



The Study of Local Government Policy and its Impact on Public Satisfaction and Incumbent Electability: An Analysis of Experiences from Jambi Province

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A B S T R A C T

Studies on Indonesian local elections have covered identity politics, patronage, and candidate charisma in great detail, but they don't provide much empirical data on how actual policy performance affects public satisfaction and incumbent electability at the province level. There is a research gap regarding whether policy-driven satisfaction quantitatively translates into voter support, especially in decentralized regions where visibility and impact of government programs vary significantly. This is because scholars have rarely integrated public service satisfaction metrics with electoral behavior. By examining whether local government policy effectiveness directly affects satisfaction levels and, in turn, determines incumbent electability in Jambi Province, this study closes that gap. 880 respondents were chosen for this quantitative survey study utilizing a multistage random sampling procedure with a 4% margin of error, and SPSS was used for analysis. The results show that a number of development initiatives, most notably the Dumisake Program, were carried out under the Haris-Sani administration (2020–2024) and received strong public support. While electability data reveals that 51.50% of respondents planned to vote for Haris-Sani in the 2024 Governor Election, the Community Satisfaction Index (IKM) reveals that 60.40% of respondents were satisfied with the administration's plans. The official election result, in which Haris-Sani easily defeated Romi-Sudirman and was subsequently appointed for the 2025–2030 term, clearly represented these opinions. The study finds that increased public satisfaction with local government programs significantly and favorably affects the incumbent's electability, indicating that policy performance continues to be a crucial factor in determining voter behavior in regional elections.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of the impact of policies carried out by incumbents is suspected to influence the level of public satisfaction and electability in regional elections. Various studies have proven that development programs carried out by incumbents have a significant impact on the satisfaction and direction of political choices (electability) of the public in elections and regional elections (Arias, E., Larreguy, H., Marshall, J., & Querubin, 2019; Avenburg, 2016; Berliner & Wehner, 2019; Boyne et al., 2009; Brender, 2003; Dharma, F., & Martani, 2016; Happy, 1992; Mughan, Anthony & Lacy, 2002; Yuliati et al., 2016).

Massive information and publications related to various incumbent programs and activities had an impact on increasing the electability of the supporting and incumbent political parties (Berliner & Wehner, 2019). The achievements of regional heads in their government had an impact on increasing electoral support for the party supporting the regional head (Arias, E., Larreguy, H., Marshall, J., & Querubin, 2019; Yuliati et al., 2016). The level of compliance with regulations, especially those related to corruption, has been proven to increase the electability of regional heads and DPRD, as emerged in a study conducted by (Avenburg, 2016). Other research also confirmed the influence of poor regional government performance on the decline in political support for regional heads in England (Boyne et al., 2009). In the opposite context, good regional government performance demonstrated by a high level of accountability has an effect on increasing political support for incumbents (Dharma, F., & Martani, 2016). In the same context, the influence of local government economic and fiscal performance on increasing the electability of incumbents also emerged in the several studies

(Brender, 2003; Happy, 1992; Mughan, Anthony & Lacy, 2002). Meanwhile, the influence of local government public service performance on increasing incumbent electability was carried out by other research (James & John, 2006).

The research conducted regarding the influence of incumbent performance on the electability of regional heads is mostly from the economic and fiscal side, public services and media coverage. Meanwhile, research that looks at the influence of the policies of regional heads, especially governors, on the level of public satisfaction and the electability of incumbents has not been conducted. In fact, there is a close relationship between local government policies, public satisfaction and the electability of incumbent candidates as shown through bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer software. This analysis maps the thematic relationships between keywords obtained from 553 scientific publications in the 2020-2025 period.

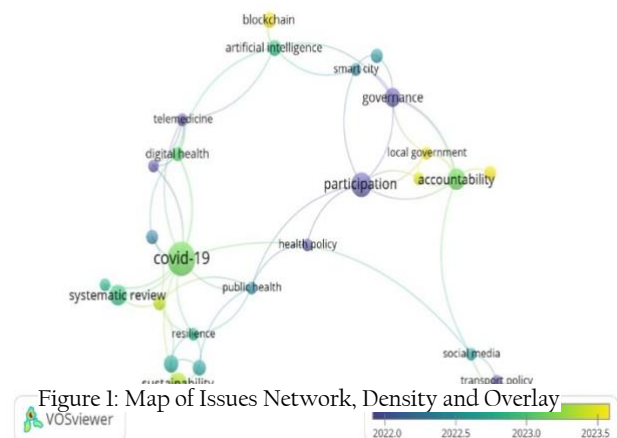


Figure 1: Map of Issues Network, Density and Overlay

In Figure 1 above, the "local government" node is in a cluster that is closely connected to "participation", "governance", and "accountability". This connection confirms that in the context of local policy, public participation and accountability are central issues that directly impact public perception and acceptance of a policy. Citizen involvement in the policy formulation process (participatory governance) not only increases policy legitimacy, but also strengthens public trust in local government institutions. In many studies, public satisfaction with local services and policies has been proven to contribute to increasing the electability of local political actors in decision-making positions. Meanwhile the "accountability" node appears in bright yellow, which indicates that this issue is a hot and relatively new topic in recent publications (2023 and above). Accountability is the link between local governance and the use of cutting-edge technology, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence and smart cities. This context shows that the digitalization of government systems is not only aimed at increasing efficiency, but also strengthening the transparency and responsiveness of the bureaucracy to public needs.

In a local policy context, applying digital accountability principles has the potential to increase public satisfaction, especially when citizens can directly access information, provide feedback, and monitor policy implementation. This satisfaction, in the long term, can influence people's electoral preferences, thereby strengthening the correlation between policy performance and electability. The node "covid-19" and its connection with "public health", "digital health", and "resilience" shows that health issues are an important field in testing local policy capacity. Handling the pandemic is a concrete indicator of how local governments are able or failed to respond to the crisis. In this case, success in dealing with public health is often converted into electoral capital in the form of increasing the electability of regional heads or local political actors. Conversely, failure in crisis management can lead to decreased public satisfaction and have a negative impact on electoral prospects. In this way, policy outcomes become a real reflection of the effectiveness of local leadership in the eyes of constituents.

The results of this VOSviewer analysis underscore the importance of looking at the relationship between local policies and public perceptions within the framework of a decentralized system. In a political system that provides autonomy to local governments, local capability in designing and implementing responsive policies is a determining factor in the level of public satisfaction, which ultimately leads to the level of electability. With high public expectations for service quality, openness of information, and participation in decision making, political actors who are able to build a participatory and accountable governance ecosystem will have an electoral advantage. This analysis shows that the trend in scientific literature is moving towards integration between policy science, e-government, and political behavior, especially in the local context.

One region in Indonesia that needs attention regarding regional government policies is Jambi Province. Jambi Province is a strategic region in the heart of Sumatra Island with natural resources (rubber, palm oil, coal and coffee) as the mainstay of its economy (<https://www.detik.com>). The area of Jambi Province is 53,435.92 km², consisting of land of 48,989.98 km² and sea of 4,445.94 km² with a coastline length of 223,025 km and a population of 3,570,272 people and an average density level of 71.18 people/km² (BPS, 2024). Based on BPS data (2024), the

Human Development Index (HDI) for Jambi Province in 2024 was 74.36, an increase of 0.63 points (0.85 percent) compared to the previous year (73.73). This position makes the level of human development in Jambi Province below the National HDI (75.02). When compared with other provinces, in 2024 Jambi Province will rank 7th out of 10 provinces on the island of Sumatra. In 2024, the three provinces with the highest HDI on the island of Sumatra will be the Riau Islands (79.89), West Sumatra (76.43), and North Sumatra (75.76). Since 2013, the three provinces with the highest HDI have remained in their respective positions. This fact of course requires a good 'touch' from the Jambi Provincial Government so that this great potential is utilized and the problem in question is resolved through policies.

After reform, successive governors were elected who led Jambi in efforts to realize community welfare through various programs. In the last 4 years after reform, Al-Haris and Abdullah Sani (Haris-Sani) were elected to lead Jambi Province 2020-2024 through the 2020 gubernatorial election. Based on the decision of the Jambi Provincial Election (KPU) on June 3 2021, Haris-Sani won the 2020 Jambi Governor Election with 600,733 votes (38.26%), while his competitors, Cek Endra and Ratu Munawaroh won 587,918 votes (37.44%) and Fachrori Umar and Syafril Nursal received 381,634 (24.30%). Haris-Sani is supported by PAN, PKB and PKS, while Cek Endra and Ratu Munawaroh are supported by PDI-P, Golkar and Nasdem, while Fachrori Umar and Syafril Nursal are supported by Gerindra, the Democratic Party, PPP and Hanura. Haris-Sani are two experienced figures who know Jambi very well. Haris was the Regent of Merangin for 2 period, while Sani was the former Deputy Mayor of Jambi. Therefore, Haris-Sani is expected to be able to present policies that can improve the quality of life of the people of Jambi Province with the various advantages of its natural wealth.

In the political context, local governments play a significant role in efforts to improve community welfare in the era of regional autonomy (Bird, R., & Vaillancourt, 1998; Brillo, 2017; Hm, Pahrudin & Darminto, 2021; Kisman & Tasar, 2014; Latifah et al., 2023; Lewis, 2017; Nak-ai et al., 2018; Nederhand et al., 2016; Sandjaja et al., 2020; Sharma, 2015; Witkowski & Kiba-Janiak, 2014). As is known, after the reforms implemented in 1998, Indonesia changed the government paradigm from centralized to decentralized. If previously, people's affairs were the full responsibility of the central government, then the decentralization system makes it a matter for regional governments. The choice of a system also known as regional autonomy was certainly not simply to appear different from the steps taken by the New Order government that replaced it. Decentralization was chosen because it was based on rational considerations carried out by all the leaders of this nation. Decentralization is believed to be an effective solution to overcome various problems that emerged when Indonesia was in a period of centralization.

According to many studies, a decentralized system was chosen as a government system because it has several advantages (Bird, R., & Vaillancourt, 1998). First, the decentralization policy which is the basis for post-reform regional management promises economic efficiency, program cost effectiveness, accountability, increased resource mobilization, reduced levels of inequality, increased political participation, as well as strengthening democracy and political stability. Second, through decentralization, local governments are considered to have better knowledge about the needs and preferences of their citizens, so

the development process in a decentralized policy model should be more efficient than a centralized policy model in the framework of improving the welfare of local communities. These are some of the advantages of decentralization which lead to the establishment of the system as a method of managing government in post-reform Indonesia.

In line with above statement, research findings conducted by other studies also show the same thing (Kisman & Tasar, 2014; Witkowski & Kiba-Janiak, 2014). These two studies show the large role of local governments (in Türkiye and Poland) in efforts to overcome social problems faced by society. These studies also confirm that regional governments can improve community welfare more, compared to when government was still in a centralized system. In addition, studies conducted by (Brillo, 2017; Nak-ai et al., 2018; Sharma, 2015) also show that the role played by local governments by collaborating with several stakeholders is able to improve the standard of living of the community. Research by (Sandjaja et al., 2020) also found that decentralization policies had a statistically significant impact on human development and poverty alleviation in Indonesia. Research by (Nederhand et al., 2016) also shows that the role of local governments tends to be flexible, that is, they can move from one role to another from time to time for the same citizen initiative depending on the stage of development, as well as taking on several roles simultaneously for different citizen initiatives. The same thing also emerged in research by (Cárcaba, Ana & Rubén Arrondo, 2022) which highlighted the importance of efficiency in local government as a key factor in improving the subjective well-being of citizens in Spain. The study by (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2007) also confirmed the need for a holistic approach in assessing the quality of local governance, which includes aspects such as citizen participation, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of public services. This approach is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the quality of governance at the local level in order to develop a broader and more inclusive performance assessment system to assess the quality of local governance as a whole. The research findings by (da Cruz & Marques, 2014) reveal that evaluation of local government performance must be carried out carefully, considering the complexity and many influencing factors. A fair and robust performance evaluation model should consider the effects of the identified determinants of cost efficiency. Research by (Latifah et al., 2023) also strengthens the importance of collaboration between the government, the private sector and the community in efforts to overcome the problem (waste). Meanwhile, research by (Lewis, 2017) revealed that in an effort to manage their region, local governments need to reduce dependence on funding assistance from the center and increase accountability and transparency in regional financial management.

Based on the studies conducted above, it can be concluded that whether community welfare is realized or not really depends on the efforts made by the regional government. This is in line with Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Autonomy, which states that regional governments in implementing regional autonomy are obliged to meet the needs of their regions in accordance with the budget that has been determined with the aim of improving the welfare of their people. In implementing autonomy, regions have obligations, including: improving the quality and life of the community, developing democratic life, realizing justice and equality, improving basic educational services, providing health service facilities, and providing

adequate social and public facilities. Thus, theoretically, as previously mentioned, the decentralized policy model should be able to bring a better level of welfare compared to a centralized system.

The success or failure of the programs implemented by the Jambi Provincial Government is reflected in the Community Satisfaction Index (IKM). Satisfaction is the level of a person's feelings after comparing their perceived performance or results with their expectations (Supranto, 2011). Meanwhile, according to (Pasolong, 2011), the better the government and the quality of services provided, the higher the public's trust (high trust). Public trust will be higher if people receive good service and feel satisfied with that service. Decree of the Minister for Empowerment of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform Number 14 of 2017 states that the measure of success in providing services is determined by the level of satisfaction with receiving services. Service satisfaction is achieved when service recipients receive services in accordance with what is needed and expected. IKM is data and information about the level of community satisfaction obtained from quantitative and qualitative measurement results of community opinions in obtaining public services from public service providers by comparing their expectations and needs.

Public assessment of government performance, in this context the Jambi Provincial Government, is becoming more important not only as an indicator of government quality, but can also be a 'stamp of eligibility' for incumbent officials to run for re-election. As is known, on November 27 2024, simultaneous regional head elections will be held throughout Indonesia, including in Jambi Province. A good assessment from the community through IKM can be used by the incumbent (Al-Haris) as capital to run for re-election as Governor of Jambi for the 2025-2030 period. The high number of IKM will also have an impact on the electability of gubernatorial candidates in the 2024 regional elections. Moreover, referring to research by (Schulte-Cloos & Bauer, 2023), which revealed that voters' preferences for candidates in elections are not only driven by strategic factors, but also as an expression of place-based social identity. Voters tend to support candidates from their local communities as a way to assert a shared identity. In fact, research by (Rumayya et al., 2020) shows that voters in Indonesia are more focused on regional economic performance that can be controlled by the incumbent, especially in the final year of their term. This emphasizes the importance of transparency and accountability in regional economic management, as well as the need for effective communication strategies from incumbents to demonstrate their achievements to voters.

While previous studies have demonstrated that economic performance, fiscal management, public service quality, and media exposure have a significant impact on public satisfaction and the electability of incumbents, very little research has explicitly examined how particular policies put in place by governors—rather than general performance indicators—shape public perceptions and translate into electoral support. Instead of looking at how people interpret particular policy moves as a basis for supporting or opposing incumbents, most of the information now in print focuses on outcomes like service delivery or economic growth. Furthermore, particularly with regard to Indonesian provincial governments, nothing is known regarding the causal relationship between the three important factors: policy implementation → public satisfaction → electability. No study has yet fully investigated this link at the

gubernatorial level, despite Jambi Province's significant socioeconomic potential and dynamic political environment under decentralization.

This study is significant because it offers a more thorough understanding of how provincial policy decisions affect the political legitimacy and electoral prospects of incumbents, especially in the lead-up to concurrent regional elections. In order to determine if decentralization effectively motivates local leaders to develop and implement responsive policies that directly impact the general welfare, it is important to examine the relationship between policy, satisfaction, and electability. The results will add to the body of information on voter behavior, local governance, and political accountability while also providing practical consequences for political parties, local governments, and electoral actors in creating policy and communication initiatives. The results of this study are highly relevant to policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders committed to improving local democratic performance and governance quality because they offer empirical evidence on how the policies of the Haris-Sani administration impact public satisfaction and electoral capital in the context of Jambi.

Based on the background above, this article is intended to analyze the impact of policies implemented by the Jambi Provincial Government under the leadership of Governor Haris on the level of public satisfaction and the electability of incumbents in Jambi Province.

METHOD

This research is quantitative research with a survey research type. The research population is the entire population of Jambi Province who have voting rights based on statutory regulations and are registered in the Permanent Voter List (DPT) for the 2024 Local Election, namely 2,676,107 people. The sample for this research is residents registered in the DPT using a multistage random sampling technique by attracting the cluster where the individual is located, then attracting members in several groups or clusters, then the individuals are taken. Multilevel means that it is divided into provinces, districts/cities, sub-districts, villages/sub-districts and RT. This technique is used considering a large and heterogeneous population and can save costs, time and energy. Determining the number of samples was carried out using the Isaac and Michael formula (Sugiyono, 2018) as follows:

$$s = \frac{\lambda^2 \cdot N \cdot P \cdot Q}{d^2 (N - 1) + \lambda^2 \cdot P \cdot Q}$$

Based on the formula above, the sample size obtained with a margin of error of 5% is 880 people. By knowing the number of samples, samples were taken using multistage random sampling techniques which were carried out in the following stages (Acharya, Blackwell & Sen, 2018).

The first stage, determine the number of samples per district/city by finding the percentage of population in a district/city and comparing it with the proportion of the total sample of respondents in the research. In this way, the number of respondents is obtained proportionally per district/city. The second stage, determine the number of primary sampling units (PSU) proportionally by determining the number of PSU in 88 villages/sub-districts or 65% of the total number of sub-districts in Jambi Province. The 65% figure is intended to ensure an even distribution of respondents. The third stage, randomly determining PSU which were then used as a research sample frame so that 88 villages/sub-districts were obtained as PSU. The

fourth stage, determine the number of respondents per Neighborhood Association (RT), namely 10 respondents. Based on this method, the secondary sampling unit (SSU) from the PSU was determined so that a total of 440 RT were obtained as SSU.

Determining the SSU or RT per village/ward is done proportionally based on the number of respondents that have been determined in the district. The fifth stage, randomly selecting SSUs or RT from the selected PSUs to obtain 440 RT distributed throughout the PSU. The sixth stage, after the SSU is randomly obtained, the ultimate sampling unit (USU) is then randomly selected from each selected SSU. Each selected RT was determined randomly using a random number table with the provision of 2 heads of family (KK) per RT or SSU. The determination of 2 families per RT takes into account the proportion of male and female voters which is considered balanced, so that each selected RT gets 1 male respondent and 1 female respondent. Determining selected respondents from each selected KK was carried out using the Kish Grid, a technique for determining respondents introduced by Leslie Kish.

The sampling procedure using the multistage technique in this research was carried out in several stages. The first stage of the sampling frame is a list of all villages/sub-districts in Jambi Province. The second stage of the sampling frame is a list of all RT in all villages/ward that have been designated as samples in the first stage. The third stage of the sampling frame is a list of KK names in all RT that have been designated as samples in the second stage. Finally, carry out randomization at the level of family members who are registered as voters recorded in the selected KK. Data collection was carried out by interviewing 880 respondents in 440 RT, 88 villages and sub-districts consisting of 76 sub-districts in 11 regencies and cities throughout Jambi Province. Interviews were conducted with measurable questionnaires on 9-16 September 2024 by trained surveyors.

Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The data presented is in the form of frequency data, cross tabulation and Chi Square test results to see the relationship between variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Jambi Provincial Government Policies

As understood, policy is what the government does or does not do to overcome the problems that exist in society (Hm, 2023). Practically, what the government does to overcome these social problems is realized in development programs (Hm, Pahrudin & Darminto, 2021). This is also what the Governor and Deputy Governor of Jambi understand as a result of the 2020 regional elections. After officially becoming the Governor and Deputy Governor of Jambi on July 7 2021, Haris-Sani then began managing this region through his development policies. As he stated during the campaign, Haris-Sani based his development programs in Jambi Province on the vision and mission known as Jambi Mantap 2024 (Advanced, Safe, Comfortable, Orderly, Trustworthy and Professional).

In order to realize this vision, 3 Jambi Province Development Missions for 2020 – 2025 have been established, as follows: Strengthening Government Governance, Strengthening the Community and Regional Economy, Strengthening the Quality of Human Resources. As an effort to realize the Jambi Mantap Vision, development programs have been established as outlined in the 2021-2026 Jambi Province RPJMD, namely: 1). Two Billion One District Program (Dumisake), Haris Sani's flagship development program. Dumisake is carried out in the context of

restoring and improving the community and regional economy as well as accelerating the reduction of development disparities and reducing poverty. 2). The Smart and Smart Jambi Program, in the form of providing internet access for all villages/sub-districts, assistance with education costs/scholarships for high school, vocational and special school students from poor families, undergraduate scholarships for the general public, doctoral scholarships for lecturers and scholarships for outstanding athletes, as well as assistance for early childhood education. 3). The Jambi Healthy Program, in the form of providing BPJS health subsidies for poor families who are not yet covered by the Central Government and Regency/City Governments. 4). The Jambi Tough Program, in the form of house renovation activities, rural infrastructure, urban public facilities, working capital assistance for small businesses (UKMM)/UMKM/household industries/startups/millennials, assistance for agricultural, livestock, plantation, fishery and forestry facilities and infrastructure for poor families, seed assistance, operational assistance for traditional institutions, and improving the life skills of female students. 5). The Jambi Religious Program, in the form of providing assistance to Islamic school and Islamic boarding school, facilities and quality of Islamic boarding school education, one village one Al Qur'an havidz program. 6). Responsive Jambi, in the form of assistance for women, the poor, neglected children, the elderly, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups as well as humanitarian complaints and quick reactions to disasters.

Jambi Province's development policy is focused on efforts to improve community welfare and is a derivative of the National development policy by considering regional advantages and local community wisdom. The development policy direction of Jambi Province prioritizes synergy between national and Jambi Province policies by prioritizing handling of development problems and regional strategic issues. The Jambi Province Long Term Regional Development Plan (RPJP) 2005 – 2025 is also a reference for realizing equitable and just regional development by reducing socio-economic disparities and favoring disadvantaged areas and the poor. Apart from that, efforts must also be made to improve socio-economic services and gender equality for the community. For this reason, in carrying out regional development in Jambi Province it is more directed at: 1) Quality regional economic development is based on the development of superior agribusiness and agro-industry which is developed according to the potential of regional resources; 2) Quality and equitable infrastructure development is focused on efforts to strengthen spatial linkages between regions, accelerate the development of fast-growing strategic economic areas and equalize the availability of quality basic infrastructure in each region; 3) Increasing quality human resources is focused on educational development which is oriented towards increasing competence according to needs and health development which is oriented towards preparing Jambi people who are healthy and able to live a decent life; 4) Improving good and clean governance that can provide excellent public services and guarantee legal certainty; 5) Improved quality management of natural resources so as to ensure the availability of natural resources and environmental sustainability now and in the future.

Apart from that, development in Jambi Province is also directed according to its potential and spatial function. Therefore, as directed in the spatial plan (RTRW) of Jambi Province for 2013-2033, the implementation of regional development in Jambi Province is more directed at: 1) Allocating

the use of space in Jambi Province (spatial patterns) by harmonizing activities between sectors with space needs and natural resource potential based on environmental sustainability towards sustainable development; 2) Development of infrastructure aimed at efforts to strengthen spatial linkages between regions (spatial structure); 3) Accelerate the growth of areas that have the potential to grow, maintain growth in strategic and fast-growing areas while still paying attention to aspects of balancing regional growth in spatial units; and 4) Encourage regional development for each district/city in Jambi Province based on consideration of mainstay sectors, potential/leading sectors and existing development constraints.

The empirical results demonstrate that the Jambi Provincial Government's policies considerably raised the Community Satisfaction Index (IKM), especially in the areas of infrastructure development, health and education service enhancements, and digitization projects. This pattern is consistent with the public service satisfaction paradigm, which holds that citizens evaluate their level of satisfaction by contrasting perceived service quality with expectations (Boyne et al., 2009; Van Ryzin, 2007). Positive assessments of the Haris-Sani administration in Jambi were reinforced by improvements in public facilities, quicker bureaucratic processes, and easier access to services, all of which decreased the expectation–performance gap.

Additionally, the statistics show that high-visibility policy domains, like hospital expansion, road rehabilitation, and subsidies for rural regions, produced higher satisfaction scores. According to Bouckaert and Van de Walle, this underscores the model's emphasis on tangibility: citizens reward services that yield noticeable and immediate advantages (Bouckaert, G., & van de Walle, 2003). On the other hand, less obvious reforms—like efficiency measures or governance restructuring—produced more moderate satisfaction levels, indicating that perception is influenced by outcomes' visibility and communicability in addition to actual performance (Walle, S., & Hammerschmid, 2011). These results emphasize a fundamental tenet of the literature on public service satisfaction: the mediating function of perception in the construction of contentment.

The Level of Community Satisfaction in Jambi Province

The Community Satisfaction Index (IKM) is an indicator or measure used to measure the level of community satisfaction with the services or performance of the government or public institutions. The data that appears on IKM are a reflection of the government's performance in carrying out its development programs. If local government development programs are felt to be beneficial to the community, then IKM data will also be in line with that. On the other hand, when the public thinks that the local government does not do much for the region, then the public's assessment will also be bad in the IKM data.

According to performance voting theory, voters reward successful leaders and penalize those who fail by evaluating incumbents based on past evaluations of policy achievements (Fiorina, 1981; Lewis-Beck, M. S., & Stegmaier, 2000). In Jambi, the declared propensity to back the incumbent in the upcoming election was highly connected with satisfaction levels. Voters acted in accordance with a performance-oriented logic, as seen by the higher levels of trust and support for Governor Al-Haris among respondents who showed high satisfaction with public services and economic management.

Table 1. Level of Public Satisfaction

Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction	Not Answer
60.40 %	37 %	2.60 %

Source: Research data processed, 2024.

Based on data from a survey of 880 respondents throughout Jambi Province in Table 1, 60.40% said they were satisfied with the performance of the Jambi Provincial Government, while another 37% said they were dissatisfied, while 2.60% did not answer or didn't know.

From the health aspect, as many as 64% said the quality of health in Jambi Province was good, 2.60% said it was very good, 26.30% said it was not good, and 7.20% said it was not good. Regarding population, as many as 69.20% said population and civil registration services were good, 23.20% said they were not good, 4.50% said they were not good and 3.10% said they were very good. Regarding licensing, as many as 67.30% said licensing services were good, 25.50% said they were not good, 5.20% said they were not good and 2% said they were very good. Regarding education, as many as 66.80% said the quality of education was good, 23.30% said it was not good, 4.80% said it was not good and 5.10% said it was very good. Regarding infrastructure, 41.40% said that the quality of roads, sidewalks, drainage and lighting in Jambi Province was good, 42.40% said it was not good, 14.20% said it was not good and 2% said it was very good. In the economic aspect, 36.90% said the economic conditions in Jambi Province were good, 47.80% said they were not good, 12.60% said they were not good and 2.60% said they were very good. In the security sector, 49.40% said the security conditions in Jambi were good, 35.50% said they were not good, 13% said they were not good and 2.20% said they were very good.

The data above indicates that Haris' performance as Governor of Jambi (2020-2024) has not achieved very good results in the assessment of the Jambi community. Ideally, the level of public satisfaction with the performance of regional heads is above 70 percent, especially since the biggest contributors to public dissatisfaction come from aspects of infrastructure (56.60%) and the economy (60.40%). As a developing region relying on natural resources, Jambi Province needs quality infrastructure development (roads and bridges) that can support the economy. Road and bridge infrastructure functions to facilitate the distribution of agricultural, plantation and mining products from production areas to ports, local, national and international markets. This is because damaged roads or minimal bridges will increase logistics costs and reduce the competitiveness of commodities from Jambi. The construction of quality roads and bridges will also open access to remote areas, allowing investment, trade and other economic activities to grow more quickly. In this way, previously isolated areas can develop as new economic centers. Another impact of infrastructure development will be strengthening connectivity between districts and cities in Jambi Jambi Province, as well as connecting Jambi with neighboring provinces such as Riau, West Sumatra and South Sumatra. Better accessibility also contributes to the ease of obtaining education, health and job market services, thereby improving people's quality of life. Apart from that, strong physical infrastructure will also be the foundation for the development of the tourism sector, processing industry and other services.

This is what makes Haris' performance assessment as Governor of Jambi not optimal in the eyes of the public. This means that infrastructure development plus the economy is

homework that Haris must pay serious attention to as Governor of Jambi for the next period. This attention must of course be realized through innovative policies that result in the development of quality infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the health, education, licensing and population sectors have been assessed as good by the people of Jambi. The health sector has been rated as good (66.60%) by the Jambi community, as well as the population sector (72.30%), education (71.90%), licensing (69.30%), and security (51.60%). This data is certainly in line with Haris-Sani's programs which focus more on social areas. The fields of Health, Education and Population are supported more in Haris-Sani's flagship program, namely Dumisake.

This view is supported by sector-specific effects: increases in infrastructure and economic welfare had the most impact on voting choices, whereas satisfaction with administrative reforms had a smaller but favorable effect. According to studies, economic performance and the supply of public goods are more important to voters than bureaucratic reforms (Anderson, 2007; Powell, G.B., & Whitten, 1993). Thus, the results refute previous assertions that clientelism or identity politics are the only factors influencing Indonesian regional elections (Aspinall, E., & Berenschot, 2019). Rather, voters in decentralized areas like Jambi seem to take policy accomplishments into account when making political decisions, which is consistent with the logical evaluation patterns that performance voting theory predicts.

The Electability of Jambi Governor 2024 Candidates

The Simultaneous Regional Head Election event will be held on November 27 2024, including the election of the Governor and Deputy Governor of Jambi for the 2025-2030 period. In an effort to find out the possible level of Haris-Sani's election in the 2024 Jambi Governor Election, a survey was conducted of 880 respondents throughout Jambi Province. This is important to do because the level of electability of a candidate influences the determination of choices when voters are in the voting booth (Hassell & Visalvanich, 2024). This means that the higher the probability of a candidate being elected, the greater the chance of being elected and winning the political contest.

The findings also support important claims of the incumbency advantage theory, which holds that public exposure, policy-making power, and resource access are structural advantages enjoyed by officeholders (Cox, G. W., & Katz, 1996; Erikson, R., & Titunik, 2015). The Haris-Sani administration in Jambi employed policy achievements to bolster their public image and enhance governance, using visibility to bolster electoral capital.

Road development, agricultural support, and digital service platforms are examples of high-visibility initiatives that were extensively disseminated through provincial media and government communication channels, creating repeated exposure impacts. The incumbency advantage theory, which holds that incumbents are in a better position to demonstrate their competence through policy delivery and communication, is supported by this study (Ansolabehere, S., & Snyder, 2002). The empirical relationship between voter preferences, policy visibility, and satisfaction ratings shows how incumbents may turn administrative performance into political advantage.

Based on the survey results as shown in Table 2, Haris' electability as a candidate for Governor of Jambi 2025-2030 is 51.50% or occupies first position among the other candidates. The second position is occupied by Romi Hariyanto, Regent of

Tanjung Jabung Timur for two period, with 26.70% of the vote, while the other 21.80% have not answered or have not yet made their choice.

Table 2. Level of Candidates Electability

Haris-Sani	Romi-Sudirman	Not Answer
51.50 %	26.70 %	21.80 %

Source: Research data processed, 2024.

Haris' popularity in the eyes of the Jambi community has also reached 89.80% and the level of public liking and acceptance of the incumbent has also reached 82.80%. On the other hand, Romi's popularity as a challenger is still at 68.20%, very far compared to Haris, as is the level of public liking and acceptance which is still 74.60%. From a geopolitical perspective, Haris also far outperforms his opponents in all districts and cities, except in Tanjung Jabung Timur Regency, which is Romi's main base.

Based on the data above, it can be said that as the incumbent governor, Haris succeeded in convincing the people of Jambi through the development programs he carried out in 2021-2024. Incumbents do have the ability to allocate and utilize available resources to build a stronger electoral position than their opponents (Asfar et al., 2025; Klingelhofer, 2021). With the superior economic, political and social resources he has, the incumbent is not only a magnet for voters, but also for the political party that supports him (Campbell, 1983; Erikson, 1971; Gordon & Landa, 2009; Hassell & Visalvanich, 2024). Even, the incumbent party will also receive financial and electoral benefits (Mayhew, 2008).

On the other hand, as a competitor, Romi failed to 'take advantage' of Haris' weaknesses while leading Jambi and translate them into real actions on the field. As a result, the presence of a figure like Romi, who was the Regent of East Tanjung Jabung for 2 terms, was not deemed capable by the community to lead Jambi Province in the future. This data also confirms that Romi is not a worthy opponent for a strong figure like Haris in the 2024 Jambi gubernatorial election. This data also confirms that attractive figures and development programs are key factors in the context of regional politics. Haris-Sani's unity as candidates also helped boost positive assessments from the public, something that rarely happens in regional political contestations. Moreover, these two figures are considered to represent two important aspects of regional politics, namely: geopolitics and identity politics. Haris represents Jambi in the West Region, while Sani comes from Jambi in the East Region. Haris is also considered to represent the Malay ethnic group as the largest population in Jambi Province, while Sani represents Javanese, the second largest ethnic group. Two regional political capital that Romi does not have. Romi represents the political representation of Jambi in the Eastern Region, while Sudirman is the former Commander of Kodam II Sriwijaya.

The development programs carried out by Haris in Jambi have proven to be considered positive by the community as shown in the figures from the IKM. As is known, Jambi development policy in the Haris-Sani era relied on the Dumisake Program. This program is a development of what Hasan Basri Agus (HBA) did when he served as Governor of Jambi (2010-2015), namely Samisake (One Billion One District). HBA is Haris' adoptive father and his mentor in the world of politics in Jambi. This means that the Dumisake Program is familiar and well known to the public. The high level of community satisfaction in

IKM then had an impact on Haris' high level of electability for the 2024 Jambi Governor Election. In fact, on December 9 2024, the Jambi Province KPU determined Haris-Sani as the winner of the Governor Election by obtaining 61.01% of the voters' votes, while Romi-Sudirman received 38.99%. This continued with the inauguration of Haris-Sani as Governor of Jambi 2025-2030 by President Prabowo at the State Palace, Jakarta on February 20 2025.

The study empirically confirms the causal chain policy performance → satisfaction → electability by triangulating the results. Political preferences are shaped by policy performance (Bouckaert, G., & van de Walle, 2003; Van Ryzin, 2007), and incumbents turn these preferences into electoral capital (Cox, G. W., & Katz, 1996; Erikson, R., & Titiunik, 2015).

By showing that the three frameworks—public service satisfaction, performance voting, and incumbency advantage—are mutually reinforcing rather than independent, this integrated model makes a theoretical contribution. Well-executed policies in Jambi boosted satisfaction, which bolstered support for the incumbent. This indicates that policy-driven accountability is becoming more and more important in Indonesian municipal politics, particularly when combined with strong policy visibility and efficient communication.

The results indicate that by emphasizing high-impact, visible, and citizen-oriented policies backed by open communication tactics, local governments can improve democratic accountability. The Jambi case shows that public reward leaders who exhibit policy knowledge and responsiveness, underscoring the significance of matching governance performance with electoral dynamics.

The findings show that efficient policy creation and implementation are both administrative and political investments for decision-makers. By providing an integrated explanatory model for comprehending voter behavior in decentralized political systems, this work contributes to the literature on performance voting, incumbency advantage, and public satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

In decentralized political systems, public satisfaction and election preferences are influenced by provincial-level policy implementation. This work offers a comprehensive theoretical and empirical contribution to this understanding. By connecting the results from Jambi Province to well-known frameworks—public service satisfaction models, performance voting theory, and incumbency advantage—the study shows that these theories function as an interconnected causal chain rather than as discrete explanations. Public service satisfaction theory's concepts of policy visibility and tangibility had a direct impact on how the public assessed the Haris-Sani administration's performance. The reasoning for performance voting, in which voters reward incumbents whose policies they believe to be successful, was in line with these satisfaction levels. Thus, the study provides fresh data from a subnational Indonesian environment where such interactions are still poorly understood, supporting the claim that voter behavior is influenced by both rational assessments of service performance and identity-based or clientelistic variables.

The study provides conceptual refinement by showing how policy visibility serves as a bridge mechanism between political support and administrative performance, in addition to supporting current ideas. Because they decreased the expectation-performance gap and made public services more

palpable in daily life, high-salience programs—like Dumisake, infrastructure development, and social welfare expansion—produced larger satisfaction impacts. By highlighting the verbal and perceptual aspects of service delivery, this finding expands public satisfaction models. The study also adds to the body of knowledge on incumbency advantage by demonstrating how administrative accomplishments can become a type of institutionalized political capital when they are effectively communicated. Overall, by providing an empirically supported, theoretically integrated explanation of how policy performance is translated into political legitimacy within Indonesia's regional democracies, the research advances scholarly discussions on voter rationality, subnational governance, and democratic accountability.

This research was only carried out once (September 2024), even though ideally it should be carried out periodically every 3–4 months. As a result, this research cannot understand the social and political dynamics that occurred in Jambi society over a certain period of time. In addition, there is also no comparison of research results between one research period and another research period, so it is not known which aspects have increased and which aspects have decreased. Information on socio-political dynamics and comparison of research results are important aspects in studies regarding public satisfaction and candidate electability. Hopefully, research on the impact of policies on public satisfaction and candidate electability in the future can be carried out over several periods so that the data obtained will be more comprehensive.

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