



Optimization of the Indonesian Ombudsman in resolving reports on public service maladministration

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Optimization of the Indonesian Ombudsman in resolving reports on public service maladministration

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra in resolving reports of public service maladministration and identifies the obstacles and improvement efforts undertaken. Using a sociological legal research approach, the study is based on primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews and field observations, as well as secondary data from laws, regulations, and relevant documents. The findings indicate that the Ombudsman plays a significant role in handling maladministration cases; however, its performance has not yet been optimal due to limitations in human resources, operational budget, infrastructure, report complexity, and resistance from reported institutions. To address these challenges, the Ombudsman has implemented several strategies, including task optimization, digitalization of report management, public reporting education, inter-agency coordination, and budget advocacy. These efforts contribute positively to improving the effectiveness of complaint handling and strengthening public service accountability and citizen rights protection at the regional level.



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Introduction

The principle of equality before the law constitutes a fundamental foundation of a democratic state governed by the rule of law (Harijanti, 2020; Wijayanti & Putri, 2024). In the context of public administration, this principle demands that every citizen receives fair, non-discriminatory, and accountable public services. However, the expansion of state authority in service delivery has also increased the potential for maladministration, including abuse of power, procedural delays, neglect of legal obligations, and discriminatory practices. These conditions necessitate the presence of an independent oversight institution capable of safeguarding citizens' rights while ensuring administrative accountability (Pambudi et al., 2022; Reicoba et al., 2020; Siwij et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia was established as a non-structural state institution to supervise the implementation of public services across governmental, state-owned, regional-owned, and delegated private entities (Harahap & Kwek, 2025; Pambudi et al., 2025). The legal mandate of the Ombudsman is firmly grounded in Law Number 37 of 2008, which positions the institution as a key actor in preventing and addressing maladministration, corruption, collusion, and nepotism. Through complaint handling, investigation, and recommendation mechanisms, the Ombudsman functions as an external control instrument within Indonesia's administrative justice system.

Despite this strong normative framework, the effectiveness of the Ombudsman's role in practice remains a critical issue, particularly at the regional level (Lestari et al., 2020; Taqwa & Nahriona, 2023). The issuance of Ombudsman Regulation Number 58 of 2023, which replaced the previous procedural regulation, reflects the state's effort to strengthen complaint examination and resolution mechanisms. Nevertheless, regulatory refinement does not automatically translate into institutional effectiveness, especially when structural and operational constraints persist within regional representative offices (Arimatea et al., 2025; Juliani et al., 2021; Rahayu et al., 2024).

Empirical data demonstrate a continuous increase in public complaints submitted to the Ombudsman, both nationally and regionally (Situngkir & Herman, 2025; Yasid et al., 2024). In West Sumatra Province, the volume and diversity of reports ranging from health services, land administration, education, to social assistance indicate persistent systemic problems in public service delivery. High-profile maladministration cases further illustrate the gap between legal standards and administrative practice, while simultaneously increasing public expectations toward the Ombudsman as a corrective institution (Rahman, 2023; Sa'adah et al., 2024).

However, the Ombudsman Representative of West Sumatra operates under significant limitations, including insufficient human resources, budgetary constraints, infrastructural inadequacies, geographical challenges, and varying degrees of cooperation from reported institutions. These conditions raise fundamental legal questions regarding the capacity of oversight institutions to perform their constitutional and statutory mandates effectively within decentralized governance structures (Akbar et al., 2024; Koutsoklenis & Karagianni, 2024).

Existing studies on the Ombudsman in Indonesia predominantly emphasize normative roles, legal authority, or general institutional functions, while empirical examinations of performance optimization at the regional level remain limited (Ituarte-Lima & Mares, 2024; Leite, 2021). In particular, there is a lack of socio-legal analysis that integrates institutional constraints, complaint-handling practices, and adaptive strategies employed by regional Ombudsman offices in responding to increasing public demands (de Ruijter et al., 2024; Walsh, 2020).

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the role of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra in resolving public service maladministration reports, identify the obstacles encountered, and examine the efforts undertaken to overcome such challenges. By adopting a sociological legal perspective, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of administrative oversight effectiveness and provides practical insights for strengthening public service accountability within Indonesia's legal system (Quah, 2017; Stojilovska, 2024).

Method

This study employs a sociological legal research approach to analyze the role of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra in handling public service maladministration. The research was conducted at the West Sumatra Ombudsman office using primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews with Ombudsman officials involved in complaint handling, and secondary data derived from relevant laws, regulations, official reports, and academic literature. Data were analyzed qualitatively by identifying key themes related to institutional roles, obstacles, and improvement efforts, with data validity supported through comparison between interview findings and documentary sources.

Results and Discussions

Public services provided by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra play a strategic role in encouraging citizen participation and safeguarding basic rights in public administration. Through its complaint-handling function, the Ombudsman serves as an institutional channel for citizens to seek justice when experiencing unfair or improper treatment by government agencies. The effectiveness of this role reflects not only the quality of governance but also the state's commitment to accountability and the protection of public rights.

In handling public service maladministration reports, the Ombudsman applies several formal administrative requirements to ensure legal certainty and procedural clarity. These include valid identification of complainants, a clear and chronological description of events, prior efforts by the complainant to resolve the issue with the reported institution, time limitations on reported events, and the completeness of supporting documents. Such requirements aim to filter reports and facilitate efficient examination and resolution processes.

In addition to administrative requirements, substantive criteria are applied to assess the eligibility of reports. Reports must fall within the scope of public services, must not be under court examination, must not be reasonably resolved by the reported agency, and must not have previously received a final settlement. These substantive requirements ensure that the Ombudsman focuses on unresolved maladministration cases and reinforces its role as an effective oversight institution in public service governance.

The following is the data of community reports in 2024 at the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province:

Table 1. Number of Community Reports Based on Whistleblower Classification in 2024

Yes	Classification of Reporters	Quarter				Sum	%
		I	II	III	IV		
1	Individual/Direct Victim	41	56	55	22	174	68,77%
2	Power of Attorney of Victim/Individual	4	8	8	7	27	10,67%
3	Power of Attorney/Family Member	5	5	20	1	31	12,25%
4	Victim's Power of Attorney/ Legal Representative	1	0	0	1	2	0,74%
5	Legal Entity/ Organization/ LBH	0	2	3	2	7	2,77%
6	Community	2	1	1	5	9	3,56%
7	Initiative on Your Own Initiative (IAPS)	1	1	1	0	3	1,19%
	Total	54	73	88	38	253	100.00%

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province

The attitude of the public who dare to report public service providers who are suspected of committing maladministration, and they are direct victims, is shown by the classification of Whistleblowers who report to the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province throughout 2024 is still dominated by Individual Whistleblowers/Direct Victims as many as 174 reports (68.77%), then the second order of Whistleblowers who are the victim's attorneys/family members as many as 31 reports (12.25%), and the power of attorney of victims/individuals as many as 27 reports (10.67%). Below is the Number of Community Reports Based on Reported Agencies.

Table 2. Number of Community Reports by Reported Agencies in 2024

Yes	Reported Agencies	Quarter				Sum	%
		I	II	III	IV		
1	Judiciary:						
	Religious Courts	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
	District Courts	3	1	0	0	4	1,58%
	Total	3	2	0	0	5	1,98%
2	Prosecutors	2	1	0	0	3	1,19%
3	Police:						
	Area	0	4	3	4	11	4,35%
	Resort	3	2	1	1	7	2,77%
	City Resorts	2	0	3	1	6	2,37%
	Sector	0	1	2	2	5	1,98%
	Total	5	7	9	8	29	11,46%
4	National Land Agency:						
	Land Region Office	0	0	1	1	2	0,79%
	Land Office	3	2	3	1	9	3,56%
	Total	3	2	4	2	11	4,35%
5	Local Governments:						
	Village/ Nagari	0	4	35	4	43	17,00%
	Neighborhoods	4	3	3	2	12	4,74%
	District	0	2	0	1	3	1,19%
	Regency Government	7	9	3	4	23	9,09%
	City Government	8	12	7	1	28	11,07%
	Provincial Government	6	5	5	6	22	8,70%
	Total	25	35	53	18	131	51,78%
6	Government Agencies/Ministries:						
	Environment and Forestry	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
	Public Works and Spatial Planning	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
	Health	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
	Religion	0	3	2	3	8	3,16%
	Law and Human Rights	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
	Total	2	5	2	3	12	4,74%
7	State Commissions/Non-Structural State Institutions:						
	Election Commission	2	0	0	0	2	0,79%
	Amil Zakat Body	0	0	0	1	1	0,40%
	Total	2	0	0	1	3	1,19%
8	TNI:	0	3	0	1	4	1,58%
9	Banking:						
	State-Owned Banks	4	1	1	0	6	2,37%
	Bank BUMD/ Bank Nagari	0	1	1	0	2	0,79%
	Total	4	2	2	0	8	3,16%
10	State Education Institutions:						
	Colleges/ Colleges/ Academies/ Polytechnics	1	0	6	0	7	2,77%
	Senior High School/ SMK/ Madrasah Aliyah	2	2	3	0	7	2,77%
	Junior High School/ Madrasah Tsanawiyah	0	2	2	0	4	1,58%
	Ibtidaiyah Elementary School/ Madrasah	0	5	1	0	6	2,37%
	Total	3	9	12	0	24	9,49%
11	Government Hospitals:						

Yes	Reported Agencies	Quarter				Sum	%
		I	II	III	IV		
	RSUP	0	2	1	0	3	1,19%
	Phc	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
	Total	1	2	1	0	4	1,58%
12	BUMN/ BUMD						
	TAPS	2	2	0	0	4	1,58%
	PT. Telkom Tbk	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
	PT. Taspen Persero	1	0	0	1	2	0,79%
	Padang Sejahtera Mandiri (PSM) BUMD	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
	PT. Pawnshop	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
	PT. Pos Indonesia	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
	PLN	0	0	1	0	1	0,40%
	PT. Jasaraharja	0	0	0	2	2	0,79%
	PT. Fertilizer Indonesia	0	0	0	1	1	0,40%
	Perum Bulog	0	0	0	1	1	0,40%
	Total	5	4	1	5	15	5,93%
13	Private Hospitals	1	1	0	0	2	0,79%
14	Private Educational Institutions:						
	Colleges/ Colleges/ Academies/ Polytechnics	0	0	2	0	2	0,79%
	Senior High School/ SMK/ Madrasah Aliyah	1	0	1	0	2	0,79%
	Junior High School/ Madrasah Tsanawiyah	0	0	1	0	1	0,40%
	Total	1	0	4	0	5	1,98%
	Total	54	73	88	38	253	100.00%

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province.

The most reported agencies during 2024 are still dominated by Regional Governments (Provincial, Regency/City Governments, Districts, Villages and/or Nagari), which is as many as 131 reports (51.78%). Regional Governments still remain in the top position as the most reported agencies even though the statistics are different every year. This is because the most accessible services to the public are in the Regional Government, especially basic services. Furthermore, the second place is in the scope of the Police with 29 reports (11.46%) and the third place is in the State Education Institution which consists of SD/MIN, SMP/MTs, and SMA/SMK/MA as many as 24 reports (9.49%). Meanwhile, public reports based on alleged maladministration are in table 3.

Table 3. Number of Public Reports Based on Allegations of Maladministration in 2024

Yes	Alleged Maladministration	Quarter				Sum	%
		I	II	III	IV		
1	Not providing Services	16	21	11	7	55	21,74%
2	Procedural Deviations	13	21	18	11	63	24,90%
3	Protracted delays	17	25	53	12	107	42,29%
4	Requests for rewards of money, goods, and services	3	5	2	0	10	3,95%
5	Not Appropriate	3	0	1	3	7	2,77%
6	Incompetent	1	0	0	0	1	0,40%
7	Conflict of Interest	0	0	1	0	1	0,40%
8	Negligence or neglect of legal duty	0	0	2	5	7	2,77%
9	Abuse of Authority	1	1	0	0	2	0,79%
	Total	54	73	88	38	253	100.00%

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province

Throughout 2024, the most allegations of maladministration were dominated by allegations of protracted delays as many as 107 reports (42.29%). In second place, Maladministration alleges procedural irregularities as many as 63 reports (24.90%) and third place allegations of not providing services as many as 55 reports (21.74%). Meanwhile, community reports based on the reported district/city are contained in table 4 below

Table 4. Number of Community Reports Based on Reported Regency/City of Origin in 2024

Yes	Reporting Regency/City	Quarter				Sum	%
		I	II	III	IV		
1	Dharmasraya Regency	1	1	0	0	2	0,79%
2	Fifty Cities Regency	1	3	1	0	5	1,98%
3	Padang Pariaman Regency	4	1	1	1	7	2,77%
4	Solok City	2	0	0	1	3	1,19%
5	West Pasaman Regency	0	1	3	2	6	2,37%
6	South Coast Regency	1	7	34	2	44	17,39%
7	Sijunjung Regency	0	0	1	0	1	0,40%
8	Solok Regency	1	0	1	0	2	0,79%
9	Tanah Datar Regency	3	0	1	1	5	1,98%
10	Bukittinggi City	1	4	3	2	10	3,95%
11	Padang City	36	45	40	22	117	46,25%
12	Payakumbuh City	0	1	1	2	4	1,58%
13	Agam Regency	3	6	0	2	11	4,35%
14	South Solok Regency	1	2	0	1	4	1,58%
15	Pariaman City	0	1	0	2	3	1,19%
16	Padang Panjang City	0	1	0	0	1	0,40%
17	Pasaman Regency	0	0	2	0	2	0,79%
	Total	54	73	88	38	253	100.00%

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province

In 2024, the origin of the most examined public service provider agencies comes from or is from Padang City as many as 143 (56.52%), Reported Agencies Furthermore, in South Pesisir Regency as many as 44 reports (17.39%) and Agam Regency as many as 11 reports (4.35%). Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the findings of the 2024 audit by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province can be concluded as shown in table 4 below.

Table 5. Conclusion of the 2024 Audit Report Findings

Yes	Examination Results	Closure Policy	Sum
1.	Maladministration was found and has been resolved in the examination process	Article 36 paragraph (1) letter d of Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in conjunction with Article 66 letter a PO 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Completion of Reports	123
2.	Maladministration was found and has been resolved in the conciliation process	Article 36 paragraph (1) letter f of Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in conjunction with	0

Yes	Examination Results	Closure Policy	Sum
3.	No Maladministration Found	Article 66 letter a PO 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Completion of Reports Article 36 paragraph (1) letter g of Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in conjunction with Article 66 letter a PO 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Completion of Reports	89
4.	Stopped Inspection	Article 40 of the Ombudsman Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Settlement of Reports	16
5.	Corrective actions have been implemented	Article 36 paragraph (1) letter d of Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia in conjunction with Article 66 letter d PO 58 of 2023 concerning Procedures for Examination and Completion of Reports	1
TOTAL			229

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra Province

From the table above, it can be seen that 229 community reports with maladministration findings have been completed in the examination process and IAPS with corrective actions in 2024. The most Maladministration Findings in Protracted Delays were 30 cases, the second case of Not Providing Services was 10 cases and the third was Procedural Irregularities. Of the 254 cases that have been resolved, 229 cases have not been resolved, 24 cases will be resolved, which will be resolved in 2025.

The findings demonstrate that the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra plays a substantive role in addressing public service maladministration; however, its effectiveness remains constrained by structural and operational limitations. The imbalance between the number of incoming reports and the availability of Ombudsman assistants has created a disproportionate workload, which directly affects the timeliness and depth of case resolution. This condition indicates a gap between the Ombudsman's normative mandate and its practical capacity at the regional level (Maurya & Biswas, 2020; Umar et al., 2025).

Human resource limitations are further compounded by the complexity of reports and the diverse characteristics of complainants (Cheisviyanny et al., 2023; Kramer & Stoicescu, 2021). Cases that

initially appear as minor service delays often evolve into broader administrative problems requiring extensive verification and inter-agency coordination. In addition, varying levels of legal literacy among whistleblowers influence the quality of reports submitted, thereby increasing the time required for clarification and examination. These findings highlight the importance of complaint management not only as a legal process but also as a communicative and administrative practice (Karim, 2018; Vallet et al., 2020).

Institutional resistance from reported agencies constitutes another significant obstacle in the handling of maladministration cases (Ferry et al., 2024; Sirait et al., 2017). Delayed or incomplete responses to Ombudsman requests for clarification weaken the effectiveness of oversight mechanisms and reflect limitations in the enforceability of Ombudsman recommendations. This situation underscores the structural weakness of external supervisory institutions when compliance largely depends on the goodwill of the reported parties rather than binding legal sanctions.

Operational and infrastructural constraints also affect the Ombudsman's performance, particularly in geographically dispersed regions such as West Sumatra. Limited operational budgets restrict field investigations, while the absence of a permanent office undermines service accessibility and institutional stability. These conditions reveal how logistical factors can indirectly influence the realization of administrative justice and public trust in oversight institutions (Oberoi, 2017; Penning & Warnock-Smith, 2022).

To address these challenges, the Ombudsman Representative of West Sumatra has implemented adaptive strategies, including workload prioritization, internal task optimization, digitalization of complaint management, public reporting education, and strengthened coordination with government agencies. Although these measures have improved procedural efficiency, they remain insufficient to fully overcome structural limitations. This study suggests that strengthening regional Ombudsman effectiveness requires not only internal managerial adjustments but also stronger institutional support, clearer compliance mechanisms, and sustainable resource allocation within Indonesia's public service oversight framework (Yolles, 2018).

Conclusions

This study finds that the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia Representative of West Sumatra plays a meaningful role in resolving public service maladministration but has not yet operated optimally. Its effectiveness is limited by insufficient human resources, complex reports, incomplete complainant data, weak cooperation from some agencies, budget constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and report accumulation. To address these issues, the Ombudsman has applied task optimization, digital report management, public reporting education, inter-agency coordination, and budget advocacy. Strengthening institutional capacity remains essential to enhance oversight effectiveness and public service accountability.

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