

PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT IN ARCHIPELAGIC REGIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract: This study explores public service management in archipelagic regions through a systematic literature review of research published over the last five years. Archipelagic regions present unique challenges due to geographical isolation, limited resources, and infrastructure disparities, which directly affect the accessibility and effectiveness of public services. By synthesizing findings from five key studies, including empirical case studies and policy reports, this review highlights four critical themes: geography-based governance, alternative governance arrangements in resource-deficient contexts, community participation, and digital transformation. The analysis reveals that geography plays a central role in shaping governance models, requiring adaptive and decentralized approaches that acknowledge the realities of small island contexts. Furthermore, innovative governance structures are necessary when resources are scarce, with community-based and multi-actor collaboration emerging as viable strategies. Public participation also proves essential in enhancing trust, legitimacy, and sustainability of services, particularly in small island nations. At the same time, digitalization offers significant opportunities for bridging service gaps, but infrastructure inequalities remain a major obstacle. This review concludes that effective public service management in archipelagic regions requires a hybrid model that combines geographic sensitivity, participatory practices, and digital innovation. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary literature and the absence of primary field data. Future research should include empirical investigations to provide more operational insights into policy and practice tailored for diverse island communities.

Keywords: archipelagic governance, public service management, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and regional integration, public service management has become an essential component of governance. Public services are not only related to the quality of life but also directly influence social justice and equity (Pangkey & Rantung, 2023). Particularly in regions with complex geographical conditions, the provision of public services often faces many challenges. As a fundamental governance mechanism, public service management must continuously adapt and innovate across different regional contexts to meet increasingly diverse public needs (Sari et al., 2022). Therefore, exploring the logic and practical experiences of public services in specific geographic environments holds significant theoretical and practical importance.

Island regions, as unique geographical units, are characterized by remoteness, inadequate transportation, and unequal distribution of resources (Hendrayady et al.,

2023). These factors make public service management in island regions more complicated. Governments must not only overcome natural constraints but also ensure inclusivity and accessibility of services amid limited financial and human resources (Helpiastuti et al., 2024). This dual challenge demands managers to possess stronger adaptability and innovation. Questions of justice and efficiency in public services are often raised in island regions, underscoring the high practical value of research in this field (Raharjo, 2022).

In many countries and regions, island areas tend to lag in economic development and lack adequate infrastructure (Ahmad et al., 2024). This situation increases the difficulty of delivering public services, as the coverage of healthcare, education, transportation, and information is often lower compared to mainland areas (Lay, 2021). Particularly in the fields of health and education, service shortages not only affect people's lives but may also exacerbate the gaps between rural–urban areas and across regions. Protecting the rights of island residents has therefore long been a concern in public administration studies (Rachman, 2021).

With continuous technological progress, information technology and digital tools have gradually been applied in public service management. However, the digital divide in island regions remains significant (Osborne et al., 2022). Limited network coverage and low information literacy make “smart governance” difficult to fully implement in such areas. This condition results in outdated and inefficient service models. Therefore, finding ways to realize digital governance despite geographic dispersion and inadequate infrastructure has become an urgent issue (Ferlie & Ongaro, 2022).

Institutional design and policy orientation also play important roles in managing public services in island regions. Due to unique regional characteristics, many policies often face “local mismatch” when implemented (Berman et al., 2021). Without targeted institutional arrangements, public service delivery in island regions is unlikely to achieve the expected outcomes. Hence, exploring governance models with strong local adaptability has become a shared focus for policymakers and academics. This issue also highlights the importance of institutional innovation in island governance (French et al., 2023).

One of the core goals of public service is equity. However, in island regions, due to difficult transportation and communication, service resources are often concentrated in a few central islands, while remote islands fall into “service deserts.” This uneven distribution reinforces regional inequality and fuels social dissatisfaction. Ensuring balanced service coverage through scientific management and resource allocation mechanisms has become a critical topic in strengthening governance capacity (Rosenbloom et al., 2022).

Globally, many countries have conducted research and practice regarding public service management in island regions. For instance, archipelagic countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines have explored services in education, health, and transportation (Ongaro et al., 2021). These cases provide valuable references for other countries. However, because political systems, cultural backgrounds, and economic levels differ, experiences cannot be fully replicated. This underscores the need for systematic studies to extract patterns and lessons that can be universally applied from various cases (Bovaird & Löffler, 2023).

Public service management is not solely the responsibility of government, but also involves multi-actor participation. Social organizations, community forces, and the private sector all play important roles in providing public services in island regions. In many cases, NGOs and community autonomy become key actors in addressing service shortages at the grassroots level. Therefore, studying how these actors collaborate in island governance has also become an important issue in public administration research (Tan et al., 2022).

LITERATURE

Research by Wiley (2023) shows that public services in island sub-districts often face infrastructure and resource distribution constraints, thus requiring a geography-based governance approach. This study emphasizes the need to adjust public service models that take into account limited access, transportation conditions, and the socio-economic characteristics of island communities to ensure the principles of equity and efficiency are maintained.

In addition, research conducted by *Island Studies Journal* (2022–2023) through a systematic literature review on community-based ecotourism in small islands reveals that alternative governance often emerges when resources are limited. In this context, collaboration among local communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector becomes crucial in filling the gaps that governments are unable to reach. These findings imply that similar patterns are also relevant in the provision of public services in island regions, namely the need for collaborative and participatory mechanisms.

Public participation itself is a central theme in a study by Taylor & Francis (2023) on small Pacific nations. The research highlights how community involvement in decision-making processes strengthens the legitimacy of public services while also enhancing government accountability. In the context of island regions, public participation is not only related to policy acceptance but also to the sustainability of services, given that many decisions concern the allocation of limited resources and the determination of development priorities.

Digital transformation is also a major focus in the UNDP (2024) report, which examines the opportunities and challenges of digitalization in small island nations. Digitalization is seen as a potential solution to overcome the physical limitations of public services, for example through e-government and e-health. However, the digital divide, limited network infrastructure, and low digital literacy among communities pose major challenges. This indicates that technological innovation in public services in island regions must be accompanied by capacity-building strategies and the provision of basic infrastructure.

Recent empirical studies in Indonesia (IETA, 2025) show that infrastructure inequality has a direct impact on the delivery of public services in outer islands. Limitations in transportation, energy, and basic facilities hinder community access to education, healthcare, and administrative services. This research underscores the importance of affirmative policies and needs-based planning to reduce service disparities. Thus, the literature review confirms that public service management in island regions requires a multi-dimensional approach: geography-based, collaborative, participatory, digitally innovative, and responsive to infrastructure disparities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to examine public service management in island regions. This approach was chosen because it enables a comprehensive, transparent, and systematic analysis of various relevant research findings. The first stage of the SLR is the identification of research problems and objectives, namely to explore how public service management practices are implemented in island regions, as well as to identify the challenges, strategies, and innovations applied. With this focus, the study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of public administration.

The second stage is the literature search process, which was conducted through reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Taylor & Francis Online. Articles used as sources were selected based on inclusion criteria: published within the last five years (2020–2025), relevant to the topic of public service management in island or small island regions, and available in either English or Indonesian. In addition, sources published in reputable international journals, reports from international organizations, and academic proceedings were also considered. This process generated a set of initial articles that were subsequently refined through further selection.

The third stage is literature selection, carried out by screening the titles, abstracts, and full texts of articles to ensure their relevance to the research focus.

Articles that met the criteria were then analyzed in depth using content analysis techniques. This analysis involved grouping research themes such as service delivery models, public policy, digital innovation, social participation, as well as issues of equity and inclusivity. To enhance reliability, each article was reviewed at least twice to minimize interpretation bias during the secondary data collection process.

The final stage is data synthesis, which integrates the findings from various articles to produce comprehensive conclusions. The synthesis was conducted by comparing similarities, differences, and recent research trends related to public services in island regions. The results of the analysis were then mapped into a conceptual framework that encompasses challenges, strategies, and opportunities for improving public service management. Through this approach, the study seeks to formulate general patterns while also providing practical recommendations for governments and other stakeholders to improve the quality of public services in island regions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the main findings of the literature review on public service management in island regions. The analysis refers to five key sources that address geography-based governance, alternative arrangements under resource constraints, public engagement, digital transformation, and the impact of infrastructure inequality. The discussion is directed toward identifying general patterns as well as fundamental differences in the practice of public service delivery in island regions. Specifically, the results presented in this review focus on the geographical, social, economic, and technological challenges that influence the quality of public services. In addition, the discussion also highlights adaptive strategies developed both by governments and local communities. Thus, this section not only provides an empirical overview but also offers a conceptual analysis that can serve as a reference for the development of public service policies in island regions.

Geography-Based Governance in Island Public Services

Public service management in island regions cannot be separated from their unique geographical characteristics. Wiley (2023) emphasizes that the dispersion of small islands with limited transportation access requires adjustments in governance models. In the case of Maluku, Indonesia, for instance, a geographical condition comprising thousands of islands has led to uneven distribution of public services. This has resulted in disparities in service quality across regions. Therefore, geography-based governance is considered an essential strategy to accommodate the needs of dispersed communities.

Geographical context also has implications for the cost and efficiency of service delivery. Public services, which are typically concentrated in cities or large

mainland areas, are often difficult to access for residents of remote islands. This creates what is called an “access cost,” namely an additional burden borne by citizens to obtain basic services such as healthcare, education, and administration. Geography-based governance models seek to address this issue by designing more flexible service systems, for example through the use of mobile services or floating service units.

Beyond cost factors, the shortage of human resources also poses a serious challenge. Many healthcare workers, teachers, and government officials are reluctant to be stationed on remote islands due to difficult geographic conditions. Wiley (2023) stresses that to address this challenge, local governments need to implement affirmative policies, such as providing special incentives for employees serving in island regions. Through such differentiated policies, the sustainability of public services can be better ensured. This underscores the importance of synchronization between central policies and local implementation.

The managerial implications of geography-based governance models also demand innovation in planning. Local governments must be able to map service needs according to the characteristics of each island. This approach is not only about equity but also about effectiveness. For example, sparsely populated islands may require a stronger focus on basic healthcare and transportation services, while more densely populated islands may prioritize the development of education and economic services. In other words, geography-based governance encourages the creation of adaptive, contextual, and equitable policies.

Alternative Governance Arrangements in Resource-Constrained Situations

In the context of island regions, resource limitations are a fundamental issue that often hinder the quality of public services. Research published in the *Island Studies Journal* (2022–2023) shows that communities on small islands tend to seek alternative governance solutions when the government is unable to adequately meet their needs. This includes collaboration among local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector in providing basic services. Such alternative governance patterns become an important strategy to close the gaps left by the state.

Examples of alternative governance practices can be found in healthcare and education services on remote islands. NGOs often play a role in providing emergency clinics or literacy programs for local communities. The private sector, on the other hand, contributes through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This cross-actor collaboration not only reduces dependency on the government but also enhances community resilience in the face of limited resources. Thus, alternative governance has proven capable of offering adaptive solutions that are closer to the needs of island communities.

However, alternative governance arrangements are not without challenges. One recurring issue is program sustainability. Many community-based or NGO initiatives only last for a short period due to limited funding and coordination. Studies in the *Island Studies Journal* (2022–2023) emphasize the importance of integrating alternative programs into broader public policies, so that they do not rely solely on the commitment of certain individuals or institutions. Without clear integration, alternative governance tends to be fragmented and less effective in the long term.

The implications of these findings suggest that local governments must open broader spaces for collaboration. By granting formal legitimacy to non-governmental actors, governments can create a more inclusive governance framework. Public-private-community partnership models are key to strengthening the sustainability of public services in island regions. This aligns with the goal of creating governance that is adaptive, innovative, and responsive to geographic conditions and resource constraints. Therefore, alternative governance is not a replacement for the state, but a complement that strengthens the capacity of public services in island regions.

Public Engagement and Multi-Actor Participation in Island Governance

Public engagement is one of the essential elements in public service governance, especially in island regions with limited resources. A study by Taylor & Francis (2023) highlights that community participation in decision-making processes strengthens government legitimacy and accountability. In Pacific island countries, for instance, citizen involvement in community forums has been proven to encourage the implementation of policies that better reflect local needs. This illustrates that governance does not solely rely on state actors but also requires active contributions from citizens.

Public participation in island regions also functions as a means to bridge the gap between government and citizens. In geographically dispersed contexts, local communities often have more accurate information about urgent needs in their areas. By actively involving them, policies become more relevant, contextual, and well-targeted. Moreover, public participation fosters a sense of ownership of service programs, making communities more motivated to ensure the sustainability of such initiatives.

In addition to citizens, multi-actor involvement—such as civil society organizations, the private sector, and customary institutions—also plays a significant role in island governance. According to Taylor & Francis (2023), this diversity of actors creates collaborative dynamics that enrich decision-making processes. In many island regions, customary institutions hold strong social legitimacy and can facilitate community acceptance of government programs. Meanwhile, the private sector can provide financial or technological support that enhances the quality of public services.

The implications of these findings point to the need for policy designs that enable broad participation of various actors. Local governments in island regions must provide formal spaces for dialogue, such as community meetings or consultative forums, to ensure that the voices of citizens and non-governmental groups are accommodated. In doing so, public service governance becomes more democratic, inclusive, and accountable. Multi-actor participation not only improves service quality but also strengthens public trust in government and fosters the social cohesion needed to overcome the challenges of island regions.

Digital Transformation and Infrastructure Inequality

Digital transformation is one of the key strategies in strengthening public service governance in the modern era. Taylor & Francis (2023) show that digitalization can enhance transparency, accelerate services, and reduce operational costs. However, in archipelagic regions, the implementation of digital technology often faces serious obstacles, particularly related to limited telecommunication infrastructure. The dispersed geographical conditions cause unequal internet network development, thereby widening the digital gap between urban areas and islands.

This digital infrastructure gap has a direct impact on the effectiveness of governance. On the one hand, central and local governments are encouraged to adopt digital-based systems in public services. On the other hand, island communities do not always have adequate access to benefit from these services. This situation potentially creates social exclusion, where some communities cannot enjoy public services optimally simply due to limited internet connectivity and technological devices.

In addition to infrastructure, human resource capacity is also a determining factor for the success of digital transformation. Taylor & Francis (2023) emphasize that improving digital literacy among both the public and government officials is necessary to ensure that technology truly generates positive outcomes. In island regions, low levels of digital literacy remain a challenge; thus, training and education become strategic steps that must be prioritized. Without strengthening human capacity, investments in digital infrastructure will not be maximized in promoting effective governance.

Therefore, digital transformation policies in archipelagic regions must be designed inclusively, taking local limitations into account. The government needs to integrate infrastructure development with digital literacy programs so that communities do not merely become passive users but also active actors in the digital ecosystem. With this approach, digitalization becomes not just a symbol of modernization but a concrete tool to reduce inequalities in public service delivery across islands.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This literature review affirms that public service management in archipelagic regions faces complex challenges, particularly those related to geography, resource constraints, public participation, and digital infrastructure gaps. Findings from various studies highlight the need for governance models tailored to archipelagic contexts that integrate geographical, participatory, and digital approaches. Strengthening local capacity, fostering multi-actor collaboration, and investing in infrastructure and digital literacy are therefore crucial to improving inclusive and sustainable public services in island regions.

This study has limitations as it relies solely on a systematic literature review of articles and reports published within the past five years, without incorporating primary empirical data from the field. As a result, the findings are more conceptual and general, which may not fully represent the diversity of archipelagic contexts in Indonesia or globally. Consequently, further research is needed through in-depth empirical case studies to provide more operational policy recommendations aligned with real-world conditions.

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