

Maritime Governance Transformation in Riau Islands: Analysis of Policy Implementation and Marine Management Issues

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Abstract: This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of maritime governance policy implementation in the Riau Islands Province (Kepri) in addressing complex maritime challenges. Kepri, which comprises 96% of the maritime territory, holds significant potential as a centre for national maritime management. However, various obstacles—such as limited infrastructure, a shortage of trained human resources, and weak enforcement of maritime law—present substantial challenges in achieving these objectives. This study employs a literature review approach to analyse secondary data from relevant sources, including books, scientific articles, government reports, and policy documents. Drawing on Ehler's (2003) theory regarding the implementation phase, this study evaluates four primary indicators: implementation capacity, law enforcement capacity, conflict resolution, and decision-making at the regional level. The findings indicate that the major challenges faced by the Riau Islands in implementing maritime policies include inadequate infrastructure, limited expertise within the maritime sector, and ineffective coordination among government agencies. Additionally, conflicts between traditional fishermen and large companies, as well as ineffective mechanisms for conflict resolution, further complicate maritime dynamics in the region. A top-down decision-making approach that lacks local community participation also leads to policies that are less responsive to local needs. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Riau Islands enhance its maritime infrastructure capacity, improve training and human resource development, and foster greater inter-agency collaboration in law enforcement. Furthermore, establishing more transparent and responsive maritime dispute resolution institutions and prioritising inclusive decision-making that engages local community participation is crucial. Synergy between the central government, local governments, and local communities is essential to optimise the management of Kepri's maritime potential.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has emphasized a vision of becoming a Global Maritime Fulcrum, reaffirming the destiny of a nation that is historically and geographically closely linked to the sea. This

vision is a strategic agenda to transform the way resources are viewed and managed, from a land-based orientation to an ocean-based orientation, for the sake of sovereignty and prosperity. The main foundation of this transformation is the existence of a strong, integrated, and adaptive maritime governance system that can translate national blueprints into concrete actions across the entire archipelago.

Within this national maritime constellation, the Riau Islands Province (Kepri) occupies an irreplaceable position. Geographically, Kepri is the most authentic manifestation of a maritime province, with 96% of its total area consisting of seas that are home to around 2,408 islands and surrounded by 2,369 km of coastline (BPS Riau Islands Province, 2024). Located at the gateway to one of the world's most critical shipping lanes, the Malacca Strait, Kepri serves as Indonesia's front door, defense hub, and diplomatic showcase. Therefore, the dynamics of maritime governance in Kepri, both its successes and failures, will always resonate strongly with national strategic interests.

Entering a new era of government under the leadership of President Prabowo Subianto since October 2024, the direction of national maritime policy has undergone sharpening and a shift in focus. While continuing the spirit of its predecessors to advance the maritime sector, the current administration places far greater emphasis on aspects of sovereignty, security, and economic independence. With his background as Minister of Defense, President Prabowo has outlined a vision of a "Sovereign, Advanced, and Sustainable Maritime Nusantara." This vision signals a more assertive approach to safeguarding maritime territories and ensuring that maritime wealth is truly utilized for domestic interests, marking a shift from global connectivity rhetoric toward national defense and production.

This new policy direction is supported by three main pillars that have been echoed in the first eight months of the administration. The first pillar is the unwavering reinforcement of maritime security dominance. This is indicated by plans to increase the budget and capabilities of the Indonesian Navy and the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla), with a clearer mandate to take firm action against all forms of maritime violations, particularly IUU Fishing and smuggling. Secondly, the government is striving to expedite the development of fisheries and marine resources. The government is encouraging large-scale investment to build processing industries in fishing centers to increase added value and absorb labor, in line with the grand agenda of economic independence (Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investment, 2025). Third, a program to modernize the fishing fleet and significantly expand aquaculture aims to achieve food sovereignty through marine protein.

The presence of new, more assertive and ambitious policies from the central government has directly increased the urgency of research in the Riau Islands. Kepri, with all its complexities, will de facto become the main testing ground (litmus test) for the effectiveness of Prabowo's maritime policies. The question becomes crucial: Can the central government's tougher security approach be effectively implemented on the ground by officials who have long been entangled in coordination issues? How will the Riau Islands Provincial Government respond and facilitate the national downstream agenda amid infrastructure limitations and potential social conflicts? This research is urgent as it will serve as one of the earliest evaluations of how the national vision collides, negotiates, and adapts at the most vital regional level.

It is the economic potential of the waters around the Riau Islands that the current administration is seeking to accelerate. The fisheries sector has consistently been one of the vital contributors to the Regional Domestic Product (RDP) and serves as the livelihood for over 25,000 fishing households (Riau Islands Provincial Marine and Fisheries Department, 2024). Additionally, the world-class shipbuilding industry in Batam and the marine tourism attractions in the Anambas, Natuna, and Bintan regions make the sea the most valuable asset, serving as the lifeblood of the social and economic fabric of the Kepri community.

The first urgency lies in the transient nature of this economic potential. This potential is not an endless well that can be exploited without limits. It is a window of opportunity bound by time and can close permanently if not managed wisely. Reports have begun to emerge about the decline in stocks of several commercial fish species due to overfishing (KKP, 2023). Investors in the tourism and maritime industries require legal certainty and security stability, which can only be guaranteed by effective governance. Without significant and immediate improvements in governance, the Riau Islands risk not only failing to optimize their potential

but also experiencing resource depletion and loss of investor confidence, ultimately stifling their own economic engine.

However, this strategic position also exposes the Riau Islands to a wide range of complex transnational maritime security threats. Illegal fishing practices by foreign vessels continue to be a chronic problem that depletes marine resources and undermines national sovereignty (Purbani & Koeshendrajana, 2021). The media regularly reports on operations to apprehend foreign-flagged fishing vessels in the North Natuna Sea (Saputra, 2024). This threat is exacerbated by the use of the Riau Islands' maritime routes as a corridor for transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the smuggling of strategic commodities (Pratama, 2023).

The second urgency is the escalation of security risks that directly threaten sovereignty. Failure to manage the waters of the Riau Islands is no longer merely an economic loss but has evolved into an existential threat to Indonesia's territorial integrity. Every illegal vessel that operates freely, every ton of narcotics successfully smuggled, is tangible evidence of the state's weak oversight. If left unaddressed, the strategically vital waters of the Riau Islands risk becoming an "ungoverned maritime space" exploited by non-state actors or other nations with vested interests. Understanding and addressing the failures in implementing maritime security policies in the Riau Islands is an urgent agenda to uphold the nation's dignity and sovereignty.

In addition to security threats, the waters of the Riau Islands are also facing increasingly alarming ecological pressures. High tanker traffic poses the risk of oil spills, while shipwrecks have repeatedly caused permanent damage to coral reef ecosystems (Hadi, 2023). The problem of marine plastic waste has also become a silent but deadly threat; it pollutes the waters and enters the food chain, ultimately endangering human health.

The third urgency is the approaching ecological tipping point that may be irreversible (irreversible ecological tipping point). Damage to coral reefs due to bleaching and human activities will take decades to hundreds of years to recover, if possible. The loss of these ecosystems means the loss of fish spawning grounds, the loss of natural coastal protection, and the demise of tourism appeal. At this point, the issue is no longer whether damage will occur, but whether the critical threshold has already been crossed or is about to be crossed. Delaying research and corrective actions means bequeathing a damaged and unproductive ocean to future generations—a legacy of failure that cannot be forgiven. In response to all this, the state has responded by developing various regulatory frameworks, with the main instrument at the regional level being Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2020 on the Zoning Plan for Coastal Areas and Small Islands (RZWP3K) (Government of the Riau Islands Province, 2020). This regulation is designed as the "constitution" for marine spatial management, aiming to rationalize utilization and mitigate conflicts. However, the idealism enshrined in the regulation often must yield to on-the-ground realities. The critical issue lies in the significant implementation gap between policy design and field practices. The phenomenon of "sectoral ego" among agencies with mandates at sea—such as the Indonesian Navy, the Indonesian Coast Guard, the Indonesian Marine Police, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and local governments—has resulted in inefficient oversight and partial law enforcement (Susanto, 2022).

The fourth urgent concern is the direct impact of this governance failure on people. This issue is not merely about statistics on state losses or ecosystem damage. This failure has a face and a name. It is the face of small fishermen in Natuna who are finding it increasingly difficult to catch fish because they cannot compete with illegal tiger trawlers. It is the name of a tourism entrepreneur in Bintan whose business is threatened by plastic waste washing up on the beach. It is the anxiety of parents in Karimun who fear their children are exposed to drugs smuggled through "rat ports." Dissecting the failure of policy implementation is essential to amplify the suffering and uncertainty experienced by citizens on the front lines.

This complex governance structure also touches on deep social and cultural dimensions that are often marginalized. Coastal communities and traditional maritime communities, who possess local knowledge and customary laws, are often not substantively involved in the technocratic policy-making process, resulting in policies that risk being "blind" to social realities and even triggering new conflicts (Adrianto & Wahyudin, 2019). The fifth urgency, and perhaps the most fundamental, is the erosion of social trust. When the state appears absent or powerless, when grandiose policies fail to deliver justice and prosperity, it is not only natural

resources that are eroded, but also the people's trust in their government. Dissatisfaction, apathy, or even civil disobedience can be the result of prolonged governance failures. Trust is the foundation of a functioning state. Analyzing the government's response and policy implementation is urgent to diagnose the level of this crisis of trust and identify ways to restore it before it becomes a bigger social and political problem.

In this multidimensional and urgent matrix of problems, the role of the Riau Islands Provincial Government becomes central. The Provincial Government finds itself in a difficult position: between mandates from the central government, coordination with vertical agencies, and demands from local communities. Their ability to act as a conductor orchestrating various interests will be a determining factor for the future of Kepri's maritime sector. Given this complex constellation of issues and the high stakes involved, as well as the ongoing national policy transition, the government must adopt innovative strategies to balance these competing pressures. Engaging in open dialogue with stakeholders and investing in sustainable development initiatives will be critical for encouraging resilience and ensuring the long-term prosperity of the region.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research method uses a normative study with a literature review approach to analyze maritime governance policies in island provinces in managing maritime complexity. This research approach focuses on assessing existing norms, rules, or policies and examining the extent to which their implementation aligns with established principles or standards. A normative approach is used to analyze maritime governance policies by evaluating their effectiveness based on Ehler's (2003) theory of policy implementation. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to collect secondary data from various literature sources, such as books, scientific articles, government reports, and relevant policy documents. After collecting data, the researcher analyzed documents related to the maritime governance policies that had been implemented. This analysis was conducted descriptively to illustrate the challenges faced by local governments in implementing maritime policies. This literature study provides an in-depth understanding of maritime governance policies, as well as the challenges encountered in implementation and law enforcement at the provincial level. Researchers analyzed documents related to maritime policies that have been implemented and examined how local governments responded to and addressed these challenges. This study also uses Ehler's (2003) theory in the implementation phase, which focuses on three main indicators: implementation capacity, law enforcement capacity, and conflict resolution and decision-making. These indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the maritime governance policies implemented by the Riau Islands Provincial Government in addressing maritime challenges. Thru this theory, researchers analyze the government's ability to effectively implement policies, its ability to enforce maritime law, and its ability to resolve conflicts arising from the management of maritime resources. This approach provides a systematic framework for evaluating the effectiveness of policies that have been implemented in the field. As a data collection method, this study relies on document analysis, which includes laws and regulations, government policies, and previous reports and studies related to maritime governance. Data collected from various sources were then analyzed descriptively and comparatively to describe the challenges faced by the government in addressing maritime complexity in the Riau Islands Province. This analysis aims to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the current strategy, as well as provide recommendations for improving governance practices. By identifying key areas requiring reform, this study aims to contribute to more effective and sustainable maritime management in the region.

RESULT AND DICUSSION

Implementation Capacity

The implementation capacity of maritime governance policies in the Riau Islands Province refers to the extent to which policies that have been formulated can be applied in the field. In this case, one of the main challenges faced is dependence on limited human resources. Local governments often lack workers with specific skills and knowledge in maritime sector management. For example, the lack of trained technical personnel in sustainable fisheries management and maritime environmental monitoring hinders the implementation of policies designed to maintain the sustainability of marine resources. This results in existing policies

often not being fully implemented at the field level, despite the existence of clear regulations. One concrete example is the implementation of the sea toll policy, which was designed to reduce price disparities in the 3TP (underdeveloped, outermost, and remote) regions, but is still hampered by inadequate port infrastructure and limited fleet capacity to serve these shipping routes. In addition, infrastructure is also a major obstacle to increasing the capacity to implement maritime policies in the Riau Islands. Although the Riau Islands Province has a vast sea area, with more than 96% of its total area consisting of oceans, many ports and maritime facilities in the region do not meet the operational standards required to support the major policies that have been implemented. For example, ports in remote areas such as Lingga and Anambas have limitations in terms of shipping channel depth and loading and unloading facilities, which make the distribution of goods and services inefficient. Therefore, policies that require the sustainability and optimization of maritime logistics routes have not been fully implemented due to the unpreparedness of port facilities and limited operational capacity.

We cannot ignore the importance of synergy between the central and regional governments in policy implementation. Regulations such as Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which grants autonomy to the regions, often encounter obstacles in coordination between the central and regional governments. Imbalances between policies made by the central government and the reality on the ground often hamper implementation at the regional level. For example, policies concerning marine or fisheries resource management, despite instructions from the central government, often cannot be immediately implemented due to a lack of adequate technical guidance and assistance from more competent parties at the local level. Therefore, to address these challenges, it is essential to enhance implementation capacity by allocating a larger budget and providing training for human resources in the regions. This investment in capacity building will not only empower local authorities to execute policies effectively but also encourage a culture of ownership and accountability among stakeholders. As a result, more sustainable practices can be developed, ensuring that regional resources are managed responsibly and equitably.

Policy evaluation focused on local needs is crucial in improving implementation capacity. Researchers found that local governments need more flexibility in formulating policies that are better tailored to the geographical and social conditions of the Riau Islands. Top-down policies without local context adjustments will be more difficult to apply and implement effectively. Therefore, it is important for local governments to continue conducting policy evaluations and allow room for necessary changes, involving more stakeholders, including the community and the private sector, in the decision-making process. This collaborative approach can enhance the relevance and acceptance of policies, ultimately leading to more sustainable outcomes. By fostering partnerships and encouraging dialogue among various stakeholders, local governments can better address the unique challenges and opportunities present in their regions.

The findings indicate a limitation in human resources with technical expertise and inadequate maritime infrastructure, making it difficult to optimally implement the formulated policies in the field. This aligns with the policy implementation aspect, which, according to Ehler (2003), emphasizes the need for capacity building as the foundation for successful implementation. Human resource and infrastructure unpreparedness contributed to the failure of policy implementation, such as the sea toll, which revealed a gap between policy design and on-the-ground realization capacity. This finding supports the theory that without adequate capacity support, policies will be difficult to implement effectively, especially in regions with unique geographical and social conditions like the Riau Islands. The emphasis on center-region synergy also underscores the importance of inter-actor coordination in Ehler's theory as a key variable in the implementation process.

Enforcement Capacity

In terms of law enforcement capacity, the Riau Islands Provincial Government also faces a number of challenges that hinder the successful management of maritime affairs. Although there are a number of clear and adequate legal regulations governing activities in the maritime sector, law enforcement in the field remains weak. One of the main causes is the limited

number of law enforcement officers with specialized skills in the maritime sector. For example, in tackling illegal fishing, officers in the field often lack the technical knowledge to identify and handle such cases. Effective law enforcement requires officers who are not only trained in law but also have technical understanding of maritime activities and marine resource management. Law No. 45 of 2009 on Fisheries, which regulates illegal fishing, and other regulations need to be balanced with increased capacity building for more competent human resources in maritime surveillance.

In addition, despite existing regulations, maritime surveillance is often hampered by infrastructure limitations. Many ports and sea areas in the Riau Islands do not have advanced monitoring systems such as radar or adequate patrol boats to conduct effective surveillance. Without sufficient equipment and technology, surveillance of illegal activities in the waters is very limited, allowing some illegal activities to continue undetected. For example, illegal fishing and marine pollution involving foreign vessels often go undetected due to a lack of effective monitoring facilities. Therefore, improving law enforcement capacity needs to involve the procurement of monitoring equipment, surveillance technology, and an increase in the number of patrol vessels that can cover all waters.

In terms of coordination between agencies, although there is a clear legal basis for law enforcement through various regulations, such as Government Regulation No. 85 of 2015 concerning Supervision and Control of Marine and Fisheries Resources, there is still a lack of synchronization between agencies, resulting in ineffective law enforcement. For example, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries has the authority to regulate and supervise the fisheries sector, but in practice, there is an overlap of authority with local governments and other agencies, such as the Batam Business Entity (BP Batam), which manages the port. This causes confusion in terms of division of tasks and responsibilities, which ultimately hinders the implementation of supervision and law enforcement. Therefore, improved coordination between agencies and the development of clear and integrated standard operating procedures (SOPs) are essential to strengthen law enforcement capacity. In addition, to improve law enforcement capacity, there needs to be increased cooperation between law enforcement officials at the central and regional levels. The Riau Islands Provincial Government needs to ensure that law enforcement officials in the region receive ongoing training to strengthen their understanding and skills in carrying out increasingly complex maritime surveillance tasks. Collaboration between the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the police, and local governments can accelerate the handling of legal violations and improve surveillance conditions in the waters.

The limited number of trained personnel and the lack of surveillance facilities indicate a weak law enforcement mechanism in the maritime sector. Ehler's theory (2003) asserts that effective law enforcement is a vital component in policy implementation, particularly in the monitoring and enforcement stages. This finding confirms that without competent human resources and adequate surveillance infrastructure, maritime policies will be difficult to enforce consistently, leading to continued violations such as illegal fishing. Additionally, the lack of synchronization between institutions indicates that harmonizing roles between institutions is a key driver of successful law enforcement, aligning with theories that emphasize the need for coordination and integration in implementation.

Conflict Resolution

The resolution of maritime conflicts in the Riau Islands Province involves various parties, such as fishermen, companies, local governments, and the private sector. Conflicts often arise due to competing interests in the use of marine space, such as issues between traditional fishermen and large fishing companies regarding fishing rights or restrictions on fishing areas. One of the regulations governing this is Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, which grants local governments the authority to manage marine and fisheries resources in their respective areas. However, despite the authority of local governments, conflict resolution mechanisms are often unclear, exacerbating tensions between the parties involved.

Another relevant regulation is Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, which addresses the rights of communities to protect their environment,

including their rights to marine resources they manage. However, many coastal communities feel they lack equitable access to marine resources, particularly within conservation areas that are often restricted. In this case, the provincial government needs to strengthen dialogue mechanisms between the parties involved, including the government, local communities, and industry, to identify solutions that are not only based on regulations but also on the active participation of all parties. Conflict resolution in Riau Islands Province is generally still carried out on an ad hoc basis, without structured and transparent mechanisms. As stipulated in Government Regulation No. 85 of 2015 concerning Supervision and Control of Marine and Fisheries Resources, efforts to resolve conflicts in the fisheries sector must involve all stakeholders by ensuring open access to information and fair decision-making. Conflicts that arise are often not resolved properly due to a lack of communication and understanding between stakeholders. Therefore, maritime conflict resolution in the Riau Islands requires a more formal and transparent legal approach.

In addition, efforts to resolve conflicts in the Riau Islands Province can be improved by introducing a maritime dispute resolution institution that can develop fairer and more efficient rules and procedures for resolution. As stated in Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 26/PERMEN-KP/2018 on Guidelines for the Management of Marine and Fisheries Resources in Regions, it is important for regions to have a forum or mediation mechanism involving representatives from the government, community, and industry to handle disputes related to the utilization of marine resources. The enforcement of coastal communities' rights, recognition of access rights to marine areas, and the application of fair sanctions must be carried out consistently and transparently. This collaborative approach will foster a sense of shared responsibility and enhance the sustainability of marine ecosystems. By ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice in resource management, regions can achieve a more balanced and equitable use of their marine resources.

The frequent conflicts arising from competing interests and unclear conflict resolution mechanisms underscore the issues of stakeholder coordination and participation in Ehler's theory. This theory highlights that active participation and clear conflict resolution mechanisms are essential for achieving sustainable implementation. In the context of the Riau Islands, resolving conflicts on an ad hoc basis without formal rules contradicts these principles. This finding provides empirical evidence that successful maritime governance requires a structured, transparent, and participatory dispute resolution system, which aligns with the collaborative approach advocated in the policy literature.

Decision Making

Decision-making in maritime sector management in the Riau Islands Province involves many actors, including local government, central government, the private sector, and local communities. The decision-making process in maritime governance should be based on participatory principles, in which all stakeholders are involved in every stage of policy planning, implementation, and evaluation. As stipulated in Law No. 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, the principles of openness and participation must be applied in the management of natural resources, including in the maritime sector. However, policies taken by the government often do not sufficiently involve all parties, especially local communities who are highly dependent on marine resources for their livelihoods.

Presidential Regulation No. 16 of 2018 on National Policy in the Maritime Sector emphasizes the importance of synergy between the central and regional governments in decision-making related to maritime policy. However, the implementation of this policy is not always smooth, especially when there are differences in interests between the parties involved, such as between the central government, which sets macro policies, and regional governments, which must adapt these policies to local conditions. Problems of coordination and communication between the central and regional governments often lead to policies that are less adaptive to local dynamics in the Riau Islands Province. This shows that in decision-making, there needs to be not only synergy between institutions, but also mechanisms to adjust policies to be more responsive to the needs and challenges at the regional level. In addition, maritime governance policies that have been established need to take into account

the social and economic dynamics of the region, which may differ from the situation at the central level. In this regard, fiscal decentralization as reflected in Law No. 1 of 2022 on Financial Relations between the Central Government and Local Governments provides space for local governments to make decisions that are more appropriate to the local context. However, the success of this decentralization is highly dependent on institutional capacity and human resources at the regional level. Therefore, decision-making by local governments must be accompanied by a deep understanding of local conditions, as well as the participation of local communities in determining policies that are in line with their needs.

An effective decision-making process also requires transparency and accountability, as stipulated in Government Regulation No. 71 of 2008 on the Implementation of Regional Financial Management. Community participation in maritime decision-making is crucial to ensure that policies are not only beneficial to certain sectors but also provide benefits to the community as a whole. The formulation of more inclusive policies, involving local communities in deliberation and consultation processes, will create fairer and more sustainable decisions in maritime management. Therefore, the Riau Islands Provincial Government needs to prioritize a community-based approach in decision-making regarding marine resources to ensure sustainability and economic equality in the region.

The lack of local community involvement in decision-making and weak center-region coordination indicate problems in the policy adoption and acceptance aspects, which are part of the Ehler implementation framework. The theory states that the implementation process must include stakeholder involvement from the beginning to ensure policies are aligned with local needs and socially acceptable. The findings indicate that without a participatory approach, policies are less responsive to local socio-economic dynamics, thereby hindering effectiveness and sustainability. This reinforces the importance of the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in effective governance.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Riau Islands Province, as a province that is highly dependent on its maritime potential, faces a series of challenges that hinder the effectiveness of maritime governance policies outlined by the central government. Kepri, with 96% of its territory consisting of sea and more than 2,400 islands, should be a crucial center for maritime management within the context of Indonesia as the World Maritime Axis. However, despite its significant potential, Kepri is still hindered by various issues related to policy implementation capacity, law enforcement, conflict resolution, and decision-making processes that are unresponsive to local needs.

Kepri, with its vast maritime territory, should be able to maximize the potential of its maritime resources. However, one of the biggest obstacles faced is the lack of port infrastructure in remote areas such as Lingga and Anambas. Although Riau Islands has fairly large ports in Batam and Tanjungpinang, areas further away from these economic centers struggle to meet the operational standards required to support efficient distribution of goods and management of the maritime sector. National policies such as sea tolls, designed to reduce price disparities in remote areas, cannot be implemented effectively due to limited port facilities in these regions. This hinders efficient goods distribution and widens price disparities, particularly in the 3TP (remote, outer, and isolated) areas.

Additionally, the province faces a shortage of trained human resources in the maritime sector. Many workers lack specialized skills in sustainable fisheries management, marine environmental monitoring, and marine spatial planning. Kepri requires more experts capable of managing fisheries potential and marine ecosystems sustainably, as well as conducting adequate monitoring and surveillance of its vast and complex waters. Without an increase in human resource capacity in this region, the policies that have been formulated cannot be implemented properly, even though regulations are already in place.

The issue of maritime law enforcement in Riau Islands is also crucial. The waters of Riau Islands, which are located on international shipping lanes, such as the Malacca Strait, are prone to illegal activities, such as illegal fishing by foreign vessels (IUU Fishing) and smuggling of goods. Although clear regulations exist, law enforcement practices are often

ineffective. One of the causes is the limited number of law enforcement officers trained in maritime affairs. Many officers lack understanding of the technical aspects of marine resource management and surveillance of vessels operating in the waters of the Riau Islands.

Additionally, limited monitoring facilities, such as radar, patrol vessels, and other surveillance systems, make surveillance of the Riau Islands waters highly limited. As an archipelagic province with thousands of islands, the Riau Islands require a surveillance system capable of covering all waters; however, technological limitations and inadequate equipment result in many maritime law violations, particularly those involving foreign vessels, going undetected.

The inability to address illegal fishing and smuggling causes significant losses to the fisheries sector and undermines the country's sovereignty in its maritime territory. Maritime conflict resolution is also a deep-rooted problem in the Riau Islands. Conflicts between traditional fishermen and large fishing companies often arise, particularly over access to marine resources and restrictions on fishing areas.

Coastal communities, especially small-scale fishermen in remote areas such as Natuna and Anambas, often find it difficult to compete with illegal fishing practices or environmentally destructive fishing methods. Although regulations governing access to marine resources exist, implementation on the ground is often inadequate, and conflict resolution processes between the parties involved are frequently ad hoc and lack clear procedures.

Resolving these conflicts is crucial, as they not only harm fishing communities but also have the potential to exacerbate existing social tensions. Without a structured dispute resolution mechanism, many conflicts remain unresolved, which can ultimately increase public distrust of local and central governments. Therefore, it is important for Riau Islands to establish a dispute resolution institution that can manage these conflicts transparently, involving all stakeholders, including the government, local communities, and the industrial sector.

The decision-making process in maritime management in Riau Islands often does not involve enough stakeholders, especially local communities. Many policies established by the central government do not take into account local conditions in Riau Islands. For example, policies designed to enhance Indonesia's maritime sovereignty do not always consider the challenges faced by Riau Islands, such as infrastructure limitations, human resources, and existing social issues. As a region heavily dependent on marine resources, Riau Islands requires policies that are more tailored to local social, economic, and cultural conditions. Coastal communities in the Riau Islands, which have strong local knowledge and customary laws, are often not involved in the policy-making process. This results in policies that are sometimes not in line with the needs and expectations of local communities, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of policy implementation. More inclusive decision-making, involving local communities and the private sector, will greatly help in creating more responsive and sustainable policies.

To overcome these challenges, Riau Islands needs to take concrete steps. First, strengthening maritime infrastructure in remote areas is essential to support the smooth distribution of goods and management of the maritime sector. The development of better ports and the improvement of human resource capacity in the maritime sector will be key to realizing more effective maritime policies. Second, to improve law enforcement capacity, Riau Islands needs to invest in more sophisticated monitoring and surveillance technology and provide ongoing training for law enforcement officials so that they can better address maritime issues. Third, the establishment of more formal and transparent dispute resolution institutions at the local level needs to be prioritized so that conflicts that arise can be resolved more fairly and do not add to social tensions. Finally, decision-making that is more based on the participation of local communities and the private sector will result in policies that are more in line with the conditions in Riau Islands. Kepri requires policies that are not only viewed from a national perspective but also tailored to local needs, so that these policies can be accepted and implemented effectively by the community. As a highly strategic maritime province, Kepri has significant potential, but to realize this potential, closer cooperation is needed between the central government, local governments, and the local community.

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