

Local Government Policy Implementation in Supporting Micro, Small, And Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Development: A Case Study of Merauke Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of local government policy implementation in Merauke Regency in fostering the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and identifies the internal (government performance and inter-agency coordination) and external (infrastructure access, financing, and community participation) factors that influence it. Adopting a qualitative approach with a case study design, the research provides an in-depth understanding of local public policy dynamics. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with government officials, MSMEs practitioners, business associations, and academics, while secondary data were obtained from policy documents and official reports. Data validity was strengthened through triangulation, and thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software.

The findings indicate that the implementation of local government policies remains suboptimal. Four major themes emerged: (1) policy effectiveness is constrained by the lack of alignment between central and local regulations; (2) limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient technical capacity pose significant challenges; (3) collaborative networks among stakeholders remain weak due to poor cross-sectoral coordination; and (4) structural barriers, including bureaucratic complexity, low digital literacy among MSMEs, and insufficient performance-based monitoring, hinder policy outcomes.

These findings underscore the need to enhance the institutional capacity of local governments, reform regulatory frameworks, improve access to financing, strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration platforms, and integrate digital transformation initiatives to boost MSME competitiveness in remote regions. The proposed recommendations aim to inform the development of more inclusive and results-oriented policy strategies.

Keywords: public policy, regulatory alignment, small and medium enterprises, collaborative networks

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a central role in both global and national economic dynamics by creating substantial employment opportunities and fostering local innovation (Verma, T. L., 2019). In Indonesia, MSMEs account for over 99% of all enterprises and employ approximately 97% of the workforce; however, they contribute only about 57% of the national GDP (Munthe et al., 2023). In Merauke, where agriculture, fisheries, and trade dominate the local economy, MSME development faces critical challenges, including limited access to capital, inadequate technical assistance, and insufficient infrastructure. The gap between the region's economic potential and the constraints in policy implementation underscores the urgent need to evaluate the effectiveness of local government policies (Tambaip, Tjilen, & Ohoiwutun, 2023).

The literature highlights that government support through policies, training programs, institutional networks, and financial facilitation can enhance MSME performance. Nevertheless, many empirical studies reveal that policy implementation often falls short of expectations, particularly in terms of inter-agency coordination, funding access, and community participation (Tambaip, Tjilen, Riyanto, et al., 2023). These persistent challenges illustrate the pressing issues that must be addressed to position MSMEs as key drivers of the national economy.

This study applies Van Meter and Van Horn's Policy Implementation Framework to assess the effectiveness of local government policy implementation, focusing on inter-agency coordination, institutional capacity, and community participation. Furthermore, the Governance and Multi-Actor Collaboration approach views MSMEs, local governments, and supporting institutions as key actors within a local economic empowerment system (Syahrudin et al., 2023). Additionally, the Local Economic Empowerment theory links policy dimensions to strengthening MSMEs capacity and its impact on socio-economic welfare (Mulanda et al., 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the implementation of local government policies in Merauke Regency to support MSMEs development. The research addresses the following questions: (1) How effective is the implementation of local government policies in supporting MSMEs development in Merauke Regency? (2) How do internal factors, such as government performance and inter-agency coordination, and external factors, such as infrastructure access, financing, and community participation, influence policy implementation outcomes? (3) What strategies can be proposed to improve the effectiveness of these policies? These questions are explored using a qualitative case study approach.

This study contributes to the literature by connecting policy implementation analysis to the context of remote regions such as Merauke and by empirically bridging the gap between policy design and on-the-ground realities through the use of primary and secondary data. Its novelty lies in the use of thematic analysis and data triangulation to identify the drivers and barriers of policy implementation in a geographical context that has been rarely studied. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based policy recommendations applicable to other peripheral regions in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Policy Implementation Theory developed by Van Meter & Van Horn provides a structural analytical framework for assessing the effectiveness of government policies. It focuses on six key variables: policy standards and objectives, resource availability, inter-organizational communication, characteristics of implementing agents, socio-economic and political conditions, and the disposition of implementers (Ririhena, 2023). This model serves by Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975 as a conceptual foundation for research on local policy implementation, including support for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Furthermore, theories of local economic empowerment and collaborative governance extend this analysis by examining the capacity of local governments to build networks, coordinate multi-actor collaboration, and empower MSMEs actors (Pakidi et al., 2025). This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between formal policy frameworks and their real-world implementation.

Empirical studies in Indonesia demonstrate that local government policies positively influence MSME development. However, these efforts remain limited due to inadequate socialization and uneven market access. For instance, in Lampung, government policies have supported MSME growth, but program penetration in remote areas remains insufficient. Similarly, research by (Hapiz & Septia, 2025) highlights that local institutional quality, corruption risks, and weak regulatory frameworks hinder the creation of new MSMEs across various regions. Additionally, a study in Semarang found that government regulations significantly affect MSME green supply chain management practices, underscoring the regulatory role in enhancing local business performance.

Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of public policy depends largely on institutional strength, including organizational structure, human resources, norms, and regulations. Strong institutional capacity enables governments to implement policies effectively by leveraging technical competencies, improving bureaucratic governance, and enhancing cross-agency coordination.

Balzano, Marzi, & Turzo, 2024, argue that robust institutions create a stable policy environment, facilitate policy execution, and foster participation among relevant actors in regional economic development. Conversely, weak institutional capacity often leads to administrative barriers, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and reduced policy implementation effectiveness. (Khassawneh & Elrehail, 2022) further stress that institutional capacity building

particularly through civil service training and organizational restructuring is a prerequisite for improving MSMEs policy outcomes.

Relevance to MSMEs:

In remote areas such as Merauke Regency, weak institutional capacity within local governments remains a major challenge for effective MSMEs policy implementation. Strengthening bureaucratic capacity through competency development and improved governance mechanisms is essential to ensure the success of these policies.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View underscores the importance of internal resources, including financial capital, as a primary determinant of organizational competitiveness and success. In the MSMEs context, access to financial resources directly influences the ability of entrepreneurs to innovate, expand production capacity, and compete in the market.

(Lee & Chen, 2022) highlight that financial constraints represent one of the greatest barriers to MSMEs growth, particularly in regions with underdeveloped economic infrastructure. Limited access to financing restricts MSMEs from adopting new technologies or expanding market networks. Similarly, (Owusu, at all, 2021) found that financial support from governments and financial institutions plays a critical role in expanding business opportunities for MSMEs, especially when such support is delivered through inclusive, locally tailored financing schemes.

Relevance to MSMEs:

In Merauke Regency, limited funding remains a structural obstacle for MSMEs development. Policy implementation must prioritize equitable and inclusive access to financing to establish a sustainable business ecosystem.

Network Governance Theory

Network Governance Theory emphasizes the importance of cross-actor collaboration in public policy implementation. In this view, governments cannot work in isolation; they must engage private sectors, academia, and civil society to create effective governance mechanisms, (Abu-Rumman, Al Shraah, Al-Madi, & Alfalah, 2021) argue that collaborative networks enhance the exchange of resources, knowledge, and innovations, resulting in more targeted and effective policy implementation. Likewise (Wang & Ran, 2023) demonstrate that multi-actor collaboration forums foster policy integration, shared learning, and cross-sectoral synergies that ultimately strengthen the competitiveness of local MSMEs.

Relevance to MSMEs:

In remote regions, limited cross-actor coordination hinders MSMEs policy implementation. Establishing collaborative forums between local governments, business actors, educational institutions, and the private sector is therefore essential for developing a supportive business ecosystem.

Based on this review, this study integrates Policy Implementation Theory with governance and local empowerment perspectives. This conceptual synthesis provides a foundation for identifying key thematic variables, including inter-agency coordination, resource availability, implementer disposition, and the contextual environment of Merauke. This framework will guide the qualitative methodology, employing triangulated data collection through interviews, observations, and policy document analysis. The following sections on Research Methodology and Findings will further elaborate on this conceptual structure as an analytical guide.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how local governments implement MSME-related policies in Merauke Regency. This approach allows the researcher to explore context-

specific phenomena using multiple data sources and perspectives (Yin, 2018). A qualitative design is well-suited for examining complex, dynamic public policy issues that involve multi-actor interactions in specific social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Data Sources and Types

The study uses both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including local government officials, MSMEs owners, local business associations, and relevant academics. Secondary data will be obtained from policy documents, government reports, and scholarly publications related to MSMEs policy implementation in Indonesia. Data triangulation will be applied to enhance the validity of findings.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The primary data collection techniques include semi-structured interviews, limited participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews are chosen for their flexibility in obtaining in-depth information while enabling comparison across respondents. The interview guide is developed based on the variables outlined in the Van Meter & Van Horn policy implementation model. Observations will be conducted at strategic locations such as government offices and MSMEs activity hubs. Document analysis will focus on regional regulations, strategic plans, and program evaluation reports.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria consist of:

1. Informants with at least two years of direct experience in either implementing or receiving MSMEs related policies.
2. Official government documents published within the last five years.
3. Peer-reviewed scholarly publications relevant to MSMEs policy in Indonesia.

Exclusion criteria include anecdotal data, unofficial documents, or non-peer-reviewed literature, to ensure data reliability and relevance.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the implementation of local government policies related to MSMEs development in Merauke Regency. The study subjects include:

1. Local government officials responsible for economic and MSMEs related policies.
2. MSMEs owners in trade, services, and home industries.
3. Representatives of local business associations.
4. Academics or public policy experts in Merauke.

Informants will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of relevant key actors.

Data Analysis

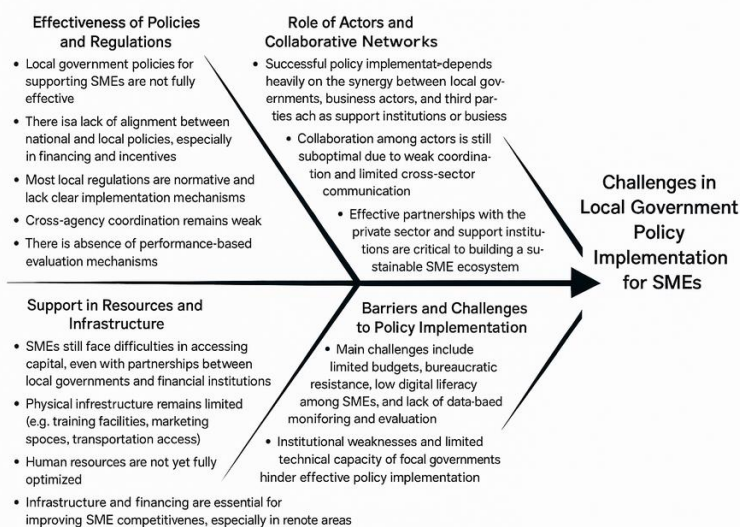
Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis with an inductive approach. The process includes familiarization, coding, theme identification, theme review, and thematic narrative development (de Farias et al., 2021). NVivo software (2020) will be used to organize qualitative data and facilitate the coding process. Analytical rigor will

be ensured through member checking and peer debriefing to maintain the consistency and credibility of interpretations.

Research Findings

The findings of this study were derived from qualitative data analysis using a thematic approach based on in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document reviews related to the implementation of local government policies for MSME development in Merauke Regency. The analysis identified four interrelated themes: (1) policy and regulatory effectiveness, (2) resource and infrastructure support, (3) the role of actors and collaborative networks, and (4) policy implementation barriers and challenges.

Figure 1. Challenges in Local Government Policy Implementation for SMEs



Policy and Regulatory Effectiveness

The NVivo coding analysis revealed that local policies intended to support MSMEs remain only partially effective. Most informants highlighted a lack of alignment between central and local government policies, particularly concerning financing schemes and business incentives. Document analysis indicated that many regional regulations remain normative and lack measurable implementation mechanisms. These findings align with previous research noting that local policy effectiveness is often constrained by poor inter-agency coordination and the absence of performance-based evaluation systems (Tjilen & Rediani, 2023). Without clear operational guidelines and effective monitoring frameworks, policy implementation risks remaining symbolic rather than practical.

Resource and Infrastructure Support

Resource availability emerged as a critical determinant of MSMEs policy outcomes. Although the local government has collaborated with financial institutions, many MSMEs owners reported difficulties accessing capital due to bureaucratic procedures and limited loan options. Furthermore, infrastructural deficits including inadequate training facilities, limited marketing spaces, and poor transportation pose significant challenges to business competitiveness. These results mirror prior studies emphasizing that financial support and infrastructure are prerequisites for enhancing MSMEs competitiveness in remote regions (Tjilen, 2025). Unless substantial investments are made in these areas, policy initiatives are unlikely to deliver sustainable economic growth.

Role of Actors and Collaborative Networks

Effective policy implementation depends on the interaction of key stakeholders, including government officials, MSMEs owners, and intermediary organizations such as business associations. However, the findings show that collaboration among these actors remains weak due to fragmented communication and limited cross-sector

coordination. Strengthening these collaborative networks could enhance policy effectiveness by fostering knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and joint problem-solving. This is consistent with studies highlighting the importance of public–private partnerships in building a sustainable MSMEs ecosystem (Tjilen, 2025).

Barriers to Policy Implementation

Despite ongoing initiatives, several structural and operational barriers persist. These include limited budgets, bureaucratic resistance, low digital literacy among MSME owners, and the absence of data-driven monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Such barriers align with prior research showing that MSMEs policies in Indonesia are frequently undermined by institutional capacity gaps and governance challenges (Maria, Situmeang, & Ardana, 2024). These constraints exacerbate the disconnect between policy design and practical implementation.

Secondary Data Analysis

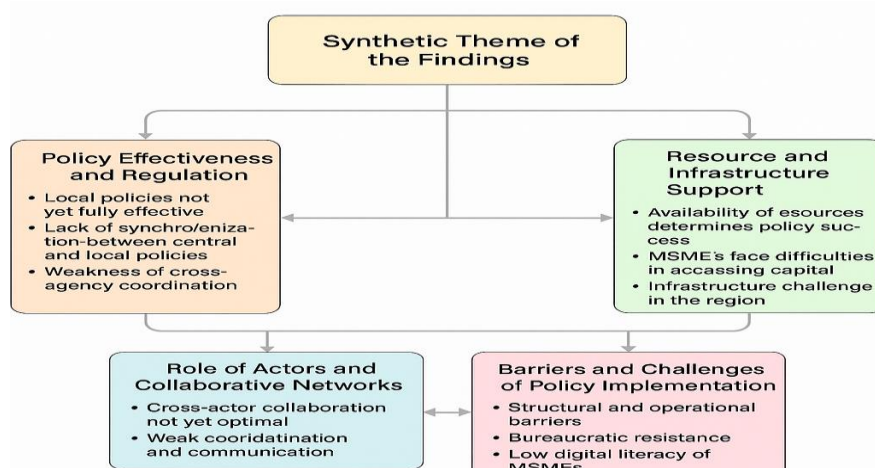
Secondary data support these findings. A report from the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs revealed that only 45% of MSMEs in Merauke accessed government assistance programs, significantly below the national average (Kemenkop UKM, 2022). This low participation underscores implementation gaps caused by limited oversight and a lack of performance-based evaluation. Additional studies similarly confirm that policy delivery is weakened by insufficient monitoring mechanisms and weak administrative capacity at the local level.

Synthesis of Findings

The four themes collectively demonstrate that MSMEs policy effectiveness in Merauke depends on the interplay between institutional capacity, resource allocation, and multi-actor collaboration. Policy effectiveness is constrained by insufficient resources, which in turn necessitate stronger cross-sector partnerships. However, such collaboration remains hindered by structural challenges, including bureaucratic inertia and inadequate infrastructure.

In conclusion, enhancing MSMEs policy outcomes in Merauke requires a shift from normative policy frameworks toward actionable strategies supported by adequate resources, effective monitoring systems, and robust collaborative networks. Addressing these interconnected factors will enable local governments to deliver more effective MSMEs development policies and promote sustainable regional economic growth.

Image 2. Synthesis of Research Themes



DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that the effectiveness of local government policies in developing micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Merauke Regency is strongly influenced by institutional factors, resource availability, the role of collaborative actors, and structural barriers that emerge during the implementation process. These results are consistent with the research objective of identifying the main determinants that

influence the success of local policies and provide a more comprehensive understanding of MSMEs policy dynamics in remote regions.

Within the framework of public policy implementation theory, particularly the top-down and bottom-up models (Timilsina, Pang, & Xi, 2021), the findings indicate an imbalance between policy design at the central level and adaptation mechanisms at the local level. This gap reinforces the view that public policies cannot be effectively implemented without considering local institutional capacity and broader stakeholder engagement (Howlett et al., 2020).

A comparison with previous studies shows that these findings align with the conclusion that infrastructure support, capital, and human resource capacity are crucial factors in strengthening MSME competitiveness (Harris & Moffat, 2021). However, this study also reveals that bureaucratic obstacles and weak cross-agency coordination remain significant challenges, which contrasts with findings from studies in urban areas where these factors tend to have less impact. Therefore, this study expands the understanding of the contextual differences in policy implementation between developed and remote regions.

Furthermore, the findings on the importance of collaborative networks reinforce the theory of network governance, which emphasizes that inter-actor relationships are key to enhancing public policy effectiveness (Wegner & Verschoore, 2022). The lack of coordination among actors identified in this study demonstrates that without effective collaboration mechanisms, local policies tend to stagnate at the implementation stage. This is consistent with other studies that affirm the success of MSMEs policies is highly dependent on the presence of strategic partnerships with the private sector and other supporting institutions (Fitriani & Darma, 2023).

From a scientific contribution perspective, this study enriches the understanding of the complexity of public policy implementation in peripheral regions by integrating institutional, resource-based, and collaborative network analyses. It highlights the importance of the interplay among these factors and provides practical implications for local policymakers.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the primary data collected only covered MSMEs actors in the Merauke region, meaning that generalization to other regions should be approached with caution. Second, the qualitative approach used in this study does not allow for a more in-depth causal analysis of the relationships between variables. These limitations are consistent with methodological literature, which emphasizes that qualitative studies focus more on contextual depth rather than broad generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The implications of this study include the need to strengthen local government institutional capacity through evidence-based policy management training and the implementation of more transparent monitoring systems. Additionally, local governments are encouraged to promote the establishment of multi-actor collaboration forums involving the private sector, financial institutions, and universities to strengthen the local MSMEs ecosystem, as proposed in research on strategic partnership models in the MSMEs sector. Future research should consider a mixed-methods approach to test the quantitative relationships between policy variables, resources, and MSME performance outcomes, thereby producing more data-driven recommendations.

An in-depth examination of the role of digital technology in strengthening MSMEs policy implementation in remote areas could also be a promising direction for future research. Previous studies have shown that digital transformation can improve financial inclusion and expand market access for MSMEs (Phoek & Tjilen, 2022). Therefore, integrating digital dimensions into local policies is expected to accelerate MSME growth and improve policy implementation effectiveness in the future as below.

Table 1. Finding and Research Implication

Variable	Research Findings	Research Implications
Institutional Capacity	Weaknesses in the organizational structure of local government and limited human resources are the main obstacles to policy implementation.	Enhancing institutional capacity through technical training and evidence-based policy management is necessary.

Financial Resources	Funding support for MSMEs remains limited and uneven.	The government needs to expand access to financing and design inclusive funding schemes for MSMEs.
Collaborative Networks	Lack of coordination among actors (government, private sector, universities) hampers policy effectiveness.	Strengthening multi-actor collaboration forums to create a sustainable support ecosystem for MSMEs.
Bureaucratic Barriers	Lengthy administrative processes and inconsistent regulations slow down program implementation.	Regulatory reforms and simplification of bureaucratic procedures are required to accelerate policy implementation.
Technology Adoption	Low utilization of digital technology limits MSMEs' access to markets and financial services.	Integrating digital transformation policies to enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs in remote areas.
MSMEs Participation	The involvement of MSME actors in policy formulation processes is still limited.	Expanding MSME participation in policy decision-making through public consultation mechanisms.
External Conditions	Geographical factors and limited infrastructure are significant obstacles in remote areas.	Improving transportation and logistics infrastructure to facilitate the distribution of MSME products.
Policy Approach	Policies are still dominated by a top-down approach without adapting to local needs.	A bottom-up approach that is adaptive to local socio-economic contexts is needed.
Monitoring & Evaluation	The policy evaluation system is ineffective in measuring the impact on MSME performance.	Implementing a data-driven monitoring system that is transparent and accountable.
Digital Transformation	Lack of regional policy digitalization strategies leaves MSMEs behind in utilizing online market opportunities.	Formulating an integrated MSME digitalization roadmap aligned with local government policies.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the effectiveness of local government policies in developing MSMEs in Merauke Regency is influenced by the complex interaction between institutional capacity, resources, collaborative networks, and structural barriers. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in strengthening a conceptual framework that integrates risk management, organizational preparedness, and business resilience as interrelated variables, while practically, these findings provide guidance for managers and policymakers to develop adaptive and evidence-based risk management strategies and build sustainable internal preparedness.

Policy effectiveness remains limited due to misalignment between central and local policies, the dominance of a top-down approach, and the absence of clear performance-based implementation and evaluation mechanisms. Insufficient resources and infrastructure—particularly regarding access to financing, training facilities, marketing, transportation, and digital technology—pose major challenges in improving the competitiveness of MSMEs in remote areas.

The role of actors and collaborative networks is also weak, mainly due to poor coordination and the lack of strategic partnership forums between the government, private sector, financial institutions, universities, and MSME actors. These are further exacerbated by bureaucratic obstacles such as lengthy administrative procedures, bureaucratic resistance, and the low level of digital literacy among MSME actors, which slow down policy implementation. External factors such as regional infrastructure limitations and geographical barriers further worsen the policy implementation gap compared to more developed regions.

This study emphasizes the need to enhance institutional capacity through technical training and regulatory reforms, expand access to financing through inclusive schemes tailored to the local context, establish multi-actor collaboration forums to strengthen the MSME ecosystem, integrate digital transformation into local government policies, implement transparent data-driven monitoring and evaluation systems, and adopt a bottom-up approach that is adaptive to the socio-economic needs of remote regions.

For future research, it is necessary to further explore contextual factors that may strengthen the relationships among variables, such as the role of organizational culture, data-driven risk management technologies, and cross-industry collaboration. Additionally, testing this conceptual model across different sectors and organizational scales is recommended to ensure the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the development of MSMEs in Merauke Regency requires not only vertically integrated policies (central–local) but also horizontal synergy among local actors to create an inclusive, competitive, and sustainable MSME ecosystem.

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Ethics and Consent Statement: The study was conducted ethically, and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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