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Politician's Dilemma: The Political Dynamics of the Pinrang Regency DPRD in Implementing Local Expenditure Efficiency Policies for the 2025 Fiscal Year

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ABSTRACT

The fiscal efficiency policy through Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025 has narrowed the regional discretionary space and triggered the politician's dilemma for local legislative members. This study aims to analyze the manifestation of this dilemma and dissect the budget political dynamics, both at the internal factional consolidation stage and the external negotiation stage in the Pinrang Regency DPRD. This study employed a qualitative method with an intrinsic case study approach. Primary data were extracted through in-depth interviews with legislative and executive representatives, party executives, and societal elements. These data were then confronted with the literature using a source triangulation technique. The results reveal that budgetary constraints force council members to formulate electoral defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are executed by prioritizing the allocation of constituency programs to the dominant voter base areas. In the Budget Committee's external arena, the executive bureaucracy's defensive maneuvers utilizing technocratic compliance instruments are responded to by the legislature through compromising bargaining tactics. These tactics involve scaling down physical programs to avoid a regional budget ratification deadlock. This study concludes that the uniform budget-cutting policy has tangibly distorted the allocation of resources and transformed the council's representative instruments into pragmatic transactional commodities. These empirical findings suggest the need for a reorientation in the formulation of an asymmetrical fiscal efficiency policy by the central government. Furthermore, the institutionalisation of a budget-priority protection mechanism at the regional level is highly necessary so that strategic development designs do not become victims of short-term factional negotiations.

Keywords: Budget Politics; DPRD; Fiscal Efficiency; Politician's Dilemma; Regional Government.

INTRODUCTION

Fiscal decentralization positions the Regional House of Representatives (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* or DPRD) and the regional government as equal partners in local governance. This partnership formally obligates both institutions to formulate public policies oriented toward societal welfare. This orientation is crucial, particularly during the management phase of the Regional Budget Revenue and Expenditure (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah* or APBD). Legislative authority has strong bargaining power to oversee development priorities, ensuring that the development process aligns with prevailing legal instruments (Kamal, 2019; Nirwan et al., 2025). Nevertheless, the reality of working relations between the executive and legislative branches at the regional level rarely proceeds linearly in accordance with this formal administrative design.

Budget documents fundamentally cannot be understood merely as technocratic or accounting instruments. Budgeting constitutes a contested arena that brings together various actors with conflicting rationalities and interests (Rubin, 2016). Governmental practices indicate that every figure reflected in the APBD structure is the product of political negotiation, persuasion, and compromise. Legislators carry a representative mandate to advocate for resource distribution to their voter bases in their respective electoral districts. Conversely, the executive is required to maintain fiscal stability and govern macro-scale development programs that transcend the territorial boundaries of these electoral districts.

The tension within this budgeting arena escalated sharply following the issuance of Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025. This policy compels all levels of government to implement uniform budget cuts across various regional expenditure allocations. This reduction approach directly narrows the fiscal discretionary space of regional governments. Furthermore, the policy strengthens the central government's hierarchical control instruments over local planning (Fatimah et al., 2024). Consequently, the budget efficiency policy introduces substantial risks of delays in strategic infrastructure projects and a degradation of public service delivery quality at the regional level (Budiman et al., 2025; Munawir et al., 2025; Yuliati, 2025).

This regulatory constraint from the central government automatically places local political actors in a highly conflictual situation. This condition aligns with the conceptual framework of the politician's dilemma proposed by Geddes (1994). This concept elucidates the structural tension between a politician's individual rational interest in maintaining short-term political support and the necessity to fulfill institutional interests focused on preserving long-term state governance capacity. Council members are required to adhere to fiscal discipline and to rationalize development programs. However, they also risk losing electoral legitimacy if they fail to fulfil campaign promises to their constituents.

The manifestation of this dilemma is highly relevant empirically in Pinrang Regency. This region is characterized by a high degree of fiscal dependence on transfer funds from the central government. The majority of the Pinrang Regency population relies on the agrarian sector for economic support; therefore, public expectations regarding the regional government's role in providing basic agricultural infrastructure are substantial. When the central efficiency regulation is implemented, forcing regional governments to delay various infrastructure projects, the members of the Pinrang Regency DPRD become the most vulnerable actors. They directly face pressure from societal actors demanding the implementation of constituency programs.

Various previous studies have attempted to dissect the dynamics of interaction between the legislative and executive branches in the formation of local budget policies (Saputra et al., 2025). Other literature has also highlighted how budget political bargaining patterns operate during the management of specific crisis conditions (Soeparno, 2022). However, a significant literature gap remains regarding how legislative actors respond, navigate, and rationalise their political choices, particularly when confronted with a centralised fiscal-efficiency mandate that threatens the fulfilment of political promises at the grassroots level. Studies examining negotiation and compromise patterns in response to Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025 at the regency level are empirically underexplored.

This study aims to analyze the manifestation of the politician's dilemma in shaping the behavior of Pinrang Regency DPRD members in responding to and navigating the pressures of the 2025 fiscal-year local expenditure efficiency policy.

In line with this focus, the study dissects political dynamics at the internal legislative stage, specifically examining how council members manage competing inter-factional interests and align the burden of party instructions with the demands of electoral district aspirations amidst a narrowing fiscal space. Furthermore, the research investigates political dynamics at the external stage, where the DPRD positions itself as the epicenter of budget negotiation and compromise. The institution interacts directly with the regional government as the guardian of technocratic rationality, political party hierarchical structures, and societal interest groups to maintain electoral legitimacy and ensure the equitable distribution of resources. The findings are expected to make theoretical contributions by enriching the literature on decentralisation and local budget politics, while offering practical benefits for formulating more adaptive conflict-resolution mechanisms.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method with an intrinsic case study approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The selection of this approach was based on the necessity to explore specific phenomena possessing contextual uniqueness within the regional governance arena. The case presented in this paper offers a concrete representation of behavioral anomalies among local political actors. These anomalies occur when central government fiscal policies directly collide with regional representational demands. The case study approach enabled the researchers to thoroughly unpack the rational motives, bargaining strategies, and interaction patterns among political actors.

Pinrang Regency was designated as the research location due to the region's exceptionally high fiscal dependence on central government transfer funds. This structural dependence leaves local government instruments vulnerable when national authorities implement uniform budget-cutting policies. The condition of limited discretionary space renders this region the most ideal locus. The researchers could directly observe the escalation of the politician's dilemma and the dynamics of budget contestation between the executive and legislative branches.

Data collection relied on primary and secondary data. Primary data were extracted through in-depth interview techniques with several informants determined using a purposive sampling method. Inclusion criteria for informants were based on the level of direct involvement, possession of decision-making authority, and representation of interests in the regional budget formulation process. The selection of informants was concluded when the acquired information reached theoretical saturation.

Key informants in this study included council members, regional planning authority officials, the regional financial management agency, political party executives, and societal representatives from farmer groups. The involvement of these

five entities ensured that data recording did not solely center on the internal dynamics of the legislative institution. The cross-sectoral informant structure guaranteed the availability of data to dissect the external arena. These cross-sectoral data were crucial in reconstructing the political negotiation and compromise processes surrounding budget formulation.

Primary data collection was conducted through open-ended interviews to comprehensively record informants' direct statements (Spradley, 2016). Recording these original statements was critical to capturing the negotiation tactics, institutional pressures, and rationalization of actions of each involved actor. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected by examining official documents, including national budget efficiency regulations and supporting documents for regional fiscal policies. These documents were utilized to validate the structural context of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data analysis was operationalised using an interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing stages (Miles et al., 2014). During the data display stage, direct statements from key informants were precisely extracted and integrated directly into the argumentative narrative. This extraction of original statements served as the primary empirical basis for validating every analytical claim regarding the manifestation of the politician's dilemma and the movement of budget politics. This display strategy ensured that the analysis in the discussion relied on empirical field facts and did not shift into descriptive assumptions.

Data validity was tested using a source triangulation technique to verify the consistency of information from various intersecting perspectives. Unilateral claims from legislative actors were confronted with testimonies from executive actors, hierarchical directives from political parties, and grassroots expectations. This cross-examination guaranteed the objectivity of the findings. This triangulation also ensured that the presented reconstruction of budgetary political dynamics had a high degree of validity in addressing the research problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Manifestation of the Politician's Dilemma Amidst the Constraints of National Fiscal Efficiency Policy

The implementation of Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025 delivered a massive structural shock to the APBD governance in Pinrang Regency. This region possesses a financial posture that is highly dependent on transfer fund flows from the central government. When efficiency regulations are mandated vertically, the regional government loses the majority of its fiscal discretionary space. This condition forces uniform expenditure allocation cuts across various development sectors previously planned and agreed upon by regional government elements.

This narrowing of fiscal space triggered the emergence of the politician's dilemma, as constructed by [Geddes \(1994\)](#). This concept elucidates the clash of rationalities experienced by political actors between two opposing poles of interest. On the one hand, legislative members have a short-term rational interest in securing their political survival by distributing development resources to constituents. On the other hand, they face a long-term institutional imperative to submit to fiscal discipline and build state governance stability through budget cuts.

The first pressure constructing this dilemma originates from public expectations at the electoral district level. The majority of Pinrang Regency's population consists of economic actors operating in the agrarian sector. This societal group measures governmental performance not by macroeconomic stability achievements, but by the availability of physical infrastructure supporting their daily production activities. The public demands the realization of basic facilities directly touching local economic needs, as emphasized by the following representation of the farmer community:¹

"In my opinion, public service in Pinrang Regency is generally still good, still perceptible to the community. However, my main concern is the development and support of agricultural facilities. Do not let agricultural access or farming road development be hindered due to budget efficiency, whereas that is what we need most to facilitate access to the rice fields and transport the harvest."

This statement from the agrarian community constitutes an empirical reflection of the failure of the uniform budget-cutting (blanket-cutting) approach instructed by the central government. According to the studies by [Budiman et al. \(2025\)](#) and [Munawir et al. \(2025\)](#), efficiency policies frequently ignore the specific urgent needs of the regions and carry a high risk of impeding the execution of strategic infrastructure projects. Public concern in Pinrang proves that fiscal rationalization from the center has tangibly threatened the accessibility of the most vital basic services for the local economic circulation of the lower class.

Public demands that are not accommodated due to these budget cuts automatically translate into political pressure on DPRD members. Legislative members are political representatives who bear their constituents' mandate. They are bound by past campaign promises that must be realized through physical development programs. When the regional budget capacity shrinks drastically, legislative members lose their primary instrument to distribute constituency programs to their respective electoral districts, as openly acknowledged by a member of the Pinrang Regency DPRD:²

¹Interview with Kaharuddin, Farmer in Pinrang Regency, on November 5, 2025.

²Interview with Kamaruddin, S.H., M.H., Chairman of Commission I of the Pinrang Regency DPRD, on October 25, 2025.

“As the Pinrang Regency DPRD, we are burdened by the legacy of campaign promises, constituent expectations, and the necessity to maintain political support bases. All this time, we have channeled much of that through public programs and constituency activities. So when the budget is tightened, that burden remains, while the space to execute it actually narrows. Frankly, we in the DPRD view this efficiency more as a budget cut that significantly burdens the fulfillment of needs in the electoral districts. In the context of the electoral district, this efficiency policy, personally and for the constituents, is quite detrimental to us because it makes fulfilling citizens’ aspirations much harder.”

This acknowledgement from the legislative actor reinforces the DPRD’s institutional position, which is fraught with uncertainty. The articulated phrase indicating detriment demonstrates that fiscal efficiency is inversely proportional to the need to nurture the electoral legitimacy of the people’s representatives. Administrative complaints regarding this narrowing program space are also confirmed by the findings of [Yuliati \(2025\)](#), which highlighted the impact of similar restrictions on the limited execution of development programs in other regions. Council members are in a difficult position, as they are expected to meet constituent expectations, yet the available funding instruments are strictly limited by national regulations.

The psychological and political burden on council members becomes increasingly heavy because pressure does not only come from the grassroots but also from the top-down hierarchy. Political party management structures provide precise instructions to their cadres occupying regional parliamentary seats. Political parties realize that openly rejecting the central government’s budget rationalization policy will trigger institutional reprimands posing risks to the party’s position. Therefore, party elites demand their cadres in the council to act pragmatically and immediately adapt to the reality of the narrowing fiscal space, in accordance with the assertion from a structural management element of the NasDem Party:³

“So the party reminds [us], do not promise anything that exceeds the regional budget capacity. Moreover, if ultimately there are programs that indeed cannot be financed, the party’s stance is clear: we must be realistic, adapt to the budget capabilities, while continuing to explain it honestly to the public.”

This party instruction restricts council members’ ability to independently reject the policy. Regional legislators are now constrained by three dimensions of power relations demanding simultaneous compliance. They are forced to be rational by national-level state efficiency regulations, instructed to be realistic by the party command structure, and simultaneously held accountable for physical development promises by voters in their electoral districts.

³Interview with Muh. Ramli Rahim, Secretary of the NasDem Party of Pinrang Regency, on October 23, 2025.

The inability to respond to these three pressures individually directs legislative members to formulate collective defense mechanisms. Faced with continuously shrinking budget resources, legislators realise that the most rational course is to consolidate allocations within the DPRD. Budget political dynamics then mutate, entering the stage of managing inter-factional debates to ensure that the remaining funds are secured to nurture the most strategic voter base areas.

B. Internal Legislative Political Dynamics: Factional Consolidation, Electoral Bases, and Aspiration Rationalization

The structural pressure resulting from the national fiscal efficiency policy not only creates an individual dilemma for legislative members but also transforms the internal space of the DPRD into a highly fierce contestation arena. The shrinkage of regional budget capacity directly triggers a zero-sum game condition among the various factions occupying parliamentary seats. As available resources become increasingly limited, every interest group within the legislative institution is driven to maneuver more aggressively to secure budget portions for the survival of its constituents.

This internal contestation constitutes a crucial consolidation stage that must be traversed before the legislative branch confronts the executive. Every faction recognises that failure to secure funding for constituency programs will have a fatal impact on the projected continuity of political support in the electoral districts. Therefore, aspirations gathered through the recess mechanism must undergo a rigorous selection and negotiation process at the commission and cross-factional levels to determine which proposed priorities must absolutely be maintained.

In practice, this priority selection process inevitably culminates in an allocation battle heavily laden with political interests. Council members face the imperative to convert limited funds into programs possessing the highest electoral leverage. This motive underlies the emergence of internal conflicts regarding the proportional distribution of physical projects and social assistance across electoral districts, as bluntly expressed by a member of the Pinrang Regency DPRD:⁴

“Frankly, in the practice of budget distribution, the following principle usually applies: where our votes are substantial and our support base is strong, budgeting policies will also predominantly be directed there. In many cases, the flow of support and program oversight is more strongly directed toward the main political support bases, such that patronage patterns tend to flow more toward the groups that have thus far been the most dominant political pillars.”

The acknowledgement of this patronage distribution pattern shows that budget design during a period of fiscal constraint is driven solely by self-

⁴Interview with Kamaruddin, S.H., M.H., Chairman of Commission I of the Pinrang Regency DPRD, on October 25, 2025.

preservation calculations. Referring to the rational choice approach analysis by Cope (2000) and Smith (2004), politicians as rational actors will consistently prioritize actions that minimize the risk of electoral punishment from rational voters. The legislative decision to direct the remaining fiscal space toward primary support bases constitutes the most logical survival strategy. This measure is designed to prevent constituent votes from shifting to political competitors in the subsequent general election cycle.

This choice rationalization also affirms that the council's proposed constituency programs are not equitable development instruments blind to the political power map. These aspirational programs operate functionally as transactional commodities to maintain the loyalty of primary supporting groups. Amid the threat of budget cuts resulting from central government directives, maintaining the supply of resources to the largest vote-contributing regions is deemed far more rational. This action is prioritised over distributing the remaining funds evenly across areas that do not guarantee commensurate electoral returns.

This internal consolidation to secure the voter base is not solely driven by the individual initiatives of council members but is also systematically coordinated by political party structures. The party holds control over the factions within the legislative institution, functioning them as ideological and strategic extensions. Party instructions become the line of command directing cadres in mapping which societal elements occupy the highest hierarchy to receive development program interventions.

The delegation of budget lobbying authority to the factional level ensures that every debate in the assembly room remains linear with the party's electoral victory agenda. Party executives actively provide oversight in setting allocation targets, ensuring that assistance and facilitation for societal groups are distributed accurately to electoral strongholds. This highly specific policy intervention target mapping strategy is detailed by a structural management element of the NasDem Party:⁵

"In practice, lobbying for budget allocation determination is delegated to each faction member in the DPRD, including us in Faction N. Thus, we frequently receive directives and input from the party when entering the budget discussion stages. We usually map the party's vote bases. Vote bases within farmer groups and MSME [Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises] actors are the most prioritized groups. Subsequently, community leader groups and mass organizations tend to be more prioritized for accommodation because they make tangible contributions to maintaining political support in the field."

⁵Interview with Muh. Ramli Rahim, Secretary of the NasDem Party of Pinrang Regency, on October 23, 2025.

The mapping of target groups converging on farmers, micro-enterprise actors, and mass organizations indicates a precisely calculated policy design. This practice of targeting allocations to organized social groups resonates strongly with the findings of [Elsa and Kosandi \(2021\)](#) and [Rahmanto et al. \(2021\)](#) regarding the political exploitation of regional budgets. Both literatures empirically prove that the distribution of grant funds, social assistance, and community group facilitation programs constitutes an effective legal instrument. This instrument is used to lock in electability and secure the mass base ahead of the momentum of local political contestation.

The concentration of power on interest groups with mass-mobilisation influence ultimately becomes the key to resolving internal friction within the council. Fierce inter-factional debates over budget distribution can be mitigated once every political entity has agreed on the percentage of the constituency program quota to be returned to their respective electoral strongholds. This internal compromise successfully unites various competing factions into a single, consolidated institutional representation agenda design.

Once the process of harmonizing internal factional interests is achieved and the formulation of electoral base allocation priorities is successfully standardized into a comprehensive legislative proposal document, the council radically alters its movement orientation. Council members' political attention is no longer focused on competition for resources among colleagues. The political focus now shifts to confronting the bureaucratic entity that holds authority over technocratic rationality. The integrated constituency program agenda is subsequently transported out of the internal legislative domain to the Budget Committee's negotiation table, thereby opening a new battleground that directly confronts the executive branch.

C. External Political Dynamics: The Arena of Compromise among the DPRD, the Executive, and Public Expectations

Once the process of harmonizing internal factional interests is achieved and the electoral base allocation priorities are successfully consolidated, the council's focus shifts to confronting the governmental bureaucratic authority. DPRD members carry these constituency program designs into the Budget Committee's negotiation room. This action triggers a new phase constituting an open contestation with the Regional Government Budget Team (*Tim Anggaran Pemerintah Daerah or TAPD*). At this stage, the APBD document no longer manifests as technocratic and neutral accounting details. Referring to the analytical framework proposed by [Rubin \(2016\)](#), the budget document in this phase transforms entirely into a political arena where various representing actors negotiate to determine the final distribution of limited resources.

The legislative branch's audacity to bargain aggressively amidst national fiscal constraints is inseparable from its structural legitimacy. Juridically and constitutionally, the council serves as an equal partner with the regional head in formulating public policy (Kamal, 2019). This equal partnership relation grants council members an informal veto power during the budget ratification stage. This veto power compels the executive branch to refrain from making decisions unilaterally (Nirwan et al., 2025). The legislative authority is fully leveraging its authority to pressure the regional government to continue accommodating physical project proposals in the electoral districts.

Facing representative pressure from the legislative institution, the TAPD formulates defense mechanisms anchored in technocratic rationality. The executive branch, represented by the regional financial management authority, recognizes that accommodating all of the council's populist proposals would undermine the budget posture. Such accommodation may also violate the efficiency provisions mandated by the central government. As a form of resistance, the financial bureaucracy utilizes the instrument of regulatory compliance as the primary shield to stem the influx of programs lacking indicative planning foundations, as emphasized by the leadership element of the Regional Financial Management Agency (*Badan Keuangan dan Aset Daerah or BKUD*):⁶

"Regarding budget policy revisions, we at the BKUD always adhere to the central government's regulations. Therefore, the change is not merely due to pressure from political actors in the region, but because there is indeed a regulatory basis. Pressure may come, but what we consistently use as the primary reference is the official regulation, not momentary political desires."

This statement from the financial bureaucrat confirms that the executive uses administrative compliance to resolve conflicts. This technocratic defensive position aligns with the conceptual framework of regional government accountability and internal control (Kurniawan & Solikin, 2025; Mediaty et al., 2025; Vambia et al., 2025). This literature shows that restricting legislative political maneuvers can be effective only if the regional financial authority firmly adheres to reporting systems and normative guidelines. These guidelines are designed so that they cannot be interfered with by momentary factional interests.

Beyond the financial authority, the regional development planning institution also faces massive political pressure. Bureaucratic planning entities are in a vulnerable position because they are required to translate the regional head's vision while simultaneously securing fiscal space, which has been reduced by the central government (Fatimah et al., 2024). Concurrently, the planning institution becomes the first gate to face tough negotiations from council members who insist

⁶Interview with Agurhan Madjid, Head of the Regional Financial Management Agency of Pinrang Regency, on November 2, 2025.

on inserting sectoral activity designs into the work programs of relevant agencies. This condition is directly acknowledged by the leadership representation of the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Innovation Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan, Riset, dan Inovasi Daerah or Bapperida*):⁷

“Our position as a planning institution is indeed in the middle. On one hand, we face political pressure from various directions, both from the DPRD and societal groups. On the other hand, we have an obligation to maintain planning consistency and regional financial stability.”

This testimony from the planning institution demonstrates a frontal clash between two governance paradigms. On one hand, the bureaucracy strives to secure the consistency of medium-term planning documents to prevent deviation from the strictures of technical rationality. On the other hand, the council brings political rationality demanding budget flexibility to answer daily public expectations. This clash of interests during the budget formulation period triggers prolonged negotiations dominating the relational interaction between the executive and legislative branches at the local level (Soeparno, 2022; Saputra et al., 2025).

The intensity of negotiations at the Budget Committee table also reveals a structural anomaly regarding the council's institutional role. Under ideal conditions, the oversight authority inherent in the legislative institution should be directed to evaluate the outputs and effectiveness of regional government spending (Ibadurrahman et al., 2023; Sudarsono et al., 2024). However, the constraints imposed by fiscal efficiency policies alter the orientation of this oversight. The oversight function mutates into a pressure instrument for council members to question the distribution of allocations. This function is utilized to ensure that no electoral district initiative programs are unilaterally eliminated by the executive.

Facing a potential deadlock that could lead to the rejection of the budget document, both parties are ultimately forced to resolve it. The executive realizes that the stability of governmental operations requires the council's approval. Conversely, the legislature understands that a total rejection would instead freeze the entire flow of programs to their electoral districts. Therefore, gradual bargaining tactics are employed to break the deadlock. Compromises are achieved by relinquishing a portion of the programs' quantitative targets without necessarily eliminating the identity of those programs, as acknowledged by a Pinrang Regency legislative actor:⁸

“The aspirations we bring are still striving to be included, but the form of activity, scale, or placement adapts to the budget capabilities and the regional government's priorities. The compromise point mostly emerges when these aspirations are translated into executable programs.”

⁷Interview with Andi Fahrudin Renreng, Head of the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Innovation Agency of Pinrang Regency, on November 2, 2025.

⁸Interview with Kamaruddin, S.H., M.H., Chairman of Commission I of the Pinrang Regency DPRD, on October 25, 2025.

This tactic of scaling down programs constitutes a manifestation of a highly pragmatic compromise. Council members rationalize that possessing an infrastructure program with a smaller working volume is far more politically advantageous than having no physical program at all. This reduction in activity scale enables the executive to maintain the discipline of fiscal thresholds. Simultaneously, this tactic salvages council members' image in the eyes of constituents, who will still perceive tangible evidence of the fulfillment of campaign promises.

This practice of pragmatic rationalization does not stop at the governmental elite level but is also distributed and accepted at the grassroots level. The community, as rational voters, is aware of the constraints the regional government currently faces. Conflict escalation and development delays can be avoided when the results of the elite's compromise are communicated transparently to the public, as reflected in the response of a farmer group representative:⁹

“As long as the process does not ignore the people's needs and remains on the side of common interests, I think differences of opinion and negotiations can actually produce policies that are fairer and more suited to conditions in the field.”

This public acceptance serves as the closing point that defuses short-term budgetary political tensions. Constituents are willing to tolerate a reduction in the scale of development interventions provided that access to basic economic support facilities, such as minor farming road repairs, continues to be executed by the regional government. The legitimacy of council members is successfully maintained through a minimalist resource channeling strategy that coincides with the tolerance limit of the agrarian community's expectations.

Nevertheless, this electoral compromise under efficiency pressure harbors a highly serious latent risk for Pinrang Regency's macro development trajectory. The executive and legislative decision to prioritize the budget on small-scale infrastructure projects fragmented across various electoral districts results in the siphoning of resources from strategic cross-regional programs. Development directed solely to appease local constituents will distort the blueprint for the regional government's long-term planning.

As a result, conflict resolution based on transactions securing momentary political support has a significant potential to undermine the quality of policy outputs. The distribution of the remaining budget that prioritises electability over technocratic value can trigger stagnation in macro-governmental indicators. Referring to the study by [Rahmah et al. \(2025\)](#), policy adaptation that ignores comprehensive priorities will directly impede the acceleration of the human development index. This condition will also reduce the effectiveness of government interventions in answering substantial welfare challenges in the future.

⁹Interview with Kaharuddin, Farmer in Pinrang Regency, on November 5, 2025.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The implementation of centralized fiscal efficiency policies has tangibly placed regional legislative actors into a highly acute manifestation of the politician's dilemma. The penetration of the Presidential Instruction regarding uniform budget cuts created a direct clash of rationalities for the members of the Pinrang Regency DPRD. They are confronted with an institutional imperative to comply with state fiscal space discipline. Simultaneously, they bear the representative burden of fulfilling the public's promises of physical development in their electoral districts. The region's heavy reliance on central transfer funds leaves local political actors with little discretion, so unmet public demands directly threaten the electoral legitimacy of the people's representatives.

In response to this regulatory constraint and the narrowing budgetary space, legislators navigate the pressure by formulating self-defence mechanisms within the council's internal space. Political dynamics mutate into a zero-sum game arena among factions competing for highly limited remaining resources. The decision to consolidate and prioritise the allocation of constituency program proposals to dominant-voter base areas is a rational calculation to ensure the continuity of political support. The act of prioritizing social assistance and agrarian infrastructure programs to primary electoral strongholds proves that aspirational programs have functioned pragmatically. These programs become transactional commodities to nurture patronage and prevent electoral punishment from constituents.

The political consolidation formed within the internal factional space subsequently triggers conflict escalation when confronted with bureaucratic authority at the Budget Committee table. The executive utilizes the instruments of administrative compliance and technocratic rationality as a shield to stem the populist legislative maneuvers that potentially destroy the consistency of regional planning. Facing the threat of a budgetary determination deadlock, both parties seek a way out through a compromise to scale down physical programs. This activity volume reduction tactic successfully salvages the politicians' image in the eyes of the public and maintains short-term regional governmental stability. Nevertheless, this tactic carries a latent risk of development fragmentation that can distort the region's medium-term strategic design.

The consequences of these conceptual findings demand a reorientation in the formulation of financial governance policies between the central and regional governments. The central government needs to adopt an asymmetrical, adaptive approach to fiscal efficiency. The magnitude of budget cuts must take into account the degree of fiscal dependence and the specifications of basic infrastructure needs in each region. At the regional level, the executive and legislative branches urgently need to institutionalise a more binding budget-prioritisation mechanism. This institutionalisation is essential to safeguard strategic cross-regional development programs from becoming victims of pragmatic cuts driven by factional political bargaining.

This study has unpacked the anatomy of negotiation and the rationality of local political actors amidst the pressure of national fiscal policy through a qualitative approach. To expand the theoretical reach in the future, further research is highly recommended to test the impact of this budget political compromise using quantitative instruments. Statistical measurements regarding the correlation between the shrinkage of physical program scales due to efficiency and the deceleration of human development index indicators at the regency level will provide a more comprehensive empirical validation. Furthermore, comparative studies of legislative political dynamics across regions with high and low original regional revenue capacities will be highly relevant for enriching the literature on fiscal decentralisation in Indonesia.

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