International Journal of Education, Vocational and Social Science
https://e-journal.citakonsulindo.or.id/index.php/IJEVSS
E-ISSN : 2963 4954
IJEVSS

The Wage Council As An Action Arena In The Formulation of Minimum Wage Policy In Indonesia: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The Wage Council brings together government, employer, worker, and academic representatives in minimum-wage deliberations, but representation does not ensure equal influence. This study analyzes the Wage Council as an action arena through a systematic literature review of 21 Indonesian studies published in 2017–2025. Thematic synthesis based on the Institutional Analysis and Development framework was combined with VOSviewer co-occurrence mapping. Six clusters containing 26 terms linked participants, institutional functions, living needs, worker mobilization, and wage determination. Wage formulas and decent-living-needs data shape bargaining space, while organizational support, political networks, analytical capacity, and information access affect participants' ability to defend proposals. Academics support data interpretation, whereas lobbying and mobilization connect formal deliberation with outside pressure. Outcomes range from consensus to deadlock, and council recommendations may differ from gubernatorial decisions. The council's role therefore depends on interactions among rules, resources, information, and decision authority.

Keywords: Wage Council; Minimum wage; Tripartite bargaining; Decent living needs; Institutional authority.

INTRODUCTION

Minimum wages affect livelihoods and business costs. Statistics Indonesia (2026) reported

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an average employee wage of IDR 3.39 million in May 2026 and 4.65% open unemployment. Effects vary with coverage, employment responses, household conditions, and regional costs (Gindling, 2024), making social dialogue important in wage setting (International Labour Organization, 2024).

Wage Councils formally unite government, employers, workers, and academics to prepare advice and considerations (Hipan, 2021). Their bargaining space depends on applicable rules: formula-based arrangements narrowed negotiation, while the alpha variable later reopened it (Izzati, 2023). Government Regulation No. 49 of 2025 permits regional councils to set alpha at 0.50–0.90 using worker interests, business capacity, and decent living needs (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

Minimum-wage evidence is mixed. Siregar (2022) found labor-market effects across Java; Ariani et al. (2024) linked higher wages with lower formal absorption and greater informality; Fadhilah and Damayanti (2024) found positive formal-employment effects weakened by non-compliance. Variation also reflects enforcement and worker groups (Neumark & Munguía Corella, 2021), so councils must assess evidence rather than rely on a single expected effect.

Wage setting is also political: formula changes redistribute bargaining opportunities (Wulansari, 2021), while unions combine council participation with lobbying and collective action (Saepulloh & Laksana, 2023). The issue is how rules interact with resources, information, and strategy when proposals are accepted, changed, or rejected.

The action-arena concept examines participants, rules, information, authority, and choices. Prior applications show how rules-in-use structure collective action (Chua & Yau, 2022), specify who may act under what conditions (Frantz & Siddiki, 2022), and support analysis of policy formulation and change (Siddiki & Frantz, 2022).

Existing work separates institutional duties (Hipan, 2021), union strategy (Saepulloh & Laksana, 2023), and non-compliance effects (Fadhilah & Damayanti, 2024). This study addresses that gap by systematically reviewing how participation rules, authority, resources, information, and negotiation interact in Wage Council recommendations across Indonesian regions and policy periods.

METHOD

Research Design

This SLR examines Wage Councils as action arenas through evidence on rules, positions, resources, information, and bargaining. Reporting followed PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021), and

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the action-arena framework guided thematic coding.

Literature Search Strategy

Searches covered journal websites, GARUDA, Neliti, reference lists, and researcher-provided articles published January 1, 2017–September 9, 2026. Indonesian- or English-language studies had to concern Indonesia. Keywords combined “dewan pengupahan,” “upah minimum,” “perumusan,” “penetapan,” “serikat pekerja,” “wawancara,” “wage council,” “minimum wage,” and “Indonesia,” following search-documentation principles from Rethlefsen et al. (2021).

Publication pages verified metadata; full texts established methods, data, and relevance. Matching repository or author versions were accepted, and duplicate versions were merged.

Article Selection, Appraisal, and Data Extraction

Eligible studies addressed wage setting or related institutional capacity and contained identifiable field evidence; empirical support was required for legal studies (Table 1).

Table 1. Article Selection Criteria

Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Publication	Journal articles/proceedings, 2017–2026	Before 2017; theses; opinions; community-service publications
Scope	Indonesia; Wage Councils/wage setting/actor strategy/institutional capacity	Outside Indonesia or unrelated to institutional wage setting
Evidence	Original research with identifiable field data	Reviews/literature-only discussions without field data
Access	Traceable publication details and examinable full text	Incomplete or unobtainable full text

Of 237 identified records, five duplicates were removed; 232 were screened, 196 excluded, and 36 assessed in full text. Fifteen were excluded at eligibility, leaving 21 articles.

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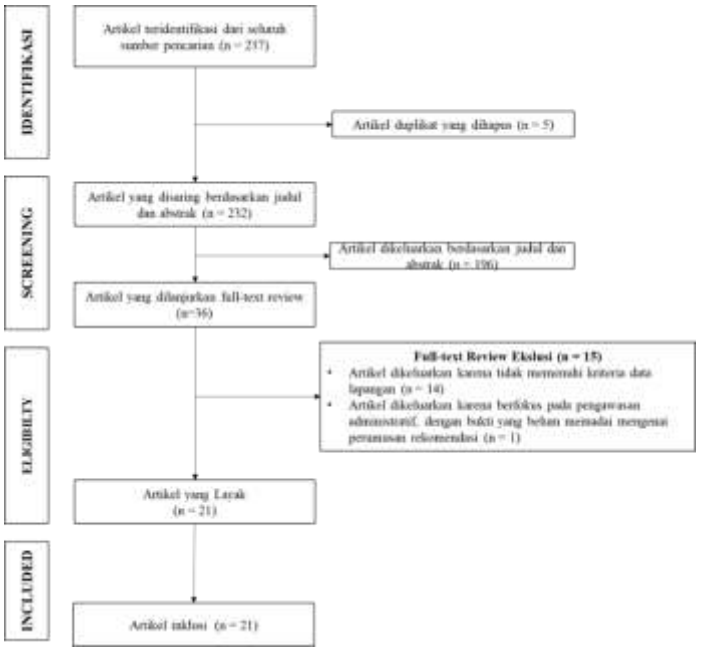


Figure 1. Full-text screening flow, adapted from PRISMA 2020

Appraisal covered objectives, methods, informants, data, analysis, and evidentiary support. Extraction recorded year, area, period, method, actors, rules, resources, information, interactions, and recommendations, while possible overlapping field sources were noted.

Thematic Analysis and VOSviewer Mapping

Thematic coding covered participants, positions, authority, resources, information, choices, interaction outcomes, lobbying, deadlock, and living-needs data; findings were compared by region, level, and regulatory period. VOSviewer 1.6.20 mapped co-occurrence through network, overlay, and density views (van Eck & Waltman, 2023). Terms from titles, abstracts, and keywords were standardized; UMP, UMK, and sectoral wages remained distinct.

A binary article–term matrix used a minimum occurrence of two and association-strength normalization; mapping and clustering settings were documented. Maps were interpreted with full texts; all 21 articles remained in thematic synthesis regardless of mapping thresholds.

RESULTS

Distribution of Article Characteristics

The 21 studies were classified by year, area, method, and publication type (Table 2). Seven

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(33.33%) appeared in 2025; evidence was concentrated in Java, with only North Sumatra and East Nusa Tenggara represented outside it.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of included articles

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Publication year	2017	3	14.29
	2018	2	9.52
	2019	2	9.52
	2020	2	9.52
	2021	3	14.29
	2022	0	0.00
	2023	2	9.52
	2024	0	0.00
	2025	7	33.33
Study area	Central Java	6	28.57
	West Java	5	23.81
	East Java	4	19.05
	Special Region of Yogyakarta	2	9.52
	Banten	1	4.76
	North Sumatra	1	4.76
	East Nusa Tenggara	1	4.76
	Cross-provincial: West Java and Yogyakarta	1	4.76
Research approach	Qualitative and legal research with qualitative analysis	20	95.24
	Descriptive-associative quantitative	1	4.76
Publication type	Journal article	20	95.24
	Proceedings article	1	4.76

Twenty studies (95.24%) used qualitative or qualitative legal approaches; one was descriptive-associative quantitative.

Characteristics and Findings of the Included Articles

Table 3 summarizes every included article. Outcomes ranged from consensus to deadlock

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and varied with rules, organizational capacity, information, and decision authority.

Table 3. Characteristics, research findings, and conclusions of the included articles

No.	Author(s) (year)	Area	Research approach	Research Findings and Conclusions
1	Arsyad (2017)	Semarang	Qualitative	Council, KHL survey, and lobbying supported SPN demands; only partly adopted.
2	Purba (2017)	Medan	Qualitative	Monitoring depended on complaints, reporting, facilities, and disclosure.
3	Setyawan and Affandi (2017)	Jombang	Case qualitative	Independent surveys, consolidation, advocacy, and mobilization supplemented council representation.
4	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018)	East Java	Qualitative	Consolidation, data debate, lobbying, and recommendations continued into post-decision conflict.
5	Kholifah and Sadiah (2018)	Jember	Quantitative	Cooperation/accommodation accompanied UMK setting; tiny sample limits inference.
6	Nusantara et al. (2019)	Kuningan	Empirical legal	Surveys and deliberation preceded proposals and gubernatorial determination.
7	Wulandari et al. (2019)	Surakarta	Qualitative	Actors differed on decent wages; government also guided and monitored.
8	Hasri et al. (2020)	Semarang	Empirical legal	Council advised on wage protection but lacked final authority.
9	Prasetiyo and Permatasari (2020)	Yogyakarta	Qualitative	Living-needs surveys supported claims about wage adequacy.

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10	Dewanti (2021)	Surabaya	Qualitative	Conflicting proposals produced deadlock and wider political pressure.
11	Mirza et al. (2021)	Semarang	Qualitative	Communication helped resolve pandemic-era differences.
12	Wulansari (2021)	Bekasi–Yogyakarta	Comparative qualitative	Formula, union strength, and politics differentiated regional bargaining.
13	Anggrayni (2023)	Bekasi	Qualitative	Recommended increases were not fully reflected in final decisions.
14	Saepulloh and Laksana (2023)	Serang	Empirical legal	SPN combined representation, consolidation, advocacy, and collective action.
15	Agustina and Marlina (2025)	Central Java	Qualitative	Lobbying, demonstrations, networks, and preparation time shaped participation.
16	Ashiddiqi and Mawar (2025)	Tasikmalaya	Qualitative	Implementation faced information, staffing, and budget constraints.
17	Febriantin and Anggrayni (2025)	Bekasi	Qualitative	FSPMI used members, media, education, and political networks.
18	Hudaya et al. (2025)	Central Java	Empirical legal	Sectoral debate emphasized regulation, protection, skills, and sector traits.
19	Kuma et al. (2025)	East Nusa Tenggara	Legal + empirical	KHL, BPS data, and operational support shaped council functions.
20	Kurnia et al. (2025)	Karawang	Qualitative/legal	Sectoral-wage changes affected protection and bargaining power.
21	Nisa et al. (2025)	Yogyakarta	Qualitative	Academics analyzed data, explained proposals, and supported consensus.

Dewanti (2021) analyzed Surabaya's 2016 UMK and Arsyad (2017) Semarang's 2014 UMK;

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two Bekasi studies partially overlapped in informants and periods (Anggrayni, 2023; Febriantin & Anggrayni, 2025).

Theme Mapping through Network Visualization

Co-occurrence analysis produced six clusters and 26 terms, interpreted as themes rather than measures of influence.

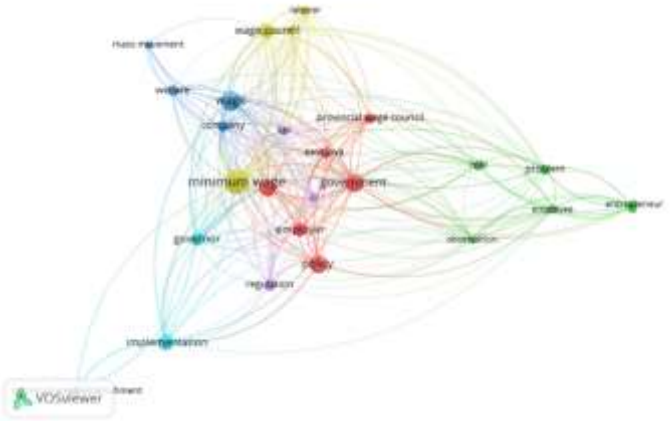


Figure 2. Network visualization of research on Wage Councils and minimum wage policy

Clusters 1–3 link participants, implementation, welfare, and mobilization: consolidation and deadlock (Humardani & Ma'ruf, 2018; Dewanti, 2021), political context and accommodation (Wulansari, 2021; Kholifah & Sadiah, 2018), implementation constraints and differing wage concepts (Ashiddiqi & Mawar, 2025; Purba, 2017; Wulandari et al., 2019), academic facilitation (Nisa et al., 2025), and union networks or sectoral claims (Febriantin & Anggrayni, 2025; Kurnia et al., 2025; Anggrayni, 2023).

Clusters 4–6 cover council functions, KHL/regulation, and governmental determination: advisory authority and changing data rules (Hasri et al., 2020; Kuma et al., 2025), union advocacy and surveys (Saepulloh & Laksana, 2023; Arsyad, 2017; Setyawan & Affandi, 2017; Prasetiyo & Permatasari, 2020; Agustina & Marlina, 2025), and staged decision making (Nusantara et al., 2019; Mirza et al., 2021; Hudaya et al., 2025).

Topic Development through Overlay Visualization

Overlay visualization was used to examine topic development.

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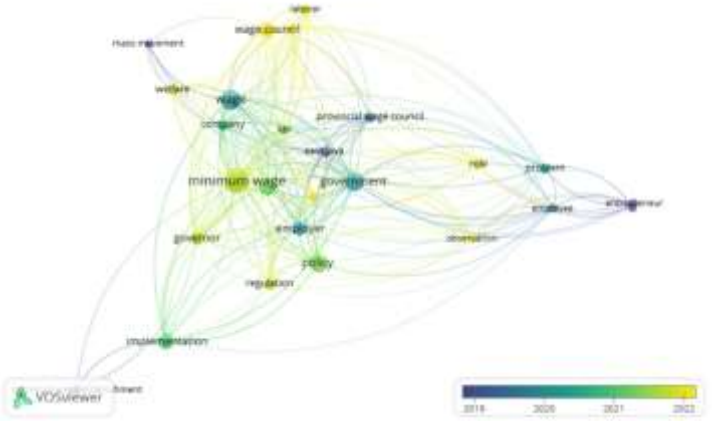


Figure 3. Overlay visualization of research on Wage Councils and minimum wage policy

Average publication year per term was unavailable, so chronological colors cannot be interpreted reliably; article content nonetheless moves from KHL, union strategy, and negotiation toward academic roles, council functions, and sectoral wages in several 2025 studies.

Topic Density through Density Visualization

Density visualization represents term concentration.

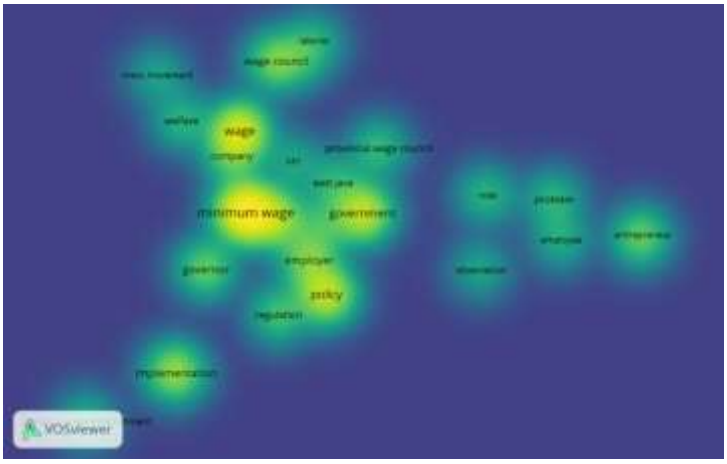


Figure 4. Density visualization of research on Wage Councils and minimum wage policy

Occurrence weights and coordinates were unavailable; cluster size was not used as a density ranking.

Institutional Rules of Wage Councils

Rules define authority and calculation bases and shape bargaining space (Table 4).

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Table 4. Institutional rules of Wage Councils

Aspect	Description	Source
Recommendation authority	Advice to governor; governor determines.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Hasri et al. (2020); Nusantara et al. (2019)
Wage formula	Formula shapes calculation and bargaining.	Wulansari (2021); Anggrayni (2023); Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018)
KHL survey	Survey evidence supports/contests needs.	Arsyad (2017); Kuma et al. (2025); Prasetiyo and Permatasari (2020)
Policy references	Rule changes invite differing interpretations.	Dewanti (2021); Mirza et al. (2021)
Sectoral wage	Considers sector, skills, and protection.	Kurnia et al. (2025); Hudaya et al. (2025)

Formal rules do not remove contestation over living-needs calculations or data rules (Humardani & Ma'ruf, 2018; Kuma et al., 2025).

Positions of the Parties in Wage Deliberations

Government, employers, unions, academics, and regional heads hold different deliberative and decision roles (Table 5).

Table 5. Positions of the parties in wage deliberations

Party	Description	Source
Government	Facilitates process and policy considerations.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Mirza et al. (2021)
Employers	Present cost and business-capacity arguments.	Dewanti (2021); Hasri et al. (2020); Anggrayni (2023)
Trade unions	Submit demands and continue advocacy.	Arsyad (2017); Saepulloh and Laksana (2023); Agustina and Marlina (2025)
Academics	Analyze data and mediate views.	Nisa et al. (2025); Nusantara et al. (2019)
Regional heads	Governor holds final wage authority.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Dewanti (2021); Anggrayni (2023)

Representation is therefore unequal in authority: councils recommend, but authorized regional officials determine final wages.

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Resources in Wage Negotiations

Organization, funding, networks, knowledge, media, and institutional support shape bargaining capacity (Table 6).

Table 6. Resources in wage negotiations

Resource	Description	Source
Organization	Consolidation/membership supports demands.	Arsyad (2017); Hasri et al. (2020); Febriantin and Anggrayni (2025)
Funding	Member funds support advocacy/mobilization.	Arsyad (2017); Setyawan and Affandi (2017)
Networks	Social/political ties broaden support.	Setyawan and Affandi (2017); Agustina and Marlina (2025); Febriantin and Anggrayni (2025)
Knowledge	Data/regulatory literacy strengthens arguments.	Nisa et al. (2025); Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018)
Media	Communication supports education and advocacy.	Febriantin and Anggrayni (2025); Agustina and Marlina (2025)
Operational support	Budgets/staff condition institutional capacity.	Kuma et al. (2025); Ashiddiqi and Mawar (2025)

Surveys, consolidation, education, media, and networks strengthened union claims in Jombang and Bekasi (Setyawan & Affandi, 2017; Febriantin & Anggrayni, 2025), with influence varying by regional context (Wulansari, 2021).

Information in the Preparation of Wage Proposals

Information supports proposal preparation, while survey methods, household assumptions, official data, and timing can create disagreement (Table 7).

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Table 7. Information in the preparation of wage proposals

Type of information	Description	Source
KHL/prices	Methods and prices can alter proposals.	Arsyad (2017); Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Setyawan and Affandi (2017)
Household needs	Wages are compared with living costs.	Prasetiyo and Permatasari (2020); Wulansari (2021)
Official data	Economic data inform but may be contested.	Kuma et al. (2025); Mirza et al. (2021)
Academic analysis	Processing clarifies data and arguments.	Nisa et al. (2025)
Agenda/timing	Notice timing affects preparation.	Agustina and Marlina (2025)
Business/sector data	Capacity and sector traits inform wages.	Dewanti (2021); Kurnia et al. (2025); Hudaya et al. (2025)

Competing KHL calculations and independent surveys supported different claims (Humardani & Ma'ruf, 2018; Setyawan & Affandi, 2017); preparation time also affected participation (Agustina & Marlina, 2025).

Interactions in Formulating Minimum Wage Recommendations

Interactions include consolidation, debate, lobbying, mobilization, mediation, and deadlock (Table 8).

Table 8. Interactions in the formulation of recommendations

Form of interaction	Description	Source
Consolidation	Organizations prepare demands/materials.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Febriantin and Anggrayni (2025)
Argument testing	Participants present and challenge evidence.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Nisa et al. (2025)
Lobbying	Communication seeks decision-maker support.	Arsyad (2017); Agustina and Marlina (2025)
Mobilization	Demonstrations accompany formal bargaining.	Setyawan and Affandi (2017); Saepulloh and Laksana (2023)

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Mediation	Government/academics reconcile positions.	Kholifah and Sadiah (2018); Nisa et al. (2025); Mirza et al. (2021)
Deadlock	Unresolved differences trigger rejection/walkout.	Dewanti (2021); Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018)

Consensus with academic facilitation and deadlock under conflicting proposals show that tripartite representation alone does not determine agreement (Nisa et al., 2025; Dewanti, 2021).

Wage Council Recommendations in Minimum Wage Determination

Outcomes distinguish demands, council recommendations, and applicable decisions (Table 9).

Table 9. Outcomes of wage recommendation formulation

Outcome aspect	Description	Source
Recommendations	Advice precedes legally applicable decision.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Hasri et al. (2020); Nusantara et al. (2019)
Agreement	Consensus may not satisfy all demands.	Nisa et al. (2025); Mirza et al. (2021)
Demand–decision gap	Final wages may differ from proposals.	Arsyad (2017); Anggrayni (2023); Agustina and Marlina (2025)
Post-decision response	Objections may continue after determination.	Humardani and Ma'ruf (2018); Dewanti (2021)
Living-needs fit	Adequacy remains contested against needs.	Prasetiyo and Permatasari (2020); Wulansari (2021)
Implementation	Compliance depends on information and monitoring.	Purba (2017); Wulandari et al. (2019); Ashiddiqi and Mawar (2025)

Bekasi and East Java show that recommendations may differ from final decisions and objections may continue afterward (Anggrayni, 2023; Humardani & Ma'ruf, 2018).

Recommendations therefore emerge from interacting rules, positions, resources, information, and strategies; the evidence supports process comparison, not institutional ranking.

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DISCUSSION

Rules and the Bargaining Space of Wage Councils

Wage Councils combine wage-protection commitments (Wulandari et al., 2019) with rules separating advisory from final authority (Hasri et al., 2020). IAD distinguishes position and action rules (Frantz & Siddiki, 2021; Siddiki & Frantz, 2024). Formula changes reshape KHL bargaining (Dewanti, 2021; Wulansari, 2021), while policy narratives and reform goals frame the same rules differently (Dunlop et al., 2021; Nandariztyani & Adi, 2025). Effective bargaining also requires analytical, operational, and political capacity (Mukherjee et al., 2021).

Representation and Negotiation of Wage-Related Interests

Formal membership is insufficient when preparation or agenda access is limited (Agustina & Marlina, 2025). Influence also reflects resources, relationships, and problem framing (Hafer et al., 2022), while participatory justice concerns recognition and distribution (Koebele et al., 2024). Deliberation may incorporate minority views (Kim, 2024) and reach agreement despite persistent differences (Koebele & Crow, 2023), especially where leadership and relationships support collaboration (Ulibarri et al., 2023).

KHL Data and Academic Considerations

KHL disputes concern legitimate knowledge as well as numbers. Academics may analyze data and reconcile views (Nisa et al., 2025), consistent with knowledge brokerage (Shaxson et al., 2025), but must distinguish informing from steering policy (MacKillop et al., 2023). Transparency should disclose data, assumptions, limitations, and indicator choices (Schnell et al., 2024). Research–policy engagement does not automatically improve evidence use (Hopkins et al., 2021) and is often weakly evaluated (Oliver et al., 2022).

Council Recommendations and Minimum Wage Decisions

Council authority ends at recommendation. Bekasi illustrates divergent responses to post-2020 wage rules (Anggrayni, 2023); Constitutional Court Decision No. 168/PUU-XXI/2023 strengthened active participation (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024), and Central Java research linked this to 2025 sectoral-wage policy (Hudaya et al., 2025). Recommendation quality should reflect local labor markets (Dube & Lindner, 2021), firm responses (Clemens, 2021), context-specific employment evidence (Dustmann et al., 2022), and distributional effects (Derenoncourt & Montialoux, 2021; Merdikawati & Izzati, 2025).

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Policy Evaluation and the Role of Regional Governments

Policy evaluation should assess process and outcomes through effectiveness, efficiency, adequacy, equity, responsiveness, and appropriateness (Dunn, 2018). Regional governments connect national rules, council advice, decisions, and implementation, so evaluation should examine consistency and responsiveness to local conditions and affected groups (Firdaus et al., 2023) and feed weaknesses into later wage-setting cycles.

CONCLUSION

Wage Councils function as action arenas where rules, interests, resources, information, and authority shape recommendations. Wage formulas and KHL data define bargaining space, while organizational capacity and preparation affect influence. Outcomes range from consensus to deadlock, and recommendations may differ from gubernatorial decisions. Meaningful participation requires timely materials, transparent data and assumptions, and documented reasons for decisions. Regional governments should compare recommendations, final decisions, and implementation using effectiveness, adequacy, equity, responsiveness, and appropriateness (Dunn, 2018), while considering local consistency and affected groups (Firdaus et al., 2023). Limitations include Java-dominated, mainly qualitative evidence and incomplete mapping data. Future studies should expand regions, compare regulatory periods, observe deliberations, interview constituents, and trace recommendations through implementation.

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