

IN DECENTRALIZATION WE TRUST: 24 YEARS OF RESEARCH ON THE DECENTRALIZATION GOVERNANCE AND THE FUTURE OF THE RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract

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The degree of decentralization in the administration of state government experiences dynamics related to intergovernmental relations (Shah et al., 1994). This study examines decentralization policy trends in Indonesia during the twenty-four years of government. Specifically, this research aims to 1) document the size and growth of the literature on the topic; 2) identify key authors, journals, and documents; 3) categorize the countries with the highest productivity rates; 4) highlight emerging topics and their relationship to the conceptual structure of each domain; and 5) address future research relating to each domain. A total of 64 scientific articles from the 1999–2023 period were obtained from the Scopus database and analyzed using R-Program, VOSviewer, and content analysis. The results show that there is a connection between the concepts of decentralization, regional government, and democracy in the decentralization policy in Indonesia specifically in environmental and multi-level governance issues. Indonesia, Australia, the Netherlands, Thailand, and Japan are the countries producing the greatest number of scientific articles. This review provides valuable insights for academics and government practitioners to expand their knowledge regarding decentralization policies in Indonesia in the form of collaborative decentralization policies in managing functions that have a direct impact on society.

Keywords: State Government, Local Government, Intergovernmental Relations, Bibliometric, Content Analysis

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — A.; Methodology — A. and A.L.; Validation — A. and I.R.M.; Formal Analysis — A. and A.L.; Resources — A.; Writing — Original Draft — A.; Writing — Review & Editing — A., I.R.M., and A.L.; Visualization — A.; Supervision — I.R.M. and A.L.; Project Administration — A.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The decentralization policy in Indonesia emerged alongside its independence, marked by the establishment of regional national committees.

Since then, decentralization and centralization have been continuously debated in the governance of the country. Decentralization and centralization are not opposing poles but rather inherent instruments in a nation-state. However, the persistent debate

revolves around the degree of the arrangement, whether it leans more toward centralization or decentralization. In 1999, Indonesia experienced a “decentralization big bang”, which was a radical shift from a highly centralized government to a highly decentralized government (Ostwald et al., 2016). The change resulted in two main consequences: regional governments’ significant authority in managing their own affairs, and regional head elections through democratic processes (Ostwald et al., 2016; Sobari, 2016; Suryanto & Hidayat, 2016).

Decentralization in the terminology used in Indonesian governance has a different meaning from the terminology used by literature originating from the Anglo-Saxon school. Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) expressed a broad definition of decentralization as devolution, de-concentration, delegation, and privatization. Indonesia uses the term decentralization as devolution or political decentralization in Anglo-Saxon terms. Therefore, the term decentralization in this study refers to political decentralization or devolution.

Decentralization, or devolution, is the transfer of government authority from the central government to the legal community in a specific area to regulate and manage its own affairs (Arif & Maksum, 2017). Decentralization has two main objectives, namely creating structural efficiency and creating local democracy (de Archellie et al., 2020; Hidayatullah et al., 2022). Structural efficiency is related to local-scale decision-making not needing to be the authority of the central government, but rather handing it over to the local government. Local democracy is related to the mechanism of local communities determining their own fate by electing their own government. Therefore, decentralization is usually termed political decentralization (Herawati et al., 2023). Indonesia carried out radical decentralization in 1999 by handing over most of the central government’s authority to autonomous regions. This event caused Indonesia to experience a paradigm shift in government, from centralistic to decentralized.

Studies examining Indonesia’s decentralization policy since 1999 have been conducted by numerous experts in line with the prevailing issues at the time. Studies related to center-regions relationship (Cao, 2018; Yasmi et al., 2006), fiscal decentralization (Siddiquee et al., 2012; Soejoto et al., 2015; Sudhipongpracha, 2017), regional head elections (de Archellie et al., 2020; Sobari, 2016), regional leadership (Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2006; Pardosi et al., 2017), social conflicts (Syahputra et al., 2021; Yasmi et al., 2006), and disintegration issues (Ferrazzi, 2000; McCarthy, 2004) have emerged. These studies were conducted independently and were philosophical-empirical in nature towards the study of decentralization in Indonesia. However, there has never been a study that looks at the development of decentralization issues in Indonesia including future research trends.

This study aims to analyze scientific publications on the decentralization policy in Indonesia, and therefore formulates the following research questions:

RQ1: How has scientific production on the decentralization policy in Indonesia evolved geographically and yearly?

RQ2: Which authors, journals, and documents on the decentralization policy in Indonesia have achieved the greatest scholarly impact?

RQ3: What is the conceptual structure of the decentralization policy in Indonesia?

RQ4: What are the gaps and directions for future research?

This paper is organized in sequence, with Section 1, an introduction, containing the background of the bibliometric study related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature, while Section 3 analyzes the methodology used in the research with detailed explanations. Section 4 presents and discusses the findings based on the research problems. Finally, Section 5 provides a summary of research findings and limitations that can be further elaborated by future researchers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Decentralization, as a method of power-sharing, is the transfer of authority from the central government to the legal community at the local level to manage its own affairs (Wong et al., 2020). There are differences in terms that define decentralization between the Continental European and Anglo-Saxon dictionaries. The Anglo-Saxon school defines decentralization as the division of power, giving rise to many variants including devolution, de-concentration, delegation, and privatization (Cheema & Rondinelli, 1983). Meanwhile, the Continental European school defines decentralization as the transfer of political and administrative authority to the legal community at the local level, similar to the meaning of devolution in the Anglo-Saxon school. This Continental European definition of decentralization is also used in Indonesia in interpreting the concept of decentralization.

The debate on decentralization in the implementation of a country’s government is still ongoing today. The pro-decentralization group believes that decentralization brings services closer to the community, democratizes the implementation of government (Pardosi et al., 2017), and the existence of local governments shows the existence of upheld humanitarian principles (liberty, equality, and welfare) (Strong, 2008). On the other hand, decentralization is considered to create local elites in power (Herawati et al., 2023), gives rise to inefficient use of the budget (Kurnia & Setiawan, 2023), and creates potential instability in the macroeconomic conditions of a country (Stecyk, 2017).

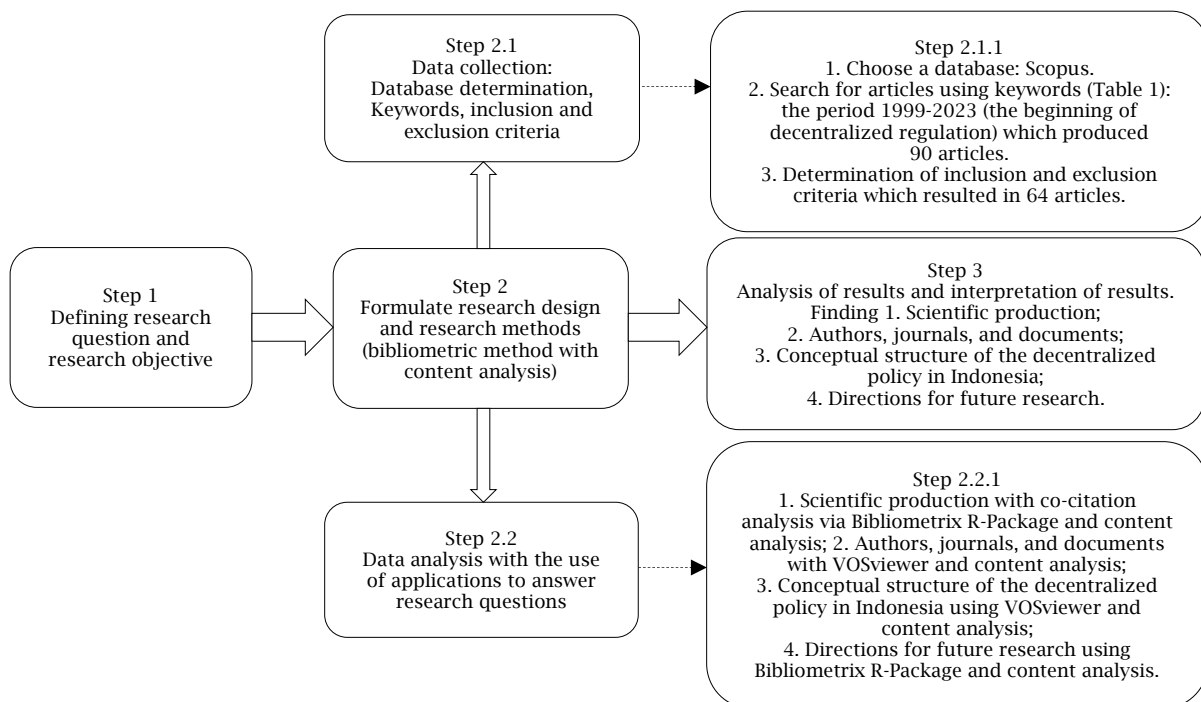
Regardless of the pros and cons of decentralization in a nation state, Indonesia has chosen decentralization as the basis for its governance. Therefore, decentralization creates a government implemented by the legal community in a certain area, then referred to as a regional government. Indonesia consists of three levels of government, namely the central government, provincial government, and district/city government. Regional governments have characteristics such as autonomy, and independence, have visible geographical boundaries, have different governments and are separate from the central government, and have the authority to supervise and use their natural resources effectively and efficiently.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a systematic literature review with a mixed approach that combined bibliometric analysis with content analysis. Bibliometric analysis was used to understand the scholarly production and development of decentralization in Indonesia over the selected period. This approach has become popular in depicting trends and the depth of a concept (Milán-García et al., 2019; Thamaree & Zaby, 2023), making it suitable for the formulated objectives. Meanwhile, content analysis was employed to summarize findings on literature trends by identifying “hot spots” or the core of the processes conducted in the previous method (Gaur & Kumar, 2018). To establish the bibliometric analysis, we used the Bibliometrix package, which operates within the R-Studio software (2021.09.2+382 version). For social network analysis (SNA), we utilized VOSviewer (version 1.6.19) (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This method helped reveal how scientific research related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia contributes to theoretical discussions and practical implications in field research.

As illustrated in Figure 1, this study consists of three main stages: 1) definition of research questions, 2) formulation of research design, and 3) methods, as well as analysis and interpretation of research results. Research questions and research objectives are crucial aspects of stage 1. Research design development was carried out to answer research questions. In the research design stage, considerations were made in determining the method for data collection and data analysis (stage 2). Data collection was carried out through Scopus as the basis for reviewing literature related to decentralization policy. The Scopus indexing engine is one of the largest publication indexers in the world. Its database covers almost all international journal publications worldwide. The Scopus academic database was selected as it provides access to a set of information commonly used for research and writing, including titles, abstracts, and keywords (Chadegani et al., 2013; Falagas et al., 2008).

Figure 1. Methodological procedures



For the effectiveness of the literature search in the Scopus database, a Boolean procedure was utilized (see Table 1). The keywords used consist of two parts. The first part (“decentralization policy” OR “decentralisation policy”) was used to view articles related to decentralization policy, while the second part (AND “Indonesia” OR “in Indonesia”) was used to narrow down decentralization policies implemented in Indonesia. The search yielded 90 articles.

The articles were subsequently filtered using sequential inclusion criteria, including accessibility of articles (90 articles) and search period from 1999 to 2023 (86 articles). With the issuance of Law No. 22

of 1999 on Regional Government, the year 1999 marked the beginning of the decentralization policy in Indonesia after 33 years under the centralistic regime of the New Order. The scope of disciplines used in this study encompasses all fields, considering that research on decentralization policy is interdisciplinary. Selected document types included scholarly articles (65 articles) in their final version (65 articles), excluding proceedings, book reviews, article reviews, and book chapters, to ensure depth of content analysis. The last filter was language, based on which articles in English were chosen for easier readability and acceptance by the international community (64 articles).

Table 1. Article gathering process from Scopus database

Keyword and filter	Combination and Criterion	Number of articles
Query string	("decentralization policy" OR "decentralisation policy") AND "Indonesia"	90
Inclusion criteria:		
• Search period	1999–2023	86
• Subject	All subjects	86
• Document type	Article	65
• Publication stage	Final version	65
• Language	English	64

Note: Data were gathered on May 22, 2023.

Bibliometric data analysis was then conducted using two software tools: Bibliometrix R-Package and VOSviewer. This study employed two main bibliometric techniques: co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling. Descriptive analysis of bibliographic data presents key information such as the number of articles, authors, document types, and document citations. Descriptive data analysis with bibliometrics was performed using

the Bibliometrix R-Package (see Table 2). Changes in research related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia were identified through dynamic co-citation analysis using the Bibliometrix R-Package for visualization and content analysis to interpret the changes. Subsequently, research streams were identified using bibliographic coupling and visualized using the VOSviewer application.

Table 2. Methods and applications for data analysis

Research question	Content analysis	Bibliometric technique	Bibliometric application
Main information	No	Citation analysis bibliometric	Bibliometrix R-Package
RQ1: How has scientific production on the decentralization policy in Indonesia evolved geographically and yearly?	Yes	Dynamic co-citation analysis and visualization	Bibliometrix R-Package
RQ2: Which authors, journals, and documents on the decentralization policy in Indonesia have achieved the greatest scholarly impact?	Yes	Dynamic co-citation analysis and visualization	Bibliometrix R-Package
RQ3: What is the conceptual structure of the decentralization policy in Indonesia?	Yes	Citation analysis bibliometric	VOSviewer
RQ4: What are the gaps and directions for future research?	Yes	Citation analysis bibliometric	Bibliometrix R-Package

Subsequently, the prioritized perspectives in influential journals, authors, and main methods were identified using content analysis and bibliometric citation analysis using the Bibliometrix R-Package, after which future research agendas were delineated.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive analysis

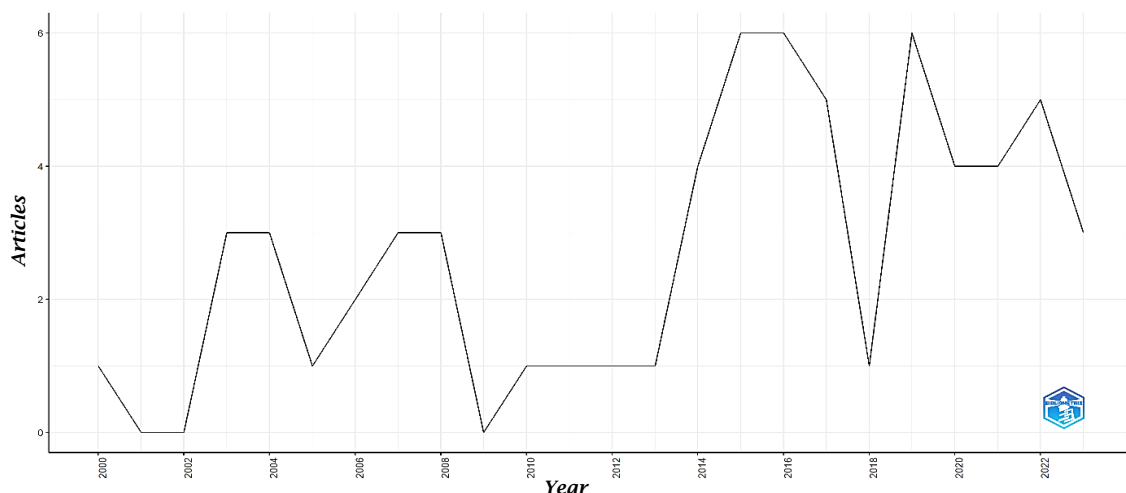
This study reviewed 64 articles from 58 journals related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia between 1999 and 2023. A total of 154 authors contributed to these 64 articles, with an average citation rate of 19.14. Most articles were authored by

multiple contributors (68.75%, $n = 44$); only 31.25% ($n = 20$) were single-authored.

Table 3. Main information

No.	Description	Results	%
1	Journals	58	
2	Average citations per doc	19.14	
3	Authors:	154	
	• Single-authored docs	20	31.25
	• Multi-authored docs	44	68.75
	• Co-authors per doc	2.67	
	• International co-authorships %	26.56	
4	Peer-reviewed articles	64	

Figure 2 presents the yearly publication trends and shows the dynamic trend of publications related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia.

Figure 2. Annual scientific production (1999–2023)

Source: Authors' elaboration using Bibliometrix R-Package.

Meanwhile, Table 4 presents the average citations per year and indicates a dynamic condition

as well, with the highest number of citations occurring in 2004 and an average of 5.94 citations per year.

Table 4. Citation average in a year (2000–2023)

Year	MeanTCperArt	N	MeanTCperYear	Year	MeanTCperArt	N	MeanTCperYear
2000	22	1.00	0.92	2014	22.25	4.00	2.22
2003	29.67	3.00	1.41	2015	13.83	6.00	1.54
2004	118	3.00	5.90	2016	38	6.00	4.75
2005	1	1.00	0.05	2017	18	5.00	2.57
2006	27	2.00	1.50	2018	5	1.00	0.83
2007	23	3.00	1.35	2019	1.33	6.00	0.27
2008	13.67	3.00	0.85	2020	10.5	4.00	2.62
2010	7	1.00	0.50	2021	1.5	4.00	0.50
2011	1	1.00	0.08	2022	0.2	5.00	0.10
2012	2	1.00	0.17	2023	2.67	3.00	2.67
2013	25	1.00	2.27				

Table 4 shows that the average citations per article were highest in 2003, and the highest average citations per year were in 2004. This is because the review process for Law No. 22 of 1999 concerning regional government was very widely carried out, both by academics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Meanwhile, many studies have examined the implementation of Law No. 32 of 2004 concerning regional government, which replaced previous policies.

4.2. Geographical and yearly growth of scientific production

To gain insight into the geographic distribution of academic research, the overall distribution per continent is depicted in Figure 3 and the top 10 countries based on the affiliation of all authors are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 3. Scientific production per continent (1999–2023)

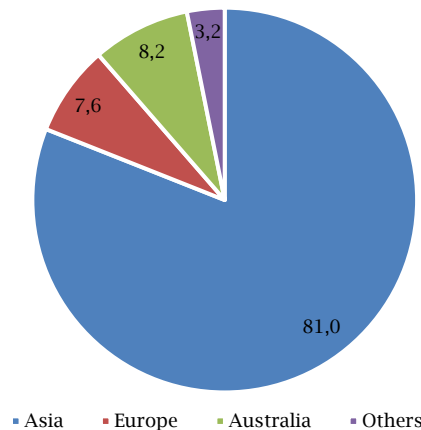
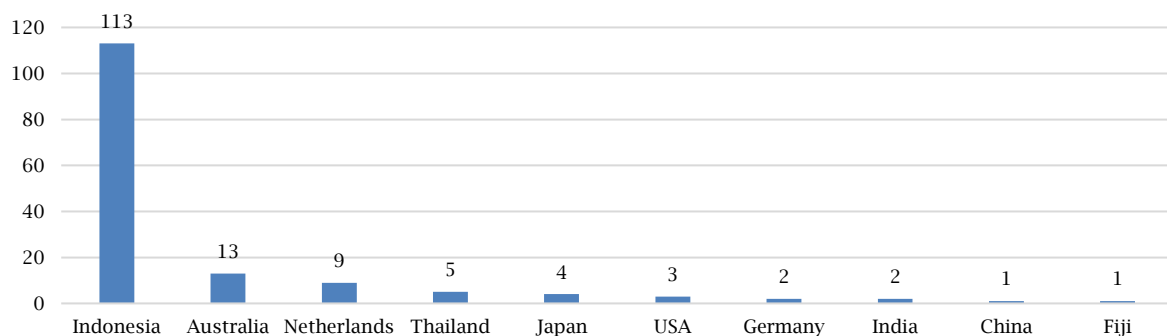


Figure 4. Scientific production per country based on authors (1999–2023)



4.3. Authors, journals, and documents with the greatest scholarly impact

Table 5 shows the 10 articles with the highest number of citations since publication with at least 40.

Table 6 shows the 10 most productive and most influential journals featuring the decentralization policy in Indonesia (1999–2023) based on the number of citations.

Table 5. Most cited articles about the decentralization policy in Indonesia (1999–2023)

Authors	Affiliation country of first author	Title	Total citations	Total citations per year
Hadiz (2004)	Singapore	Decentralization and democracy in Indonesia: A critique of neo-institutionalist perspectives	194	9.70
McCarthy (2004)	Australia	Changing to gray: Decentralization and the emergence of volatile socio-legal configurations in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia	143	7.15
Sahide et al. (2016)	Germany	Decentralization policy as decentralization strategy: forest management units and community forestry in Indonesia	87	10.88
Bjork (2003)	United State	Local responses to decentralization policy in Indonesia	68	3.24
Prabowo et al. (2017)	Indonesia	Conversion of forests into oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan, Indonesia: Insights from actors' power and its dynamics	57	8.14
Butler et al. (2016)	Australia	Priming adaptation pathways through adaptive co-management: Design and evaluation for developing countries	57	7.13
Fahmi et al. (2014)	Nederland	Extended urbanization in small and medium-sized cities: The case of Cirebon, Indonesia	57	5.70
Setiawan et al. (2016)	Indonesia	Opposing interests in the legalization of non-procedural forest conversion to oil palm in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia	44	5.50
Raihani (2007)	Australia	Education reforms in Indonesia in the twenty-first century	42	2.47
van Voorst (2016)	Denmark	Formal and informal flood governance in Jakarta, Indonesia	40	5.00

Table 6. Ranking of five most productive and influential journals by citations (1999–2023)

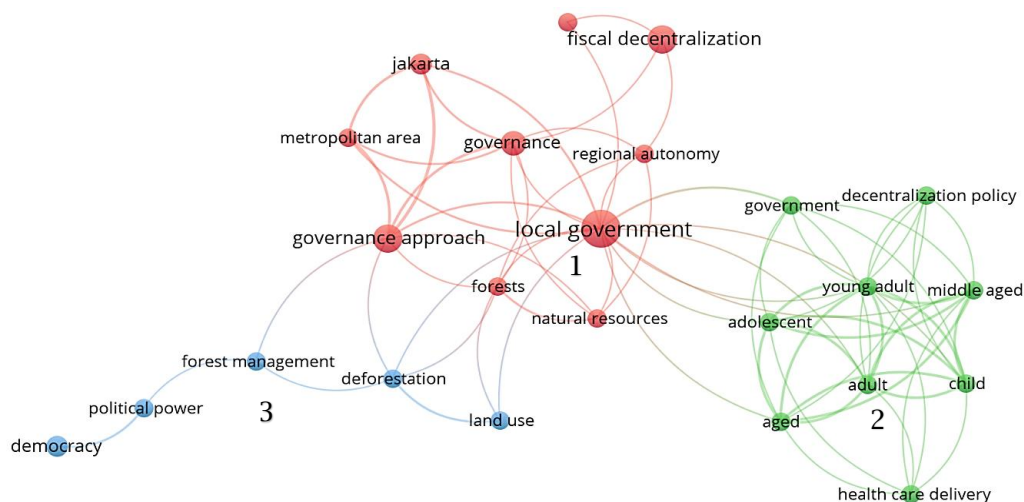
Journal	Number of articles	Citation	Impact factor (IF)	Main theme
<i>Development and Change</i>	1	194	3,0	Development
<i>World Development</i>	1	143	6,9	Development, poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, disease, lack of shelter
<i>Habitat International</i>	2	97	6,8	Urban and rural human settlements
<i>International Forestry Review</i>	1	87	1,8	Forest policy
<i>Comparative Education Review</i>	1	68	2,6	Comparative and international education
<i>Climate Risk Management</i>	1	57	4,4	Sustainable development, climate change decision
<i>Forest Policy and Economics</i>	2	57	4,0	Forest policy, forest landscape, forest-related industries
<i>Land Use Policy</i>	1	44	7,1	Urban and rural land use
<i>Malaria Journal</i>	2	43	3,0	Malaria disease, health policy
<i>International Education Journal</i>	1	42	*	Education administration, education innovation

Note: * Means that there is no information available regarding the impact factor of the journal.

4.4. Conceptual structure of the decentralization policy in Indonesia

Based on the 379 generated keywords (author keywords and index keywords), several criteria were employed to observe the network of keyword usage, including 1) a full counting method where each link has a strength of one; 2) a minimum number of co-occurrences of three, meaning that each related

keyword is contained in at least three documents; 3) association as the normalization method of the network layout. The results show that there are 25 keywords organized into three main clusters identified by the VOSviewer algorithm, named after the main nodes, namely 1) the local government cluster; 2) the decentralization policy cluster; 3) the democracy cluster.

Figure 5. Visualization of keyword co-occurrence network based on total link strength

Source: Authors' elaboration using VOSviewer.

Table 7. Clusters identified in the keyword network

Cluster No.	Cluster name	Color	Number of keywords
1	Local government	Red	10
2	Decentralization policy	Green	9
3	Democracy	Blue	5

A content analysis was also carried out on ten influential articles with more than 40 citations. These articles were carefully examined through their titles, abstracts, and content to assign them to the existing clusters. Table 8 presents the cluster identification, articles, methods, research findings, and recommendations for further research.

Table 8. Analysis of ten most-cited articles

Authors	Methodology	Result	Further readings
Hadiz (2004)	Qualitative approach with case study design	1) Neo-institutionalist perspectives on decentralization and democracy in Indonesia are inadequate and overlook the factors of power, struggle, and interests. 2) The Indonesian experience clearly illustrates the need to incorporate power, struggle, and interests into an understanding of decentralization processes.	Power and civic engagement in local government (Kadirbeyoglu, 2017). Support system in strategic planning (Kuller et al., 2022).
McCarthy (2004)	Empirical qualitative	1) Decentralization policy narratives tend to overlook the political processes that shape the implementation of decentralization. 2) The decentralization in Central Kalimantan has led to volatile socio-legal configurations that created insecurity and heightened resource conflicts.	Conflict management in forest management (Großmann, 2019; Syahputra et al., 2021).
Sahide et al. (2016)	Qualitative approach with interviews, participant observation, and content analysis	1) The Indonesian central government is on its way to reclaim its authority in forest administration and management through Forest Management Units (FMU) and closely related community forestry programs. 2) Power struggles between national, provincial, and district bureaucracies are the sources of real contention in <i>Kesatuan Pengelola Hutan</i> (KPH) and community forestry policies.	Promoting social forestry schemes (Rakatama & Pandit, 2020).
Bjork (2003)	Qualitative, ethnographic	The difficulties that Indonesian educators have had in responding to LCC orders originate from a clash between the intellectual premise of educational decentralization and the culture of teaching and government that determines teachers' behavior as public servants.	Critical thinking in the learning management system (Girinzio et al., 2023).
Prabowo et al. (2017)	Mix method with sequential survey.	1) Oil palm interests resonate with the economic interests of local governments, which use their legal mandates on land use allocation to facilitate the establishment of oil palm plantations. 2) Oil palm companies have accumulated power that enables them to control forest land and convert it into oil palm plantations.	Political struggle in forest protection (Purnomo et al., 2019).
Butler et al. (2016)	Qualitative approach	Adaptive co-management (ACM) successfully primed stakeholders, enabling trust, cross-scale social networks, and knowledge integration, and empowering communities to develop and test innovative adaptation strategies.	Participatory evaluation in ACM (Trimble & Plummer, 2019).
Fahmi et al. (2014)	Mixed method, combining quantitative research through location quotient (LQ), and qualitative research through interviews	1) In developing countries, small cities grow faster than large cities. 2) Small cities in developing countries have relatively higher population densities compared to small cities in developed countries.	Impact of urbanization in turbulence time (Rahayu et al., 2023). Peri-urbanization process impact (Mardiansjah et al., 2021). Urbanization and ruralization in modern cities (Astuti et al., 2021; Henein et al., 2019).
Setiawan et al. (2016)	Qualitative with three different methods: content analysis of key policy documents, participant observations, and expert interviews	Contradicting laws and regulations have created a situation where the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) and local governments have relatively equal legal mandates and authority over land use and allocation.	Palm oil value chains in Indonesia (Purnomo et al., 2020).
Raihani (2007)		1) The 2003 Education Act explicitly calls for democratic citizens. School-based management has been chosen as a new paradigm in school management, while the new curriculum focuses on competency-based principles and school-based management. 2) Decentralization policy in governance has resulted in autonomy in education and consequent reforms. 3) Obstacles including cultural and economic barriers are assumed to potentially hinder the success of reform implementation.	Educational leadership and entrepreneurship education (Amalia & von Korflesch, 2021; Faizuddin et al., 2022).
Van Voorst (2016)	Qualitative with case study design	1) Jakarta's decentralization policies effectively manage floods but lack community empowerment. 2) Riverbank settlers pursue their interests and needs through informal channels, rather than accepting aid and support from formal political institutions. 3) Effective decentralization does not necessarily lead to democratic or inclusive governance.	Adaptation and formality of vulnerable groups in flood disasters (Surtiari et al., 2022). Physical and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) development impacts on city's flood (Verrest et al., 2020).

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The next step involved content analysis to complement the network analysis, including in-depth descriptions of the formed clusters.

4.4.1. Local government cluster

The first cluster on local government pertains to inter-regional cooperation, regional disparities, and regional expansion. Inter-regional cooperation involves regional border development requiring the involvement of other regions (Firman, 2014). Development through inter-regional cooperation mechanisms is related to the development of slum settlements (Zuhdi et al., 2022), forest governance (Yasmi et al., 2006), and protected area governance (Shivakoti & Shivakoti, 2008). Inter-regional cooperation in slum area management is conducted by governmental actors, where both central and regional governments act as pioneers and initiators of area management policies. Meanwhile, other actors such as the private sector and NGOs act as intermediaries and provide recommendations regarding technical planning and area development budgets. Therefore, cooperation in slum area development mostly takes the form of collaborative governance or cross-sector collaboration. Additionally, cooperation in slum area management using SNA facilitates the identification of the degree of involvement among actors involved in slum area governance (Zuhdi et al., 2022).

Cooperation in forest governance appears to involve non-state actors more extensively, whereas Harakan et al. (2022) observed the involvement of other countries in forest management cooperation to enhance regional economies while minimizing the destructive impacts of existing forest damage and technology transfers. Furthermore, conflicts of interest in forest management, both between the central government and regional governments (Sahide et al., 2016), and between the government and the community, require forest management involving all stakeholders (Aji et al., 2021; Yasmi et al., 2006) as natural resource management, including forests, is invariably associated with conflicts (Yasmi et al., 2006). Cooperation in forest governance also includes mechanisms for reconciling conflicting parties by building a shared understanding of different regulations and their application (Castro & Nielsen, 2001). Protected areas in their governance do not differ significantly from the forest sector due to the vast potential of natural resources in protected areas. On the other hand, there are actors who feel entitled in these areas such as the central government, regional governments, and communities (Hilmawan & Amalia, 2019; Shivakoti & Shivakoti, 2008).

4.4.2. Decentralization policy cluster

The second cluster focuses on the administration of central and regional government affairs and their financing mechanisms. Satria and Matsida (2004) examined fisheries and marine affairs, revealing that decentralization strengthens fishermen in maximizing their activities in fishing. The formation of fishermen groups as a form of community-based fisheries management (CBFM) only requires verification by regional governments, instead of the central government. Harakan et al. (2022) and Butler et al. (2016) similarly perceived that decentralization policies can accelerate

the development of the tourism industry and existing development planning in regions. Decentralization policies, coupled with paradiplomacy by regional governments and other actors, have resulted in several agreements with other countries such as tourism infrastructure development, the formulation of regional regulations supporting tourism, and foreign exhibitions.

On the other hand, decentralization policies were not smoothly implemented in certain areas. Sopaheluwakan et al. (2023), Suwarno et al. (2015), and McCarthy (2004) observed that the decentralization in forestry affairs was not effective at the regional government level. Forestry affairs remain entirely within the jurisdiction of the central government, leading to policies aimed at tightening control over regional governments regarding forest resource use. Meanwhile, in the education sector, decentralization policies have exacerbated disparities between regions in terms of education quality. Despite the standardization of education quality, differences in regional financial capabilities have resulted in quality disparities (Aginta et al., 2023; Dewi, 2021).

The financing mechanism for the administration of government affairs was examined by several scholars. Sudhipongpracha and Wongpredee (2017) observed the differences in the financing of government affairs between Indonesia and Thailand. Although both countries implement decentralization, fiscal transfers in Indonesia are more effective than in Thailand due to two factors: the Thai government's limitations in decentralizing its affairs and the continued politicization of budgeting (Sudhipongpracha, 2017; Sudhipongpracha & Wongpredee, 2017). According to Hartono and Irawan (2011), the success of fiscal decentralization in distributing budgets to regions has led to new problems, namely, high-income inequality and a high Gini ratio in regions. There is a gap between the success of fiscal decentralization and the microeconomic conditions and society in the regions (Aginta et al., 2023; Hartono & Irawan, 2011), which is caused by the absence of a link between fiscal decentralization and improving the quality of human resources (Prayoga & Ananda, 2023).

4.4.3 Democracy cluster

The democracy cluster is related to the election of regional leaders and the public decision-making process. De Archellie et al. (2020) studied the election of regional leaders in Indonesia, highlighting the uniqueness of considering indigenous elites alongside formal leaders in regional political contests. Their research findings indicate that elected regional leaders, particularly in Gorontalo, Indonesia, cannot effectively govern without two aspects: cultural legitimacy and culturally-based oversight. Meanwhile, Hadiz (2007) stated that regional leader elections in Indonesia have a high potential for social conflict due to the high political costs candidates must bear when participating in local political contests. These high political costs are attributed to several factors, including the process of seeking political party support, campaign costs, and the process of persuading and ensuring voters (Arifin et al., 2015; Hadiz, 2007). The study by Hadiz (2004) further reveals a transformation of entrepreneurs in the political arena, where they transition from being

pure entrepreneurs to becoming financiers for regional leader candidates, with some even daring to become regional leader candidates themselves.

Decision-making in urban cases has been the focus of several experts. Van Voorst (2016) observed that one of the main causes of weak democracy in urban areas is the ineffectiveness of local government institutions, which, in their decision-making, are inward-looking and thus sacrifice urban development. Therefore, van Voorst (2016) argued that explaining the effective connection between decentralization and empowering local communities and inclusive governance is difficult. In line with this, research by Fahmi et al. (2014) reveals that democracy in urban areas brings about significant development, resulting in high levels of urbanization. However, this condition is not balanced with regional institutional capacity, causing cities to grow inconsistently with planning (Fahmi et al., 2014; Talitha et al., 2020).

4.5. Future research directions

4.5.1. Research agenda for local governments

Considering the existing research in this cluster, studies related to cooperation in the local government cluster have generated several recommendations for future research. Research conducted by Arifin et al. (2015), which found several factors contributing to the failure of regional cooperation, including the political will of regional leaders, inaccessible shared data, and ongoing corruption among service providers, suggests the need for further research on the practice of good local governance and strengthening internal control and cooperation team (Arifin et al., 2015; Pahrudin & Darminto, 2021).

Based on the analysis of the cooperation in forest management, protected areas, and slum areas, future research should focus on managing conflicts between cooperating parties and stakeholders. Several studies could be continued, such as those related to internal communication and coordination (Yasmi et al., 2006), analysis of potential conflicts arising from the environment (Aji et al., 2021), collaborative governance in areas with significant externalities (Hilmawan & Amalia, 2019) not limited to forests and protected areas, such as irrigation, mining, and free trade. Methodologically, future research on regional cooperation is also recommended by several authors, detailing actors, networks, and interests in SNA (Prabowo et al., 2017; Zuhdi et al., 2022).

4.5.2. Research agenda for decentralization policy

In relation to the second cluster, several researchers recommended further research to deepen the focus on decentralization policy. Research related to communication between the central and local governments in administering government affairs remains an interesting area for future investigation (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023), especially concerning matters related to sustainable development in regions (McCarthy, 2004). Harakan et al. (2022) recommended research related to the readiness of local government policies for the potential influx of tourists resulting from paradiplomacy policies. Some studies recommended research on community participation in the administration of fisheries and health affairs (Murhandarwati et al., 2015; Satria &

Matsida, 2004), and the role of regional leaders as political leaders in administering government affairs (Bjork, 2003).

Future research worthy of deepening fiscal decentralization policy in Indonesia relates to regional development disparities between the western and eastern parts of Indonesia (Hartono & Irawan, 2011). Additionally, research with updated data is necessary, considering the dynamic development of regional conditions each year (Aginta et al., 2023). Therefore, the research recommended by Sudhipongpracha and Wongpredee (2017) regarding the enhancement of local government capacity and the development of key indicators for fiscal decentralization is imperative to undertake.

4.5.3. Research agenda for democracy

The topic of regional head elections and public policymaking found in the third cluster recommended several further studies. De Archellie et al. (2020) suggested research examining the influence of cultural-based leadership on the level of trust and acceptance of the community in the political process. Furthermore, they recommended similar research conducted in several regions with strong local cultural values in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Hadiz (2007) recommended research on the role and contribution of entrepreneurs (cukong or financiers) in the process of formulating public policies by legislative and executive bodies, both at the regional and national levels.

Regarding decision-making topics, it has been revealed that urban governance is not always related to top-down policies but involves community engagement with their various knowledge and skills in addressing their issues (Supriyatno, 2021; van Voorst, 2016). Therefore, van Voorst (2016) recommended future research related to inclusive community-based policy formulation strategies (bottom-up). Continuing from previous research, Talitha et al. (2020) and Fahmi et al. (2014) suggested research related to the devolution of budgeting and financing the implementation of government affairs to the lowest levels of government, while also examining the effectiveness and efficiency of such financial devolution if handed over to lower levels of government.

5. CONCLUSION

This article aims to explain the relationship between decentralization policy and the implementation of local governance in Indonesia. Concerning *RQ1*, descriptive analysis reveals that geographically, authors from Asian countries (Indonesia, India, Japan, China) published the most articles related to the decentralization policy in Indonesia (81%) during the period 1999–2023. This distribution is not surprising given the location of the research in Indonesia, leading to many Indonesian authors collaborating with authors from other countries studying decentralization.

Regarding *RQ2*, the analysis of the most influential articles (based on citation count) is also geographically validated by continent, with authors such as Hadiz (2004), Setiawan et al. (2016), and Prabowo et al. (2017) originating from Asia, and McCarthy (2004) and Raihani (2007) from Australia. Considering influential journals on decentralization

policy in Indonesia, our findings show that *Development and Change* receive the most citations (194). This is parallel to the most-cited article from this journal titled “Decentralization and democracy in Indonesia: A critique of neo-institutionalist perspectives” by Hadiz (2004).

Using mapping processes, keyword co-occurrence helped in identifying the conceptual structure within the research topic (RQ3). Furthermore, based on content analysis of the ten most influential articles, findings on research, methods, and recommendations for future research were generated. There were three relevant clusters: local government, decentralization policy, and democracy. By examining the interconnection among these clusters, the main conclusion drawn is that each cluster is interconnected in the practice of decentralization in Indonesia. Some articles highlight the political struggles and tensions between the central and local governments (Bjork, 2003; Firman, 2014; Hadiz, 2004; Pardosi et al., 2017), and advocate for collaborative approaches involving multi-stakeholders (such as government, community, and non-governmental actors) (Fahmi et al., 2014; Prabowo et al., 2017; Setiawan et al., 2016; Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023; Yasmi et al., 2006). Another significant contribution pertains to recommendations for further research to deepen the study focus (RQ4).

Some recommendations for further research on the decentralization policy in Indonesia include

the need for research on the use of SNA in governance, particularly regarding sustainable forest governance. This can enrich collaborative approaches in inclusive policy formulation. Secondly, research exploring and seeking the ideal relationship between central and local governments in the implementation of governance affairs along with their financing is warranted. In summary, future research should aim to develop a more comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to the decentralization policy in Indonesia. In practice, the current and future decentralization policy in Indonesia is related to the paradox between the policy of increasing national income through maximizing natural resources, and the policy of environmentally based sustainable development.

This study is not without limitations. Firstly, although we have ensured a broad article search with extensive keyword techniques, some relevant important articles might have not been covered in this research. Finally, this article only retrieved data from the Scopus database, thus excluding other reputable databases. Therefore, further research to analyze articles from databases other than Scopus is necessary. Despite these limitations, this research provides a valid overview of the decentralization policy in Indonesia, with several aspects that can be expanded and explored scientifically in more specific regions or time periods.

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