

Implementation of the Independence Policy of Fire and Rescue Services in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keyword: Policy implementation; Institutional autonomy; Fire services; Compliance; Policy performance	This study is motivated by the uneven implementation of the policy establishing Regional Fire and Rescue Agencies as independent government departments, reflecting a gap between policy design and local implementation capacity due to fiscal constraints, limited human resources, and political and institutional dynamics. The objective of this study is to analyze the implementation of this policy based on the dimensions of compliance, routine functions, and performance and impacts, while also identifying the factors influencing its implementation and formulating policy implications to strengthen its effectiveness and long-term sustainability. This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine the implementation of the policy on the institutional independence of Regional Fire and Rescue Agencies through interview and documentary data. The analysis is guided by the dimensions of compliance, routine functions, and performance and impacts, and is conducted inductively with validity ensured through triangulation. The findings indicate that the implementation of the policy establishing Regional Fire and Rescue Agencies as independent departments has progressed; however, its success varies across regions, with compliance tending to remain administrative rather than fully substantive. Regions that have established independent agencies demonstrate improved governance, particularly in workflow management, decision-making processes, and budget administration. Nevertheless, these improvements have not been consistently reflected in the quality of public service delivery, indicating the need for stronger guidance from the central government and greater commitment from local governments.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of public governance in Indonesia demands a bureaucracy that is increasingly responsive, adaptive, and citizen-oriented, including in strategic public service sectors such as fire and rescue services (Kang et al., 2026; Lingard et al., 2024). As the frontline institution responsible for fire prevention and emergency response, fire and rescue agencies are required to possess strong, professional, and responsive institutional structures capable of ensuring the timeliness and effectiveness of service delivery (Kang et al., 2026; Kim et al., 2018; Lingard et al., 2024). Therefore, institutional strengthening has become a critical component in ensuring that public service functions operate effectively, are well coordinated, and are capable of addressing the increasingly complex fire risks faced by regions across the country.

To strengthen these institutional arrangements, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued Minister of Home Affairs Regulation (Permendagri) No. 16 of 2020 concerning the Nomenclature Guidelines for Provincial and Regency/Municipal Fire and Rescue Agencies. This regulation serves as the legal basis for establishing Fire and Rescue Agencies as independent regional government departments, with the objective of improving organizational effectiveness and enhancing the quality of public service delivery. Institutional restructuring is widely recognized as an essential element of bureaucratic reform because an appropriate organizational structure contributes significantly to improving the effectiveness of public administration (Sartika et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the implementation of this policy has not been uniformly achieved across all regions. Data from the Directorate of Disaster and Fire Management of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2024) indicate that, at the provincial level, the majority of fire and rescue institutions remain organizationally integrated within the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), accounting for 27 provinces, while six provinces place these functions under the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), and only one province has established an independent Fire and Rescue Agency. A similar pattern is observed at the regency and municipal levels, where 248 local governments continue to place fire and rescue functions under Satpol PP, 71 under BPBD, and only 137 have established independent Fire and Rescue Agencies.

These conditions indicate that policy implementation continues to encounter substantial institutional and regional capacity constraints. Previous studies have shown that the restructuring of regional government organizations is frequently hindered by fiscal limitations, local political dynamics, and insufficient human resource capacity (Hidayat & Sion, 2025; Laila & Hidayat, 2020). Other studies further emphasize that institutional restructuring plays a significant role in enhancing governmental coordination and improving the quality of public service delivery (Saripuddin et al., 2022). An appropriate organizational structure has also been found to improve the responsiveness of fire and rescue services to community needs (Iasha, 2021).

Furthermore, fiscal constraints and regional dependence on central government policies constitute additional factors influencing policy implementation at the local level (Anilawati et al., 2020). Political considerations also affect the institutional restructuring process, as the establishment of independent Fire and Rescue Agencies is frequently perceived as imposing additional bureaucratic and financial burdens on local governments (Rifandanu, 2024). These findings suggest that policy implementation is shaped not only by administrative factors but also by political dynamics, institutional capacity, and the commitment of local governments.

Most previous studies have primarily focused on policy implementation at the local government level, while comparatively limited attention has been devoted to examining the role of the Ministry of Home Affairs as the central regulator and institutional supervisor of regional governments. Yet, successful policy implementation largely depends on the central government's capacity to provide guidance, supervision, and institutional support to local governments. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the implementation of the policy on establishing independent Fire and Rescue Agencies in Indonesia under Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 16 of 2020, with particular emphasis on the role of the Ministry of Home Affairs in facilitating and promoting the implementation of this policy.

Specifically, this study seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the implementation of the policy establishing independent Fire and Rescue Agencies pursuant to Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 16 of 2020 by employing a policy implementation perspective encompassing the dimensions of compliance, routine functions, and policy performance and impacts. More specifically, the study aims to identify the gaps between policy design and implementation practices at the regional level, examine the factors contributing to variations in compliance and implementation effectiveness, and evaluate the extent to which the establishment of independent agencies has improved organizational governance and the quality of public service delivery. Furthermore, this study seeks to formulate policy implications for strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing synergy between the central and regional governments, and promoting a more adaptive, effective, and sustainable implementation of the policy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine the implementation of the policy on the institutional independence of the Fire and Rescue Service based on the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs (Permendagri) No. 16 of 2020 within the Ministry of Home Affairs. This approach was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the processes, dynamics, and challenges associated with policy implementation (Fisdian Adni et al., 2024). Content analysis was utilized to systematically examine textual data through a structured coding process, enabling a comprehensive interpretation of the phenomena under investigation (Baharuddin et al., 2022; Yahya et al., 2024).

The research was conducted at the Directorate of Disaster and Fire Management, Ministry of Home Affairs, employing a policy implementation framework encompassing the dimensions of compliance, the smooth functioning of routine administrative processes, and policy performance and impacts. The study drew upon both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, while secondary data consisted of official documents and institutional reports. Data collection involved in-depth interviews and document analysis, whereas data analysis followed an inductive approach through coding, verification, and thematic categorization. The trustworthiness of the findings was ensured through source, method, and time triangulation to enhance the credibility of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the implementation of the policy to establish the Fire and Rescue Agency as an independent agency in accordance with Minister of Home Affairs Regulation Number 16 of 2020, by applying Ripley and Franklin's policy implementation theory, which encompasses the dimensions of compliance, functional routines, and policy performance and impact.

Content Analysis

The content analysis of the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs (Permendagri) No. 16 of 2020, Government Regulation (PP) No. 18 of 2016, and national reports indicates that the policy on establishing independent Fire and Rescue Services is supported by a clear and relatively comprehensive regulatory framework. Normatively, these regulations emphasize institutional strengthening through the establishment of organizational structures that are more focused, professional, and responsive to fire service demands. However, the analysis reveals a significant gap between policy design and implementation, primarily because the regulatory framework has not been fully complemented by operational instruments that are sufficiently adaptive to the diverse capacities of local governments. The policy largely adopts a uniform approach, despite substantial variations in local fiscal capacity, geographical conditions, and human resource availability. Consequently, policy implementation has not been uniformly effective and tends to achieve better outcomes only in regions with relatively strong institutional capacities.

Furthermore, budgetary constraints and shortages of personnel emerge as dominant themes across the analyzed documents, indicating that the principal implementation challenges extend beyond administrative compliance to encompass the actual capacity of local governments to operationalize the policy. The analysis also demonstrates that the absence of robust incentive and disincentive mechanisms from the central government has slowed policy adoption across local jurisdictions. In addition, weak integration between institutional policy and regional development planning has resulted in the establishment of independent Fire and Rescue Services often receiving low priority within local government agendas. Therefore, although the policy is normatively adequate, its successful implementation largely depends on policy synchronization across different levels of government, strengthening local institutional capacity, and developing a more contextualized implementation framework tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of each region.

A more critical examination further reveals a mismatch between the policy's ambitions and the implementation capacities of local governments. The policy implicitly assumes that all regions

possess comparable institutional readiness, whereas in practice significant disparities exist. Consequently, the predominantly top-down policy approach, without sufficient flexibility in implementation design, risks producing symbolic rather than substantive compliance, whereby local governments merely fulfill administrative requirements without strengthening institutional functions. This finding suggests that the policy has yet to adequately incorporate the principle of differentiated implementation based on varying regional capacities.

Moreover, the prominence of budget limitations and personnel shortages indicates that implementation barriers are fundamentally structural rather than merely technical. Critically, this also reflects the central government's limited role in fostering an enabling implementation environment through affirmative funding mechanisms, realistic minimum service standards, and effective incentive and disincentive systems. Furthermore, the weak integration of this policy into regional development priorities highlights the existence of budgetary political constraints, in which fire and rescue services are not yet regarded as strategic sectors relative to competing policy priorities. This condition contributes to the limited commitment of local governments to allocate adequate resources. Therefore, it can be concluded that the principal challenges to implementation lie not only in local government capacity but also in a policy design that lacks adaptability, weak intergovernmental coordination, and the absence of sufficiently strong policy instruments capable of driving substantive and sustainable institutional reform.

Compliance

The findings indicate that most local governments have demonstrated formal compliance with the policy by adjusting organizational nomenclature and regional institutional structures in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 16 of 2020. However, such compliance remains largely administrative and has not consistently been followed by the establishment of fully independent Fire and Rescue Services. Several local governments, including Jembrana Regency and Central Maluku Regency, continue to place fire services under the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) due to budgetary limitations and fiscal efficiency policies. In contrast, jurisdictions that have established independent agencies, such as Palembang City, possess clearer operational legal frameworks, enabling more stable policy implementation.

Regarding human resources, the Ministry of Home Affairs has established normative guidelines for workforce management through job analysis and workload analysis. In jurisdictions with independent Fire and Rescue Services, such as Palembang City, workforce restructuring has been implemented by converting structural positions into functional positions without generating significant organizational resistance. Conversely, in Jembrana Regency and Central Maluku Regency, where independent agencies have not yet been established, the number of civil servants assigned to fire services remains limited, with the majority of personnel consisting of non-permanent employees or Government Employees under Work Agreements (PPPK). Consequently, career development systems and functional organizational structures have not been fully institutionalized.

From the perspective of budget management, all local governments have procedurally complied with the regional budgeting mechanism through the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). The central government has consistently emphasized that financing Fire and Rescue Services falls within the authority of local governments. Regions with independent Fire and Rescue Services generally enjoy greater budgetary flexibility, allowing financial resources to be allocated more directly toward operational activities. In contrast, in regions where fire services remain integrated with other regional agencies, financial resources continue to be shared across organizational functions, with a substantial proportion allocated to personnel expenditures rather than operational requirements. These findings demonstrate that limited fiscal capacity constitutes one of the principal factors influencing policy implementation.

Overall, the findings within the compliance dimension reveal a clear distinction between formal compliance and substantive compliance. While local governments have generally fulfilled the administrative requirements of the policy, they have not fully achieved its primary objective of strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing the professionalism of Fire and Rescue

Services through the establishment of independent agencies. This finding underscores that compliance should not be assessed solely on the basis of legal or administrative conformity but should also consider the extent to which the policy has been substantively implemented in terms of institutional arrangements, human resource management, and the effective utilization of financial resources. Accordingly, high levels of administrative compliance do not necessarily indicate successful policy implementation.

Furthermore, variations in compliance across regions demonstrate that fiscal capacity, human resource availability, and local policy priorities constitute the primary determinants influencing the establishment of independent Fire and Rescue Services. These findings highlight the necessity of adopting a more adaptive and context-sensitive policy approach, accompanied by stronger central government support through institutional guidance, technical facilitation, and incentive mechanisms for local governments. Without more strategic intervention, there is a significant risk that policy implementation will remain confined to administrative compliance, without generating meaningful and sustainable institutional transformation in the delivery of Fire and Rescue Services at the local level.

Routine Functions

The establishment of an independent Fire and Rescue Service as a regional government agency is intended to create a clearer and more efficient organizational workflow. The findings indicate that local governments that have established independent agencies, such as Palembang City and Ambon City, possess simpler organizational structures, resulting in clearer decision-making processes and operational chains of command. This organizational arrangement facilitates internal coordination and enables more rapid responses to fire emergencies.

In contrast, in regions that have not established independent Fire and Rescue Services, the stability of organizational workflows continues to depend on coordination among different divisions because fire services remain integrated within larger organizational structures. The most common operational challenges are associated with inadequate infrastructure, limited firefighting equipment, insufficient numbers of fire engines, and extensive service coverage areas. In Central Maluku Regency, for example, the shortage of fire engines and the aging condition of existing vehicles constitute major constraints on firefighting operations. Similarly, in Jembrana Regency, the wide geographical coverage area makes it difficult to achieve the prescribed emergency response time standards.

To ensure service continuity, most local governments have implemented shift-duty systems to maintain personnel readiness. In Ambon City, the deployment of personnel through rotating shifts has helped maintain the stability of fire protection services. However, in regions experiencing personnel shortages, such as Central Maluku Regency, firefighters continue to face relatively high workloads because the number of personnel is disproportionate to the size of the service area. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of routine organizational functions is highly dependent upon the adequacy of human resources and operational facilities.

Overall, the findings within the routine functions dimension demonstrate that the establishment of independent Fire and Rescue Services has significantly improved workflow clarity, coordination effectiveness, and operational responsiveness. Local governments with independent agencies tend to deliver services in a more structured and stable manner because they benefit from clear command structures and more specialized task allocation. Conversely, regions without independent agencies continue to face bureaucratic complexity and dependence on cross-divisional coordination, which ultimately reduces service effectiveness, particularly during emergencies requiring rapid and well-coordinated responses.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of routine organizational functions is determined not only by institutional structure but also by the availability of adequate human resources and operational infrastructure. Shortages of personnel, firefighting equipment, and the extensive geographical coverage of service areas remain critical factors affecting operational performance. These findings suggest that the establishment of independent agencies must be accompanied by comprehensive organizational capacity strengthening. Without adequate resources, institutional restructuring risks producing only administrative improvements without generating substantial enhancements in service quality.

Performance and Impacts

The implementation of the policy establishing independent Fire and Rescue Services has generated several positive impacts on organizational performance. One notable improvement is reflected in the achievement of the Minimum Service Standards (MSS), particularly in program planning and performance reporting. However, these improvements remain concentrated primarily on administrative performance and have not yet been consistently accompanied by significant improvements in the quality of public service delivery across all regions.

From the perspective of financial management, local governments that have established independent Fire and Rescue Services tend to demonstrate more effective budget utilization because budget planning, implementation, and accountability are managed within a single organizational chain of command. In contrast, regions with limited fiscal capacity, such as Central Maluku Regency, continue to encounter difficulties in effectively implementing fire service programs due to financial constraints.

Institutional independence has also facilitated the implementation of operational and preventive programs. In Palembang City, operational activities and fire prevention initiatives can be implemented more efficiently because coordination with other government sectors is no longer required. Conversely, in regions that have not established independent agencies, program implementation continues to face structural barriers and budget limitations, preventing activities such as public education campaigns and fire simulation exercises from being conducted on a sustainable basis.

Furthermore, the establishment of independent agencies has strengthened the institutional image of Fire and Rescue Services as strategic public service organizations. In Palembang City and Ambon City, the existence of independent Fire and Rescue Services has enhanced public confidence in fire protection services. By contrast, in regions without independent agencies, the institutional identity of the Fire and Rescue Service remains closely associated with its parent regional government organization, although the operational performance of firefighters continues to be viewed positively by the public.

Overall, the findings within the performance and impacts dimension indicate that the establishment of independent Fire and Rescue Services has made a positive contribution to improving organizational governance, particularly in program planning, financial management, and program implementation. Local governments with independent agencies generally exhibit more integrated and responsive organizational systems, thereby enhancing operational effectiveness and strengthening institutional capacity in public service delivery. Nevertheless, these improvements are still more evident in administrative and managerial aspects, while improvements in the quality of services delivered to the public have not been uniformly achieved across regions. This finding suggests that the success of the policy has not yet been fully reflected in public service outcomes.

Furthermore, variations in policy impacts across regions confirm that successful implementation is strongly influenced by fiscal capacity, the availability of qualified human resources, and the commitment of local governments. Without adequate resources and strong policy commitment, the establishment of independent agencies risks producing structural changes without corresponding improvements in substantive organizational performance. Therefore, strengthening the role of the central government through institutional guidance, capacity-building initiatives, and more adaptive implementation strategies is essential to ensure that institutional independence not only improves organizational efficiency but also contributes to meaningful and sustainable improvements in the quality of public service delivery.

CONCLUSION

The principal findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the policy establishing independent Fire and Rescue Services has progressed; however, its level of success varies considerably across local governments. From an administrative perspective, most local governments have complied with the policy requirements, particularly in terms of organizational restructuring and budget allocation. Nevertheless, substantive compliance has not yet been fully achieved, as several local governments have yet to establish independent Fire and Rescue Services and continue to place fire service functions under other regional government agencies.

This situation is influenced by limitations in human resources, fiscal capacity, and the lack of adequately developed supporting regulations at the local level. Furthermore, the study found that local governments that have established independent Fire and Rescue Services generally demonstrate better organizational governance, characterized by clearer workflows, more defined task allocation, and more effective chains of command. These improvements have contributed to more systematic planning processes and greater efficiency in budget management. However, these organizational gains have not been consistently accompanied by equitable improvements in the quality of public service delivery, particularly in achieving the Minimum Service Standards (MSS). Therefore, although the policy has been implemented in accordance with the established regulatory framework, stronger guidance and oversight from the central government, together with greater commitment from local governments, remain essential to ensure that the policy objectives are achieved effectively and sustainably.

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