, such as paying public servant wages and purchasing required inventories and consumable administration staff. When public servants are provided with a proper salary and complete supporting stuff to do their job, they will have better job satisfaction, higher motivation to work, and more commitment to the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Prior studies have shown that public servant job satisfaction has a positive impact on public service delivery (Christensen et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the capital expenditure is indeed allocated to provide facilities for public service delivery (Muda & Naibaho, 2018).

In regards to capital expenditure, having higher capital expenditure certainly gives more facilities to the people and increases public service quality. With higher capital expenditure, local governments will have more funds for fixed assets procurement (Kuntar et al., 2019) so that local governments can build more public infrastructures to support public service. Capital expenditure can also support information technology innovation in delivering public services such as the development of e-government as effective public service tool to increase public access (Farida & Lestari, 2021). It can bring significant benefits in simplifying the bureaucracy that has been criticized by the people in Indonesia due to its inefficiency. These findings may also imply that the operational and capital expenditures should continuously be increased and appropriately implemented for public service, confirming Lewis' (2019) study. As for the examination of control variables, human development and the population of local government have no significant impact on public service quality overall.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This research aims to investigate the determinants of local government public service quality in Indonesia. The study provides empirical findings that the average public service quality in Indonesian local governments is already around the high level. Nevertheless, there are still several local governments with medium and even low public service quality that requires urgent improvement to enhance public welfare and national development agenda. We also find that local governments located in Java and Bali have better accomplishments than other islands. Furthermore, we reveal that local government women's representation in the legislative board, local government operational expenditure, and local government capital expenditure positively affect public service quality. Meanwhile, local head education level, legislative political coalition, and female local head show no significant effect.

This study provides several implications for the local government and the public in general. First,

the public should ensure that they make the right choice in the election to have ideal legislative board composition with proper women representation while also having a competent local head. Secondly, the local government should have a proper amount of operational and capital expenditure followed by effective realization to deliver a higher quality of public service. This is very important, especially the capital expenditure, to provide more public facilities in the areas that experience significant inequality and develop e-government implementation as effective public service delivery tool. In addition, local governments must improve the regulation and public officials to be more public-oriented to improve the quality of public service delivery. The study is essential for the literature and future studies as it contributes to providing one of the earliest comprehensive empirical evidence in regard to public service quality determinants in Indonesian local governments. However, there is still a limitation of the study in which the analysis is limited to the use of a quantitative approach only.

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