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Administrative Autonomy and Digital Platform Dependency in Indonesian Central–Local Government Relations

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Abstrak

Transformasi pemerintahan digital di Indonesia telah memperluas penggunaan platform bersama, prosedur administrasi yang terstandarisasi, dan pertukaran data antar lembaga. Perkembangan ini memunculkan pertanyaan penting bagi desentralisasi: seberapa besar otonomi administratif yang dipertahankan pemerintah daerah ketika platform yang mendukung pekerjaan mereka dirancang atau diatur di tingkat nasional? Artikel ini mensintesis kajian tentang desentralisasi, tata kelola multilevel, dan pemerintahan digital untuk meneliti perbedaan antara ketergantungan platform teknis dan kewenangan administratif substantif. Dengan menggunakan tinjauan literatur integratif, artikel ini mengusulkan empat dimensi analitis: kontrol sistem, kontrol data, kontrol prosedural, dan kontrol pengambilan keputusan. Sintesis ini menunjukkan bahwa ketergantungan pada teknologi yang terstandarisasi secara nasional tidak selalu menghilangkan otonomi daerah. Pemerintah daerah dapat mempertahankan kewenangan pengambilan keputusan substantif meskipun kontrol teknis terbatas; sebaliknya, fleksibilitas teknis tidak menjamin keleluasaan administratif. Tipologi konseptual empat tipe dikembangkan untuk membedakan otonomi digital substantif, otonomi administratif terintegrasi, otonomi yang fleksibel secara teknis tetapi terbatas secara substantif, dan ketergantungan administratif-digital. Kerangka kerja ini menawarkan dasar untuk penilaian empiris di masa mendatang tentang hubungan pusat-daerah dalam tata kelola digital Indonesia. Temuan ini bersifat konseptual dan tidak menetapkan otonomi aktual dari pemerintah daerah tertentu.

Kata kunci: *Otonomi Daerah; E-Government; Pemerintahan Digital; Desentralisasi*

Abstract

Digital government transformation in Indonesia has expanded the use of shared platforms, standardized administrative procedures, and cross-agency data exchange. These developments raise an important question for decentralization: how much administrative autonomy do local governments retain when the platforms supporting their work are designed or governed at the national level? This article synthesizes scholarship on decentralization, multilevel governance, and digital government to examine the distinction between technical platform dependency and substantive administrative authority. Using an integrative literature review, it proposes four analytical dimensions: system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control. The synthesis suggests that dependence on nationally standardized technology does not necessarily eliminate local autonomy. Local governments may retain substantive decision-making authority despite limited technical control; conversely, technical flexibility does not guarantee administrative discretion. A four-type conceptual typology is developed to distinguish substantive digital autonomy, integrated administrative autonomy,

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technically flexible but substantively constrained autonomy, and administrative-digital dependency. The framework offers a basis for future empirical assessment of central–local relations in Indonesian digital governance. The findings are conceptual and do not establish the actual autonomy of any particular local government.

***Key words**: Regional Autonomy; E-Government; Digital Government; Decentralization*

INTRODUCTION

Decentralization is a defining principle of local governance in Indonesia, providing regional governments with the authority to manage administrative affairs and deliver public services according to local needs and priorities. Its significance extends beyond the formal transfer of governmental responsibilities, as meaningful decentralization requires local authorities to exercise administrative discretion, respond effectively to community demands, and make decisions within their legally established mandates. Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema (1983) conceptualize decentralization through the distribution of planning, management, and decision-making responsibilities across different levels of government. Similarly, Faguet (2014) emphasizes that the effectiveness of decentralization depends not merely on the formal allocation of authority but also on the institutional and political conditions that enable local governments to exercise that authority. These perspectives suggest that regional autonomy should be assessed not only through its legal foundations but also through the practical capacity of local governments to make independent administrative decisions.

The rapid development of digital government has introduced new complexities into the relationship between central and local authorities. Government administration increasingly relies on integrated information systems, interoperable databases, standardized digital procedures, and nationally coordinated technological infrastructure. Dunleavy et al. (2006), through the concept of digital-era governance, identify reintegration and digitalization as important transformations in public administration. Although digital integration can improve administrative efficiency, coordination, and service consistency, it also raises fundamental questions about the distribution of institutional control. When local governments depend on nationally managed digital platforms to perform decentralized functions, the boundaries between technological integration and administrative centralization become increasingly difficult to distinguish.

This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where digital transformation has become an important component of national public administration reform. Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 concerning the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE), Presidential Regulation No. 39 of 2019 concerning One Data Indonesia, and Presidential Regulation No. 82 of 2023 concerning the Acceleration of Digital Transformation and Integration of National Digital Services establish important policy foundations for strengthening interoperability, administrative standardization, and integrated public services. While these regulations support more coordinated digital governance, their implementation also creates an important analytical question regarding the position of regional governments within nationally integrated administrative systems. Local governments may be required to operate through digital platforms whose technical architecture, data structures, and procedural configurations are determined beyond their direct institutional control. However,

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such technical dependency does not necessarily indicate that their legally established decision-making authority has been transferred to the central government.

Despite the growing body of scholarship on decentralization and digital government, an important conceptual gap remains in explaining how dependence on centrally governed digital platforms relates to the substantive administrative autonomy of local governments. Existing decentralization studies primarily examine the formal distribution of authority, institutional accountability, and political conditions affecting local governance (Rondinelli et al., 1983; Faguet, 2014). Meanwhile, digital government scholarship emphasizes technological integration, organizational transformation, and administrative coordination (Dunleavy et al., 2006). Although these perspectives provide important theoretical foundations, they do not, by themselves, offer a sufficiently differentiated analytical framework for determining whether technological dependency also constitutes a restriction on substantive administrative authority. Consequently, the relationship between digital platform governance and local administrative discretion remains insufficiently specified within the theoretical perspectives synthesized in this article.

More specifically, the limitation of existing theoretical approaches lies in their tendency to examine institutional authority and technological integration as related but analytically separate governance concerns. Decentralization theory explains how governmental authority is distributed, but it provides limited guidance on how technical system configurations, data access restrictions, and automated administrative procedures may influence the practical exercise of that authority. Conversely, digital government theory explains how integrated technologies transform administrative processes but does not necessarily distinguish between technical dependence on shared infrastructure and the loss of substantive decision-making discretion. Multilevel governance theory, as developed by Hooghe and Marks (2003), recognizes the distribution of authority across interconnected governmental levels, yet its general institutional orientation does not directly specify how different forms of digital platform control should be assessed in relation to local administrative autonomy.

The unresolved issue is therefore not simply whether digitalization encourages centralization, but under what conditions technical platform dependency translates into substantive constraints on local governmental decision-making. This distinction is theoretically significant because technical control and substantive administrative authority are not necessarily equivalent. A regional government may have limited authority to modify a nationally developed application while retaining the legal and operational discretion to evaluate administrative cases, determine local priorities, and approve decisions. Conversely, a locally managed digital application may provide considerable technological flexibility while substantive administrative decisions remain strictly determined by national regulations or centralized approval mechanisms. Without clearly distinguishing these conditions, assessments of digital governance risk treating the use of centralized technological infrastructure as evidence of diminished regional autonomy, or interpreting locally controlled systems as indicators of meaningful decentralization. Such interpretations may obscure the actual distribution of administrative authority within digitally integrated governmental arrangements.

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The urgency of addressing this conceptual gap is particularly evident in Indonesia's ongoing digital government transformation. As national initiatives increasingly promote integrated platforms, standardized administrative procedures, and interconnected government data, regional governments must exercise their decentralized responsibilities within a more technologically coordinated institutional environment. This development creates a potential tension between the objectives of national digital integration and the principles of regional autonomy established within Indonesia's decentralized governance system. If the relationship between platform dependency and administrative discretion remains conceptually unclear, policymakers and researchers may struggle to determine whether digital integration strengthens intergovernmental coordination while preserving local authority or introduces operational constraints that limit the effective exercise of decentralized responsibilities. A more precise analytical framework is therefore necessary to assess digital government arrangements without assuming that technological standardization automatically produces administrative recentralization.

The importance of this issue is further reinforced by political economy and polycentric governance perspectives. Bardhan (2002) argues that decentralization outcomes depend on institutional incentives, accountability arrangements, and the potential for local institutional capture. Ostrom (2010) demonstrates that multiple decision-making centers can operate within shared institutional rules while maintaining distinct areas of authority. These perspectives indicate that administrative coordination and institutional autonomy are not inherently contradictory. Applied to digital governance, they suggest that shared technological systems may coexist with decentralized decision-making, provided that the relevant administrative authority remains meaningfully exercisable. However, determining whether such autonomy exists requires a more detailed examination of how control is distributed across technological infrastructure, administrative information, procedural arrangements, and substantive decisions.

To address this gap, the present article proposes a conceptual framework that distinguishes technical digital platform dependency from substantive administrative dependency through four interconnected analytical dimensions: system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control. System control concerns the ability of local governments to configure or modify digital applications; data control concerns their authority to access, manage, and utilize administrative information; procedural control refers to their capacity to organize or adapt administrative workflows; and decision-making control concerns their authority to determine substantive administrative outcomes. By separating these dimensions, the framework enables a more precise conceptual assessment of the relationship between technological integration and local governmental autonomy. It also provides the foundation for developing a typology of administrative autonomy under different conditions of digital platform dependency.

Accordingly, this article addresses three research questions: (1) How does existing scholarship explain the relationship between digital platform dependency and local administrative autonomy? (2) How can digital platform dependency be analytically distinguished across system, data, procedural, and decision-making controls? and (3) What conceptual typology can explain variations in administrative autonomy within digitally integrated central–local government relations? The article contributes to public

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administration scholarship by integrating decentralization theory, multilevel governance, and digital government perspectives into a more differentiated framework for examining administrative authority in digitally interconnected institutions. In the Indonesian context, the proposed framework offers a conceptual basis for evaluating whether national digital integration arrangements preserve, constrain, or reconfigure the substantive discretion of regional governments. As an integrative literature review, the study advances a theoretical proposition rather than making empirical claims about the actual autonomy of particular Indonesian local governments.

METHOD

This article employs an integrative literature review and conceptual thematic synthesis to examine the relationship between digital platform dependency and local administrative autonomy. This approach enables the integration of theoretical perspectives from public administration, decentralization, multilevel governance, and digital government to develop analytical categories. The literature was purposively selected based on three inclusion criteria: (1) publications addressing the distribution of governmental authority, administrative discretion, institutional coordination, or digital governance; (2) theoretical and empirical studies published between 1983 and 2026, encompassing foundational public administration and decentralization scholarship alongside more recent developments in e-government and digital transformation; and (3) academic publications with identifiable authorship and bibliographic information. The main theoretical foundations include decentralization theory, multilevel governance, polycentric governance, and digital-era governance. Relevant Indonesian regulatory documents were also included to contextualize these perspectives within the country's institutional and digital governance framework.

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, the selected literature was examined to identify theoretical explanations of authority distribution, administrative discretion, organizational coordination, and digital integration. Second, the concepts were compared and synthesized to distinguish technical platform governance from substantive administrative decision-making authority. Third, recurring theoretical themes were organized into four proposed analytical dimensions: system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control. These dimensions were subsequently integrated into a two-axis conceptual typology to illustrate different configurations of digital platform dependency and local administrative autonomy.

This study constitutes a narrative integrative synthesis rather than a systematic literature review. The selection of publications was guided by theoretical relevance rather than exhaustive database searches or formal systematic screening procedures. Consequently, no reproducible search log, comprehensive screening counts, or PRISMA flowchart was established. The selected literature therefore provides a focused conceptual foundation rather than a comprehensive representation of all relevant scholarship. Furthermore, no interviews, surveys, or field observations were conducted. Accordingly, the proposed analytical dimensions and typology remain conceptual and require further empirical validation before they can be used to assess the actual degree of administrative autonomy or digital platform dependency among Indonesian local governments.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Administrative decentralization concerns not only the formal allocation of governmental responsibilities but also the extent to which local governments can exercise authority in practice. Rondinelli et al. (1983) emphasize that the organizational arrangements through which governmental functions are distributed are essential to understanding decentralization. Similarly, Faguet (2014) associates decentralization with improvements in responsiveness and accountability while recognizing that its effectiveness depends on institutional and political conditions. Within digital government, these considerations extend beyond legal mandates to the technological systems, administrative procedures, and information arrangements through which governmental decisions are processed and implemented.

Hooghe and Marks (2003) conceptualize governance as a system in which authority is distributed across multiple governmental levels. This perspective helps explain how administrative functions may simultaneously involve national regulations, local implementation, shared information, and intergovernmental oversight. Dunleavy et al. (2006) further emphasize that digital-era governance encourages the reintegration of previously fragmented administrative functions through technological coordination and organizational restructuring. Although such integration may improve administrative efficiency and consistency, it does not necessarily eliminate the distinction between national standard-setting authority and local administrative decision-making.

Digital platforms should therefore be understood not merely as technological applications but also as institutional arrangements that influence the exercise of governmental authority. Platform architecture can determine access to administrative information, available procedural options, approval mechanisms, and opportunities for local adaptation. Nevertheless, identifying the implications of these arrangements for regional autonomy requires distinguishing technical control over digital infrastructure from substantive authority over administrative outcomes. The ownership or management of a digital platform alone is insufficient to establish whether local administrative discretion has been preserved or constrained.

This argument is consistent with Cordella and Tempini (2015), who emphasize that digital government transformation does not necessarily replace bureaucratic organization or administrative rules. Instead, technological systems interact with existing institutional structures and may reinforce or modify administrative practices. In decentralized governance, this interaction becomes particularly significant when nationally standardized digital procedures are used to implement responsibilities legally assigned to regional governments.

Synthesis of Previous Studies

Table 1 presents the foundational literature used to develop the conceptual argument. The synthesis identifies the principal theoretical contributions of previous studies and the analytical questions that remain concerning digital platform dependency and administrative autonomy.

Author(s)	Focus	Main contribution	Relevance
Rondinelli et al. (1983)	Administrative decentralization	Distinguishes forms of distributing administrative responsibilities.	Foundation for assessing where authority resides; predates digital platforms.

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Hooghe & Marks (2003)	Multilevel governance	Explains differentiated structures of authority across governance levels.	Clarifies overlapping responsibilities; does not classify platform controls.
Dunleavy et al. (2006)	Digital-era governance	Emphasizes reintegration, needs-based holism, and digitization.	Explains integration pressures; leaves local discretion to be examined.
Faguet (2014)	Decentralization and governance	Connects decentralization outcomes to accountability and institutional context.	Shows why formal decentralization alone is insufficient.
Gil-Garcia et al. (2018)	Digital governmen and public management	Connects digital systems with organization, policy, and management.	Supports treating platform design as a governance issue.
Mergel et al. (2019)	Public-sector digita transformation	Describes organizational and process changes associated with transformation.	Explains organizational effects beyond application adoption.
Vial (2019)	Digital transformation review	Synthesizes technology-driven organizational change.	Offers a broad change perspective, not a local-autonomy typology.
Tangi et al. (2021)	Drivers and barriers of digita government	Analyzes organizational and institutional influences on transformation.	Highlights implementation conditions rather than allocation of discretion.
Bardhan (2002)	Decentralization and governance	Discusses incentives, accountability, and institutional risks in decentralized governance.	Helps assess whether local decision authority is meaningful rather than merely formal.
Ostrom (2010)	Polycentric governance	Explains coordination among multiple decision-making centers operating under shared rules.	Suggests that technical integration can coexist with distributed decision authority.
Cordella & Tempini (2015)	Digital governmen and bureaucracy	Reappraises the role of administrative organization and bureaucratic rules in e-government.	Helps distinguish standardized workflows from the displacement of local administrative judgment.

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis, 2026.

The reviewed literature provides complementary explanations of decentralization, institutional authority, and digital government transformation. Decentralization scholarship primarily addresses the distribution and effectiveness of governmental authority, whereas digital government scholarship emphasizes technological integration, organizational restructuring, and administrative coordination. However, the theoretical perspectives synthesized here do not provide a sufficiently differentiated framework for examining how dependence on digital infrastructure relates to the substantive decision-making autonomy of local governments.

Three analytical tensions emerge from this synthesis. First, formal administrative authority does not necessarily guarantee effective discretion when local institutions lack the information, technical capacity, or procedural flexibility required to exercise it. Second,

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technological standardization and interoperability may improve administrative coordination without transferring substantive decision-making authority to the central government. Third, digital platforms may incorporate mandatory verification procedures, automated restrictions, or centralized approval requirements that influence local discretion even when the formal legal distribution of authority remains unchanged.

These tensions demonstrate the importance of identifying where administrative control is located rather than assuming that digital integration necessarily produces administrative centralization. The proposed conceptual contribution therefore focuses on distinguishing control over technological infrastructure from control over substantive administrative outcomes. This distinction provides a foundation for examining how digital platform dependency may coexist with, support, or constrain regional autonomy.

Digital Platform Dependency in Central–Local Relations

Digital platform dependency is defined in this article as a condition in which local governments rely on digital systems, technical standards, administrative information infrastructure, or operational arrangements that they cannot independently determine or modify. Such dependency may arise when regional administrative functions are performed through nationally developed or centrally coordinated digital platforms.

Importantly, digital platform dependency should not automatically be interpreted as a reduction in regional autonomy. Nationally standardized systems may support legitimate administrative objectives, including data consistency, interoperability, cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, and intergovernmental coordination. The implications for autonomy depend on whether technological arrangements restrict the administrative discretion that local governments are legally entitled to exercise.

For example, a local government may be required to use nationally established data formats and standardized reporting procedures while retaining the authority to verify information, evaluate administrative cases, and determine substantive outcomes. Conversely, a digital platform may impose mandatory approval mechanisms or procedural restrictions that limit local decision-making even when the relevant governmental responsibility formally remains decentralized.

These examples illustrate why the distinction between centralized and decentralized technological systems is insufficient for evaluating administrative autonomy. A more precise assessment requires identifying the different forms of control embedded within digital governance arrangements.

Four Dimensions of Platform Dependency

Based on the conceptual synthesis, this article proposes four interconnected dimensions for examining digital platform dependency: system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control. These dimensions represent analytical propositions rather than empirically validated indicators.

Table 2. Four Dimensions of Digital Platform Dependency

Dimension	Definition	Illustrative indicators	Autonomy question
System control	Ability to choose, configure, or modify platform functions.	Application selection, configuration, feature changes, technical access.	Can local administrators adapt the technology?

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Data control	Authority to access, validate, correct, and reuse administrative information.	Access rights, validation, correction, sharing, reuse.	Can local government use the data required for its functions?
Procedural control	Ability to organize or adapt administrative workflow.	Verification sequence, routing, exceptions, service steps.	Can local government adjust lawful procedures?
Decision control	Authority to determine substantive administrative outcomes.	Approval, refusal, prioritization, case resolution.	Who has the legal and operational final say?

Source: Author's conceptual synthesis, 2026.

System control concerns technological flexibility, whereas data control relates to the authority to manage and utilize administrative information. Procedural control addresses the organization of administrative activities, while decision-making control concerns the authority to determine substantive outcomes.

These dimensions should be treated as analytically distinct, although they may interact in practice. A local government may possess limited technical control over a nationally managed digital platform while retaining meaningful decision-making authority. Conversely, considerable flexibility in modifying digital applications does not necessarily guarantee substantive administrative autonomy when administrative outcomes remain determined by external regulations or approval mechanisms.

To clarify these relationships, the four dimensions can be synthesized into two broader analytical axes. The first axis, technical-operational control, primarily concerns system control and the technical aspects of data management. The second axis, substantive administrative authority, concerns decision-making control and the extent to which procedural discretion can be meaningfully exercised. Data and procedural control may influence both axes depending on the institutional arrangements being examined. The distinction between relatively high and low levels of control is conceptual rather than based on empirically established thresholds.

Combining these two axes produces four ideal types of administrative autonomy: substantive digital autonomy, integrated administrative autonomy, technically flexible but substantively constrained autonomy, and administrative-digital dependency.

Illustrative Application of the Four Types of Administrative Autonomy in IndonesiaTo demonstrate the practical relevance of the proposed framework, Indonesia's Sistem Informasi Pemerintahan Daerah (SIPD) provides an appropriate institutional context for a hypothetical illustration. SIPD is associated with the integration of regional government information and administrative processes, including development planning and financial management. Its nationally coordinated character makes it relevant to discussions about the relationship between digital integration and decentralized administrative authority.

Consider a hypothetical municipal government in Indonesia that utilizes a nationally integrated digital platform to support regional development planning and budgeting. Although the municipality is responsible for carrying out administrative functions within its legally established authority, the technological infrastructure supporting these functions may be governed through national standards and institutional arrangements.

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Within this hypothetical setting, the four types of administrative autonomy can be illustrated as follows. First, substantive digital autonomy represents a condition in which local governments possess relatively high technical-operational control and substantive administrative authority. For example, a municipality may be able to configure digital system functions, manage administrative information, adapt lawful procedures, and determine development priorities within its statutory responsibilities. Under this arrangement, digital technology primarily supports locally exercised administrative authority.

Second, integrated administrative autonomy occurs when local governments depend on nationally standardized technological infrastructure but retain meaningful substantive decision-making authority. A municipality may be required to use a centrally managed digital platform with predetermined technical configurations, standardized data formats, and reporting requirements. Nevertheless, local authorities may retain lawful discretion to identify development priorities, formulate budget proposals, and make administrative decisions within applicable legal and fiscal constraints. This configuration illustrates that technical dependency does not necessarily eliminate substantive regional autonomy.

Third, technically flexible but substantively constrained autonomy describes a condition in which local governments possess technological flexibility while substantive administrative decisions remain restricted. For instance, municipal administrators may be able to develop supplementary applications, modify technical interfaces, or manage local information systems. However, administrative outcomes may remain subject to binding national regulations, mandatory approval procedures, or externally determined decision criteria. Consequently, local control over digital technology does not necessarily indicate meaningful administrative independence.

Fourth, administrative-digital dependency refers to a condition in which local governments experience relatively low technical-operational control and substantive administrative authority. In this hypothetical arrangement, a municipality may depend on centrally managed digital systems whose configurations, data permissions, and workflows cannot be independently modified, while important administrative decisions are also subject to external authorization or centrally prescribed requirements. Local administrative functions may consequently become oriented primarily toward implementing procedures determined beyond the municipal level.

Implications for Digital Governance in Indonesia

The proposed framework has several implications for understanding and evaluating digital governance within Indonesia's decentralized administrative system.

First, evaluations of regional autonomy should extend beyond the formal distribution of governmental responsibilities to examine how those responsibilities are exercised through digital administrative systems. Relevant evidence includes platform governance arrangements, access permissions, data management rules, administrative workflows, and the authority to resolve exceptional cases. Such an approach would help distinguish legally established autonomy from the practical capacity to exercise administrative discretion.

Second, policymakers should distinguish technical standardization from substantive administrative centralization. Nationally integrated platforms may improve interoperability, information consistency, and administrative coordination while preserving meaningful local

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decision-making authority. However, mandatory digital procedures or centralized approval mechanisms may constrain local discretion even without a formal transfer of governmental responsibilities. Evaluating these possibilities requires attention to the institutional arrangements embedded within digital platforms.

Third, organizational capacity remains an important consideration. Mergel et al. (2019) and Tangi et al. (2021) emphasize the organizational and institutional conditions influencing digital transformation. Regional governments may formally possess administrative discretion but lack the technical expertise, personnel, or institutional resources necessary to exercise it effectively. Therefore, the existence of administrative authority should be distinguished from the organizational capacity required to implement it.

Fourth, the hypothetical SIPD illustration demonstrates how the proposed framework may support more differentiated evaluations of nationally integrated digital platforms. Rather than treating platform ownership as the primary indicator of administrative autonomy, researchers and policymakers should investigate the extent to which regional governments retain authority over administrative information, procedural arrangements, and substantive decisions. This distinction is particularly relevant as Indonesia continues to pursue digital government integration through SPBE and related national initiatives.

Finally, the framework offers a foundation for future comparative research involving Indonesian municipalities and regencies. Studies could examine whether local governments operating within similar national digital systems experience different levels of technical-operational control and substantive administrative authority. Such comparisons may clarify whether variation arises from platform governance arrangements, regulatory requirements, organizational capacity, or institutional practices.

Theoretical Contribution and Limitations

The principal theoretical contribution of this article lies in distinguishing technical digital platform dependency from substantive administrative dependency. By integrating four analytical dimensions system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control the framework provides a more differentiated approach to examining administrative autonomy within digitally integrated governmental arrangements.

The proposed four-type typology extends this distinction by illustrating how technical-operational control and substantive administrative authority may vary independently. It challenges the assumption that technological centralization necessarily produces administrative recentralization, while also questioning whether local control over digital applications automatically indicates meaningful regional autonomy.

This conceptual contribution builds upon decentralization theory, multilevel governance, and digital-era governance. Rondinelli et al. (1983) and Faguet (2014) provide foundations for understanding the allocation and effectiveness of administrative authority. Hooghe and Marks (2003) explain the distribution of authority across governmental levels, while Dunleavy et al. (2006) highlight the integrative characteristics of digital-era governance. Ostrom (2010) further supports the possibility that coordination within shared institutional arrangements can coexist with multiple centers of decision-making.

Recent Indonesian scholarship provides additional context for this theoretical discussion. Heryani and Iskandar (2025) examine decentralization and public service

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implementation, while Artisa et al. (2026) emphasize the importance of adapting digital government arrangements to local institutional conditions. Paskarina et al. (2026) examine the governance rationalities underlying local digital policies, whereas Werang et al. (2026) discuss the relationship between formal regional autonomy and continuing central governmental influence. These perspectives reinforce the importance of examining how institutional authority operates within changing administrative arrangements.

Furthermore, Verhoef et al. (2021) emphasize that digital transformation involves broader organizational changes rather than technological adoption alone. Applied to central–local government relations, this perspective supports examining digital platforms as institutional arrangements capable of shaping administrative procedures, information access, and decision-making authority.

Nevertheless, the proposed framework has several limitations. First, it is derived from an integrative literature synthesis rather than a systematic review of all relevant scholarship. Consequently, its theoretical novelty remains provisional and requires further comparison with a broader body of research on digital platform governance and administrative autonomy.

Second, the four dimensions and the proposed typology have not been empirically validated. Their analytical boundaries may overlap in practice, particularly where data management and procedural arrangements simultaneously influence technical operations and substantive decisions. The high–low classifications presented in the typology are therefore conceptual distinctions rather than empirically established measurement categories.

Third, the SIPD-based municipal illustration is hypothetical and should not be interpreted as evidence of actual administrative dependency or autonomy in Indonesia. Further empirical research is required to determine how the proposed dimensions operate within specific digital government platforms and institutional settings.

Future studies could employ comparative case studies, regulatory analysis, platform documentation, and interviews with central and regional government officials to examine the distribution of technical and substantive control. Such research would help assess the explanatory usefulness of the framework and identify the conditions under which national digital integration supports, preserves, or constrains meaningful regional administrative autonomy.

CONCLUSION

Digital integration has transformed the exercise of decentralized administrative functions in Indonesia, yet dependence on nationally governed digital platforms does not necessarily eliminate local administrative autonomy. This study demonstrates the conceptual importance of distinguishing technical platform dependency from substantive administrative authority. Through an integrative literature synthesis, the article proposes four dimensions of platform control system control, data control, procedural control, and decision-making control and develops four ideal types of administrative autonomy. The framework highlights that technological standardization may coexist with meaningful local decision-making discretion, while technical flexibility does not automatically guarantee substantive administrative independence.

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From a practical perspective, the framework provides important considerations for policymakers at both national and local levels. For national policymakers, digital government integration should be designed to promote interoperability, data consistency, and administrative efficiency while safeguarding the decision-making authority legally assigned to regional governments. National digital policies should therefore establish clear institutional responsibilities, transparent data governance arrangements, and appropriate procedural flexibility to prevent technological standardization from unnecessarily restricting regional autonomy. For local policymakers, the framework emphasizes the importance of strengthening institutional capacity, improving digital governance competencies, and ensuring that administrative discretion can be effectively exercised within nationally integrated platforms. Local governments should also assess how system configurations, data access, and administrative workflows influence their ability to respond to community needs and implement regional priorities.

The proposed framework thus offers a conceptual foundation for evaluating whether digital integration supports administrative coordination while preserving meaningful decentralization. Nevertheless, its dimensions and typology remain theoretical and require empirical validation. Future research should examine platform governance arrangements, regulatory provisions, and administrative decision-making practices across Indonesian municipalities and regencies to assess the framework's applicability and explanatory value in different institutional contexts.

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