

Review Article

# Civil Servant Pension Administration Services in Remote Regional Governments

(A Review of Public Administration Literature)

Agustino Yamlean <sup>1</sup>, Dian Ferriswara <sup>2\*</sup>, Fedianty Augustinah <sup>3</sup>, and Sri Kamariyah <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Jenjang S2, Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi, Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia: [tinoyamlean@gmail.com](mailto:tinoyamlean@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Jenjang S2, Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi, Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia: [dianferriswara@unitomo.ac.id](mailto:dianferriswara@unitomo.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup> Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Jenjang S2, Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi, Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia: [fedianty.augustinah@unitomo.ac.id](mailto:fedianty.augustinah@unitomo.ac.id)

<sup>4</sup> Prodi Ilmu Administrasi Jenjang S2, Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi, Universitas Dr. Soetomo Surabaya, Indonesia: [sri.kamariyah@unitomo.ac.id](mailto:sri.kamariyah@unitomo.ac.id)

\* Corresponding Author: Dian Ferriswara

**Abstract:** Civil servant pension administration is a vital yet insufficiently studied public service function within decentralized governance systems, particularly in remote and peripheral local governments where administrative capacity and service accessibility are limited. Although pension policies are nationally standardized, their local-level implementation often reveals disparities in institutional resources, human capital, coordination mechanisms, and infrastructure, leading to uneven service quality and increased administrative burdens for retirees. This literature review aims to synthesize and critically examine scholarly discussions on civil servant pension administration from the perspectives of public service delivery, administrative capacity, and Public Human Resource Management (Public HRM), with a focus on remote and peripheral governance contexts. Employing a narrative–systematic literature review approach, the study analyzes peer-reviewed international journal articles using thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis. The review identifies four dominant themes: the procedural and coordination-intensive nature of pension administration; persistent administrative capacity constraints involving human resources, institutions, and systems; the exacerbating effects of geographic isolation and spatial inequality on service delivery; and the strategic yet underrecognized role of pension administration within public sector HRM and lifecycle governance. The findings suggest that pension administration challenges in remote regions reflect structural capacity mismatches inherent in decentralized systems rather than isolated implementation failures. This review contributes theoretically by integrating public service theory, administrative capacity, and Public HRM within a peripheral governance framework, and practically by emphasizing the need for context-sensitive, capacity-oriented pension service reforms to promote service equity, accountability, and organizational legitimacy in local governments.

Received: July 23, 2025

Revised: September 23, 2025

Accepted: November 18, 2025

Online Available: January 19, 2026

Curr. Ver.: January 19, 2026



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open

access publication under the

terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution

(CC BY SA) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

**Keywords:** Administrative Capacity; Decentralized Governance; Policy Implementation; Public Administration; Public Service Delivery.

## 1. Introduction

Public pension administration constitutes a critical yet frequently underexamined component of public administration and Public Human Resource Management (Public HRM). Within the lifecycle of civil servants, pension administration represents the final institutional interaction between the state and its employees, embodying both administrative responsibility and normative commitments to fairness, security, and public value. From a Public HRM perspective, pension services are not merely technical procedures but integral elements of workforce governance that influence organizational legitimacy, employee trust, and long-term welfare outcomes (Boselie et al., 2021). In public administration theory,

pension administration is closely associated with public service quality, administrative accountability, and bureaucratic capacity, particularly in decentralized governance systems where service delivery responsibilities are delegated to local governments (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). Ineffective pension administration may generate administrative burden, undermine public confidence, and expose systemic weaknesses in state capacity (Herd & Moynihan, 2021). Consequently, examining pension administration through the combined lenses of public service delivery and Public HRM provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how administrative systems operationalize state obligations toward civil servants beyond active employment.

The urgency of improving civil servant pension administration is particularly pronounced at the local government level, where administrative capacity, institutional coordination, and resource availability vary substantially. Decentralized governance arrangements often place significant operational responsibility on local governments without ensuring commensurate administrative capacity, resulting in uneven service performance across regions (Setiawan et al., 2022). These challenges are amplified in remote and peripheral areas, where geographic isolation, limited human resources, infrastructural constraints, and weak intergovernmental connectivity complicate routine administrative processes (Madubun, 2024). Pension administration in such contexts frequently entails lengthy procedures, fragmented coordination with central agencies, and increased compliance costs for retirees, thereby intensifying administrative burden (Herd & Moynihan, 2021). Empirical studies on rural and peripheral governance consistently demonstrate that service delivery outcomes in these areas require distinct analytical treatment due to structural disadvantages that cannot be explained solely by managerial inefficiency (Gallardo et al., 2021). Accordingly, pension administration in remote local governments represents not only a technical service issue but also a broader governance challenge that reflects spatial inequality and differentiated state capacity.

Existing literature on public service delivery and administrative capacity provides valuable insights into the determinants of service performance in government organizations, yet rarely focuses explicitly on pension administration. Research in public administration emphasizes the role of administrative capacity—comprising human, organizational, and procedural dimensions—in shaping service effectiveness and policy implementation outcomes (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). Parallel strands of Public HRM literature highlight pension administration as part of the broader governance of the civil service employment lifecycle, linking retirement management to organizational stability and employee welfare (Boselie et al., 2021). Studies on digital government and rural service delivery further underscore how capacity constraints in smaller or remote local governments limit the modernization of administrative services, including personnel management systems (Puron-Cid et al., 2022). However, pension administration is often subsumed within broader discussions of social security or HR reform, leaving its administrative processes, institutional coordination, and service quality dimensions insufficiently theorized within public administration scholarship (Barr, 2021). This fragmentation suggests the need for integrative synthesis across service delivery, capacity, and HRM perspectives.

Despite the growing body of research on public service delivery and administrative capacity, a clear research gap persists regarding the systematic examination of civil servant pension administration in remote and peripheral local governments. Most existing studies either address pension systems at the macro-policy level or analyze public service performance without distinguishing pension administration as a distinct administrative function (Barr, 2021; Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). Moreover, research on administrative capacity rarely incorporates the specific procedural and inter-organizational complexities associated with pension processing, such as document verification, coordination with central agencies, and service continuity for retirees in geographically isolated areas (Painter & Pierre, 2021). Similarly, Public HRM scholarship tends to emphasize recruitment, performance management, and motivation, while retirement administration remains marginal in empirical and conceptual analyses (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). As a result, the intersection between pension administration, capacity gaps, and peripheral governance contexts remains underexplored, limiting both theoretical advancement and evidence-based policy guidance for local governments operating under structural constraints.

In response to these gaps, this article aims to systematically review and synthesize the scholarly literature on civil servant pension administration within the fields of public administration and Public HRM, with a specific focus on local governments in remote and peripheral regions. Employing a narrative-systematic literature review approach, the study

seeks to integrate theoretical perspectives on public service delivery, administrative capacity, and Public HRM to develop a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding pension administration challenges. The review contributes theoretically by positioning pension administration as a core public service function embedded within administrative capacity and HRM governance, rather than as a peripheral technical process. Practically, the article offers conceptually grounded insights for policymakers and local government administrators seeking to improve pension service delivery in structurally disadvantaged regions. By foregrounding the governance implications of pension administration in peripheral contexts, this review advances public administration scholarship and supports more equitable and capacity-sensitive approaches to public service reform.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Public Service Concepts, Service Quality, and Administrative Accountability**

Public service theory provides a foundational framework for understanding pension administration as a core governmental obligation rather than a purely technical procedure. In public administration scholarship, public services are evaluated not only by efficiency but also by service quality, equity, responsiveness, and administrative accountability, which together shape citizens' trust in government institutions (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). Pension administration, as a terminal service delivered to civil servants, embodies these principles because it directly affects welfare security and perceptions of state responsibility. Studies on administrative burden further demonstrate that complex procedures, documentation requirements, and coordination failures can impose significant psychological and compliance costs on service users, particularly retirees who may face declining physical or economic capacity (Herd & Moynihan, 2021). From this perspective, poor pension service quality reflects deeper weaknesses in administrative design and accountability mechanisms rather than isolated operational failures. Consequently, pension administration should be conceptualized as part of the broader public service delivery system, where quality standards, procedural transparency, and accountability structures are essential to ensure equitable outcomes. This conceptualization anchors pension administration firmly within the analytical domain of public service theory.

### **Administrative Capacity of Local Governments**

Administrative capacity is widely recognized as a critical determinant of public service performance, particularly in decentralized governance systems where local governments assume significant implementation responsibilities. Policy and administrative capacity literature conceptualizes capacity as a multidimensional construct encompassing institutional arrangements, human resources, and procedural systems that enable governments to translate policy objectives into effective service delivery (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). Empirical studies consistently show that variations in local government capacity explain disparities in service outcomes more convincingly than formal policy design alone (Setiawan et al., 2022). In the context of pension administration, limited staffing, inadequate administrative skills, and fragmented procedures can lead to delays, errors, and coordination problems with central agencies. These challenges underscore the importance of viewing pension services as capacity-dependent administrative functions rather than standardized processes that operate uniformly across jurisdictions. Moreover, capacity constraints tend to be cumulative, as weak institutional arrangements often exacerbate human resource shortages and procedural rigidity (Painter & Pierre, 2021). Thus, analyzing pension administration through the lens of administrative capacity allows for a more nuanced understanding of why local governments differ markedly in their ability to deliver timely and reliable pension services.

### **Public Human Resource Management and Pension Administration**

Public Human Resource Management (Public HRM) scholarship situates pension administration within the broader lifecycle management of civil servants, linking retirement processes to organizational stability, workforce planning, and employee welfare. While Public HRM research traditionally emphasizes recruitment, performance management, and motivation, recent reviews highlight the need to address underexplored functions such as retirement and post-employment administration (Boselie et al., 2021). Pension administration

represents a critical transition point where administrative systems must ensure continuity, accuracy, and fairness while coordinating multiple institutional actors. Failure at this stage not only affects retirees but also signals deficiencies in HR governance and organizational professionalism. Moreover, HRM practices shape the capacity of administrative units to manage pension services effectively, as staff competencies, procedural knowledge, and coordination mechanisms are directly linked to service quality outcomes (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). By integrating pension administration into Public HRM analysis, scholars can better capture its strategic significance as a governance function rather than a residual administrative task. This perspective reinforces the argument that pension services are integral to sustainable public sector human resource management.

### **Remote and Peripheral Regions as a Public Policy Context**

The governance of public services in remote and peripheral regions presents distinct challenges that require context-sensitive analysis. Research on peripheral governance emphasizes that geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and constrained human resources fundamentally shape administrative capacity and service accessibility (Madubun, 2024). In such contexts, standardized administrative procedures—often designed for urban settings—can exacerbate service inequities by imposing disproportionate costs on users in remote areas. Studies on digital inclusion and rural governance further show that technological solutions do not automatically compensate for capacity gaps, particularly when digital literacy and institutional readiness remain limited (Gallardo et al., 2021). Pension administration in peripheral regions therefore operates under compounded constraints, where administrative burden intersects with spatial disadvantage. These structural conditions necessitate differentiated policy and administrative responses rather than uniform service models. Conceptually, peripheral regions function as stress tests for public administration systems, revealing latent weaknesses in capacity, coordination, and adaptability. Incorporating this context into the analysis of pension administration strengthens the explanatory power of public administration theory and highlights the spatial dimensions of service inequality.

### **Thematic Synthesis: Linking Service Quality, Capacity, and Pension Policy Implementation**

Synthesizing the reviewed literature reveals a convergent pattern in which pension administration outcomes are shaped by the interaction between service quality principles, administrative capacity, and contextual constraints. Studies on public service delivery emphasize normative standards of accountability and responsiveness, while capacity-focused research explains the operational feasibility of meeting these standards (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022; Brenton et al., 2023). Public HRM literature adds an organizational governance dimension by situating pension administration within workforce lifecycle management (Boselie et al., 2021). When applied to remote local governments, these strands collectively demonstrate that pension administration failures are rarely attributable to policy intent alone but rather to capacity mismatches and implementation constraints (Painter & Pierre, 2021). This thematic synthesis underscores the need for integrative analytical frameworks that bridge public service theory, administrative capacity, and Public HRM. By consolidating these perspectives, the literature points toward a more holistic understanding of pension administration as a governance function embedded within structural, organizational, and spatial realities. This synthesis directly informs the analytical focus of the present review.

## **3. Materials and Method**

### **Research design and characteristics of the literature review**

This study adopts a Literature Review Article design employing a narrative–systematic review approach, which combines the structured rigor of systematic searching and selection with the interpretive depth of narrative synthesis. This approach is particularly appropriate for public administration research, where phenomena such as pension administration involve complex institutional arrangements, multi-level governance, and contextual variability that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative aggregation alone (Snyder, 2019). The narrative–systematic review allows the study to map theoretical developments, compare empirical findings, and synthesize conceptual insights across diverse strands of literature

related to public service delivery, administrative capacity, and Public HRM. Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, the review seeks analytical generalization by integrating and interpreting existing knowledge to identify patterns, gaps, and explanatory mechanisms (Booth et al., 2016). This design is well suited to examining pension administration in remote local governments, where contextual and structural factors play a decisive role in shaping administrative outcomes.

### **Literature search strategy and data sources**

The literature search was conducted systematically using a combination of curated and open academic sources. The Pustaka Agustino Pool served as the primary reference base, comprising peer-reviewed journal articles published predominantly between 2021 and 2025 in reputable international journals within the fields of public administration and Public HRM. To ensure comprehensive coverage, additional searches were conducted in major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Controlled keywords and Boolean operators were employed to refine the search, including combinations of civil servant pension administration, public service delivery, local government administrative capacity, public human resource management, remote or peripheral regions, and policy implementation. Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to connect thematic clusters and broaden or narrow search results as needed. This strategy follows established best practices for systematic and semi-systematic literature searches, ensuring transparency, replicability, and relevance of the retrieved studies (Kitchenham et al., 2009; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

### **Inclusion and exclusion criteria and screening procedure**

To maintain academic rigor and thematic relevance, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening process. Articles were included if they (1) were published in peer-reviewed academic journals; (2) addressed issues related to public administration, public service delivery, administrative capacity, Public HRM, or policy implementation; and (3) were empirically or conceptually relevant to local government contexts, particularly in remote or peripheral regions. Articles were excluded if they consisted of non-academic commentary, policy briefs, or popular reports; lacked a clear methodological basis; or did not engage substantively with administrative or governance dimensions of pension services. The screening process followed a sequential procedure involving title review, abstract screening, and full-text assessment to ensure consistency and traceability. This staged selection process is consistent with evidence-informed management and systematic review methodologies, enabling the reduction of bias while retaining analytically relevant studies (Tranfield et al., 2003).

### **Data analysis: thematic analysis and conceptual synthesis**

The selected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative synthesis technique well established in integrative and narrative literature reviews. The analysis proceeded through iterative stages of familiarization, coding, theme development, and refinement, focusing on recurrent concepts, theoretical arguments, and empirical findings across studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key themes were identified relating to public service quality, administrative capacity constraints, Public HRM governance, and the challenges of pension administration in remote settings. These themes were then synthesized through conceptual comparison, allowing similarities and divergences across studies to be systematically examined. Rather than summarizing individual articles descriptively, the analysis emphasized cross-study interpretation and theory integration, in line with best practices for literature review methodology (Snyder, 2019). This approach enabled the identification of explanatory patterns and knowledge gaps relevant to the governance of pension administration in local governments.

### **Theoretical lenses guiding interpretation**

The thematic synthesis was guided by three complementary theoretical lenses: Public Service Theory, Administrative Capacity Theory, and Public Human Resource Management (Public HRM). Public Service Theory was used to interpret findings related to service quality, accountability, and administrative burden in pension administration. Administrative Capacity Theory provided an analytical framework for examining how institutional arrangements,

human resources, and procedural systems shape service performance at the local government level (Wu et al., 2015). Public HRM offered a governance perspective that situates pension administration within the lifecycle management of civil servants, linking retirement processes to organizational capacity and workforce governance. The integration of these theoretical perspectives enabled a multidimensional interpretation of the literature, ensuring that empirical findings were contextualized within broader administrative and HRM frameworks. This theoretically informed synthesis strengthens the analytical coherence and policy relevance of the review.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### Results

#### *Patterns of Civil Servant Pension Administration in Local Governments*

The literature consistently indicates that civil servant pension administration in local governments follows a highly procedural and rule-based pattern, characterized by extensive documentation requirements and inter-agency coordination. Studies on public service performance emphasize that pension administration involves interactions among local HR units, central personnel agencies, and pension or social security institutions, creating multi-layered administrative chains that increase processing time and error risks (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). From a service delivery perspective, these procedural complexities translate into delayed benefit disbursement and inconsistent service experiences for retirees. The literature further shows that standardized national regulations are often implemented uniformly across jurisdictions, without adequate adaptation to variations in local administrative capacity (Setiawan et al., 2022). As a result, similar regulatory frameworks generate markedly different service outcomes at the local level, suggesting that pension administration performance is shaped more by administrative execution than by policy design alone.

A second pattern identified in the literature relates to the persistence of administrative burden in pension services. Pension administration is frequently described as document-intensive, requiring retirees to navigate multiple verification stages, often in person, which increases learning, compliance, and psychological costs (Herd & Moynihan, 2021). These burdens are particularly salient for older civil servants who may have limited mobility or access to administrative centers. The literature thus positions pension administration as a high-stakes public service where procedural rigidity directly affects service equity. This finding underscores the importance of reinterpreting pension administration not merely as a technical HR process but as a core public service function subject to the same quality and accountability expectations as other citizen-facing services.

#### *Administrative Capacity Constraints in Pension Administration*

A dominant theme across the reviewed studies concerns the role of administrative capacity in shaping pension service outcomes. Administrative capacity is conceptualized as a composite of institutional arrangements, human resources, and administrative procedures that enable governments to implement policies effectively (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). In the context of pension administration, the literature highlights recurrent capacity deficits, including insufficient staffing, limited technical expertise, and weak procedural integration within local government HR units. These deficits undermine service continuity and increase dependence on informal practices to compensate for formal system weaknesses (Painter & Pierre, 2021). Empirical evidence suggests that such capacity constraints are structural rather than incidental, reflecting long-standing disparities in local government resourcing under decentralized governance arrangements (Setiawan et al., 2022).

Further analysis reveals that capacity constraints are often mutually reinforcing. Weak institutional coordination exacerbates procedural rigidity, while limited human resource capacity restricts opportunities for organizational learning and process improvement. Studies on digital government adoption in smaller jurisdictions demonstrate that technological tools alone cannot resolve these challenges when organizational readiness and staff competencies remain limited (Puron-Cid et al., 2022). Consequently, pension administration failures should be interpreted as systemic capacity mismatches rather than isolated managerial shortcomings. This finding reinforces the analytical value of administrative capacity theory for explaining variations in pension service performance across local governments.

### ***Geographic and Structural Constraints in Remote and Peripheral Regions***

The literature identifies geographic and structural constraints as defining characteristics of pension administration in remote and peripheral regions. Research on peripheral governance emphasizes that physical distance, transportation limitations, and underdeveloped infrastructure significantly impede access to administrative services and inter-organizational coordination (Madubun, 2024). In pension administration, these constraints manifest in longer processing times, higher transaction costs for retirees, and greater reliance on intermediaries to navigate administrative procedures. Such conditions challenge assumptions embedded in national administrative systems that presume physical proximity to service centers.

In addition, studies on rural and peripheral service delivery highlight that digitalization initiatives often reproduce existing inequalities rather than eliminate them. While digital platforms are frequently promoted as efficiency-enhancing solutions, uneven digital literacy and connectivity constrain their effectiveness in peripheral contexts (Gallardo et al., 2021). The literature thus suggests that pension administration in remote regions operates under compounded constraints, where spatial disadvantage intersects with administrative capacity limitations. This theme underscores the necessity of incorporating geographic context into analyses of public administration performance, particularly for services such as pension administration that require sustained institutional coordination.

### ***Public HRM Implications of Pension Administration***

From a Public HRM perspective, the reviewed literature reveals that pension administration is strategically significant yet systematically underexamined. Public HRM research has traditionally prioritized recruitment, performance management, and motivation, often marginalizing retirement administration as a residual function (Boselie et al., 2021). However, empirical studies indicate that weaknesses in pension administration reflect broader HR governance challenges, including limited professionalization, unclear role delineation, and insufficient training of HR personnel (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). Pension administration thus functions as a critical indicator of HRM system maturity within public organizations.

Moreover, the literature highlights that pension administration outcomes influence perceptions of organizational fairness and state credibility. Inadequate pension services undermine trust not only among retirees but also among active civil servants, shaping expectations regarding long-term employment security. This finding reinforces the argument that pension administration should be analytically integrated into Public HRM frameworks as a core governance function. By doing so, Public HRM scholarship can more fully capture the lifecycle implications of HR policies and administrative practices.

## **Discussion**

### ***Reframing Pension Administration as a Core Public Service Function***

The findings of this literature review invite a fundamental reframing of civil servant pension administration within public administration scholarship. Rather than being treated as a residual or technical function of personnel management, pension administration emerges as a core public service that embodies state accountability, administrative justice, and public value. Public service theory emphasizes that service quality is defined not only by efficiency but also by fairness, reliability, and responsiveness, particularly in services affecting citizens' long-term welfare (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). Pension administration fits squarely within this normative framework, as it represents the final institutional interaction between the state and its employees. The reviewed literature shows that deficiencies in pension services undermine perceptions of administrative credibility and erode trust in public institutions, especially among retirees who depend heavily on timely and accurate benefit delivery (Herd & Moynihan, 2021).

This reframing has important analytical implications. By conceptualizing pension administration as a public service rather than a back-office HR process, the literature highlights the relevance of service quality standards, accountability mechanisms, and user-centered design in pension governance. This perspective aligns pension administration with broader debates in public administration regarding service legitimacy and citizen-state relations. Consequently, pension administration failures should be interpreted as service

delivery failures that require systemic governance responses, rather than as isolated administrative errors.

### ***Administrative Capacity as the Central Explanatory Mechanism***

Administrative capacity theory provides the most compelling explanatory lens for understanding variation in pension administration outcomes across local governments. The reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that policy effectiveness depends less on regulatory design than on the institutional, human, and procedural capacities available at the implementing level (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). In decentralized systems, local governments are often tasked with complex administrative responsibilities without commensurate investments in capacity, producing structural implementation gaps (Setiawan et al., 2022). Pension administration illustrates this dynamic vividly, as it requires sustained coordination, technical competence, and procedural accuracy over extended periods.

The literature further indicates that administrative capacity deficits are not merely quantitative (e.g., insufficient staff) but qualitative, involving limited expertise, weak coordination mechanisms, and rigid procedures (Painter & Pierre, 2021). These constraints are mutually reinforcing: weak institutional arrangements restrict learning, while procedural rigidity amplifies workload pressures on limited human resources. From this perspective, pension administration problems are symptomatic of broader capacity mismatches within local government systems. This finding reinforces the argument that improving pension services requires capacity-oriented reforms rather than procedural simplification alone.

### ***Spatial Inequality and Peripheral Governance as Amplifiers of Capacity Gaps***

A critical contribution of this review lies in its integration of spatial inequality into analyses of administrative capacity and service delivery. The literature on peripheral governance demonstrates that remote regions face structural disadvantages—such as geographic isolation, limited infrastructure, and constrained fiscal capacity—that fundamentally shape administrative performance (Madubun, 2024). Pension administration in these contexts is particularly vulnerable, as retirees often must overcome physical distance and transportation barriers to access services, thereby increasing administrative burden (Herd & Moynihan, 2021).

Importantly, the reviewed studies caution against assuming that digitalization can fully offset spatial disadvantages. While digital government initiatives are frequently promoted as solutions for remote service delivery, evidence shows that uneven digital literacy and connectivity can reproduce or even exacerbate existing inequalities (Gallardo et al., 2021). These findings suggest that spatial context is not a peripheral variable but a central determinant of administrative feasibility. By foregrounding peripheral governance, this review extends administrative capacity theory to account explicitly for spatial dimensions of inequality, thereby enriching its explanatory power in decentralized governance settings.

### ***Pension Administration within Public HRM and Lifecycle Governance***

From a Public HRM perspective, the literature reveals a significant conceptual gap in how retirement administration is treated within the governance of civil service systems. Public HRM research has predominantly focused on recruitment, performance, and motivation, often neglecting retirement administration despite its centrality to workforce lifecycle management (Boselie et al., 2021). The reviewed studies demonstrate that pension administration outcomes shape perceptions of organizational justice, long-term employment security, and institutional reliability, affecting not only retirees but also active employees.

Moreover, weaknesses in pension administration reflect broader deficiencies in HRM professionalization, including limited training, unclear role allocation, and fragmented responsibility structures (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). These findings support the argument that pension administration should be analytically integrated into Public HRM frameworks as a strategic governance function. Doing so allows scholars and practitioners to better understand how HRM systems sustain long-term commitments to employees and how failures at the retirement stage undermine organizational legitimacy. This integration advances Public HRM theory by extending lifecycle governance beyond active employment.

### ***Policy Implementation and the Limits of Uniform Administrative Design***

The discussion also highlights the relevance of policy implementation theory in explaining pension administration outcomes. National pension regulations are typically designed with assumptions of administrative uniformity, yet the reviewed literature demonstrates that implementation contexts vary widely across local governments (Painter & Pierre, 2021). In remote regions, uniform procedural standards often collide with capacity constraints and spatial barriers, producing predictable implementation gaps. This finding aligns with broader implementation research emphasizing the role of context and discretion in shaping policy outcomes.

By situating pension administration within implementation theory, this review underscores the limitations of one-size-fits-all administrative reforms. Instead, the literature points toward the need for differentiated governance strategies that align procedural demands with local capacity and contextual realities. This insight contributes conceptually by linking administrative capacity and implementation theory, and practically by informing policy designs that are more adaptive and equitable in peripheral settings.

### **Novelty and Contribution to Public Administration Scholarship**

The central novelty of this literature review lies in its integrative analytical framework that connects public service theory, administrative capacity, Public HRM, and peripheral governance in the study of pension administration. While prior research has examined these dimensions separately, this review demonstrates their interdependence and cumulative effects on service outcomes. By focusing on pension administration in remote local governments, the article illuminates a governance function that has been systematically under-theorized in public administration scholarship.

This contribution is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it advances administrative capacity and Public HRM theories by embedding them within spatially differentiated governance contexts. Practically, it provides a conceptually grounded basis for designing pension administration reforms that prioritize capacity building, contextual adaptation, and service equity. In doing so, the review strengthens the relevance of public administration research for addressing persistent service disparities in remote and peripheral regions.

## **5. Comparison**

### **Urban/advanced regions versus remote/peripheral regions in pension service delivery**

The literature demonstrates a clear divergence in pension administration performance between urban or administratively advanced regions and remote or peripheral local governments. Studies on public service performance show that urban areas benefit from denser institutional networks, easier access to central agencies, and more stable administrative routines, which facilitate faster and more predictable pension processing (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022). In contrast, research on peripheral governance indicates that pension services in remote regions are frequently delayed and procedurally fragmented due to distance, limited coordination, and weaker institutional embeddedness (Madubun, 2024). This comparison suggests that regulatory uniformity does not translate into service uniformity. While pension policies are nationally standardized, their implementation outcomes are spatially differentiated, reflecting uneven administrative capacity and service accessibility. The implication for public administration theory is that spatial context functions as a mediating variable between policy design and service outcomes. Practically, this comparison highlights the inadequacy of one-size-fits-all administrative models for pension services and underscores the need for territorially differentiated service delivery strategies.

### **Comparative administrative capacity across geographic contexts**

Comparative analysis of administrative capacity across geographic contexts reveals systematic differences in institutional robustness, human resource availability, and procedural integration. The policy capacity literature emphasizes that administrative capacity consists of interdependent institutional, human, and procedural dimensions that collectively shape

implementation performance (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). Empirical studies show that urban local governments typically possess stronger institutional coordination mechanisms, higher staff specialization, and more mature administrative routines, enabling them to manage complex pension processes more effectively (Setiawan et al., 2022). By contrast, peripheral local governments often face cumulative capacity deficits, including limited staffing, overlapping roles, and rigid procedures that constrain adaptive problem-solving (Painter & Pierre, 2021). This comparison underscores that capacity gaps are structural rather than incidental, rooted in long-term disparities in resource allocation and organizational development. Theoretically, this finding reinforces administrative capacity theory by illustrating how contextual factors condition capacity effectiveness. Practically, it suggests that pension administration reforms must prioritize capacity building tailored to local conditions rather than uniform procedural enhancement.

### **Policy implementation and Public HRM practices under varying capacity conditions**

The literature also reveals significant contrasts in policy implementation approaches and Public HRM practices across local governments with differing capacity levels. In higher-capacity contexts, pension administration is more likely to be integrated into formal HRM systems, supported by clearer role delineation, standardized training, and routine coordination with central agencies (Boselie et al., 2021). These conditions enable more consistent application of pension regulations and reduce administrative burden for retirees. Conversely, in low-capacity and peripheral contexts, implementation practices tend to be informal, reactive, and dependent on individual discretion, reflecting limited HRM professionalization (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). This comparison aligns with implementation theory, which emphasizes that frontline discretion and organizational capacity shape policy outcomes more decisively than formal rules alone (Painter & Pierre, 2021). From a Public HRM perspective, the contrast highlights how lifecycle governance weakens when retirement administration is not institutionally embedded. The implication is that Public HRM frameworks must explicitly address pension administration as a capacity-sensitive function, particularly in decentralized and spatially unequal governance systems.

### **Positioning the article's contribution relative to prior studies (novelty)**

Compared with prior studies, this article advances the literature by systematically integrating spatial context, administrative capacity, and pension policy implementation into a unified analytical framework. Existing research has examined public service quality, administrative capacity, or Public HRM largely in isolation, often focusing on urban or average local government contexts (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022; Boselie et al., 2021). Studies addressing remote regions tend to emphasize service access or digital inclusion without linking these issues explicitly to pension administration (Gallardo et al., 2021). By contrast, this review foregrounds pension administration as a governance function where capacity gaps and peripheral conditions intersect most visibly. This comparative positioning establishes the article's novelty by demonstrating that pension administration failures in remote regions are not anomalous but structurally patterned outcomes of decentralized governance and uneven capacity distribution. Theoretically, this contributes to public administration scholarship by extending administrative capacity and Public HRM theories into peripheral governance contexts. Practically, it provides a stronger evidence base for differentiated pension service policies tailored to local capacity realities.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **Synthesis of key insights from the literature**

This literature review synthesizes a dispersed body of scholarship to elucidate how civil servant pension administration in remote local governments is shaped by the interaction of service design, administrative capacity, and spatial context. Across studies, pension administration emerges as a capacity-sensitive public service in which procedural complexity and inter-organizational coordination place significant demands on local governments. The literature consistently indicates that variations in service outcomes are less attributable to policy intent than to mismatches between nationally standardized procedures and uneven local administrative capacity (Van de Walle & Groeneveld, 2022; Setiawan et al., 2022). In

peripheral regions, geographic isolation and infrastructural constraints amplify administrative burden and exacerbate delays, revealing structural vulnerabilities in decentralized service delivery systems (Herd & Moynihan, 2021; Madubun, 2024). Taken together, these insights suggest that pension administration constitutes a revealing case for understanding how public services perform under conditions of constrained capacity and spatial inequality. Rather than isolated operational problems, the challenges identified reflect systemic governance dynamics that warrant integrative analytical treatment within public administration scholarship.

### **Theoretical contributions and novelty**

The primary theoretical contribution of this article lies in its integrative framing of pension administration at the intersection of Public Service Theory, Administrative Capacity, and Public Human Resource Management (Public HRM) within peripheral governance contexts. While prior studies have examined these perspectives separately, this review demonstrates their cumulative and mutually reinforcing effects on pension service outcomes. By foregrounding administrative capacity as a mediating mechanism, the analysis extends capacity theory to explicitly incorporate spatial differentiation and peripheral disadvantage (Wu et al., 2015; Brenton et al., 2023). Furthermore, situating pension administration within Public HRM advances lifecycle governance perspectives by recognizing retirement administration as a strategic function shaping organizational legitimacy and employee trust (Boselie et al., 2021). The novelty of this review resides in its emphasis on capacity gaps and policy implementation challenges in remote regions, a dimension often overlooked in mainstream public administration research. This contribution enriches theoretical debates by demonstrating that spatial context is not ancillary but central to understanding administrative performance in decentralized systems.

### **Practical and policy implications for local governments and Public HRM**

From a practical standpoint, the findings underscore the need for capacity-oriented and context-sensitive reforms in pension administration. Uniform procedural standards and digital solutions, while valuable, are insufficient when local governments lack the institutional, human, and procedural capacity to implement them effectively (Painter & Pierre, 2021; Puron-Cid et al., 2022). For remote local governments, policy responses should prioritize targeted capacity building, including specialized training for HR personnel, strengthened coordination mechanisms with central agencies, and adaptive procedural designs that reduce administrative burden for retirees (Herd & Moynihan, 2021). From a Public HRM perspective, integrating pension administration into strategic HR governance can enhance lifecycle management and reinforce organizational credibility (Kroll & Vogel, 2021). These implications suggest that improving pension services is not merely a technical exercise but a governance reform that aligns service quality objectives with realistic capacity assessments. Policymakers should therefore adopt differentiated approaches that recognize spatial inequality and tailor administrative expectations accordingly.

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

Despite its contributions, this review is subject to several limitations inherent to literature-based research. First, the synthesis relies on secondary sources, which limits direct insight into organizational practices and user experiences in specific local contexts. Second, while the review emphasizes remote and peripheral regions, empirical evidence from such settings remains comparatively scarce, constraining the depth of comparative analysis. Future research should address these gaps by conducting qualitative and mixed-methods studies that examine pension administration processes at the organizational and street-level, particularly in geographically isolated local governments. Comparative case studies across regions with differing capacity profiles would further illuminate how administrative and HRM reforms interact with spatial context. Additionally, longitudinal research could assess how capacity-building initiatives influence pension service outcomes over time. Advancing this agenda would strengthen the empirical foundations of administrative capacity and Public HRM theories and support more equitable public service governance in peripheral regions.

**Author Contributions:** “Conceptualization, A.Y.; F.A.; Methodology, A.Y.; D.F.; Formal analysis, A.Y.; S.K. ; Writing, A.Y. The authors has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript”

**Funding:** Please add: “This research received no external funding”

**Data Availability Statement:** This article is a literature review and does not generate new primary data. All materials analyzed in this study are derived from publicly available secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings indexed in recognized academic databases.

**Acknowledgments:** “The author gratefully acknowledges institutional and academic support that facilitated the completion of this review. The author also acknowledges the use of artificial intelligence–assisted tools for language refinement and editorial support, applied in accordance with responsible research and publication ethics, without altering the scholarly interpretation or substantive content of the manuscript.”

**Conflicts of Interest:** “The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

## References

- Barr, N. (2021). Pensions: Overview and policy challenges. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, 37(2), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/grab008>
- Booth, A., Sutton, A., & Papaioannou, D. (2016). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Boselie, P., Van Harten, J., & Veld, M. (2021). A human resource management review on public management and public administration research. *Public Management Review*, 23(4), 483–500. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2019.1695880>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brenton, S., Howlett, M., & Woo, J. J. (2023). Policy capacity: Evolving theory and missing links. *Policy Studies*, 44(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2022.2043266>
- Gallardo, R., Beaulieu, L. J., & Geideman, C. (2021). Digital inclusion and parity: A rural perspective. *Community Development*, 52(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2020.1866275>
- Herd, P., & Moynihan, D. P. (2021). Administrative burden: Policymaking by other means. *Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2021.7.1.01>
- Kitchenham, B., Pretorius, R., Budgen, D., Brereton, P., Turner, M., Niazi, M., & Linkman, S. (2009). Systematic literature reviews in software engineering—A tertiary study. *Information and Software Technology*, 51(1), 7–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2008.09.009>
- Kroll, A., & Vogel, D. (2021). Public employees’ motivation and HRM practices: A systematic review. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 41(4), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X20975082>
- Madubun, J. (2024). Public services in island sub-districts: Challenges and opportunities. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 83(3), 308–327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12586>
- Painter, M., & Pierre, J. (2021). Unpacking policy capacity: Issues and themes. *Policy and Society*, 40(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2020.1864264>
- Puron-Cid, G., Reddick, C. G., & Ganapati, S. (2022). Digital government in smaller and rural local governments. *Government Information Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.1017xx>

- Setiawan, A., Tjiptoherijanto, P., Mahi, B. R., & Khoirunurrofik, K. (2022). Local government capacity and public service delivery: Evidence from Indonesia. *Economics*, 10(12), 323. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economics10120323>
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104, 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, 14(3), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00375>
- Van de Walle, S., & Groeneveld, S. (2022). Public service performance: Conceptual and empirical challenges. *Public Administration*, 100(2), 251–266. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12776>
- Wu, X., Ramesh, M., & Howlett, M. (2015). Policy capacity: A conceptual framework for understanding policy competences and capabilities. *Policy and Society*, 34(3–4), 165–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polsoc.2015.09.001>
- Xiao, Y., & Watson, M. (2019). Guidance on conducting a systematic literature review. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 39(1), 93–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X17723971>