



## IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTOCOL GUIDELINES IN OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT (A CASE STUDY OF NORTH SULAWESI PROVINCE, INDONESIA)

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### Abstract (English)

*This study aims to analyze the implementation of protocol guidelines in official activities of the regional government of North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, and to identify the factors influencing its implementation. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Informants were selected purposively from government officials involved in protocol activities. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the implementation of protocol guidelines remains suboptimal, as indicated by inaccuracies in seating arrangements based on hierarchical positions, inconsistencies between planned and executed event agendas, weak inter-agency coordination, limited understanding of protocol regulations among officials, inadequate human resources, and the absence of integrated standard operating procedures. Factors influencing implementation include communication, resources, disposition of implementers, and bureaucratic structure, none of which are functioning effectively. The study concludes that strengthening coordination, enhancing official capacity, and developing integrated SOPs are essential to improve the quality of protocol implementation.*

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### Key Words

*policy implementation; protocol; public administration; local government; North Sulawesi*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of decentralization, regional governments are required to demonstrate professional, effective, and public-oriented governance. One aspect often considered merely ceremonial but holding strategic importance is the conduct of official government activities. These activities serve not only as formal communication channels between institutions but also reflect the legitimacy of power, institutional image, and government authority in the eyes of the public (Dwiyanto, 2014). In this context, protocol guidelines become essential as normative instruments regulating the conduct of official activities to ensure order and compliance with applicable rules.

Protocol guidelines fundamentally form part of governmental administrative systems, regulating seating arrangements, ceremonial procedures, and forms of respect in official activities. Protocol is not merely about technical event management but contains symbolic values related to hierarchical positions, respect for state institutions, and prevailing social and cultural norms. Therefore, the implementation of protocol guidelines cannot be viewed as purely administrative activity but as an integral part of public administration practice with political, social, and cultural dimensions.





In practice, the implementation of protocol guidelines within regional governments often encounters various challenges. These include limited understanding of protocol regulations among officials, inadequate human resources with protocol competencies, and weak coordination between regional working units. Such conditions cause official activities not always to conform to established standards, potentially leading to errors in seating arrangements, order of officials, and forms of respect.

Edward III (1980) asserts that successful policy implementation is determined by four main variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. In the context of protocol guideline implementation, these four variables become key factors influencing the success of official activities. Ineffective communication can lead to differing perceptions among implementers, while resource limitations—both in quantity and competency—can hinder optimal protocol task execution. Furthermore, implementer dispositions that lack responsiveness to protocol importance, and bureaucratic structures that do not support good coordination, also impede implementation.

In North Sulawesi Province, the conduct of official government activities has unique characteristics influenced by local geographical, social, and cultural conditions. As a region with high interaction with various parties, including the central government and international partners, North Sulawesi frequently hosts various official activities at both local and national levels. This demands that regional government officials possess the ability to manage official activities professionally, including applying protocol guidelines.

Based on this background, this study aims to answer two research questions: (1) How are protocol guidelines implemented in official activities of the North Sulawesi provincial government? (2) What factors influence the implementation of protocol guidelines in these activities?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Public Administration

Public administration plays a strategic role in understanding how governance processes are executed to achieve state goals. Dwiyanto (2014) states that public administration is the process of conducting government affairs by state apparatus to fulfill public needs through quality service provision. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) emphasize that modern public administration must orient toward serving citizens, not merely performing bureaucratic functions—a concept known as New Public Service. In the context of regional government, public administration becomes increasingly important with decentralization policies, demanding adequate administrative capacity at the regional level, including in protocol implementation.

### 2.2 Public Policy and Implementation

Dye (2017) defines public policy as whatever governments choose to do or not to do, reflecting priorities and commitments in handling public issues. Howlett and Ramesh (2020) explain that public policy results from interactions between various actors from government, private, and civil society sectors. Implementation is the crucial stage where policy is translated into concrete action. Edward III's (1980) model identifies four critical variables: communication (clear and consistent transmission), resources (human, financial, facilities), disposition (attitudes and commitment of implementers), and bureaucratic structure (division of tasks, coordination, standard procedures). Grindle (2017) adds that implementation success is also influenced by policy content and implementation context.



## 2.3 Protocol

Mulyadi (2016) defines protocol as a series of rules governing the conduct of official state and government activities aimed at creating order, certainty, and honor. Protocol encompasses three main aspects: seating arrangements (positioning officials according to hierarchy), ceremonial procedures (event order), and forms of respect (honorific treatment). In Indonesia, protocol is legally regulated by Law No. 9 of 2010 concerning Protocol and Government Regulation No. 62 of 1990.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, chosen to understand deeply the phenomenon of protocol guideline implementation in official activities of North Sulawesi's regional government and to reveal influencing factors in their natural context (Sugiyono, 2019). The research was conducted within the North Sulawesi Provincial Government, focusing on the Protocol and Leadership Communication Division of the Regional Secretariat. Data collection took place over three months.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling: key informants (Head of Protocol Division), primary informants (protocol staff and civil servants involved), and triangulation informants (structural officials, representatives of other institutions, and external guests). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. Analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Overview of North Sulawesi Provincial Government

The North Sulawesi Provincial Government's vision is "Realizing North Sulawesi that is Advanced, Prosperous, and Competitive." Relevant missions include improving public service quality and achieving good governance. The Protocol and Leadership Communication Division has the main function of planning, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating protocol activities.

### 4.2 Implementation of Protocol Guidelines

**Seating arrangements according to hierarchical positions:** The study found that seating arrangements are planned based on protocol guidelines, but implementation often deviates due to sudden changes in attendance and last-minute requests. Weak coordination among committees and limited understanding of regulations contribute to placement errors. The Head of Protocol Division stated: *"In principle, seating arrangements refer to applicable guidelines, but adjustments often occur due to sudden changes, such as unscheduled official attendance."*

**Conformity of event agendas:** Agendas are formally prepared but frequently change before or during activities because of leader interventions, sudden agenda additions, and technical constraints. Evaluation mechanisms are not systematic, limiting continuous improvement.

**Inter-agency coordination:** Coordination is conducted through preparatory meetings and informal communication, but remains suboptimal. Information delays, incomplete messages, and unclear task division lead to overlapping responsibilities. The Protocol Division's coordinative role has not reached optimal levels at the technical field level.

**Official understanding of protocol regulations:** Understanding is uneven. Officials frequently involved demonstrate adequate knowledge, but less engaged staff have limited



comprehension. Training is not routine nor comprehensive. The Head of the Human Resource Development Agency noted: *"Socialization and training have been conducted but are not routine and do not reach all officials."*

**Human resource limitations:** Both quantity and quality are insufficient. Personnel are too few for the intensity of activities, leading to high workloads. Competency is uneven; many officials lack specialized protocol training. Rotation of experienced personnel exacerbates gaps.

**Integrated SOPs:** No integrated, systematically documented SOP exists. Implementation relies on individual experience and ad hoc direction, resulting in inconsistent practices across activities. The absence of SOPs hinders evaluation and quality control.

**Table 1:** Key findings on seating arrangements

Aspect analyzed	Finding	Problem indication	Impact
Conformity with hierarchy	Placement not fully according to hierarchy	Sudden changes, non-technical interventions	Discomfort, reduced event authority
Accuracy of attendance data	Data often inaccurate and changes frequently	Lack of real-time information updates	Errors in seating positioning
Inter-committee coordination	Suboptimal and not integrated	Information not evenly distributed	Differing understandings in placement
Official understanding	Incomplete understanding of regulations	Minimal training and socialization	Errors in determining hierarchical positions

### 4.3 Factors Influencing Implementation (Edward III Model)

**Communication:** Information is shared via meetings, briefings, and digital media, but consistency is weak; changes occur suddenly and are not evenly distributed. Leadership plays a crucial role, yet its effectiveness varies.

**Resources:** Human resources are limited in quantity and uneven in competency. Budget constraints and inadequate facilities for large-scale events worsen implementation. Training programs are not sustainable.

**Disposition:** Official commitment is generally adequate but inconsistent. Some officials exhibit passive resistance, perceiving protocol rules as rigid. Leadership strongly influences disposition.

**Bureaucratic structure:** Formal structure is clear, but task division is unclear, leading to overlaps. Coordination mechanisms and workflows are not consistently followed. The absence of integrated SOPs is the most critical structural weakness.





## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate a clear implementation gap between normative protocol guidelines and field practices (Dunn, 2018). This gap is not merely technical but reflects systemic issues in communication, resource allocation, implementer attitudes, and bureaucratic design. Seating arrangement inaccuracies and agenda inconsistencies align with Grindle's (2017) emphasis on implementation context, where power relations and actor interests shape policy outcomes. Weak inter-agency coordination emerged as a central challenge: existing mechanisms are too formal and lack integration. The Protocol Division's authority is insufficiently supported by enforcement mechanisms, leading to coordination failures at the technical level.

The finding that competency is uneven and training irregular points to the need for systematic human resource development. Protocol work requires both declarative knowledge (knowing the rules) and procedural knowledge (applying them dynamically). The absence of integrated SOPs represents the most actionable finding. Without clear, documented, and mandated procedures, implementation will continue to rely on individual experience. The study confirms Edward III's (1980) model: all four variables interact to determine success. However, bureaucratic structure (specifically SOP integration) may be the most foundational, as its weakness exacerbates problems in other areas.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that the implementation of protocol guidelines in official activities of the North Sulawesi provincial government is suboptimal. Specific deficiencies include: (1) inaccurate seating arrangements due to situational changes, weak coordination, and limited official understanding; (2) inconsistent event agendas caused by sudden changes, leader interventions, and poor communication; (3) ineffective inter-agency coordination with overlapping tasks; (4) uneven understanding of protocol regulations; (5) inadequate human resources in both quantity and competency; and (6) absence of integrated standard operating procedures. The influencing factors—communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure—are not functioning effectively and mutually reinforce implementation difficulties.

### 6.2 Recommendations

- **Strengthen coordination mechanisms** between regional working units through structured, integrated, and documented coordination procedures.
- **Improve communication quality** by ensuring clear, consistent, and documented information delivery to all parties involved.
- **Develop and implement integrated SOPs** for protocol activities that are systematic, easy to understand, and mandated for all officials.
- **Enhance human resource capacity** through regular, sustainable training and technical guidance in protocol management, and ensure placement according to competency.
- **Increase budget allocation and facility provision** to support official activities in accordance with protocol standards.
- **Establish stronger policy enforcement** including continuous supervision and evaluation of official activity implementation.
- **Strengthen leadership roles** in ensuring consistent and professional protocol implementation across all working units.



- **Integrate policies across regional working units** to create uniformity in protocol implementation standards.

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