

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Policy oversimplification in the "First 100 Days" post-regional head elections

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Abstract

The 100-day work period concept is often used to evaluate the initial performance of elected officials, including in Indonesia. While useful as an early indicator, this concept tends to oversimplify the complex policymaking process into campaign promises that must be fulfilled in a short timeframe. This study highlights the phenomenon of oversimplification during this period, where policies often focus on visible short-term outcomes at the expense of sustainability and long-term impact. Using semi-structured interviews, policy document analysis, and data triangulation, the research identifies that policy evaluations during the 100-day period frequently emphasize administrative and statistical achievements without considering deeper social changes. The study recommends a more sustainable approach to policy formulation and evidence-based evaluation involving various stakeholders. The findings suggest that policy success should be measured based on its ability to foster inclusive change, reduce social inequality, and improve community quality of life in the long term. Further research is needed to develop ongoing evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of policies beyond the 100-day work period.

Keywords

First 100 Days Work, Policy Oversimplification, Policy Evaluation, Election, Local Election, Indonesia

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1 | INTRODUCTION

The use of a “First 100 Days Work” period as an initial measure of an elected official’s performance has become common practice in modern politics (Castro Cornejo et al., 2022). This concept first became popular during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt who used this period to launch a series of significant reforms known as the “New Deal” to address the Great Depression (Patel & Goodman, 2020). Since then, the first 100 days have become the unofficial standard for judging the effectiveness and direction of newly elected officials’ new policies. While useful as an initial gauge and for establishing policy momentum, the use of this period can raise a number of issues related to oversimplification of the policymaking process (Harvey, 2012; Rauchway, 2019).

Oversimplification occurs when complex solutions to social, economic, and political problems are reduced to campaign promises that can be achieved in a very short time frame (Boswell, 2007). This approach often fails to take into account the true complexity of the issues at hand, the need for consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, and an adequate legislative process (Lindenauer, 2022). As a result, elected officials may be motivated to produce visible short-term results, which can come at the expense of long-term considerations and policy sustainability (Alcalde Heras et al., 2020). The 100-day working period has become an important benchmark in Indonesian politics to assess the commitment and effectiveness of newly elected officials. The concept is used by the media, political analysts, and the general public to evaluate the new government’s early achievements and its ability to implement campaign promises (Flavin, 2015). While this period provides a useful initial overview of the direction of the new government’s policies, there is often a risk of oversimplification, where solutions to complex problems are expected to be achieved in a limited time (Armsworth et al., 2012).

Oversimplification in this context can be seen from ambitious campaign promises or from high public expectations for instant change (Wehner & Thies, 2021). Complex policies that require cross-sector dialogue and consultation can be reduced to populist policies designed to meet expectations in 100 days. This not only poses challenges in effective implementation, but also has the potential to have unintended long-term impacts, as the policies made may not take into account all important variables.

This study will investigate how the 100-day working period has been used in Indonesia to set the agenda for the new government, focusing on the ways in which oversimplification has affected public policymaking. Through this analysis, the article aims to critique the common approach to the 100-day period and suggest a more sustainable and inclusive method for evaluating and implementing the early policies of the new government

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of a 100-day period as an initial assessment of an elected official’s effectiveness has gained widespread acceptance since it was introduced by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933. Roosevelt used this period to launch the New Deal, a series of economic policies to address the Great Depression (Harvey, 2012; Kent, 2023; Mann & Wallerstein, 1986; Yang, 2023). The concept of the 100-day work theory refers to the initial period of a leader’s term, especially in government or organizational contexts, which is considered critical for demonstrating direction, vision, and early performance. During the first 100 days, new leaders are expected to take strategic steps to build trust, showcase managerial capabilities, and establish a foundation for their work agenda moving forward. It is also a time to evaluate the initial conditions, identify key priorities, and make quick decisions on urgent issues. In politics, this concept is often used to assess how effectively leaders translate campaign promises into tangible actions while leveraging the momentum to build legitimacy and public support.

In Indonesia, the 100-day working period has become a tool for the media and the public to assess the promises and effectiveness of the new government. This period is often used to measure the government’s ability to implement strategic policies promised during the campaign (Song & Lee, 2016; Vallentin, 2022). Although considered an important indicator, this period is often insufficient to implement significant changes given the

complexity of the bureaucracy and the issues at hand, an argument in favor of the effectiveness of economic policies within a 100-day period (Chan et al., 2020; Gackowski, 2020; Helm, 2015; Pugh, 2016).

Oversimplification in policy making is a recognized risk in the political and administrative literature discussing how oversimplification of complex problems often results in inadequate policies that fail to address the root causes (Hueso & Bell, 2013). In the Indonesian context, oversimplification in a 100-day period can affect the success of long-term policies and cause the public to feel disappointed when the expected results do not materialize (Dwijayanti, 2021; Purna & Didin, 2022).

Policy populism is an approach to policy-making that is based on efforts to appeal to the wider public by simplifying complex problems into seemingly simple and straightforward solutions. In this context, policymakers often employ rhetoric that emphasizes the distinction between “elites” and “the people,” positioning themselves as direct representatives of the will of the people (Destradi et al., 2022; Drápalová & Wegrich, 2021; Valizade et al., 2023). This approach often sidelines in-depth analysis and data-driven decision-making, favoring measures that appear attractive to the public, even if their long-term impacts are untested (Bratu et al., 2020; Clifford Astbury et al., 2023). Policy populism also tends to focus on issues that have high emotional appeal, such as subsidies or tax cuts, to strengthen political support.

Oversimplification in policy is often a key feature of populism, where actually complex issues are condensed into simple narratives to make it easier to communicate to the public (Selway Joel, 2011; Shubham et al., 2021). This process has the potential to ignore important variables, such as social, economic and cultural contexts, that should be taken into account in decision-making. For example, structural challenges such as social inequality or climate change are often simplified into populist policies without considering sustainable solutions. This oversimplification can increase the risk of implementing ineffective or even counterproductive policies, especially when the solutions offered are not compatible with existing realities (Indah & Hariyanti, 2018; Lipschultz, 2021; Rossini et al., 2015)

3 | METHODS

The research method involved the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with individuals directly involved in the design, implementation, or evaluation of the policy over a 100-day working period. The data collection process began with each interview being recorded, which was then transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data analyzed. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, where interview transcripts were systematically examined to identify key recurring themes that reflected important aspects of participants’ subjective experiences of over-simplification in policymaking. Next, data triangulation was implemented to strengthen the validity of the findings. This involved an in-depth review of relevant policy documents and media reports related to the policies discussed by the participants. These documents were analyzed to find any congruence or contradiction between the participants’ narratives and the public representation of the policies. This process also helped to understand the broader context of the policy implementation and the public response to it. As a final step, validation of the findings was conducted through feedback sessions with participants. In these sessions, a summary of the findings was presented to participants for their confirmation or revision, ensuring that the researcher’s interpretations were in line with the participants’ experiences and perspectives. This approach not only increases the reliability of research results but also deepens understanding of the dynamics involved in policy making over a 100-day working period.

4 | RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In 100-day work reports, oversimplification often occurs in the scope of programs announced by governments or organizations. Reported programs tend to focus on physical numbers and progress (outputs), while more complex aspects such as real impacts (outcomes) are often ignored. For example, a program announced to be completed in 100 days may only cover administrative completion or inauguration without ensuring sustainable implementation

in the field. In addition, there is a tendency to highlight the success of programs that are easier to achieve, such as small infrastructure development or facility procurement, while large projects that take longer and involve higher complexity are often presented ambiguously as "in progress". Challenges such as budget constraints, logistical constraints, or lack of human resources are often not reported transparently, creating a narrative that all programs are running smoothly. Oversimplification is also seen in claims of success that are not always supported by measurable performance indicators. Instead of measuring long-term impacts, such as improvements in people's quality of life or program sustainability, reports often focus on quantities, such as the number of projects announced or the number of units built. This narrative can mislead the public and obscure reality, so that real challenges do not get adequate attention to be addressed

In implementing the program, analysis of achievements is very important to evaluate success and determine strategic steps forward. Based on the data (Figure 1), there are 116 programs announced with the following result categories: 24% of programs completed, 31% of programs in process, and 45% of programs not running.

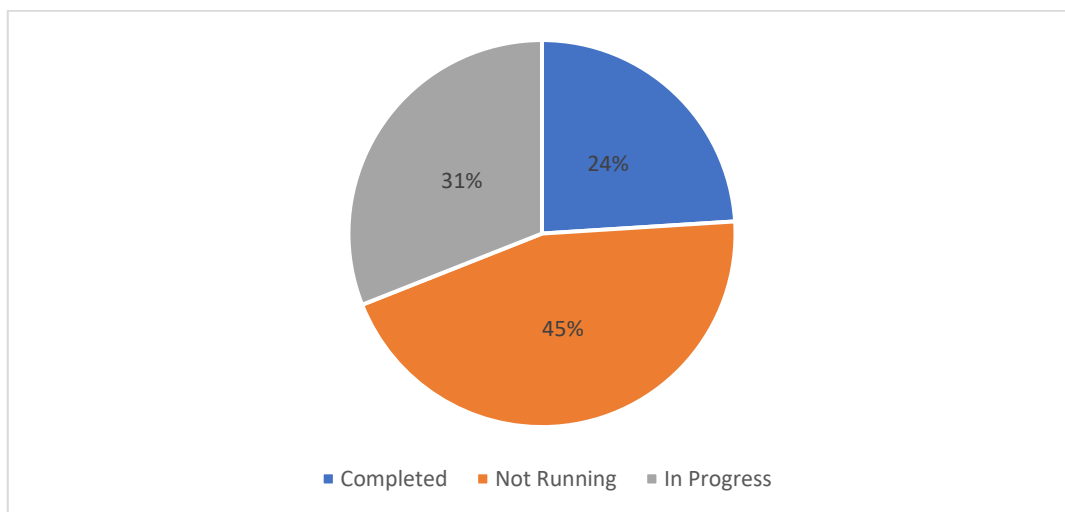


Figure 1. Scope of the program analyzed

Among the 116 programs announced, only 24% have reached completion. This rate reflects the government's or implementing parties' commitment to program realization, although the figure remains suboptimal. It underscores the need for improvements in both planning and execution to enhance the likelihood of achieving program targets.

As many as 31% of programs are currently in the implementation stage. This condition indicates that there are active efforts in running programs that are expected to be completed in the future. However, the success of implementation is highly dependent on the sustainability of support, such as sufficient resources, good coordination between stakeholders, and the ability to resolve challenges that may hinder the implementation process.

The majority, namely 45% of the total programs, are in a non-running status. This is a critical concern because it illustrates the failure in implementing almost half of the planned programs. The causes can vary, such as lack of technical preparation, limited human resources or budget, to external obstacles such as obstructive regulations or unfavorable socio-economic conditions

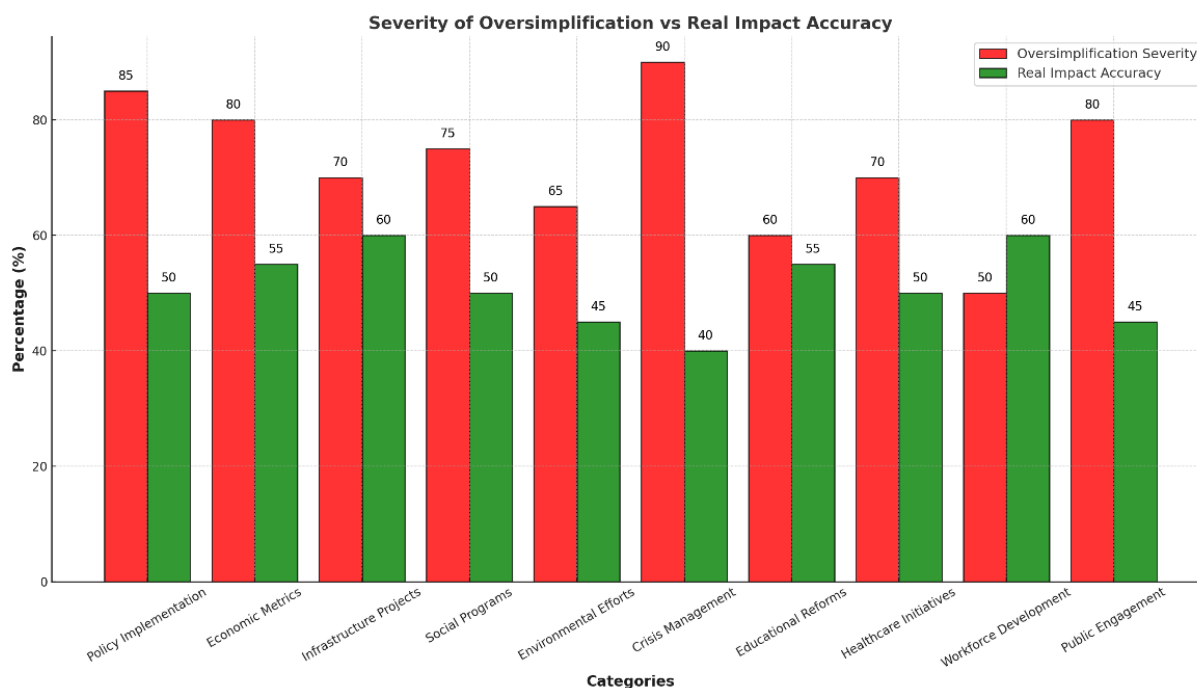


Figure 2. Severity of Oversimplification vs Real Impact Accuracy

Figure 2 shows a comparison between the level of Severity of Oversimplification and Real Impact Accuracy in various policy and program categories. A thorough analysis of each category shows a common pattern, namely a fairly large gap between simplification in policy planning and the actual results achieved.

In the Policy Implementation category, the level of simplification reached 85%, while the impact accuracy was only 50%. This reflects that policy implementation often does not consider the complexities in the field, so that the results are not in accordance with initial expectations. Likewise, in Economic Metrics, the simplification of 80% is much higher than the real impact accuracy of 55%, indicating the need for more in-depth evaluation so that economic policies are more realistic and effective.

The Infrastructure Projects category showed slight improvement, with a simplification of 70% and an impact accuracy of 60%. Although there is still a gap, these results indicate that the approach to infrastructure projects is more realistic than other categories. However, in Social Programs, simplification reached 75%, while the accuracy of the impact was only 50%, illustrating that social programs are often designed without considering the real challenges and needs of the community. In the Environmental Efforts category, the level of simplification was at 65%, while the accuracy of the impact was only 45%. This shows that environmental policies still face major obstacles in their implementation, perhaps due to a lack of careful planning or limited resources. A similar situation also occurred in Crisis Management, where simplification reached the highest figure of 90%, while the accuracy of the impact was only 40%. This high level of simplification reflects a lack of attention to the complexity of emergency situations, so that crisis policies fail to meet field needs..

In the Educational Reforms category, simplification is at 70%, with an impact accuracy of 55%. Education reforms require a more detailed approach so that the policies designed can be implemented more effectively. Likewise in Healthcare Initiatives, a simplification rate of 70% compared to an impact accuracy of 50% indicates the need for improved planning and implementation so that the gap can be bridged. The Workforce Development category shows a simplification rate of 60% and an impact accuracy of 50%. Although the gap is relatively small compared to other categories, it still indicates the need for a more contextual approach to developing the workforce. Meanwhile, in Public Engagement, the simplification rate reaches 80%, while the impact accuracy is only 45%. This

shows that public participation is often designed with an approach that is too simple, so that the results are not optimal.

Table 1. Oversimplification Severity with Accuracy Coefficients

Categories	Metric 1 oversimplifications	Metric 2 real impact accuracy	Metric 3 (Ratio)
Policy Implementation	78.45	54.12	0.72
Economic Metrics	69.87	61.34	0.85
Infrastructure Projects	74.32	49.56	0.68
Social Programs	66.78	44.21	0.71
Environmental Efforts	88.92	39.73	0.46
Crisis Management	61.45	56.89	0.91
Educational Reforms	71.56	51.37	0.73
Healthcare Initiatives	52.78	59.32	1.18
Workforce Development	82.67	46.45	0.59

Table 1 shows varying levels of oversimplification, which impacts the accuracy of real impact reports. Categories with High Oversimplification are in Environmental Efforts (88.92) and Workforce Development (82.67) showing the highest levels of oversimplification. Reporting efforts often exaggerate success without reflecting the complexity of challenges in the field. This is reflected in the low impact accuracy ratio, which is 0.46 for Environmental Efforts and 0.59 for Workforce Development. This indicates that reality is far from the reported claims. Meanwhile, the Category with More Realistic Reporting is in the context of Healthcare Initiatives which has the lowest oversimplification (52.78) and the highest impact accuracy ratio (1.18). This shows that reports in this category tend to be realistic and even more accurate in reflecting the real impact of the program.

On the other hand, Categories such as Economic Metrics (ratio 0.85) and Crisis Management (ratio 0.91) show fairly balanced reporting between claims and reality. While oversimplification remains, reporting in this category is closer to representing reality than other categories. The conclusion is that reporting tends to be more realistic in the health and crisis management sectors, while environmental and workforce development efforts often experience significant oversimplification. This trend suggests that categories involving major changes or high complexity are more susceptible to oversimplification, which can mislead stakeholders in understanding the true challenges and impacts of these programs.

The gap between “claims of success (%)” and “Independent reports” reflects significant differences in the assessment of success across categories (Figure 2). Some categories show very high levels of gaps, such as “Policy Implementation” and “Infrastructure Projects,” with gaps of 57.19% and 69.43%, respectively. This may indicate that while claims of success are based on internal measures, independent evaluations show much lower results. In “Policy Implementation,” gaps may reflect obstacles to policy implementation or lack of acceptance on the ground, while in “Infrastructure Projects,” high claims of administrative completion have not been matched by actual project impacts or benefits. Categories such as “Social Programs” and “Educational Reforms” show fairly large but more moderate gaps, at 46.8% and 54.43%, respectively. This indicates that while impacts or successes are visible, there is room for improvement in the scope, quality, or effectiveness of the programs. In contrast, categories such as “Healthcare Initiatives” have a relatively small gap compared to other categories, with claims at 89.54% and independent reports at 26.04%, indicating that internal claims may be more realistic although still higher than independent assessments

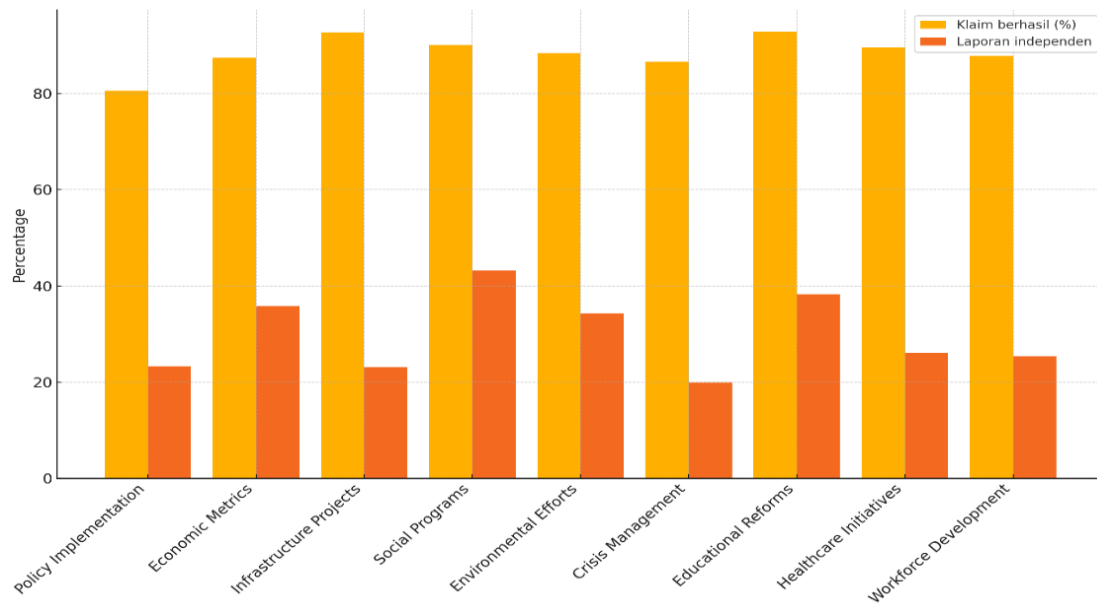


Figure 2. Comparison of Success Claims and Independent Reports by Category

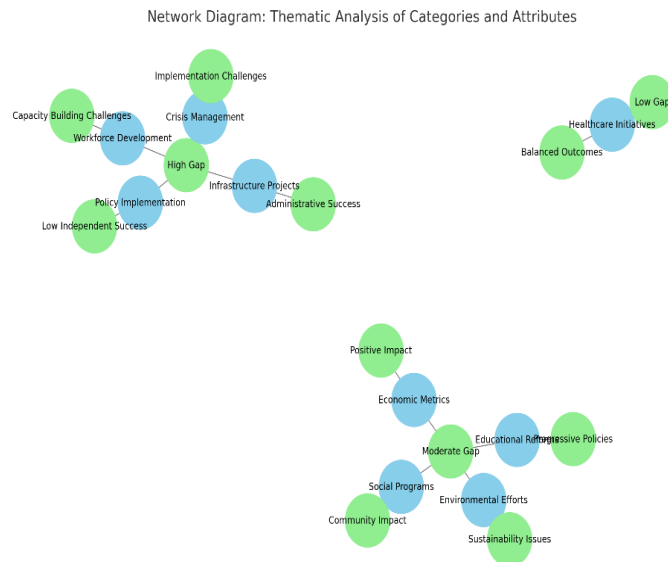


Figure 3. Network Diagram of Theatic Analysis of Categories and Atributes

Figure 3 illustrates the thematic connections generated from the data. Each category is connected to its thematic attribute, which provides insight into emerging patterns and insights. Categories such as “Policy Implementation” and “Infrastructure Projects” exhibit attributes such as “High Gap” and “Low Independent Success,” indicating significant discrepancies between claims of success and independent evaluations. Meanwhile, the categories “Economic Metrics” and “Social Programs” reflect attributes such as “Moderate Gap” and “Positive Impact” or “Community Impact,” indicating moderate alignment between claims and independent evaluation results.

The category “Healthcare Initiatives” is of interest because it has the attributes “Low Gap” and “Balanced Outcomes,” indicating closer alignment between claims and independent evaluations. On the other hand, themes such as “Sustainability Issues” and “Implementation Challenges” emerge in the categories “Environmental Efforts”

and “Crisis Management,” respectively, highlighting specific challenges faced in implementing programs in those categories.

The process of oversimplification in policy often occurs when decisions are made without considering the complex factors that influence their effectiveness. To better understand the causes, an analysis of various factors that can worsen the process is carried out, from planning to policy implementation. In this effort, various interrelated factors are identified, such as hasty decision-making, limited resources, and lack of coordination between institutions. Furthermore, these factors are mapped in the form of a network diagram that illustrates the relationship between elements that influence each other. This process provides a clearer picture of the relationship and influence of each factor on oversimplification in policy.

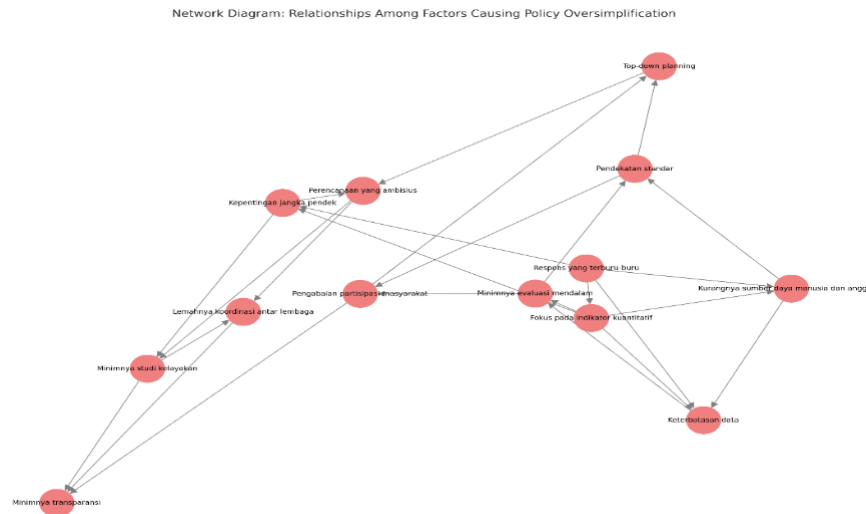


Figure 4. Network Diagram Relationship Among Factors Causing Policy Oversimplification

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between various factors that cause policy oversimplification. Each node represents an individual factor, while the arrows (edges) show the influence between these factors. This provides a systematic view of how factors are interrelated and contribute to policy oversimplification. Some of the key factors that contribute to policy oversimplification include hasty response, focus on quantitative indicators, short-term interests, lack of human resources and budget, limited data, lack of in-depth evaluation, standardized approach, neglect of community participation, ambitious planning, top-down planning, lack of feasibility studies, weak coordination between agencies, and lack of transparency. The network analysis shows that the factors "Top-down planning" and "Ambitious planning" have many relationships with other factors. This shows that decisions made at the top level can affect many aspects of policy implementation, including evaluation and coordination. Decisions driven by ambitious planning and top-down approaches have the potential to lead to policies that are unrealistic, less effective, or trapped in oversimplification. Furthermore, the factors “Lack of in-depth evaluation”, “Weak coordination between agencies”, and “Lack of feasibility studies” are interrelated, indicating that policies that are not thoroughly evaluated or lack coordination between agencies are prone to being simplified and failing to achieve the desired results. Without in-depth evaluation and effective coordination, policies become more easily simplified, ignoring the complexities and needs on the ground.

The factor “Rush response” is linked to “Focus on quantitative indicators” and “Data limitations”, indicating that policies are often made in a hurry without considering enough data or adequate analysis. This can lead to simpler but less accurate policies, as decisions are made based on limited data or in a rush, ignoring other important aspects. The factor “Short-term interests” also plays a significant role in policy simplification, especially in relation to “Lack of transparency” and “Ignoring community participation”. When policies focus too much on short-term results, decisions tend to be made without involving the community or considering long-term impacts. This leads to

simpler policies, which may be effective in the short term but are not sustainable. Finally, “Lack of human resources and budget” is linked to other factors such as “Ambitious planning” and “Lack of transparency”, indicating that a lack of resources can affect the ability to plan policies realistically and implement policies with sufficient transparency. Lack of human resources and budget leads to simpler policies due to limitations in policy planning and implementation

Oversimplification in reporting work programs often occurs due to a focus on numbers and administrative successes rather than real impacts on the ground. For example, 100-day work reports tend to highlight the number of programs completed or ongoing, without evaluating whether their implementation has resulted in positive changes for the community. Data shows that of the 116 programs announced, only 24% were completed, 31% were still in progress, and 45% were not running at all. This indicates that in addition to administrative successes, there are underlying problems in planning and resource allocation, which hinder the holistic achievement of targets. Different program categories show varying patterns of oversimplification, depending on the complexity of the program. In sectors such as “Environmental Efforts” and “Workforce Development,” the level of oversimplification is very high, with a low impact accuracy ratio. This reflects exaggerated claims of success without considering challenges on the ground. In contrast, in categories such as “Healthcare Initiatives” and “Crisis Management,” the level of oversimplification is lower, indicating a more realistic approach to communicating results. The gap between claims of success and independent evaluation also underscores this problem, such as in “Infrastructure Projects,” where claims of success reached 92.6%, but independent evaluation was only 23.17%.

In-depth analysis reveals that the main causes of this simplification are weak coordination between institutions, unrealistically ambitious planning, and limited human and budgetary resources. Decisions that are often driven by pressure to achieve quick results, such as “Rush response” and “Focus on quantitative indicators,” lead to neglect of fundamental aspects such as feasibility studies and community participation. The causal network diagram shows that “Top-down planning” has a significant influence in creating policies that do not touch the needs on the ground, while the lack of in-depth evaluation makes things worse by creating policies that are less effective.

In addition, categories with high claims of success but low independent impact, such as “Policy Implementation” and “Social Programs,” show that programs are often more focused on administrative achievements than on real impacts. This approach, which prioritizes quantity over quality, results in policies that are unsustainable and difficult to measure their success objectively. Factors such as “Short-term interests” and “Lack of transparency” also contribute to oversimplification, which leads policies in a less inclusive direction and often does not reflect the needs of society as a whole.

Oversimplification in policy reporting and planning can be understood through a theoretical framework that links administrative pressures, the need for political legitimacy, and institutional constraints (Weyland, 2023). In the context of the bounded rationality theory put forward by Herbert Simon, decision making is often influenced by the limitations of information, time and resources available to policy makers (Ilabaca et al., 2020). As a result, policies tend to be designed with a focus on quantitative indicators that are easier to measure and report, such as the number of programs completed or infrastructure targets achieved. In practice, this often ignores the complexity of implementation on the ground and the long-term impacts, which require in-depth evaluation and more comprehensive coordination (Christensen & Mandelkern, 2022).

Oversimplification can also be explained through the theory of institutional isomorphism, which suggests that institutions tend to imitate practices deemed successful in order to gain legitimacy, even though those practices may not be appropriate to their specific context (Hwang, 2023; Jarvis, 2014; Schneiberg & Lounsbury, 2018). In this case, governments or organizations often highlight administrative successes to show positive performance, without really ensuring the real impacts generated. This phenomenon is exacerbated by political pressure to show quick results, which leads policies to become more “shallow” by focusing on symbolic achievements, such as project

inaugurations, instead of addressing more complex root causes (Komatsu, 2013; Leiter, 2005; Razak et al., 2020). Thus, oversimplification is not only a result of technical limitations, but also part of the political and institutional dynamics that influence the policy process

5 | CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the phenomenon of oversimplification in the 100-day working period often results in limited policy evaluations and does not reflect broader and longer-term socio-political impacts. Policy success is often only measured based on administrative achievements or statistical figures, which do not always reflect deeper social changes in society. In the social and political context, an approach that focuses too much on short-term results can reinforce existing injustices or inequalities, because policies may only focus on visible aspects without considering structural impacts and a more equitable distribution of resources.

The main findings of this study emphasize the importance of broadening perspectives in policy formulation and evaluating evidence-based policies, with a focus on sustainability, long-term impacts, and possible social and political impacts. The success of a policy should not only be seen from administrative achievements in a short time, but also from how the policy can create more equitable and inclusive changes, reduce social inequality, and improve the quality of life of the community in the long term. For further research, it is recommended to examine more deeply how policy evaluation can be carried out holistically by involving various stakeholders, and considering social and political dynamics in its implementation. Research could also explore how ongoing evaluation mechanisms could be implemented to measure the effects of policies after a 100-day working period

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Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that has no relevant or material financial interests that relate to the research described in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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