

Administrative System of Limited Stay Permits for Foreign Nationals in Bengkulu Province (A Case Study at Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu)

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Received: 12-12-2022

Accepted: 14-01-2023

Published: 30-01-2023

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Publishing Inc.

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Abstract

This study explores the administrative system for managing Limited Stay Permits (ITAS) for foreign nationals at the Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research aims to analyze the quality of public services through five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Data were collected using interviews, observations, and documentation involving immigration officers and foreign nationals as informants. Findings indicate that while the immigration office has implemented standard operating procedures effectively and provides adequate facilities, several challenges persist, such as language barriers, legal verification difficulties, and the lack of supporting infrastructure like photocopying and office supplies. Despite these challenges, the overall service was assessed as satisfactory by the foreign applicants, especially in terms of responsiveness and adherence to service timelines. The study suggests that enhancing language capabilities and improving supporting facilities could significantly elevate service quality. This research contributes to the discourse on public administration reform, particularly in enhancing immigration services for foreign residents.

Keywords:

Public Service, Immigration Administration, Limited Stay Permit, Foreign Nationals

Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization and international mobility, immigration has emerged as a critical issue in national governance. The increasing movement of people across borders has necessitated the development of robust administrative systems to manage the legal status of foreign nationals residing in a country. In Indonesia, the Immigration Office plays a central role in overseeing this process, particularly in granting and monitoring Limited Stay Permits (Izin Tinggal Terbatas or ITAS), which are crucial for foreigners who wish to live in the country for work, study, or other legally sanctioned purposes.

Public administration, particularly in the domain of immigration, is expected to offer not only legal compliance but also high-quality service delivery. According to Kasmir (2005), service is an action or activity aimed at providing satisfaction to its recipients. In the context of immigration, this means facilitating a transparent, accessible, and responsive system that ensures both national security and individual rights. The Indonesian government, through Law No. 6/2011 on Immigration, mandates that every foreign national entering or residing in the country must comply with immigration procedures, including acquiring the appropriate type of stay permit.

The role of Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu is particularly relevant given the increasing number of foreign nationals, especially from countries like China, Australia, and India, who apply for or extend their ITAS in this region. As shown in statistical data from 2023, the office processed 530 ITAS applications, with the majority originating from Chinese citizens. This growing influx underscores the importance of an efficient and well-organized administrative system capable of handling complex and varied immigration needs.

However, the delivery of immigration services is not without challenges. Language barriers, limited support infrastructure, and discrepancies in service standards often hinder the effectiveness of administrative processes. For instance, not all foreign nationals are proficient in English or Bahasa Indonesia, and conversely, not all immigration officers are equipped to handle multilingual interactions. These limitations can affect the accuracy and efficiency of service delivery, ultimately impacting the satisfaction of foreign applicants (Hardiyansyah, 2008).

Moreover, immigration offices are tasked with ensuring national security by thoroughly verifying applicants' documentation and legal status. This dual role—facilitating foreign residency while safeguarding national interests—places significant pressure on the immigration system. Inefficiencies or lapses in administrative procedures may lead to legal uncertainties or even threats to national security, as suggested by Lovelock's (2001) framework on service assurance and accountability.

Past studies, such as those conducted by Oktaviana (2022) and Vahini (2022), have evaluated the performance of immigration services in other regions of Indonesia, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses. While these studies affirm that immigration offices generally adhere to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), they also emphasize common constraints such as insufficient human resources, inconsistent document processing times, and a lack of technological integration. These findings call for a more comprehensive assessment of immigration service quality at local offices like Bengkulu.

This study responds to that call by examining the administrative system and quality of services related to ITAS at the Immigration Office in Bengkulu. Guided by the theoretical framework proposed by Zeithaml et al. (1990), the research adopts five core dimensions of service quality—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—to evaluate the experiences of both service providers and foreign recipients. These dimensions offer a comprehensive lens through which service quality can be systematically assessed and improved.

One of the key objectives of this study is to identify operational gaps that hinder optimal service delivery. By analyzing empirical data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, the research aims to uncover institutional and procedural issues that affect service performance. In doing so, it also seeks to provide practical recommendations that could inform policy development and institutional reform.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the discourse on public service innovation within the immigration sector. By shedding light on localized administrative practices and highlighting areas of improvement, the study supports the broader objective of enhancing Indonesia's immigration governance. Effective administration of ITAS not only upholds legal compliance but also projects a positive image of the country to the international community, fostering goodwill, trust, and cooperation.

In conclusion, this research aims to fill the gap in existing literature by offering a focused analysis of the administrative system managing limited stay permits at a regional immigration office. It aligns with broader efforts to improve public service delivery in Indonesia and serves as a model for similar studies in other provinces. The findings are expected to inform both academic debates and practical interventions aimed at refining immigration services across the country.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the administrative system and service quality of Limited Stay Permits (ITAS) for foreign nationals at the Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth of experiences, perceptions, and interactions involved in the provision of immigration services. As outlined by Bogdan and Taylor (1991), qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring social phenomena through naturalistic observation, interviews, and document analysis, allowing the researcher to generate rich, contextual insights.

Data collection involved three main techniques: in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Key informants included immigration officers directly involved in ITAS services, such as the Head of the Residency and Immigration Status Division, the Head of the Immigration Status Section, and an immigration analyst. Additional informants were two foreign nationals (from China and Italy), each accompanied by their Indonesian sponsors who served as interpreters. The selection of informants followed purposive sampling, emphasizing participants with direct knowledge or experience of the immigration process. All interviews were conducted in person, recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis.

Direct observation was carried out at the Immigration Office to document the physical infrastructure, workflow, and public service interactions. Observational data provided contextual grounding to interview responses, helping to validate and triangulate the findings. Furthermore, relevant administrative documents, including service standards, permit application forms, and SOPs, were examined to support the analysis of institutional practices and compliance.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Transcripts were coded thematically based on the five service quality dimensions proposed by Zeithaml et al. (1990): tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This analytical framework enabled systematic evaluation of how the immigration office fulfilled each quality criterion. Reflective memos and field notes were used throughout to enhance the credibility and interpretative depth of the findings.

This study did not involve any experimental intervention or use of large datasets, animals, or human biomedical research, and thus did not require ethical clearance from a bioethics committee. However, all informants participated voluntarily and were informed of the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. No proprietary data or code was used or produced. All materials, such as interview guides and observation protocols, are available upon request for replication or further research development.

Results and Discussion

This study explored the administrative procedures and service quality of Limited Stay Permits (ITAS) for foreign nationals at the Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu. Data were collected from interviews, observations, and official documents. The findings are presented based on the five service quality dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

The demographic profile of ITAS applicants in 2023 showed a total of 530 foreign nationals applying for or extending their stay permits. Among these, applicants from China formed the largest group, totaling 323 individuals, followed by applicants from Malaysia, Australia, and Japan. The gender distribution indicated a strong male dominance, with 489 male and only 41 female applicants. This demographic dominance could imply a pattern related to specific work, study, or investment purposes, which traditionally involve more male applicants.

Observation and interview data indicate that the physical infrastructure at the Immigration Office is well-maintained and complies with the standard operating procedures. Facilities such as biometric data capture rooms, waiting areas, administrative counters, and informational desks were sufficiently equipped. Computers, fingerprint scanners, cameras, and other necessary tools were found operational and accessible, contributing to a tangible service environment that meets applicants' expectations.

From the perspectives of immigration officers, the office had sufficient material resources to carry out ITAS-related services. However, challenges were noted in the form of support infrastructure for applicants—such as the lack of internal photocopying services or stationary vendors—which forced some applicants to exit the premises for basic administrative needs, potentially delaying the overall processing time.

Reliability was assessed through the consistency and accuracy of service delivery. Informants, including foreign applicants and immigration staff, confirmed that the office adhered closely to established procedures. Service outcomes were generally consistent with promises made during the submission process. Most applicants received their processed permits within the stipulated three-day timeframe, particularly when their documentation was complete and accurate.

Staff members emphasized that reliability was reinforced by clear internal coordination and adherence to SOPs. Each division operated with a defined mandate, and regular evaluations ensured compliance. Despite occasional delays due to systemic issues such as server downtimes or application backlogs, staff members were trained to manage these disruptions efficiently and with minimal inconvenience to applicants.

Responsiveness emerged as a key strength in the service process. Immigration officers demonstrated a high level of attentiveness and professionalism in addressing applicant queries and concerns. According to interviews, frontline officers were quick to respond to requests and

complaints, and cases requiring clarification were usually resolved within the same working day.

Nonetheless, communication barriers persisted as a recurring issue. Many foreign nationals, particularly from China and Turkey, lacked English or Bahasa Indonesia proficiency. This occasionally led to misunderstandings during documentation or biometric stages. While some sponsors acted as interpreters, the absence of official translation support remains a service gap that requires policy-level attention.

In terms of assurance, officers projected confidence and competence in handling administrative matters. The office regularly updated its staff on new immigration laws and procedural changes, allowing them to provide accurate information and legal certainty to applicants. Informants from within the institution confirmed the existence of periodic training sessions and policy briefings to maintain professional standards.

Foreign applicants expressed trust in the institution's handling of legal matters, citing accurate cost breakdowns, transparent timelines, and secure document processing. Legal assurance was particularly significant in cases involving permit extensions and conversions from visitor permits to ITAS. The institutional guarantee of service accuracy strengthened applicant satisfaction and reduced anxiety around bureaucratic procedures.

Empathy was manifested in the conduct of officers toward applicants. Staff members were generally courteous, respectful, and sensitive to the needs of foreign nationals. Special attention was given to applicants who were elderly, traveling with children, or had special needs. Interviews revealed that officers frequently went beyond procedural obligations to accommodate individual difficulties faced by applicants.

Notably, applicants also commended the respectful treatment by immigration officers, stating that interactions were characterized by politeness, clarity, and cultural sensitivity. These findings highlight the humanistic dimension of public service delivery in a regulatory environment that is often perceived as rigid and impersonal.

Data analysis further revealed that despite operational successes, the office faced structural challenges in managing sudden influxes of applicants, particularly during peak seasons. Limited staffing and space occasionally resulted in overcrowding, longer waiting times, and delayed biometric processing. These issues were noted by both officers and applicants.

Documentation procedures, though standardized, still involved manual steps that increased administrative workload and applicant effort. For instance, online registration was often followed by manual form submissions and verification processes that could have been digitized. Enhancing digital workflows would significantly improve service speed and reduce redundancies.

In terms of gender, male applicants overwhelmingly dominated all categories of ITAS application. This trend may reflect labor migration patterns or gendered expectations within international mobility in Indonesia. Further studies are needed to examine the implications of such a demographic skew in immigration service design.

Based on the observations, the office's biometric data collection area functioned efficiently, with digital fingerprinting, signature recording, and photo capture integrated into a single workflow. Applicants typically completed this stage within one visit, suggesting an effective alignment between technology and human resource allocation.

Figures from 2023 also showed a significant proportion of ITAS applicants sought extensions rather than new permits, implying a stable foreign resident base in Bengkulu. This has implications for long-term urban planning, resource allocation, and community integration

strategies in the region.

Among the top ten nationalities served, applicants from China, Malaysia, Australia, and Japan consistently ranked highest. This distribution may reflect investment and business linkages, bilateral agreements, or regional proximity. Further policy coordination with these countries could streamline visa and permit processing channels.

Overall, the study indicates that the immigration office in Bengkulu demonstrates a high level of administrative competence. However, improvements in support facilities, language mediation, and digital integration remain necessary to elevate service performance. These recommendations align with global public administration trends toward inclusive, efficient, and user-centered service delivery.

Finally, these findings underscore the strategic role of immigration services in national development. Effective permit administration not only ensures legal compliance but also promotes economic participation, foreign investment, and cross-border cooperation. This makes the quality of public immigration service a critical component of national governance and international reputation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the administrative system for Limited Stay Permits (ITAS) at the Class I Immigration Office TPI Bengkulu generally meets the expected standards of public service delivery. The institution demonstrates operational competence through adherence to established SOPs, efficient biometric processing, and consistent service timelines. Applicants reported a high level of satisfaction, particularly in terms of officer responsiveness, legal assurance, and courteous treatment.

However, key challenges persist, including language barriers between officers and non-English-speaking foreign nationals, the absence of on-site support facilities, and partial digitization of service procedures. These limitations, if addressed through targeted improvements, could significantly enhance overall service quality and institutional performance. The research affirms that continuous evaluation and innovation in immigration service delivery are essential for strengthening governance, security, and international cooperation.

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