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The Existence of Ombudsman Recommendations in Government Administration: An Analysis of State Administrative Law on Public Agency Compliance

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Abstract

The recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia serve as a key external oversight mechanism aimed at preventing and addressing maladministration within government operations and public service delivery. From the perspective of administrative law, these recommendations hold significant authority as they represent the conclusive outcome of investigations based on public complaints and are, in principle, final and expected to be acted upon by the reported public institutions. Their existence is intended to promote accountability, transparency, and the improvement of governance in line with the principles of good governance. Nevertheless, in practice, compliance with Ombudsman recommendations by public bodies continues to face various challenges. Many public institutions have not fully implemented the Ombudsman's recommendations due to factors such as limited legal enforcement power, bureaucratic resistance, and weak mechanisms for monitoring follow-up actions. This situation creates a gap between normative regulations

and their actual implementation, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of the Ombudsman's role in the administrative oversight system. This article aims to examine the legal standing and authority of the Ombudsman's recommendations within the framework of administrative law, as well as to explore the factors influencing public institutions' adherence to these recommendations. Using a normative legal approach, supported by statutory analysis and a review of national scholarly literature, the study finds that although the Ombudsman's recommendations are legally well-founded, their effectiveness requires reinforcement through stronger regulatory support, institutional commitment, and heightened legal awareness among government officials. Such measures are expected to improve compliance by public institutions while enhancing the Ombudsman's role in fostering a clean, effective, and public-oriented governance system.

Keywords: Ombudsman, Recommendations, Compliance, Administrative Law, Good Governance

Introduction

The administration of government in a modern rule-of-law state cannot be separated from the principles of accountability, transparency, and the protection of citizens' rights. In the context of Indonesia as a state governed by law, as stipulated in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, every governmental action must be conducted in accordance with the law and be accountable both legally and administratively. One crucial instrument to ensure these principles is the oversight mechanism over the actions and decisions of government bodies or officials, particularly in the provision of public services. Such oversight is essential to prevent abuse of authority, maladministration, and violations of citizens' rights as users of public services (Fardiansyah *et al.*, 2023) [3].

In practice, the relationship between the government and the public is often characterized by power asymmetry. Public bodies possess greater authority, resources, and access compared to ordinary citizens, creating potential for arbitrary or unprofessional conduct in public service delivery. This situation necessitates the presence of independent external oversight institutions that act as a balancing mechanism (checks and balances) beyond internal bureaucratic supervision and judicial review. It is within this context that the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia (ORI) operates as a state institution mandated to supervise public service administration and address citizens' complaints regarding alleged maladministration (Suparman, 2014) [13].

The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia was established under Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. The institution is tasked with receiving public complaints, conducting investigations, and issuing recommendations to the reported agencies as a form of administrative correction. The existence of the Ombudsman reflects the development of administrative oversight mechanisms that not only rely on judicial procedures but also prioritize non-litigation solutions that are rapid, simple, and aimed at restoring citizens' rights (Tjandra, 2021) ^[15]. Consequently, the Ombudsman occupies a strategic position in supporting bureaucratic reform and enhancing the quality of public services.

One of the Ombudsman's most significant legal outputs is its recommendations. These recommendations are conclusions and suggested corrective actions resulting from the examination of public complaints. Normatively, they are final and must be implemented by the reported public body or official. This obligation ensures that recommendations serve not merely as administrative documents but as instruments for systemic improvement in governance (Kurniawan, 2021) ^[7].

However, in practice, the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations faces several challenges. Research indicates that public institutions' compliance with these recommendations remains suboptimal. Many agencies delay, ignore, or only partially implement recommendations without addressing the substantive maladministrative practices identified. This situation highlights a gap between the legal norms governing the follow-up of recommendations and their actual implementation in the field (Prasetyo, 2022) ^[9].

Noncompliance with Ombudsman recommendations is often linked to the limited legal enforcement power inherent in such recommendations. Although the Ombudsman Law mandates that recommendations are obligatory, it does not provide explicit administrative sanctions for public bodies that fail to comply. Consequently, recommendations are often perceived as moral guidance or advisory suggestions rather than enforceable legal obligations (Sulistiyowati, 2023) ^[12].

In addition to normative factors, structural and bureaucratic culture also play a significant role in the low compliance of public institutions. Hierarchical organizational cultures, resistance to external oversight, and limited legal awareness among government officials weaken the effectiveness of the Ombudsman's recommendations. In some cases, public bodies prioritize institutional interests over restoring citizens' rights, resulting in recommendations being deprioritized (Rizky & Anwar, 2022) ^[11].

From the perspective of administrative law, Ombudsman recommendations should be understood as part of the instruments for controlling governmental power. They aim to correct administrative actions that deviate from the general principles of good governance (*algemene beginselen van behoorlijk bestuur*), including the principles of legal certainty, transparency, professionalism, and quality service. Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations, therefore, not only reflects adherence to the oversight institution but also demonstrates public bodies' commitment to the rule of law and democratic governance (Hadjon, 2017) ^[5].

Low compliance with Ombudsman recommendations has direct implications for the quality of governance.

Noncompliance can undermine public trust in state institutions, impede bureaucratic reform, and prolong maladministrative practices in public service delivery. When recommendations are ignored, the effectiveness of external oversight diminishes, making it difficult for the Ombudsman to fulfill its role as a protector of citizens' rights (Firmansyah, 2021) ^[4].

In the context of national legal development, strengthening the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations has become both a relevant and urgent issue. Such reinforcement involves not only regulatory improvements but also institutional capacity, inter-agency coordination, and the enhancement of legal awareness among state officials. Several academic studies suggest the need for harmonization of statutory regulations to ensure that Ombudsman recommendations carry clearer legal consequences, including potential administrative sanctions or performance implications for noncompliant public officials (Panjaitan, 2023).

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that Ombudsman recommendations play a strategic role in the administrative law system, yet their effectiveness largely depends on public institutions' compliance. Therefore, a comprehensive study of the legal status of Ombudsman recommendations, the factors affecting institutional adherence, and their implications for governance quality is necessary. This article aims to analyze the legal standing of Ombudsman recommendations, the determinants of compliance by public bodies, and their impact on the quality of governance. The study is expected to contribute both academically and practically to strengthening the Ombudsman's function and improving the administrative oversight system in Indonesia.

Research Methodology

This study employs a normative legal research approach, which emphasizes the analysis of applicable positive legal norms and prevailing legal doctrines. Normative legal research was chosen because the focus of the study is on examining the legal status and authority of recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as the obligations of public bodies to implement these recommendations in accordance with administrative law provisions. Through this approach, the research does not directly investigate public behavior but rather analyzes law as a set of norms governing the relationship between state institutions and citizens (Kristiawanto, 2022) ^[6].

The primary approach used in this study is the statutory approach. This involves examining relevant legislation that governs the authority of the Ombudsman and the administration of public services, such as Law Number 37 of 2008 on the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia and Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services. Through this approach, the study analyzes the legal norms concerning the nature of Ombudsman recommendations, the obligation of public bodies to follow up on such recommendations, and the legal consequences of noncompliance.

In addition, a conceptual approach is applied to understand the fundamental concepts and principles of administrative law related to government oversight. The conceptual approach is used to examine doctrines regarding maladministration, administrative supervision, the general principles of good governance (*algemene beginselen van*

behoorlijk bestuur), and the principles of good governance. Opinions from legal experts and administrative law theories serve as the conceptual framework for interpreting the role of Ombudsman recommendations as instruments for correcting deviations in administrative actions.

The study also incorporates a case approach by analyzing selected cases or reports handled by the Ombudsman that have resulted in recommendations to public institutions. This approach provides contextual insights into the application of legal norms in the practice of governance, particularly regarding the level of compliance by public bodies with Ombudsman recommendations. Although the research is normative in nature, examining these cases is important to illustrate the gap between legal norms and their practical implementation.

The legal materials used in this research are categorized into primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Primary legal materials include binding legislation such as the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and laws governing the Ombudsman and public service administration. Secondary materials consist of legal textbooks, accredited national journal articles, previous research findings, and other scholarly works relevant to administrative oversight and public body compliance. Tertiary materials are employed to support the clarification of legal terms and concepts used in the study.

Data collection was conducted through library research by reviewing various written legal sources in both print and electronic forms. Sources were accessed via national journal databases, university repositories, and official publications from relevant state institutions, including reports and publications of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. This method allowed for the systematic and comprehensive collection of legal materials necessary for the research analysis.

The analysis of legal materials was conducted qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical method. Collected materials were examined by interpreting the contents of legal norms, relating them to administrative law doctrines, and assessing their relevance to public bodies' compliance with Ombudsman recommendations. The analysis employed deductive legal reasoning, drawing conclusions from general legal provisions toward the specific research focus.

To ensure consistency and validity, the study utilized comparative and cross-verification techniques across legal sources, comparing statutory provisions, expert opinions, and findings from previous studies. This approach strengthens the argumentative basis of the research and ensures its scientific accountability within the field of administrative law.

Discussion

1. Legal Basis of Ombudsman Recommendations within the State Administration System

The recommendations issued by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia are grounded in a clear and robust legal framework within Indonesia's administrative law system. The primary legal basis for the Ombudsman's authority to issue recommendations is established in Law Number 37 of 2008 concerning the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. This law stipulates that the Ombudsman has the authority to receive public complaints, conduct investigations into alleged maladministration, and provide recommendations to the reported agency as the final

outcome of the examination process. These provisions position Ombudsman recommendations as official state instruments derived from statutory authority, rather than mere moral advice or informal opinions (Ridwan HR, 2019) [10].

From the perspective of administrative law, Ombudsman recommendations can be understood as forms of administrative correction addressing actions or decisions of government bodies and officials that deviate from legal provisions or the general principles of good governance (AUPB). Such recommendations aim to rectify maladministration, whether in the form of prolonged delays, abuse of authority, inadequate service, or negligence in public service delivery. Thus, Ombudsman recommendations serve both preventive and corrective functions: preventing the recurrence of maladministration while restoring the rights of affected citizens (Hadjon, 2017) [5].

Law Number 25 of 2009 on Public Services further reinforces the position of Ombudsman recommendations within the administrative system. This law obliges public service providers to adhere to service standards and take responsibility for any service violations. Within this framework, Ombudsman recommendations act as an external oversight mechanism, ensuring that public service providers fulfill their duties in accordance with accountability and legal certainty principles. Consequently, these recommendations serve as a bridge between public service norms and the practical implementation of governance (Sutedi, 2020) [14].

Normatively, Ombudsman recommendations are final and must be acted upon by the reported institutions. This obligation ensures that recommendations do not remain mere administrative documents but lead to tangible improvements in governance practices. From an administrative law perspective, compliance with Ombudsman recommendations reflects adherence to oversight mechanisms and respect for the rule of law in governmental actions (Asshiddiqie, 2018) [1].

Nevertheless, the nature of Ombudsman recommendations as administrative legal products has distinct characteristics. Unlike court rulings, which are directly enforceable, Ombudsman recommendations do not carry immediate coercive power. They emphasize a persuasive, corrective, and administratively moral approach. Conceptually, this positions Ombudsman recommendations between binding legal norms and non-litigation administrative policy instruments. Despite this, the recommendations retain legal legitimacy because they derive directly from statutory law (Kurniawan, 2021) [7].

Within the national administrative oversight system, Ombudsman recommendations also function as part of a checks-and-balances mechanism over executive power. The Ombudsman operates outside the bureaucratic structure, ensuring that its recommendations are intended to be objective and independent. This independence is crucial to prevent conflicts of interest and to ensure that oversight of administrative actions is conducted neutrally and focuses on protecting citizens' rights (Firmansyah, 2021) [4].

Academic studies indicate that Ombudsman recommendations constitute formal legal instruments that significantly contribute to improving governance and public service quality. Even without direct enforcement sanctions, these recommendations carry normative weight, serving as

the basis for evaluating public bodies' performance, guiding superiors in assessing reported officials, and informing future administrative policy decisions. Consequently, Ombudsman recommendations hold strategic value within the administrative system, although their effectiveness largely depends on the commitment and compliance of public institutions (Sulistyowati, 2023) ^[12].

2. Public Institutions' Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations

Compliance by public institutions with the recommendations of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia serves as a critical indicator for evaluating the effectiveness of the state's administrative oversight system. Normatively, legislation obliges public bodies and officials to follow up on Ombudsman recommendations as a demonstration of accountability for identified maladministration. This obligation is intended to ensure that recommendations are not merely symbolic but drive tangible improvements in governmental practices. However, research indicates that compliance levels remain relatively low and uneven across different sectors of governance (Prasetyo, 2022) ^[9].

A primary factor contributing to low compliance is the misperception of the legal nature of Ombudsman recommendations. Many agencies view them as advisory or administrative suggestions without binding legal force comparable to court decisions. This perception arises because Ombudsman recommendations are not accompanied by direct executorial sanctions for noncompliance. As a result, public institutions often assign lower priority to these recommendations compared to other administrative obligations with clearer legal consequences (Kurniawan, 2021) ^[7].

Beyond legal perception issues, internal bureaucratic resistance poses a significant obstacle to implementing Ombudsman recommendations. Hierarchical and insular organizational cultures make some public officials defensive when receiving recommendations. Ombudsman recommendations are frequently perceived as institutional criticism, leading to either outright rejection or purely formal compliance without substantive change. This indicates that compliance challenges are not solely legal in nature but are closely linked to organizational culture and public service ethics (Rizky & Anwar, 2022) ^[11].

Another factor affecting compliance is the weakness of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for following up on Ombudsman recommendations. Although the Ombudsman has the authority to oversee implementation, institutional resource limitations and the broad scope of supervision hinder optimal monitoring. In many cases, follow-up reports are submitted administratively without thorough verification of their actual effectiveness. This allows public bodies to claim compliance even when implemented measures fail to address the root causes of maladministration (Firmansyah, 2021) ^[4].

Low compliance with Ombudsman recommendations directly undermines the effectiveness of administrative oversight. When recommendations are ignored, the Ombudsman's role as an external supervisory body is weakened, limiting its capacity to deter maladministrative practices. This situation increases the likelihood of repeated public service violations and diminishes public trust in non-

litigation complaint and oversight mechanisms provided by the state (Sulistyowati, 2023) ^[12].

Noncompliance also impedes the realization of good governance principles, particularly accountability and governmental responsiveness. Public institutions that fail to act on Ombudsman recommendations demonstrate weak commitment to transparent and responsible governance. Yet, adherence to these recommendations represents both a moral and legal obligation for state officials to protect citizens' rights and enhance public service quality (Sutedi, 2020) ^[14]. From the perspective of administrative law, compliance with Ombudsman recommendations should be understood as adherence to legitimate and constitutional oversight mechanisms. Such compliance reflects not only legal conformity but also the ethical standards and legal awareness of government officials. Therefore, improving compliance requires a comprehensive approach, including regulatory reinforcement, bureaucratic culture reform, and the synergistic strengthening of internal and external supervision (Hadjon, 2017) ^[5].

3. Structural and Bureaucratic Barriers in the Implementation of Recommendations

Institutional structure and bureaucratic complexity are among the primary factors influencing the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendation implementation. A highly centralized and multi-layered government system creates lengthy coordination processes and intricate administrative procedures, which often result in delays in following up on Ombudsman recommendations. This complexity makes it difficult for public institutions to identify the parties directly responsible for implementation, leading to recommendations being executed only partially or formally, without substantive improvements (Rizky & Anwar, 2022) ^[11].

Additionally, the high administrative workload within government agencies further slows down the implementation process. Public officials responsible for following up on recommendations often have other operational duties that consume significant time and resources. As a result, acting on recommendations may not be treated as a priority, despite the legal obligation to do so. Research shows that excessive workload, combined with a still hierarchical bureaucracy, presents a significant barrier to effective implementation (Firmansyah, 2021) ^[4].

Another factor affecting low compliance is the limited understanding among public officials regarding the legal obligations and normative value of Ombudsman recommendations. Many officials do not fully recognize that these recommendations are legally grounded and serve as formal administrative oversight tools. This lack of awareness often leads to delays or neglect in implementation, preventing the Ombudsman's corrective oversight from achieving its intended effect. These findings highlight the need for more intensive legal education for public officials concerning the role, authority, and legal implications of Ombudsman recommendations (Sulistyowati, 2023) ^[12].

Resource limitations also pose a major challenge in implementing recommendations. Several public institutions face shortages of staff with adequate administrative and legal expertise required to carry out recommendations effectively. Furthermore, limited budgets or inadequate supporting infrastructure hinder improvements, whether

through adjustments to service procedures or internal administrative systems. Previous studies suggest that strengthening institutional capacity, including providing competent personnel and effective monitoring systems, is essential for enhancing compliance with Ombudsman recommendations (Kurniawan, 2021) ^[7].

Moreover, a bureaucratic culture that resists external oversight constitutes an additional obstacle. Many public agencies are reluctant to accept criticism from bodies outside their hierarchical structure. Ombudsman recommendations are sometimes perceived as external interference that could threaten the agency's internal authority or reputation. Such defensiveness exacerbates low implementation rates and demonstrates that structural barriers are not solely administrative but also tied to organizational attitudes, values, and culture.

To overcome these barriers, research emphasizes the importance of an integrated approach, including strengthening institutional capacity, reforming internal procedures, and providing legal education for public officials. By enhancing capacity, officials can better understand the urgency and legal obligations associated with Ombudsman recommendations and develop effective follow-up strategies. This approach is expected to reduce bureaucratic resistance, accelerate recommendation implementation, and improve the overall quality of administrative oversight.

4. Strategies to Strengthen Compliance and Policy Implications

Enhancing the authority and effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations within the state administration system requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing both regulatory and institutional dimensions. One key strategy involves legal reform, which aims to establish a stronger legal basis to ensure that Ombudsman recommendations carry clear enforceability. This can be achieved by instituting administrative sanctions for public institutions that fail to comply with recommendations, such as impacting performance evaluations of officials, restricting budget access, or implementing other corrective internal measures. By providing concrete consequences, Ombudsman recommendations are no longer merely normative suggestions but become legal instruments with tangible effects for noncompliant institutions (Kurniawan, 2021) ^[7].

In addition to legal reform, institutional strategies are crucial in improving public institutions' compliance with recommendations. This can involve restructuring the units responsible for implementing recommendations so that each agency has a dedicated team with clear, measurable procedures. The implementation of transparent and accountable reporting systems can further enhance monitoring effectiveness, as every step of follow-up actions is systematically documented and subject to auditing by the Ombudsman or other external parties (Rizky & Anwar, 2022) ^[11].

The use of information technology represents another highly relevant strategy in today's digital era. Electronic systems for tracking and monitoring recommendation follow-up enable both public institutions and the Ombudsman to oversee implementation progress in real time. Integrated digital platforms allow for rapid access to follow-up reports,

minimizing delays or information manipulation. Furthermore, IT systems can support the creation of performance evaluation databases regarding how institutions respond to recommendations, providing valuable data for policy improvements and institutional benchmarking (Sulistiyowati, 2023) ^[12].

Beyond legal and institutional measures, outreach and legal education for public officials are equally critical. Enhancing officials' understanding of the Ombudsman's authority, functions, and legal implications fosters legal awareness and strengthens ethics and professionalism in public service delivery. Such initiatives can be implemented through training programs, workshops, procedural manuals, or regular internal education campaigns, ensuring that officials recognize their responsibility to follow up on recommendations substantively (Hadjon, 2017) ^[5].

Strengthening compliance with Ombudsman recommendations also carries broader policy implications for governance. First, high compliance reinforces the principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to public needs. Second, consistent compliance enhances public trust in state institutions and external oversight mechanisms, encouraging greater use of non-litigation complaint channels provided by the Ombudsman. Third, monitoring outcomes and follow-up actions can serve as a basis for reforming internal procedures and policies, enabling systemic and sustainable improvements in public service delivery (Prasetyo, 2022) ^[9].

Importantly, strategies to strengthen compliance are not solely administrative or technical; they also involve cultivating organizational culture. A bureaucratic culture that is open to external oversight and responsive to corrective measures provides a foundation for the effective functioning of Ombudsman recommendations. Integrating legal reform, institutional strengthening, technological tools, and legal education fosters a conducive administrative environment for effective recommendation implementation while promoting accountable governance that prioritizes public interest (Firmansyah, 2021) ^[4].

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the legal basis, public institution compliance, bureaucratic obstacles, and strategies to strengthen adherence, it can be concluded that Ombudsman recommendations in Indonesia hold a strategic position within the state administration system. The robust legal foundation, particularly Law No. 37 of 2008 on the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia and Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, provides juridical legitimacy for Ombudsman recommendations as instruments of administrative correction against maladministration. These recommendations are not merely advisory but carry a normative obligation for public institutions to act upon, even though they do not possess the direct enforceability of court rulings.

However, the implementation of recommendations at the institutional level still faces significant challenges. Compliance among public institutions tends to be low due to misconceptions regarding the legal status of the recommendations, internal bureaucratic resistance, and the lack of independent and effective monitoring mechanisms. These issues undermine the effectiveness of administrative oversight and slow improvements in public service delivery,

making it difficult to fully realize good governance principles such as accountability, transparency, and responsiveness.

Structural and bureaucratic barriers further weaken the substantive implementation of recommendations. Procedural complexity, heavy administrative workloads, limited understanding of legal obligations among officials, and insufficient institutional resources all contribute to partial or formalistic compliance. Additionally, a bureaucratic culture that is resistant to external oversight reinforces internal reluctance, resulting in recommendations often being executed in form only, without meaningful improvement.

Addressing these challenges requires multidimensional strategies. Legal reforms, such as the introduction of administrative sanctions and expanded monitoring authority, can enhance institutional compliance. Institutional approaches, including the establishment of dedicated units to handle recommendation follow-ups, and the utilization of information technology for real-time monitoring, can improve transparency and accountability. Furthermore, outreach and legal education for public officials are crucial for cultivating legal awareness and professionalism in responding to Ombudsman recommendations.

Overall, the effectiveness of Ombudsman recommendations depends not only on normative legal foundations but also on the commitment, capacity, and organizational culture of public institutions. By strengthening legal frameworks, institutional structures, and legal education, Ombudsman recommendations can function optimally as external oversight instruments, promoting accountable, transparent, and public-oriented governance. Enhancing compliance with these recommendations is key to achieving a responsive, effective, and equitable public administration system.

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