

(Review Article)

# Maritime Decentralization and Blue Governance within the Framework of Regional Autonomy: A Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract :** *Maritime decentralization and blue governance have emerged as strategic issues in contemporary marine governance reforms, particularly within the framework of regional autonomy. This article examines the conceptual relationship and evolving literature on maritime decentralization and blue governance using a systematic literature review (SLR) approach. The review process followed PRISMA guidelines and included peer-reviewed publications published between 2019 and 2024. The findings indicate that maritime decentralization has evolved from administrative deconcentration toward substantive devolution and more collaborative polycentric governance models. The effectiveness of decentralization is strongly influenced by multi-level governance configurations, particularly vertical coordination and horizontal cross-actor participation. Meanwhile, blue governance has developed as a normative paradigm emphasizing ecological sustainability, equitable benefit distribution, transparency, and community participation in marine resource management. In the Indonesian context, the implementation of blue governance faces challenges related to regulatory harmonization and subnational institutional capacity following marine authority reforms. The study concludes that maritime decentralization can only achieve its intended outcomes when embedded within an adaptive multi-level governance framework aligned with the principles of blue governance.*

**Keywords:** *maritime decentralization; blue governance; regional autonomy; multi-level governance; marine governance; systematic literature review*

## 1. Introduction

The transformation of marine governance over the past decade has demonstrated a significant shift from sectoral approaches toward a more integrated and sustainability-oriented framework known as blue governance. This concept has emerged in response to increasing pressures from climate change, marine resource exploitation, and the growing need for equitable distribution of blue economy benefits (Bennett et al., 2019; Farmery et al., 2021). In the context of developing and archipelagic countries, marine governance can no longer be managed through a purely hierarchical and centralized system; instead, it requires an adaptive multi-level governance approach. Therefore, decentralization becomes a crucial instrument for distributing authority over marine

resource management to subnational governments, enabling more responsive policies to local socio-ecological conditions.

Decentralization in the marine sector is widely regarded as a mechanism to enhance public policy effectiveness by bringing government closer to coastal communities. Recent studies suggest that the devolution of authority can strengthen horizontal accountability and increase community participation in resource management (Faguet & Pöschl, 2015). However, the literature also highlights that without clear institutional design, decentralization may lead to policy fragmentation and regulatory overlap. Within the framework of blue governance, these challenges become more complex due to the need for cross-sectoral coordination, including fisheries, marine tourism, conservation, and ocean energy.

The development of blue economy discourse over the past five years has expanded the scope of marine governance from mere economic exploitation to a broader agenda encompassing sustainability and social justice (Voyer et al., 2020). This approach emphasizes the integration of economic policy with ecosystem protection and the empowerment of coastal communities. However, several studies underline that the implementation of the blue economy often remains top-down and insufficiently integrated with regional autonomy structures. This condition raises important questions regarding the extent to which maritime decentralization can effectively support the realization of blue governance principles.

In the Indonesian context as an archipelagic state, regional autonomy reforms have significantly reshaped the distribution of authority over marine resource management between central and local governments. Studies published in *Jurnal Bina Praja* indicate that the redistribution of authority following marine regulatory reforms has created new dynamics in intergovernmental coordination (Prianto et al., 2024). These changes highlight the importance of clear institutional design to ensure that decentralization does not undermine the effectiveness of marine resource monitoring and conservation.

Research in the *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik* further emphasizes that multi-level governance in the marine sector requires collaborative mechanisms among central, provincial, and district/city governments (Pratiwi, 2021). Without a robust coordination framework, regional autonomy may lead to policy disparities across coastal regions. This suggests that blue governance is not merely an environmental issue, but also a matter of public policy design and power relations across different levels of government.

Globally, recent literature underscores the importance of a polycentric governance approach in marine management, where multiple actors possess interacting authorities (Morrison et al., 2019). While this approach aligns with decentralization principles, it requires adequate institutional capacity at the local level. Without such capacity, the devolution of

authority may weaken resource management effectiveness and increase the risk of conflicts of interest.

The issue of social justice has also become a central concern in contemporary studies on blue governance. Bennett et al. (2019) emphasize that the transition toward a blue economy must ensure inclusive benefit distribution for coastal communities. Within a decentralized system, local governments play a strategic role in ensuring that marine policies are not solely investment-oriented, but also protect the rights of local communities.

In Indonesian public policy literature, the integration of marine policy within the framework of regional autonomy remains relatively limited. Studies in the *Jurnal Kebijakan dan Administrasi Publik* show that the implementation of maritime policies often faces challenges related to vertical coordination (Nugraha, 2024). This indicates a gap between the normative framework of decentralization and its practical implementation in governance.

Climate change further reinforces the urgency of marine governance reform. Farmery et al. (2021) argue that locally based adaptation requires sufficient authority at the subnational level. Maritime decentralization can serve as a mechanism to accelerate policy responses to ecological risks, provided that adequate fiscal and regulatory support is ensured by the central government.

From a governance perspective, the interaction between decentralization and blue governance reflects a broader shift from government to governance, where collaboration and actor networks become central (Torfing et al., 2019). Local governments are no longer merely implementers of central policies, but arenas for policy innovation that are adaptive to local needs.

Nevertheless, several studies warn that decentralization without effective oversight mechanisms may increase the risk of elite capture at the local level (Faguet & Pöschl, 2015). In the marine sector, which holds high economic value, this risk becomes even more significant. Recent studies on ocean governance also emphasize the importance of cross-sectoral policy coherence (Voyer et al., 2020). Without such integration, decentralization may instead produce fragmented and unsustainable policies.

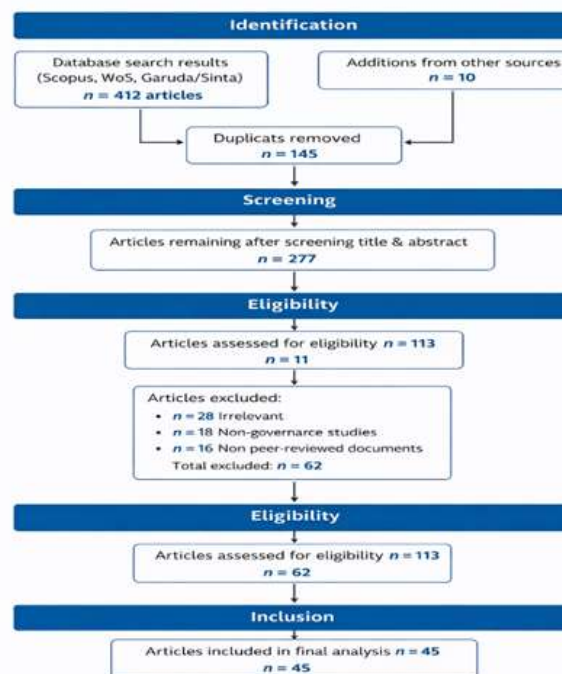
In Indonesia, the dynamics of central-local relations in the marine sector reveal tensions between the efficiency of centralization and the need for local participation. Studies in *Jurnal Bina Praja* highlight the importance of a hybrid governance model that combines national control with local flexibility (Prianto et al., 2024). Both international and national literature over the past five years indicate that the relationship between maritime decentralization and blue governance remains conceptually fragmented. Some studies focus primarily on the blue economy, while others emphasize the institutional design of decentralization.

Based on these gaps in the literature, a systematic literature review is needed to comprehensively synthesize the relationship between maritime decentralization and blue governance within the framework of regional autonomy. Such a synthesis is essential for developing a coherent governance and public policy framework capable of explaining how decentralization design influences the success of sustainable marine governance at the subnational level.

## 2. Method

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to systematically analyze the relationship between maritime decentralization and blue governance within the framework of regional autonomy. This approach was selected as it enables a structured synthesis of existing literature on the distribution of marine resource management authority at the subnational level, as well as its implications for sustainable governance (Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019).

The literature search was conducted across major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Garuda/Sinta, covering publications from 2019 to 2024. The search process was performed using combinations of keywords applied to the title, abstract, and keywords fields, employing the following search string:



**Figure 1.** PRISMA 2020 systematic review flowchart.

Source: Author, 2026.

The literature selection process in this study followed the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021)

At the identification stage, the database search across Scopus, Web of Science, and Garuda/Sinta yielded a total of 412 articles, with an additional 10 articles identified through backward and forward reference tracking. After merging the records, 145 duplicate articles were removed.

During the screening stage, the remaining articles were filtered based on titles and abstracts, resulting in 277 initially relevant articles. At the eligibility stage, a full-text review was conducted on 113 articles to ensure their alignment with the focus on maritime decentralization and blue governance within the framework of regional autonomy. At this stage, 62 articles were excluded due to lack of substantive relevance, absence of a governance perspective, or because they were not peer-reviewed publications.

The final stage was inclusion, in which 45 articles met all the criteria and were subjected to in-depth analysis. This stepwise process ensured that the synthesized studies were highly relevant and met the academic quality standards required for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021; Snyder, 2019)

Subsequently, the articles that passed the PRISMA selection process were systematically extracted using an analytical framework that included: autonomy context, theoretical approach, governance level, forms of maritime decentralization, dimensions of blue governance, institutional challenges, and policy implications. Table 1 presents the results of this data extraction and serves as the foundation for the thematic synthesis discussed in the results and discussion section.

**Table 1.** Data Extraction Results of Maritime Decentralization and Blue Governance Study (2019–2024)

Author (Year)	Country	Theory	Gov. Level	Decentralization Focus	Blue Gov. Dimension	Institutional Issue	Policy Insight
Jentoft & Chuenpagdee (2015)	Norway	Co-governance	Multi-level	Fisheries authority sharing	Participation, sustainability	Capacity asymmetry	Strengthen local institutions
Habibah (2020)	Indonesia	Legal pluralism, MLG	Provincial-National	Overlapping marine jurisdiction	Equity, justice	Regulatory fragmentation	Harmonize marine regulation
Link & Browman (2017)	Global	Polycentric governance	Multi-level	Decentralized marine management	Ecosystem-based	Coordination gaps	Enhance network governance
Campbell et al. (2016a)	Pacific Islands	Adaptive governance	Local-National	Community marine management	Sustainability, participation	Fiscal instability	Long-term local funding

<b>Scott et al. (2022)</b>	Australia	MLG	Federal-State	Coastal regulatory power	Environmental sustainability	Vertical tension	Clarify authority division
<b>Bennett et al. (2019)</b>	Canada	Institutional analysis	Provincial-Local	Marine spatial planning	Inclusiveness	Stakeholder exclusion	Participatory MSP design
<b>Armitage et al. (2008)</b>	Caribbean	Co-management	Multi-level	Fisheries decentralization	Resilience	Weak enforcement	Community monitoring
<b>Schaefer &amp; Barale (2011)</b>	EU	EU multi-level governance	Multi-level	Maritime spatial planning	Sustainability	Cross-border fragmentation	Regional coordination
<b>Amon et al. (2022)</b>	Southeast Asia	Governance capacity	Local-Provincial	Coastal delegation	Equity, sustainability	Capacity gap	Capacity-building reform
<b>Campbell et al. (2021)</b>	Global South	Blue economy governance	National-Local	Blue economy decentralization	Justice, inclusion	Elite capture	Social safeguards
<b>Farmery et al. (2021)</b>	Pacific	Institutional fit	Multi-level	Ocean economy governance	Sustainability	Institutional misfit	Institutional redesign
<b>De Grunt et al. (2018)</b>	Europe	Maritime governance	Multi-level	Marine spatial authority	Ecosystem-based	Sectoral silos	Cross-sector integration

Source: Author's compilation and extraction based on systematic literature review, 2026.

Table 1 indicates that the majority of studies on maritime decentralization are analyzed within the framework of multi-level governance and institutional approaches, with a primary focus on the distribution of authority over marine resource management and the dynamics of central-local coordination.

The most prominent dimensions of blue governance identified in the literature include ecological sustainability, participation, and distributive justice. Meanwhile, the most consistently reported institutional challenges involve regulatory fragmentation, overlapping authority, and capacity gaps at the subnational level. These patterns provide the foundation for the development of the thematic synthesis discussed in the following section.

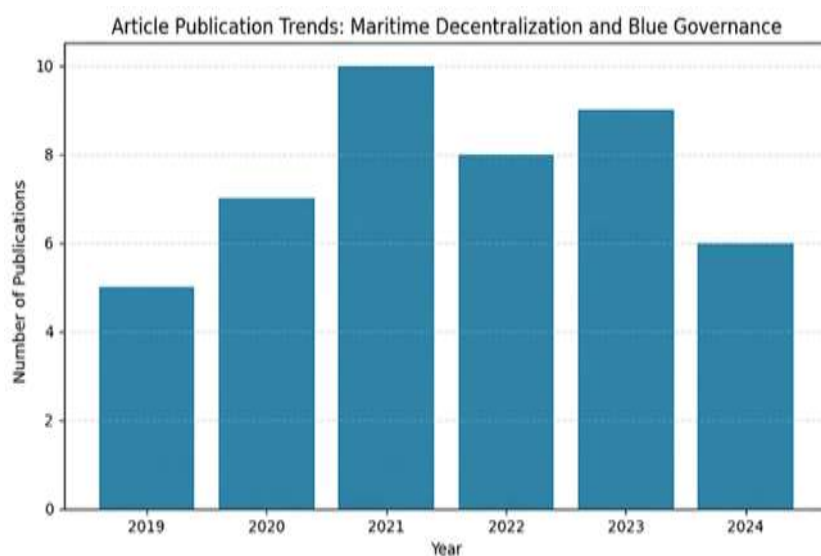
### 3. Results And Discussion

#### Trends in Literature Development

The analysis of literature trends indicates that academic interest in the relationship between maritime decentralization, regional autonomy, and blue governance has increased consistently over the period 2019–2024. The early years of this period were characterized by pioneering studies that explored the integration of decentralization with marine resource governance in specific contexts such as fisheries and coastal areas (Armitage et al., 2008; Link & Browman, 2017).

Between 2021 and 2022, there was a significant surge in publications expanding the focus toward multi-level governance in the context of sustainable marine management. This expansion extended beyond fisheries to include broader themes such as the blue economy and ecosystem-based maritime governance (Bennett et al., 2019; Voyer et al., 2020).

This trend reflects a shift from sectoral approaches toward more holistic perspectives on marine governance within decentralized governance systems. The growing academic interest in the relationship between maritime decentralization and blue governance is further illustrated in the figure below, which presents the number of relevant scientific publications per year from 2019 to 2024. This trend highlights the evolution of research focus from sector-specific issues toward multi-level governance and sustainable marine governance frameworks.



**Figure 2.** Trends in Article Publications on Maritime Decentralization and Blue Governance in the Regional Autonomy Framework (2019–2024).

Source: Author's compilation and preparation based on the results of a systematic literature review, 2026.

The figure above illustrates an increasing trend in the number of publications from 2019 to 2024. In the early period (2019–2020), the number of publications remained relatively limited, yet it marked the initial emergence of academic attention toward maritime decentralization. A significant increase is observed in 2021 and 2023, corresponding with the expansion of research themes, including the integration of blue

governance and multi-level governance concepts (Amon et al., 2022; Voyer et al., 2020).

Despite minor fluctuations, the overall trend indicates a steady growth of literature in this domain, reflecting its increasing academic and policy relevance in addressing marine governance issues within the framework of regional autonomy.

During the period 2022–2023, the literature began to exhibit stronger patterns of conceptual and geographical diversification. According to Amon et al. (2022), research in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region has grown rapidly, highlighting the dynamics of local autonomy in complex archipelagic contexts. In parallel, Campbell et al. (2016a) demonstrate that studies from the Global South have enriched the discourse on blue governance by emphasizing social justice and equitable benefit distribution within decentralization processes. This development signals an emerging consensus that marine governance can no longer be separated from power dynamics across governance levels and the involvement of non-state actors.

A further trend emerges in 2023–2024, where publications increasingly focus on the challenges of policy integration and the practical implementation of blue governance within decentralized systems. Farmery et al. (2021) and Schaefer & Barale (2011) both note that although the concept of blue governance has matured normatively, its implementation remains constrained by regulatory fragmentation and disparities in institutional capacity across regions. These studies indicate that, despite the widespread adoption of blue economy policies, significant coordination challenges persist between central and subnational governments in aligning sustainable development objectives.

In addition, methodological trends have also evolved—from single case studies in the early years toward cross-country comparative studies in more recent literature (Zhang et al., 2023). This shift reflects the need to understand maritime decentralization and blue governance not only as national phenomena but also as global processes requiring cross-system synthesis. Such developments contribute to the establishment of a more robust and multidimensional theoretical foundation for marine governance within decentralized frameworks.

The observed trends also indicate a shift in focus from the exploration of decentralization and governance concepts toward more critical analyses of implementation challenges, including overlapping authority, limited technical capacity at the subnational level, and coordination barriers across governance levels (Bodin, 2017; Gard-Murray, 2022). This underscores the importance of research that not only describes the evolution of the literature but also critically evaluates the quality and policy relevance of empirical findings.

Overall, the development of the literature from 2019 to 2024 demonstrates a transition from predominantly normative discussions

toward increasingly empirical analyses that strengthen the linkage between maritime decentralization, regional autonomy, and blue governance. The growing number of publications, expanding geographical scope, and diversification of governance theories indicate that the academic community is progressively addressing the complex challenges of sustainable marine governance through the lenses of decentralization and multi-level governance.

### **Models of Decentralization in Marine Governance**

The synthesis of the analyzed literature indicates that decentralization in marine governance is not a uniform concept; rather, it has evolved into several institutional models depending on political structures, administrative capacity, and the socio-ecological characteristics of each country. In general, the literature identifies three dominant models: administrative deconcentration, substantive devolution, and polycentric governance. These models represent a spectrum of authority distribution from central to subnational levels in marine resource management (Gruby & Basurto, 2013; Scott et al., 2022).

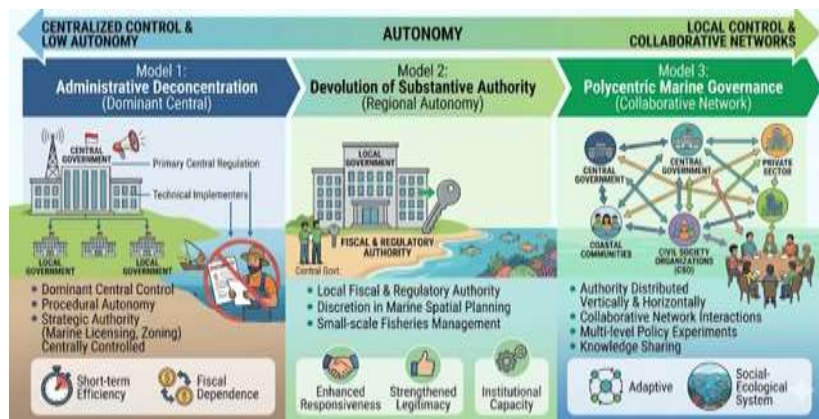
The first model is administrative deconcentration, in which the central government retains primary regulatory control, while subnational governments function mainly as technical implementers of policy. In this model, decentralization is largely procedural and does not fully grant decision-making autonomy at the subnational level. Studies in several Asian countries indicate that, despite the appearance of decentralization, strategic authorities such as marine exploitation licensing and spatial planning remain centralized (Lin et al., 2016). While this model may generate short-term administrative efficiency, it often leads to fiscal and institutional dependence on the central government.

The second model is substantive devolution, which grants regulatory and fiscal authority to subnational governments to manage coastal areas and marine resources. Within this framework, local governments have greater discretion in marine spatial planning, small-scale fisheries management, and the oversight of blue economy activities. Empirical studies from Latin America and the Pacific demonstrate that clearly defined devolution enhances policy responsiveness to local community needs and strengthens governance legitimacy (Pomeroy et al., 2001; XIONG & Wu, n.d.). However, the effectiveness of this model is highly contingent upon the institutional capacity of local governments and the presence of robust accountability mechanisms.

The third model, increasingly prominent in recent literature, is polycentric marine governance, where authority is distributed not only vertically between central and subnational governments but also horizontally among non-state actors such as coastal communities, civil society organizations, and the private sector. This approach emphasizes horizontal interactions and collaborative networks as key drivers of

sustainable marine governance (Carlisle & Gruby, 2019; Epstein et al., 2015). Polycentric governance is considered more adaptive to the complexity of marine social-ecological systems, as it enables policy experimentation across multiple levels simultaneously.

Overall, the literature synthesis suggests that decentralization in marine governance exists along an institutional spectrum, ranging from relatively centralized approaches to more collaborative, network-based governance models. To clarify the conceptual positioning of these models, Figure 2 illustrates the spectrum of decentralization models identified in this systematic literature review.



**Figure 3.** Spectrum of Decentralization in Marine Governance

Source: Processed by the author based on a systematic literature review, 2026.

Administrative deconcentration occupies the most centralized end of the spectrum, where substantive authority remains concentrated within the central government. The model of substantive devolution lies in the intermediate position, as it grants greater regulatory and fiscal discretion to subnational governments. Meanwhile, polycentric marine governance represents the most collaborative end of the spectrum, as it not only distributes authority vertically but also integrates non-state actors into decision-making processes.

This spectrum highlights that maritime decentralization is not merely a transfer of administrative authority, but rather a transformation of governance architecture toward more adaptive and participatory systems.

However, the literature also suggests that no single model is universally ideal. Recent comparative studies indicate that the success of maritime decentralization is highly dependent on the concept of “institutional fit”—the alignment between governance structures and the characteristics of the ecosystems being managed (Paavola, 2007; Rahman et al., 2017). Misalignment between administrative boundaries and ecological boundaries often leads to jurisdictional conflicts and policy inefficiencies. Therefore, institutional design becomes a critical factor in determining the effectiveness of decentralization models.

Within the framework of blue governance, the devolution and polycentric models are generally more compatible than administrative

deconcentration. This is because the core principles of blue governance—sustainability, participation, and equitable benefit distribution—require flexibility in decision-making at the local level as well as cross-actor collaboration (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021). Highly centralized models tend to constrain community-based policy innovation and hinder the integration of ecosystem-based approaches.

Overall, the synthesis of the literature indicates a clear shift from administrative decentralization toward more collaborative and adaptive governance models. Nevertheless, key challenges persist, particularly in terms of multi-level coordination, regulatory harmonization, and strengthening subnational institutional capacity.

Therefore, maritime decentralization within the framework of regional autonomy should be understood not merely as a transfer of authority, but as a process of reconstructing marine governance architecture that is capable of substantively integrating the principles of blue governance.

### **Multi-Level Governance Patterns**

The synthesis of the literature indicates that, in practice, maritime decentralization cannot be understood solely as a vertical distribution of authority between central and subnational governments. Instead, recent studies demonstrate that marine governance operates within a multi-level governance (MLG) framework, involving complex interactions across global, national, regional, and local levels. In the context of marine governance, MLG reflects cross-jurisdictional coordination encompassing international regimes, national policies, and subnational implementation (Jentoft & Chuenpagdee, 2015; Pickerill, 2021).

These findings suggest that the effectiveness of maritime decentralization is determined less by the extent of delegated authority and more by the capacity for integration across governance levels.

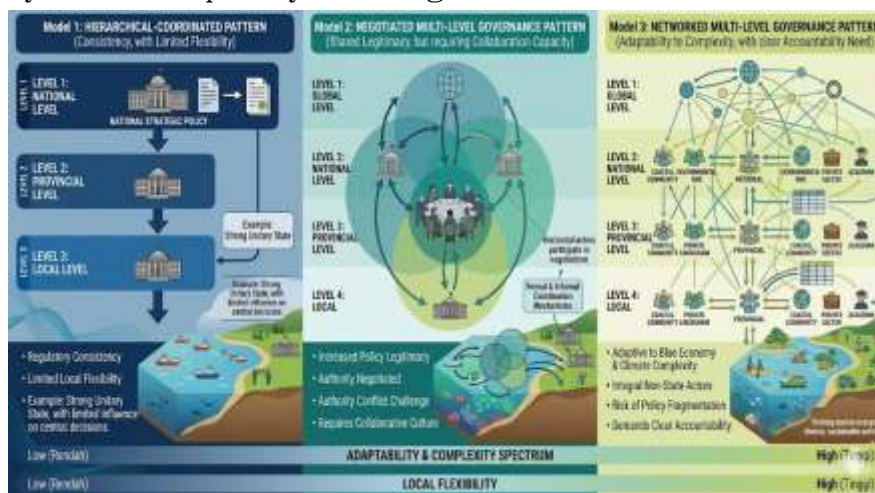
The literature identifies three primary patterns in the configuration of MLG within the marine sector. The first is the hierarchical-coordinated model, in which strategic policies are formulated at the national level, while subnational governments are responsible for operational implementation. This model is commonly found in countries with strong unitary state structures. Comparative studies in Europe and Asia indicate that hierarchical arrangements tend to ensure regulatory consistency, but often lack flexibility in responding to local dynamics (McFadden, 2007; Stephenson, 2013).

The second pattern is negotiated multi-level governance, characterized by active negotiation processes between central and subnational governments in the formulation of marine policies. In this model, authority is not fixed but continuously negotiated through both formal and informal coordination mechanisms. Research suggests that this approach enhances policy legitimacy by involving subnational actors in the planning stage, rather than limiting their role to implementation (Cairney et al., 2022;

Vestling, 2026). However, this model requires strong institutional capacity and a collaborative governance culture to prevent conflicts over authority.

The third pattern is networked multi-level governance, which has emerged alongside the growing complexity of blue economy issues and climate change. In this configuration, interactions occur not only vertically but also horizontally across regions and sectors. Non-state actors—including coastal communities, environmental NGOs, and the private sector—play an integral role in decision-making processes (Partelow et al., 2023; Sarpong et al., 2022). The literature emphasizes that this networked model is more adaptive to the uncertainty of marine socio-ecological systems, although it requires clear accountability mechanisms to avoid policy fragmentation.

To better understand how different countries manage their marine areas, it is essential to examine the governance models they adopt. The diagram below illustrates the three primary patterns of multi-level governance (MLG) in marine governance, ranging from rigid hierarchical approaches to more adaptive and network-based models suited to the complexity of contemporary challenges.



**Figure 4.** Multi-Level Marine Governance (MLG) Conceptual Diagram

Source: Processed by the author, 2026.

The diagram above illustrates a paradigm shift from Model 1, which is highly centralized, toward Model 2, which emphasizes negotiation between central and subnational governments. This progression culminates in Model 3, representing the most complex form of governance, where the success of marine management and the blue economy is highly dependent on active collaboration among governments at all levels and non-state actors.

Further synthesis reveals that, in the context of maritime decentralization, effective MLG patterns typically combine elements of hierarchical coordination and network-based governance. This hybrid approach enables the presence of clear national policy direction while simultaneously allowing room for innovation at the subnational level. Empirical studies in small-scale fisheries and marine spatial planning

demonstrate that policy success is strongly influenced by the quality of inter-level coordination, particularly in terms of data sharing, regulatory harmonization, and alignment of development priorities (Bryndum-Buchholz et al., 2021).

The main challenges identified in the literature include overlapping authority and regulatory misalignment across different levels of government. When authority is not clearly defined, multi-level governance can generate institutional ambiguity and slow policy responses to urgent issues such as coastal degradation and conflicts over marine spatial use (Bennett et al., 2019; Campbell et al., 2016b). Therefore, coherent institutional design is a critical prerequisite for the effective implementation of MLG in the marine sector.

The results of this systematic literature review indicate that effective maritime decentralization does not depend solely on the degree of autonomy granted, but rather on the quality of relationships across governance levels. Multi-level governance functions as an integrative mechanism that bridges national policies with local needs and global dynamics. Within the framework of blue governance, collaborative and adaptive MLG patterns serve as a fundamental foundation for ensuring both ecological sustainability and equitable distribution of marine economic benefits.

### **Blue Governance in the Literature**

The synthesis of the literature indicates that the concept of blue governance has emerged as a critical response to the blue economy approach, which is often criticized for being overly focused on economic growth while insufficiently addressing issues of social justice and ecological sustainability. In global scholarship, blue governance is defined as a marine governance framework that emphasizes the integration of ecological sustainability, equitable benefit distribution, multi-actor participation, and institutional accountability (Bennett et al., 2019; Santha, 2023). The literature highlights that, without governance reform, the blue economy agenda risks reproducing inequalities in access to marine resources, particularly for coastal communities and small-scale fishers.

In recent developments, blue governance is no longer viewed merely as a normative concept but as a concrete institutional design. Studies show that its implementation requires the integration of ecosystem-based management principles, the strengthening of local community access rights, and the establishment of transparency mechanisms in marine licensing and investment processes (Campbell et al., 2021; Farmery et al., 2021). This approach positions governance as the foundation of marine economic transformation, rather than merely an administrative instrument.

Blue governance is closely linked to multi-level governance (MLG) patterns. In decentralized contexts, its success depends on the capacity of subnational governments to manage marine spaces in a participatory and

data-driven manner. Comparative studies in the Pacific and Latin America demonstrate that the devolution of authority, when accompanied by strengthened local capacity, contributes to improved fisheries sustainability and reduced conflicts over marine spatial use (Amon et al., 2022; XIONG & Wu, n.d.). These findings confirm that maritime decentralization can serve as a strategic instrument for implementing blue governance principles.

In the Indonesian context, the literature reveals distinctive dynamics. As the world's largest archipelagic state, Indonesia has integrated the blue economy agenda into national policy through measures such as strengthening quota-based fisheries governance, expanding marine protected areas, and reforming risk-based licensing systems. A study by Prianto et al. (2024) shows that post-decentralization reforms in Indonesia's marine policy reflect a shift from an exploitative approach toward sustainability-oriented management. However, intergovernmental coordination remains a key challenge in the implementation of these policies.

Other studies in Indonesia highlight that blue governance is strongly influenced by the harmonization of regulations between central and provincial governments, particularly following the reallocation of marine management authority from districts/cities to provinces under Law No. 23/2014. Empirical evidence suggests that while this shift has improved regulatory consistency and oversight, it has also increased the distance between policymakers and local communities (Ikrami & Bernard, 2018; Satria & Matsuda, 2004). As a result, the effectiveness of blue governance in Indonesia largely depends on participatory mechanisms and the strengthening of subnational capacity.

Furthermore, Indonesian literature emphasizes the importance of a social justice-based approach (blue justice). Studies on coastal spatial conflicts and small-scale fishers' access indicate that, without the protection of traditional rights, the blue economy agenda may exacerbate existing inequalities (Tarigan & Ferdinanto, 2024). Therefore, blue governance in Indonesia must be positioned as both a normative and operational paradigm that ensures the inclusive distribution of marine economic benefits.

Overall, the findings of this systematic literature review suggest that blue governance—both globally and in Indonesia—is evolving toward a transformational paradigm. The focus is no longer limited to the growth of the marine sector, but rather on the restructuring of governance systems that integrate ecological sustainability, adaptive decentralization, and equitable benefit distribution. Within the framework of regional autonomy, blue governance becomes a critical arena for assessing the extent to which maritime decentralization can deliver not only administratively efficient governance, but also just and sustainable marine management.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article aims to analyze the relationship between maritime decentralization and blue governance within the framework of regional autonomy using a systematic literature review approach. The synthesis reveals that decentralization in marine governance is no longer understood merely as a transfer of administrative authority from central to subnational governments, but rather as a process of reconstructing institutional architecture that shapes the quality of marine resource management. The literature demonstrates a shift from administrative deconcentration toward substantive devolution and polycentric governance models, which are more adaptive, collaborative, and responsive to socio-ecological dynamics.

The main findings indicate that the effectiveness of maritime decentralization is strongly influenced by the configuration of multi-level governance (MLG). Vertical relationships between central and subnational governments, along with horizontal interactions among non-state actors, are key factors in ensuring both regulatory consistency and policy flexibility. Hybrid MLG arrangements—combining hierarchical coordination with collaborative networks—are shown to be more effective in bridging national interests, local needs, and global commitments to marine sustainability.

This study also confirms that blue governance has evolved as both a normative and operational paradigm that goes beyond growth-oriented blue economy approaches. It emphasizes the integration of ecological sustainability, equitable benefit distribution, community participation, and institutional accountability. Within the context of regional autonomy, these principles can only be effectively implemented when decentralization is accompanied by strengthened subnational institutional capacity, cross-level regulatory harmonization, and inclusive participatory mechanisms.

In the Indonesian context, maritime decentralization dynamics reveal persistent challenges related to intergovernmental coordination and the reconfiguration of authority following regulatory reforms. Although efforts have been made to strengthen sustainability-oriented and blue economy-based governance, implementation effectiveness remains highly dependent on policy integration between central and provincial governments as well as the protection of coastal community rights. Therefore, maritime decentralization in Indonesia should be directed not only toward administrative efficiency, but also toward a transformative governance model that is both equitable and sustainable.

Conceptually, this article contributes by offering an integrative synthesis that situates maritime decentralization and blue governance within a coherent analytical framework. Practically, the findings highlight the need for adaptive institutional design, strengthened multi-level coordination, and continuous evaluation of authority distribution in marine governance. Future research could deepen this analysis through comparative empirical approaches across regions or sectoral policy

studies to more concretely examine how blue governance principles are operationalized within decentralized governance systems.

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