



Department of Digital Business

Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business (RIGGS)

Homepage: <https://journal.ilmudata.co.id/index.php/RIGGS>

Vol. 4 No. 4 (2026) pp: 14112-14118

P-ISSN: 2963-9298, e-ISSN: 2963-914X

State Administrative Law and Citizens' Rights

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Abstract

This research examines the role of State Administrative Law (Hukum Administrasi Negara/HAN) as a fundamental instrument for protecting citizens' rights against government actions. In the context of Indonesia as a state based on the rule of law, governmental authority is not merely an expression of executive power but must be exercised in accordance with the principles of legality, accountability, transparency, and respect for human rights. State Administrative Law serves as a legal framework that regulates relations between the government and citizens to prevent abuses of power and ensure legal certainty and justice. This study employs a normative juridical approach by analyzing laws and regulations, judicial decisions, and institutional practices related to state administrative governance. The analysis focuses on control mechanisms provided by HAN to supervise government administrative actions. The findings indicate that HAN offers several legal remedies and oversight instruments, including administrative objections, proceedings before the State Administrative Court (Pengadilan Tata Usaha Negara), and supervision by independent bodies such as the Ombudsman. These mechanisms are intended to ensure that government decisions comply with legal norms and do not violate citizens' rights. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of State Administrative Law still faces challenges, including low public legal awareness, overlapping regulations, bureaucratic complexity, and weak institutional oversight. Consequently, access to justice in administrative disputes remains limited. Therefore, this research highlights the need for institutional reform, simplification of administrative procedures, regulatory harmonization, and stronger public participation to optimize the role of HAN in supporting good governance in Indonesia.

Kata kunci: Government, Citizen, Institutional

1. Introduction

State administrative law is a branch of public law that regulates the relationship between the government and citizens, especially regarding the implementation of government authority in providing public services, making decisions, and carrying out other administrative actions [1]. This branch of law occupies a strategic position because it governs how state power is exercised in everyday administrative interactions that directly affect citizens. Unlike private law, which emphasizes equality between parties, state administrative law is characterized by the asymmetrical relationship between the government as the holder of public authority and citizens as recipients or subjects of administrative action. Through this legal framework, the government is granted authority to act in the public interest, while at the same time being bound by legal norms that aim to protect the interests and rights of citizens. These norms are intended to ensure that the exercise of administrative power is not solely driven by discretion but remains oriented toward legality, justice, and public accountability.

In the context of a state based on the rule of law, administrative authority must adhere to the principle of legality, namely that every government action must have a clear legal basis and must not violate the rights of citizens [2]. The rule of law concept requires that governmental power be exercised under and within the law, rather than through personal or political will. The principle of legality is therefore fundamental, as it determines whether an administrative action is valid, lawful, and capable of being defended both normatively and procedurally. This principle functions as a fundamental safeguard to ensure that the exercise of governmental power is accountable, measurable, and transparent, thereby preventing arbitrary actions by public officials. Without a clear legal basis, administrative actions risk becoming instruments of abuse of power, which can undermine public trust in government institutions.

By requiring all administrative actions to be grounded in law, the principle of legality ensures that government authority remains within the applicable legal corridor and can be objectively assessed when disputes

arise. This assessment may occur internally within administrative institutions or externally through judicial mechanisms. In this regard, legality not only limits power but also provides certainty for citizens regarding their rights and obligations. Legal certainty is essential in administrative governance because citizens depend on predictable and consistent administrative actions when accessing public services, permits, licenses, and other governmental decisions. The absence of legal certainty can result in confusion, unequal treatment, and prolonged administrative processes, all of which may negatively affect citizens' daily lives.

Protection of citizens' rights is an important goal of the existence of state administrative law [3]. The function of administrative law extends beyond regulating governmental authority to actively safeguarding citizens from the potential negative consequences of administrative actions. In administrative relations, citizens are often in a weaker bargaining position, as government decisions are typically unilateral and binding. The interaction between the state and citizens in administrative matters often places citizens in a vulnerable position, particularly when facing unilateral decisions made by government institutions. These decisions may concern essential matters such as access to public services, social assistance, land use, licensing, or employment in the public sector, all of which have direct implications for citizens' welfare and legal status.

When the government issues administrative decisions or actions, there is the potential for maladministration, such as abuse of authority, negligence, prolonged delays, or procedural uncertainty, which can harm citizens both materially and immaterially. Material harm may arise in the form of financial loss, loss of employment opportunities, or denial of public services, while immaterial harm may include psychological stress, loss of dignity, or erosion of trust in government institutions. These risks highlight the need for legal mechanisms that enable citizens to seek protection and remedies against unlawful or improper administrative behavior. Without effective control mechanisms, administrative power may be exercised disproportionately, leading to systemic injustice and public dissatisfaction.

Therefore, state administrative law provides a control mechanism through the general principles of good governance (AUPB), administrative measures, and judicial review through the State Administrative Court (PTUN) as a form of protection. The AUPB serves as a normative guideline that emphasizes values such as fairness, transparency, proportionality, and accountability in administrative decision-making. Administrative measures, such as objections and administrative appeals, allow disputes to be resolved within the administrative system before escalating to judicial forums. Meanwhile, judicial review through the PTUN provides a formal legal avenue for citizens to challenge administrative decisions or actions that are considered unlawful or detrimental to their rights. These mechanisms are designed not only to correct wrongful administrative actions, but also to encourage government bodies to act carefully, fairly, and responsibly in exercising their authority.

In the reality of governance, various problems arise regarding how citizens' rights are guaranteed through administrative legal instruments [4]. Although the normative framework of state administrative law is relatively comprehensive, its implementation often faces practical constraints. One of the main issues lies in the gap between legal norms and administrative practices. Regulations that are clear at the normative level may be interpreted differently by implementing officials, resulting in inconsistent application across institutions or regions. This inconsistency can lead to unequal treatment of citizens and undermine the principle of equality before the law.

These challenges include inconsistent regulatory implementation among government institutions, weak bureaucratic transparency, and limited public understanding of their administrative rights and available legal remedies. Bureaucratic transparency remains a critical issue, as administrative processes are often complex and difficult for citizens to understand. Limited access to information regarding procedures, requirements, and legal remedies may discourage citizens from asserting their rights or challenging administrative decisions. In addition, public legal awareness regarding state administrative law is still relatively low, which further weakens the effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms.

As a result, citizens may experience difficulties in accessing justice or asserting their rights against unlawful administrative actions. The complexity of procedures, coupled with limited legal knowledge, can create barriers that prevent citizens from utilizing available administrative or judicial remedies. In some cases, citizens may choose not to pursue legal action due to fear of retaliation, lack of resources, or prolonged dispute resolution processes. This situation demonstrates that the effectiveness of state administrative law cannot be measured solely by the existence of legal instruments but must also be assessed based on their accessibility and practical impact on citizens.

Therefore, studies of state administrative law and the protection of citizens' rights are crucial to assess the effectiveness of existing legal instruments in practice. Such studies are necessary to evaluate whether administrative law has functioned optimally in maintaining a balance between state authority and citizens'

constitutional rights. By examining both normative frameworks and practical implementation, these studies can identify structural weaknesses and propose improvements to administrative governance. Ultimately, strengthening state administrative law is essential not only for enhancing legal protection but also for promoting good governance, public trust, and democratic accountability within the framework of a modern rule-of-law state.

2. Research Method

This research employs a normative legal research method, with a primary focus on the analysis of legal norms, principles, and doctrines governing state administrative actions and the protection of citizens' rights. Normative legal research is fundamentally oriented toward law as a normative system, meaning that law is examined as a set of rules, principles, and concepts that regulate human behavior, particularly in the context of governmental authority and administrative governance. In this study, state administrative law is positioned as the main analytical framework through which the relationship between the state and citizens is assessed, especially in relation to the exercise and limitation of administrative power.

The normative approach was chosen because the issues examined in this research are closely related to abstract legal concepts such as legality, administrative authority, accountability, and legal protection. These issues cannot be adequately addressed solely through empirical observation, as they require systematic interpretation of legal norms and doctrines embedded in statutory regulations and judicial decisions. By employing a normative approach, this research aims to explore how state administrative law is designed to function as a mechanism for protecting citizens' rights and how its principles are structured within the legal system governing public administration. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the coherence, consistency, and adequacy of legal norms in regulating administrative actions and preventing maladministration.

This research method applies three main analytical approaches, namely the statutory approach, the conceptual approach, and the case approach. Each approach serves a specific function and complements the others to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. The statutory approach is used to examine legal norms contained in laws and regulations related to government administration and the protection of citizens' rights. Through this approach, relevant statutes are analyzed to identify the legal basis, scope of authority, and limitations imposed on administrative actions. The statutory approach is essential for understanding how the principle of legality and other administrative law principles are formally regulated and institutionalized within the legal framework.

The conceptual approach is employed to analyze legal doctrines and theoretical concepts underlying state administrative law. This approach focuses on understanding key principles of state administration, such as the principle of legality and the general principles of good governance (AUPB), as normative standards that guide administrative behavior. Through conceptual analysis, the research clarifies the meaning, function, and interrelation of these principles in ensuring lawful and accountable governance. The conceptual approach also contributes to strengthening the analytical framework of the study by providing theoretical justification for the protection of citizens' rights within administrative law. By examining doctrinal perspectives, this approach helps bridge the gap between abstract legal theory and its application in administrative practice.

In addition, the case approach is used to examine court decisions or examples of relevant administrative disputes that reflect the implementation of state administrative law in practice. Through this approach, judicial reasoning and legal considerations adopted by adjudicating bodies are analyzed to illustrate how legal norms and principles are applied in resolving administrative disputes. The case approach is particularly important in understanding how courts interpret the principle of legality, assess maladministration, and provide remedies for citizens whose rights have been violated. By studying selected cases, this research highlights the practical role of judicial institutions in enforcing administrative law and safeguarding citizens' rights against unlawful government actions.

The legal materials used in this research are classified into primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials consist of binding legal sources, including statutory regulations and court decisions that directly govern state administrative actions and administrative justice. These materials serve as the main reference for identifying applicable legal norms and authoritative interpretations. Secondary legal materials consist of textbooks, scientific journals, and scholarly writings on administrative law and public administration. These materials are used to provide doctrinal analysis, scholarly perspectives, and critical evaluations of legal developments related to state administrative law. Tertiary legal materials include legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference sources that assist in clarifying legal terminology and concepts used in the analysis.

The analysis of legal materials in this research is conducted qualitatively, using an interpretative method to examine legal norms, principles, and doctrines systematically. Qualitative legal analysis involves organizing and interpreting legal materials to identify patterns, relationships, and normative implications relevant to the research problem. This method allows the researcher to assess the coherence between legal norms and their intended objectives, particularly in relation to protecting citizens' rights from arbitrary administrative actions. Through qualitative interpretation, legal rules and principles are examined not only in isolation but also in their broader legal and institutional context.

The results of the analysis are then used to address the formulation of problems concerning the role of state administrative law and the effectiveness of mechanisms for protecting citizens' rights. By integrating statutory analysis, conceptual understanding, and case-based examination, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive evaluation of how administrative law functions as a legal safeguard within the governance system. The methodological framework employed in this study ultimately supports the formulation of systematic conclusions and recommendations aimed at strengthening administrative legality, accountability, and the protection of citizens' rights in the implementation of government administration.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Principle of Legality in State Administrative Law and Limitations on Government Authority

The principle of legality is the primary foundation of state administration, requiring that every action by government officials be based on applicable legal norms. In state administrative law, legality functions as a normative boundary that determines the scope and limits of governmental authority. Nurtjahjo explains that without clear legality, officials are prone to exceeding their authority (*detournement de pouvoir*), which could potentially threaten citizens' administrative rights [5]. Such deviations often result in arbitrary decisions and weaken legal certainty, ultimately undermining public trust in administrative institutions.

Legality also serves as a mechanism for limiting power and ensuring administrative accountability. Agustina emphasized that the existence of the principle of legality is a prerequisite for ensuring administrative protection, particularly when maladministration occurs in public services [6]. By requiring that administrative actions be legally justified, legality provides an objective standard for assessing whether an action constitutes lawful governance or an abuse of authority. In state-citizen relations, this principle ensures that administrative actions can be examined and evaluated based on legal norms rather than on subjective policies or discretionary preferences of administrative officials.

Furthermore, the principle of legality plays an important role in guaranteeing predictability and fairness in administrative decision-making. When administrative actions are grounded in clear legal norms, citizens are better positioned to understand their rights and obligations, as well as the procedures available to challenge unlawful actions. This contributes to legal certainty and equality before the law, particularly in situations where administrative decisions directly affect citizens' legal status, access to public services, or economic interests.

Deseano et al. demonstrate that the principle of legality is not only a control tool but also a catalyst for bureaucratic reform through the enforcement of administrative law by the State Administrative Court (PTUN) [7]. Judicial review based on legality requirements encourages government institutions to improve internal administrative procedures and comply consistently with legal standards. Thus, legality functions as a legal instrument that maintains a balance between government authority and the protection of citizens' rights, while simultaneously strengthening the quality and accountability of public administration.

3.2 General Principles of Good Governance (AUPB) as a Standard of Administrative Ethics and Accountability

The General Principles of Good Governance (AUPB) function as ethical guidelines for administrative officials in carrying out governmental duties in accordance with the principles of accuracy, openness, and accountability [8]. These principles serve as normative standards that guide administrative behavior beyond mere compliance with formal legal requirements. Through AUPB, administrative actions are expected to reflect fairness, transparency, and responsibility, ensuring that public authority is exercised not only lawfully but also ethically in serving the public interest.

As'adi emphasized that AUPB constitutes the main parameter for assessing whether an administrative action has fulfilled the principles of justice and procedural fairness [9]. In this regard, AUPB plays a crucial role in evaluating the quality of administrative decision-making processes, including whether procedures

are conducted fairly, information is disclosed appropriately, and decisions are made carefully and proportionately. By functioning as a benchmark for procedural justice, AUPB strengthens accountability and prevents administrative actions from being driven solely by technical compliance or bureaucratic convenience.

In public service practice, AUPB also serves as a standard for identifying and evaluating maladministration. Yuswarni and colleagues demonstrate that the implementation of AUPB contributes to increased transparency and accountability among public service providers [10]. The consistent application of these principles encourages administrative institutions to improve service quality and responsiveness, while at the same time fostering public trust in administrative services. When citizens perceive that administrative actions are carried out openly and responsibly, confidence in government institutions is significantly enhanced.

In the context of maladministration, Sharon stated that administrative actions violating AUPB can cause both material and immaterial losses to citizens, highlighting the importance of compensation mechanisms [11]. This demonstrates that AUPB is not merely an ethical guideline but also functions as a legal instrument for enforcing accountable government administration. Violations of AUPB may serve as the basis for legal responsibility and remedial actions, reinforcing the role of these principles in protecting citizens' rights and promoting just and ethical administrative governance.

3.3 Administrative Control Mechanisms: Internal and External Supervision and Administrative Efforts

Administrative oversight constitutes a crucial component in protecting citizens' rights within the framework of government administration. Effective supervision ensures that administrative authority is exercised in accordance with legal norms and does not deviate from its intended purpose. Widiarta and Akbarsyah explain that the State Administrative Court (PTUN) functions as an "administrative shield" by reviewing both factual actions and administrative decisions of government officials that exceed their authority [12]. Through judicial oversight, the PTUN provides a formal mechanism for citizens to challenge unlawful administrative conduct and obtain legal remedies, thereby reinforcing the principle of legality and accountability in public administration.

In addition to judicial mechanisms, administrative oversight is also carried out through non-litigation channels. Outside of litigation, non-judicial mechanisms such as the Republic of Indonesia Ombudsman serve as external monitors of alleged maladministration [10]. The Ombudsman plays an important role in supervising administrative conduct by receiving public complaints, conducting investigations, and issuing recommendations to government institutions. Agustina emphasized that the presence of the Ombudsman expands access to non-litigation justice for the wider community, particularly in cases of maladministration that do not directly result in material losses [6]. This mechanism allows citizens to seek corrective action without undergoing lengthy and costly judicial processes.

On the other hand, internal control mechanisms in the form of administrative remedies, such as objections and administrative appeals, provide an early avenue for resolving disputes before they are brought before the State Administrative Court. These administrative efforts enable disputes to be addressed within the administrative hierarchy, allowing government institutions to reassess and correct their own actions. Ariky and colleagues found that administrative remedies contribute to reducing the litigation burden on courts and provide opportunities for government agencies to improve administrative actions proactively [13]. This approach supports efficiency in dispute resolution while maintaining institutional responsibility.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of administrative oversight can be enhanced through the consistent application of Ombudsprudence in resolving maladministration cases handled by the Ombudsman. Nuryanto and colleagues emphasized that consistent patterns in Ombudsman decision-making strengthen legal certainty and improve the quality of oversight outcomes [14]. Overall, administrative oversight mechanisms whether internal, external, or judicial serve as essential pillars for maintaining the quality of public services and preventing abuse of authority. The integration of these mechanisms ensures comprehensive protection of citizens' rights and promotes accountable and responsive administrative governance.

3.4 The Role of the State Administrative Court (PTUN) in Protecting Citizens' Rights

The State Administrative Court (PTUN) is a judicial institution that provides citizens with a formal legal avenue to challenge government actions that are deemed to violate procedural rules or deviate from the

limits of administrative authority. Through its judicial function, the PTUN ensures that administrative actions are subject to legal scrutiny and are not immune from accountability. Ritonga et al. emphasize that PTUN procedural law plays a strategic role in achieving administrative justice, as it provides a structured mechanism for reviewing the legality of administrative decisions and actions [15]. By enabling citizens to access judicial review, the PTUN strengthens the rule of law and reinforces public confidence in administrative governance.

The effectiveness of the PTUN in protecting citizens' rights has increased following the strengthening of the principle of legality through the enactment of the State Administration Law. Ismail, Safriani, and Asmar explain that this legal development expanded the court's authority, particularly in adjudicating not only formal administrative decisions but also factual actions carried out by government officials [16]. This expansion reflects a more substantive approach to administrative justice, ensuring that all forms of administrative conduct that may harm citizens' rights are subject to judicial oversight. As a result, the scope of legal protection afforded by the PTUN has become broader and more responsive to practical administrative realities.

Purba and Jaidun's findings show that the role of the PTUN in preventing maladministration has a preventive as well as corrective function [17]. The existence of judicial control encourages government institutions to exercise greater caution when issuing administrative decisions, as these decisions may later be reviewed and annulled if found to be unlawful. This preventive effect contributes to improving the quality of administrative decision-making and promotes a culture of legal compliance within public institutions. Consequently, the PTUN not only resolves disputes after violations occur but also discourages potential abuses of authority.

Furthermore, Bastian and Hadi emphasized that public legal entities may now be recognized as *justitiabelen* in the PTUN, thereby expanding access to administrative justice [18]. This development reflects an inclusive approach to judicial protection, acknowledging that various legal subjects may be affected by administrative actions. Thus, the PTUN is not merely an institution that adjudicates administrative decisions, but also serves as a guardian of the supremacy of administrative law. Through its role in upholding legality, accountability, and fairness, the PTUN functions as a key protector of citizens' rights against illegitimate government actions and reinforces the integrity of the administrative justice system.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the protection of citizens' rights in the implementation of government administration is largely determined by the effectiveness of the principle of legality, the application of the General Principles of Good Governance (AUPB), as well as the functioning of administrative control mechanisms and the role of the State Administrative Court (PTUN). The principle of legality is the main foundation that ensures that the actions of government officials are carried out within the limits of their authority and are not arbitrary. The application of AUPB serves as an ethical standard as well as an objective measuring tool for assessing the quality of administrative actions, particularly regarding accuracy, transparency, accountability, and fairness.

Furthermore, administrative control mechanisms, such as internal oversight, external oversight through the Ombudsman, and dispute resolution through administrative remedies, have proven to be crucial instruments in preventing maladministration and providing initial protection for the public. At the judicial level, the State Administrative Court (PTUN) serves as a guardian of the legality of government actions and as a remedial avenue for citizens whose rights have been violated. The strengthened role of the PTUN following the enactment of the State Administration Law has expanded the scope for protection through the review of both administrative decisions and factual actions.

Thus, it can be emphasized that the integration between the principles of legality, AUPB, supervisory system, and administrative justice is the main pillar that guarantees the fulfillment of citizens' rights in the implementation of modern governance.

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