

Policy Gridlock in Regional Budget Politics: The Case of APBD in Kuantan Singingi Regency, Indonesia (2022–2024)

Andriansyah^{1*}, Sujianto², Muchid³, Auradian Marta⁴

¹²³⁴Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Riau, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Andriansyah7458@grad.unri.ac.id

Abstrak

This study examines the phenomenon of policy gridlock in the formulation and approval of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD) in Kuantan Singingi Regency, Indonesia, during the 2022–2024 fiscal years. Policy gridlock, characterized by delays, conflicts, and the inability of stakeholders to reach timely consensus, has become a recurring issue in regional budget politics, potentially undermining governance effectiveness and public service delivery. This study aims to analyze the underlying factors contributing to gridlock and to explore its implications for regional governance. This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including local government officials, members of the regional parliament (DPRD), and policy experts, as well as through document analysis of official budget reports, meeting minutes, and regulatory frameworks. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of conflict, negotiation dynamics, and institutional constraints. The findings reveal that policy gridlock in the APBD process is primarily driven by political bargaining among elites, misalignment of interests between the executive and legislative branches, limited transparency, and institutional weaknesses in budget governance. Additionally, external pressures and bureaucratic inefficiencies further exacerbate delays in budget approval. As a result, gridlock negatively affects the timeliness of budget implementation, disrupts development programs, and reduces the overall effectiveness of public service delivery. This study contributes to the literature on public policy and regional governance by highlighting the structural and political dimensions of budgetary gridlock in decentralized systems. It also provides practical recommendations for improving coordination mechanisms, strengthening institutional capacity, and enhancing transparency in regional budget processes to mitigate future gridlock.

Keywords: Policy Gridlock, APBD, Regional Budget Politics, Local Governance, Indonesia

1. Introduction

Regional budget politics constitutes a critical arena in decentralized governance, where competing interests between executive and legislative actors are negotiated and institutionalized through the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). In Indonesia's post-decentralization era, the APBD is not merely a fiscal instrument but also a political product shaped by bargaining processes, coalition dynamics, and institutional constraints [1], [2]. While decentralization aims to enhance efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service delivery, it has also introduced complex governance challenges, including the phenomenon of policy gridlock [3], [4].

Policy gridlock refers to a condition in which decision-making processes are stalled due to conflicts, divergent preferences, and the inability of key actors to reach agreement within a reasonable timeframe [5], [6]. In the context of regional budgeting, gridlock manifests in delays in APBD approval, failure to ratify revised budgets (APBD-P), and prolonged negotiations that disrupt fiscal

cycles [7]. Such conditions not only weaken governance effectiveness but also directly affect the continuity of development programs and public service delivery [8].

Empirical evidence from Indonesia indicates that delays in APBD approval remain a recurring issue across regions. Historical trends show that a significant number of local governments fail to meet statutory deadlines, reflecting structural inefficiencies and political conflicts in budget formulation processes [9], [10]. These recurring delays suggest that budgetary gridlock is not incidental but systemic, driven by institutional fragmentation and political bargaining dynamics [11].

At the provincial level, similar patterns are evident in Riau Province during the 2022–2024 fiscal years. Data from the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency (BPKAD) of Riau Province (2025) show that several districts and municipalities experienced delays or failures in APBD and APBD-P approval. While regions such as Kampar, Pelalawan, Indragiri Hulu, Pekanbaru City, and

Rokan Hulu demonstrated relatively consistent compliance with approval timelines, others exhibited significant deviations. Among these, Kuantan Singingi Regency stands out as the most critical case, characterized by repeated failures in APBD-P ratification and substantial delays in APBD approval.

Specifically, Kuantan Singingi Regency failed to ratify APBD-P in 2022, 2023, and 2024, indicating a persistent inability to reach consensus between the executive and legislative branches. Furthermore, the APBD for the 2024 fiscal year was only approved on February 22, 2024, exceeding the statutory deadline and entering the fiscal year period. This pattern reflects not merely administrative delay but a deeper structural gridlock in budget politics [12].

The severity of this gridlock is further evidenced by its tangible impacts on governance outcomes. In 2022, the failure to ratify APBD-P resulted in the postponement of civil servant performance allowances (TPP) for approximately five months and delayed the appointment of around 600 contract-based teachers (PPPK). In 2023, similar failures led to the cancellation of critical healthcare procurements, including CT-scan equipment, ambulances for maternal services, and ultrasound devices for community health centers. In 2024, the delayed APBD approval and failed APBD-P resulted in the non-payment of salaries and allowances for civil servants and honorary staff for up to three months, along with disruptions in procurement activities. These impacts illustrate how policy gridlock directly translates into reduced state capacity and weakened public service delivery [13], [14].

One of the key structural factors contributing to this condition is institutional fragmentation within the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD). The composition of political parties in the DPRD of Kuantan Singingi Regency reflects a highly fragmented structure, with no single party holding a dominant majority. Seats are distributed across multiple parties, necessitating coalition-building and complex negotiations, which increases the likelihood of deadlock when preferences diverge [15].

From a theoretical perspective, institutional fragmentation is strongly associated with policy gridlock. Harden and Kirkland (2021) argue that greater divergence in policy preferences increases the probability of gridlock, particularly in the absence of effective coordination mechanisms [16]. In fragmented legislative environments, decision-making becomes slower and more conflict-prone, especially when formal rules for resolving disagreements are weak or ambiguous [17].

Moreover, the repeated failure of APBD-P approval over three consecutive years in Kuantan Singingi indicates the presence of structural, rather than incidental, gridlock. This aligns with broader findings in public policy literature emphasizing that institutional design, political competition, and governance capacity jointly shape policy outcomes [18], [19]. In this context, the Kuantan Singingi case provides a compelling example of how decentralization, while empowering local actors, can also create governance vulnerabilities when institutional arrangements fail to facilitate consensus.

Despite the growing body of literature on decentralization and public financial management, limited studies have specifically examined policy gridlock in regional budget politics at the local level in Indonesia. Most existing studies focus on compliance, transparency, or fiscal performance, rather than the political dynamics underlying budget delays and failures [20]. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth empirical analysis of policy gridlock at the subnational level, focusing on the interaction between institutional fragmentation and political bargaining in regional budget processes.

Therefore, this study aims to:

1. analyze the structural and political factors contributing to policy gridlock in the APBD process;
2. examine its impacts on governance and public service delivery; and
3. provide insights for improving budget governance in decentralized systems.

By focusing on a case characterized by persistent and severe gridlock, this study contributes to the broader discourse on public policy, institutional design, and regional governance in developing countries.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the phenomenon of policy gridlock in regional budget politics, focusing on Kuantan Singingi Regency, Indonesia, during the 2022–2024 fiscal years. A qualitative case study is considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth exploration of complex political interactions, institutional constraints, and decision-making dynamics that shape the formulation and approval of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD).

The unit of analysis in this study consists of institutional actors and processes involved in regional budgeting, particularly the interaction between the executive (regional government) and the legislative (DPRD). The study focuses on how

political fragmentation, bargaining processes, and institutional arrangements contribute to delays and failures in APBD and APBD-P approval.

To ensure comprehensive analysis, this research utilizes multiple data sources. Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including officials from the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency (BPKAD), members of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), and policy observers. These interviews were designed to capture perspectives on political negotiation, sources of conflict, and institutional barriers in the budgeting process. Secondary data were obtained from official documents such as APBD approval records, meeting minutes, regulatory frameworks, and institutional reports from the BPKAD of Riau Province and the DPRD Secretariat of Kuantan Singingi.

Data collection was conducted through a combination of in-depth interviews and document analysis. Interviews allowed the researcher to explore the underlying dynamics of political bargaining and gridlock, while document analysis was used to validate factual information such as approval timelines, procedural compliance, and instances of policy failure. This combination strengthens the credibility of the findings through data triangulation.

The analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. The process began with data reduction to identify relevant information related to policy gridlock, followed by coding procedures consisting of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Through this process, key themes were identified, including political conflict, institutional fragmentation, weak coordination mechanisms, and patterns of budget delays. These themes were then interpreted in relation to existing theories of policy gridlock and public governance.

To operationalize the concept of policy gridlock, this study uses several analytical indicators, including delays in APBD approval beyond statutory deadlines, repeated failure to ratify APBD-P, intensity of political conflict during budget discussions, and the degree of institutional fragmentation reflected in the composition of political parties within the DPRD. These indicators allow for a systematic assessment of gridlock as both a procedural and political phenomenon.

Empirical evidence from Kuantan Singingi Regency demonstrates a consistent pattern of gridlock during the 2022–2024 period. As presented in Table 1, APBD-P failed to be ratified for three consecutive years, while the APBD for the 2024 fiscal year was approved significantly late, on February 22, 2024, exceeding the statutory deadline. This pattern

indicates a structural rather than incidental form of gridlock.

Table 1. APBD and APBD-P Approval Pattern in Kuantan Singingi Regency (2022–2024)

Budget Type	Schedule	2022	2023	2024
APBD	End of November	30-11-2021	30-11-2022	22-02-2024 (Delayed)
APBD-P	End of September	Failed	Failed	Failed

Furthermore, institutional fragmentation within the DPRD is evident from the distribution of political party seats, where no single party holds a dominant majority. As shown in Table 2, the legislature consists of multiple parties with relatively balanced seat distribution, requiring coalition-building and complex negotiations in decision-making processes.

Table 2. Political Party Composition in DPRD Kuantan Singingi

Political Party	Seats
Golkar	6
PPP	4
Gerindra	4
NasDem	4
PAN	4
Demokrat	4
PDIP	3
PKB	3
PKS	2
Hanura	1

This fragmented political structure is analytically linked to policy gridlock through a conceptual framework in which institutional fragmentation leads to diverging political interests, weak coordination, and ultimately delays or failures in budget approval. These conditions further result in disruptions to governance processes and public service delivery.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study applies data triangulation by combining multiple sources and methods. In addition, member checking was conducted by validating key findings with selected informants, and an audit trail was maintained to document the research process systematically. Ethical considerations were also addressed by ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and preserving neutrality in analyzing political dynamics.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Patterns of Budget Approval and Failure

Empirical findings reveal a consistent and systemic pattern of delays and failures in the APBD process in Kuantan Singingi Regency during the 2022–2024

fiscal years. The data indicate that while APBD approvals in 2022 and 2023 were completed on time, a significant deviation occurred in 2024, where the APBD was approved on February 22, exceeding the statutory deadline. More critically, APBD-P (revised budgets) failed to be ratified for three consecutive years.

Table 3. APBD and APBD-P Approval Pattern in Kuantan Singingi (2022–2024)

Budget Type	Schedule	2022	2023	2024
APBD	End of November	30-11-2021	30-11-2022	22-02-2024 (Delayed)
APBD-P	End of September	Failed	Failed	Failed

This recurring failure indicates a non-random and structural pattern of disruption in budget governance.

Political Fragmentation in DPRD

The composition of the DPRD in Kuantan Singingi Regency shows a highly fragmented political structure, with no single party holding a majority. This distribution creates a coalition-based decision-making system that is inherently complex.

Table 4. Political Party Composition in DPRD Kuantan Singingi

Political Party	Seats
Golkar	6
PPP	4
Gerindra	4
NasDem	4
PAN	4
Demokrat	4
PDIP	3
PKB	3
PKS	2
Hanura	1

This fragmentation requires intensive negotiation and increases the risk of disagreement among actors.

Comparative Regional Patterns

At the provincial level, data from Riau Province (2022–2024) show that Kuantan Singingi is among the regions with the most severe policy gridlock. While regions such as Kampar, Pelalawan, and Pekanbaru demonstrate consistency in timely approval, Kuantan Singingi exhibits repeated failures.

Table 5. Regional Comparison of APBD Approval (Selected Regions)

Region	APBD Timeliness	APBD-P Status
Kampar	Consistent	Approved
Pelalawan	Consistent	Approved
Pekanbaru	Consistent	Approved
Indragiri Hilir	Delayed	Partially Failed
Kuantan Singingi	Delayed	Failed (3 Years)

Impact of Policy Gridlock

The study identifies direct and measurable impacts of policy gridlock on governance and public service delivery:

Table 6. Impacts of Budget Gridlock (2022–2024)

Year	Event	Impact
2022	APBD-P failed	Delay of TPP for ~5 months; 600 PPPK teachers not appointed
2023	APBD-P failed	Cancellation of CT-Scan, ambulance, and USG procurement
2024	APBD delayed + APBD-P failed	Salary delays (3 months); disrupted procurement

These findings demonstrate that gridlock has tangible consequences, not merely procedural implications.

Structural Pattern of Gridlock

The empirical data suggest a recurring cycle of gridlock:

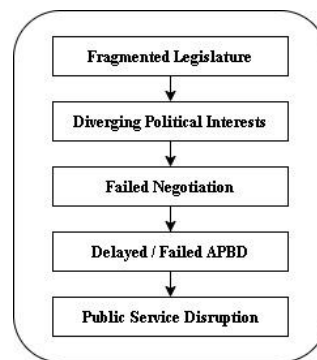


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Policy Gridlock in Regional Budgeting

This figure illustrates the causal mechanism of policy gridlock in the regional budgeting process. It begins with a fragmented legislature, which leads to diverging political interests among actors. These differences often result in failed negotiations between the executive and legislative branches, ultimately causing delays or failures in the approval of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). The consequence of this gridlock is reflected in disruptions to public service delivery, highlighting the direct link between political dynamics and governance outcomes.

Discussion

Policy Gridlock as a Structural Phenomenon

The findings confirm that policy gridlock in Kuantan Singingi is structural rather than incidental. The repeated failure of APBD-P over three consecutive years indicates a persistent inability of political

actors to reach agreement. This aligns with theoretical perspectives that view gridlock as a product of institutional design and political competition.

The absence of APBD-P ratification reflects not only procedural failure but also deeper issues of governance capacity and political coordination.

The Role of Political Fragmentation

The fragmented composition of the DPRD plays a central role in generating gridlock. With ten political parties and no dominant majority, decision-making requires coalition-building and negotiation across diverse interests.

This condition increases:

1. Transaction costs in decision-making
2. Risk of veto players
3. Delays in reaching consensus

In such environments, even minor disagreements can escalate into prolonged deadlock, particularly when no effective conflict-resolution mechanism exists.

Executive–Legislative Conflict

The study also highlights tensions between the executive and legislative branches as a key driver of gridlock. Differences in policy priorities, budget allocation preferences, and political agendas create friction during the budgeting process.

This conflict is intensified by:

1. Lack of trust between institutions
2. Weak communication channels
3. Strategic bargaining behavior

As a result, the APBD process becomes a political contest rather than a technocratic planning exercise.

Governance Implications

The impacts of gridlock in Kuantan Singingi demonstrate a direct link between political dysfunction and governance outcomes. Delays in salary payments, failure in healthcare procurement, and disruption of public programs indicate reduced state capacity.

This finding reinforces the argument that:

1. Budget politics is not neutral
2. Institutional inefficiency translates into public service failure

Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to the literature by:

1. Demonstrating how institutional fragmentation leads to policy gridlock in decentralized systems
2. Providing empirical evidence from a local government context

3. Expanding the understanding of gridlock beyond national-level politics

The case of Kuantan Singingi shows that decentralization can produce governance challenges when institutional arrangements fail to support coordination.

Toward a Model of Budget Gridlock

Based on the findings, this study proposes a refined model:

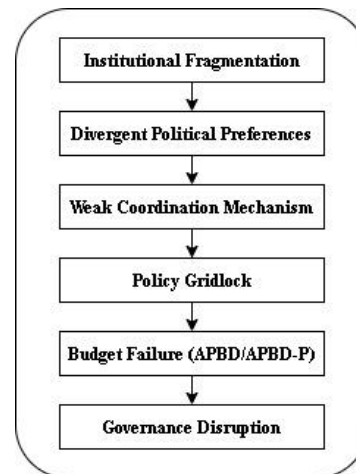


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Policy Gridlock in Regional Budgeting

This figure presents a conceptual framework explaining the emergence of policy gridlock in regional budgeting. The process begins with institutional fragmentation, which generates diverging political preferences among actors. These differences are further exacerbated by weak coordination mechanisms, leading to policy gridlock. As a result, the gridlock manifests in budget failure, particularly in the delay or non-approval of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD/APBD-P). Ultimately, these failures contribute to broader governance disruption, affecting the effectiveness of public administration and service delivery.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that policy gridlock in the regional budgeting process of Kuantan Singingi Regency during the 2022–2024 fiscal period is not incidental but structural in nature. The repeated failure to ratify the revised budget (APBD-P) over three consecutive years, coupled with the significant delay in the approval of the 2024 APBD, indicates a persistent dysfunction in budget governance. These patterns confirm that the issue extends beyond administrative inefficiency and reflects deeper political and institutional constraints. The findings reveal that institutional fragmentation within the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) plays a

central role in generating gridlock. The absence of a dominant political party creates a fragmented decision-making environment characterized by multiple veto players and competing interests. This fragmentation leads to diverging political preferences, which, in the absence of effective coordination mechanisms, escalate into failed negotiations between the executive and legislative branches. As a result, the APBD process becomes highly vulnerable to delays and failures. Furthermore, this study highlights that policy gridlock follows a cumulative and self-reinforcing pattern. Initial failures in budget agreement, particularly in APBD-P, contribute to the normalization of institutional dysfunction, which over time escalates into more severe disruptions, including delays in primary budget approval. This path-dependent dynamic indicates that unresolved political conflicts can weaken institutional capacity and increase the likelihood of recurring gridlock. The consequences of this gridlock are both immediate and substantial. Delays in salary payments, failure to implement strategic procurement programs, and disruption of public services demonstrate a direct link between political conflict and governance outcomes. These findings emphasize that budgetary gridlock is not merely a procedural issue but has tangible impacts on state capacity and the welfare of citizens. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on public policy and decentralized governance by providing empirical evidence of how institutional fragmentation, divergent political interests, and weak coordination mechanisms interact to produce policy gridlock at the local level. It extends the understanding of gridlock beyond national legislative contexts and highlights its relevance in subnational governance systems. Practically, the study underscores the need for institutional reforms to mitigate policy gridlock in regional budgeting. Strengthening coordination mechanisms between the executive and legislative branches, establishing clearer procedural rules for conflict resolution, and enhancing transparency in budget negotiations are critical steps toward improving governance effectiveness. In addition, efforts to streamline decision-making processes in fragmented political environments are essential to prevent prolonged delays and ensure timely budget approval. In conclusion, the case of Kuantan Singingi Regency illustrates that decentralization, while offering opportunities for local autonomy, also introduces governance risks when institutional arrangements fail to support effective coordination

and consensus-building. Addressing policy gridlock therefore requires not only technical improvements in budgeting procedures but also structural and political reforms aimed at fostering cooperation among actors and strengthening institutional capacity.

References

- [1] B. R. Weingast, "The economic role of political institutions: Market-preserving federalism and economic development," *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1–31, 1995.
- [2] E. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- [3] J. Rodden, *Hamilton's Paradox: The Promise and Peril of Fiscal Federalism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- [4] S. Falleti, "A sequential theory of decentralization: Latin American cases in comparative perspective," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99, no. 3, pp. 327–346, 2005.
- [5] G. Tsebelis, *Veto Players: How Political Institutions Work*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- [6] W. N. Eskridge, "Overriding Supreme Court statutory interpretation decisions," *Yale Law Journal*, vol. 101, no. 2, pp. 331–455, 1991.
- [7] A. Wildavsky and N. Caiden, *The New Politics of the Budgetary Process*, 5th ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 2004.
- [8] J. E. Stiglitz, *Economics of the Public Sector*, 3rd ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2000.
- [9] Ministry of Home Affairs Republic of Indonesia, *Report on Regional Budget Evaluation*, Jakarta, 2022.
- [10] World Bank, *Indonesia Public Expenditure Review: Spending for Better Results*, Washington, DC, 2020.
- [11] A. Shah, *Local Budgeting*. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2007.
- [12] BPKAD Riau Province, *Regional Budget Approval Report (2022–2024)*, Pekanbaru, 2025.
- [13] M. Grindle, "Good governance: The inflation of an idea," *Harvard International Review*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 48–54, 1999.
- [14] D. Kaufmann, A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi, "Governance matters VIII: Aggregate and individual governance indicators," *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*, 2009.
- [15] DPRD Secretariat of Kuantan Singingi, *Political Party Composition Report*, 2024.
- [16] J. J. Harden and J. H. Kirkland, "Gridlock and legislative effectiveness," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 46, no. 2, pp. 321–350, 2021.
- [17] T. Persson and G. Tabellini, *Political Economics: Explaining Economic Policy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.
- [18] P. Pierson, "Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 2, pp. 251–267, 2000.
- [19] F. Fukuyama, *Political Order and Political Decay*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014.
- [20] R. Andrews and G. Boyne, "Capacity, leadership, and organizational performance," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 70, no. 3, pp. 443–454, 2010.