



Encouraging Superior Performance of Village Government: The Strategic Role of Regional Autonomy in Realizing Quality Public Services in Lebak Regency

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Abstract

This research analyzes the strategic role of regional autonomy in encouraging superior performance of village governments and realizing quality public services in Lebak Regency. Using a descriptive qualitative case study approach and literature review, this research explores important factors such as capacity building of village apparatus, optimization of village budget, community participation, accountability, transparency, and utilization of information technology. The results show that regional autonomy opens opportunities for the Lebak District Government to allocate resources more effectively, provide training and mentoring for village officials, and strengthen supervision and accountability systems. Optimization of village budgets, active community participation, and the application of good governance principles such as transparency and accountability are important elements in supporting the superior performance of village governments. The utilization of information technology also plays a strategic role in improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of public services in the villages of Lebak Regency. This research provides policy recommendations and strategies that can be implemented by local governments to improve the quality of public services at the village level in the context of regional autonomy.

Keywords: Superior performance, Village government, Strategic role, Regional autonomy

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on Law No. 32/2004, local governments are given autonomy, which means they can organize and manage government affairs and community interests in their regions in accordance with laws and regulations. The purpose of enacting regional autonomy is to encourage creativity, innovation, and independence in the regions and reduce their dependence on the central government. Regions can also manage development independently (Law, 2005). In this study, regional autonomy provides the Lebak Regency government with the opportunity to optimize its resources to support excellent village governance and provide good public services.

Through regional autonomy, the Lebak Regency Government has the authority to explore alternative sources of financing for development in its region, including in efforts to improve the performance of village governments. In addition, regional autonomy also allows the Lebak Regency Government to allocate public funds in accordance with the priorities and aspirations of village communities. In this case, the role of private investment and Regional-Owned Enterprises (BUMD) is highly expected as the main driver of regional economic growth and development, which in turn can support the development of quality public services at the village level. Village government plays a crucial role in realizing quality public services that are responsive to the needs of local communities. As the government entity closest to the community, villages have the responsibility to provide basic services such as population administration, village infrastructure development, health services, education, and so on. However, in reality, many village governments still face challenges in realizing optimal performance, especially regarding the provision of adequate public services. This condition is influenced by various factors, such as limited human resources, limited budget, inadequate infrastructure, and the low capacity and competence of village officials.



In the context of decentralization and regional autonomy, local governments have broader authority in managing resources and organizing public services according to the needs and potential of their respective regions. Based on the applicable laws and regulations, namely Law Number 23 of 2024, local governments are given the authority to regulate and manage their own government affairs in their regions, in accordance with the principles of autonomy and mandated assistance. This law also emphasizes that local governments have an obligation to improve the quality of public services in their regions, including at the village level (Antlöv et al., 2016).

Decentralization opens opportunities for regional governments to improve the capacity and performance of governance at the village level. With broader authority, local governments can allocate resources more efficiently, provide training and mentoring for village officials, and strengthen supervision and accountability systems in the delivery of public services in the village (BKD Jogja, 2018). In addition, local governments can also optimize the role of village institutions, such as representative bodies and community empowerment institutions, to increase citizen involvement in the process of planning, implementing, and monitoring village development.

In the context of Lebak Regency, the strategic role of regional autonomy becomes very important to encourage superior performance of village governments and realize quality public services. Lebak Regency has a large area with diverse village characteristics, both in terms of geographical, social, economic, and cultural aspects. Most of Lebak Regency is a rural area with a high poverty rate and limited access to public services. Therefore, an appropriate approach and strategy is needed to improve the performance of village governments and provide public services that meet the needs of the community.

This study aims to analyze the strategic role of regional autonomy in encouraging superior village government performance and realizing quality public services in Lebak Regency. By identifying factors that influence village government performance, as well as exploring opportunities and challenges in the implementation of regional autonomy, this research is expected to provide policy considerations and strategies that can be applied by local governments in order to improve the quality of public services at the village level. The results of this study are also expected to make theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of decentralization and good village governance.

2. METHOD

This research uses a case study approach with descriptive qualitative methods. The qualitative approach was chosen to analyze the phenomenon of the strategic role of regional autonomy in encouraging superior performance of village government and quality public services in Lebak Regency. Researchers used related concepts such as strengthening the capacity of village officials, optimizing village budgets, community participation, accountability, transparency, and the use of information technology. Data collection was conducted through literature studies from sources such as journals, books, laws and regulations, and relevant information media content. With a descriptive qualitative case study approach and literature study, this research aims to provide in-depth analysis and comprehensive recommendations in encouraging superior performance of village government and quality public services in Lebak Regency in the context of regional autonomy.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Village government as the smallest unit in service to the community has a strategic role in the success of government. Regional autonomy opens opportunities for local governments to improve the capacity and performance of governance at the village level (Binaraga & Utara, 2024). With greater authority, local governments can allocate resources more effectively, provide training and



mentoring for village officials, and strengthen supervision and accountability systems in the delivery of public services in the village. Strengthening the capacity of village officials, optimizing village budgets, community participation, accountability, transparency, and the use of information technology are important elements in realizing quality public services in Lebak Regency.

Strengthening the Capacity of Village Apparatus

The enactment of the Village Law was a breath of fresh air for strengthening the legal basis and existence of the village government in Lebak Regency. Previously, the capacity of village administration in this region was known to be limited, both in terms of human resources and supporting facilities and infrastructure. Despite having support from donor agencies in village development, it is no longer sufficient to face the demands and complexities of village governance in the current era. Therefore, the Lebak Regency Government needs to design and implement adequate instruments, such as empowerment programs, training, mentoring, as well as the provision of facilities and infrastructure needed to improve the ability and capacity of village governments in the region.

After the reformation, the village government in Lebak Regency is not only required to run the village administration, but also emphasized to be able to bring government services closer to the village community more optimally. This is in line with the mandate of the Village Law which aims to promote the welfare of village communities. Therefore, the development of village government capacity is absolutely necessary to meet the increasingly complex and diverse needs of the community. Village governments in Lebak Regency are required to carry out their main tasks and functions in accordance with the laws and regulations, as well as master the advancement of science and technology in order to run effectively, efficiently, and be able to adapt to the times.

So far, the vision and mission of the Kabupaten Lebak district government have been carried out independently without effective coordination and synergy, which has resulted in a lack of progress in the development of the region. To address this, efforts must be made to reconcile the vision and mission of the local government with the vision and mission of the development of the Kabupaten Lebak region as a whole. Pemerintah desa is tasked with integrating the jangka menengah daerah (RPJMD) rencana into the strategic desa plan so that construction can proceed in a way that is more in line with the more ambitious goals of building a wider region. Given the role that desa plays as a guardian angel in the community's welfare and the rakyat's kesejahteraan, the increase in the capacity of the desa's pemerintahan is extremely important to be carried out in a way that is comprehensive, multifaceted, and inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, whether they are in the province, kabupaten, or desa itself (Aparatur et al., 2016).

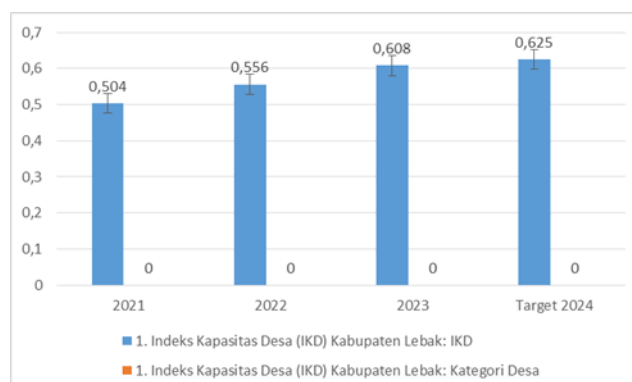
According to Grindle and Haryono (2012), in order to achieve unggul labor and high-quality public service in the desa's pemerintahan, it is necessary to increase capacity to a point where some critical aspects are compromised. First, human capital is developed through training, silent practice, collaborative work environments, and professional hiring practices. Second, strengthening the organization by emphasizing effective personnel management, an insensitive system, effective personnel training, strong organizational culture, clear communication, and an ideal managerial structure. The third reform is a kelembagaan that aims to improve the macrostructure and system, weaken fundamental laws and regulations, and carry out pertinent constitutional reforms. Linda (2019).

In the context of regional autonomy, capacity building of village governments in Lebak Regency is very important. It aims to improve the abilities, skills, talents, and potential possessed by village officials, village government organizations, and related institutions at the village level. Capacity building is expected to strengthen the village government so that it is able to maintain professionalism and provide quality public services to the community, in the midst of changes and demands that continue to develop. or organization.



The Statistical Data on Strengthening the Capacity of Village Apparatus in Lebak Regency, as follows:

Figure 1. Data on Village Capacity Index (IKD) of Lebak Regency in 2021-2024



Source: Statistics Indonesia (2023)

The IKD data shows that village capacity in Lebak Regency has consistently increased in recent years. This shows that the efforts to strengthen village capacity made by the local government are quite effective. The Lebak Regency Government needs to continue efforts to strengthen village capacity to achieve the IKD target set in 2024.

Budget Optimization

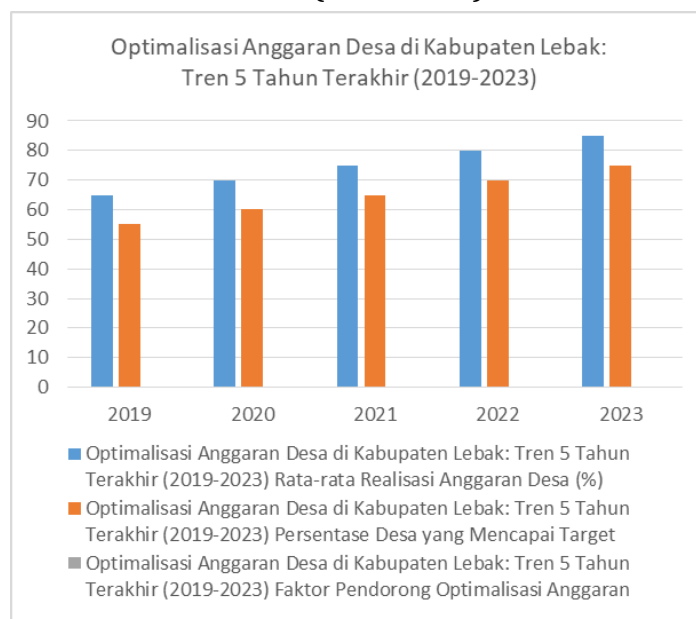
Budget optimization in Lebak Regency has a strategic role in supporting the superior performance of the village government and realizing quality public services. As a district with a large area and a large number of villages, the availability of an adequate budget is a crucial factor in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of governance at the village level.

In the era of regional autonomy, the Lebak Regency Government has the authority to allocate and manage the budget in accordance with the priorities and needs of development in its region, including in the villages. Budget optimization at the kabupaten and village levels is key to ensuring that development programs and public services can be implemented properly. The main challenge faced is how to optimize the limited budget so that it can be used effectively and efficiently, as well as on target in meeting the needs of village communities. This requires careful planning, transparent and accountable financial management, and good coordination between district and village governments. In addition, efforts are also needed to improve the capacity of village officials to manage the budget professionally and responsibly.

Budget optimization at the village level cannot run well without the support and commitment of the Lebak Regency Government. Therefore, the active role of the district government in supporting the optimization of village budgets is very important. The first step that can be taken is to prioritize adequate budget allocations for villages in the Lebak Regency area. In addition, the district government also needs to provide clear guidelines and regulations related to village financial management, as well as establish a team of assistants or facilitators to help villages in budget planning and management. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the use of village budgets also needs to be conducted to ensure accountability and transparency.



Figure 2. Data on Village Budget Optimization in Lebak Regency: Trend of the Last 5 Years (2019-2023) :



Source: Community and Village Empowerment Office (DPMD) of Lebak Regency

Budget optimization in Lebak Regency can be supported by several driving factors. One of the driving factors is the increase in the allocation of the Village Fund (DD) from the central government which provides a greater source of funding for villages. In addition, strengthening the capacity of village officials in village financial management is also an important driving factor. Training and education provided to village officials can improve their skills in managing budgets effectively.

Public Partisipation

Community participation plays a crucial role in promoting excellent village governance and achieving high-quality public services in Lebak Regency. In the context of regional autonomy, community involvement is essential to ensure government programs are implemented effectively and align with local needs. Sherry R. Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" theory categorizes community engagement into various levels, from purely symbolic to full citizen control in decision-making. For village governance in Lebak Regency, higher levels of participation are desired, where citizens have genuine power to influence policy decisions rather than just symbolic involvement. Active community engagement in planning, implementing, and monitoring village government programs helps ensure optimal use of allocated budgets to meet community needs. Furthermore, such participation enhances the community's sense of ownership and responsibility towards these programs, thereby improving their sustainability. This approach is particularly important in the context of regional autonomy, where local needs and priorities must be effectively addressed (Arnstein, 1969).

As Eko Prasjo states in his book "Participatory Development: Redefinition and Operationalization Strategies", community participation should be seen as a continuous process, not just a momentary event. In the context of village governance in Lebak District, community participation should be made an integral part of the entire cycle of village governance, from planning to evaluation (Prasjo Eko, 2004). With active and sustainable community participation, the superior performance of the village government in Lebak Regency can be realized, and will ultimately encourage the realization of quality public services for the community. Community participation is an important element in realizing good governance at the village level. As revealed by (Susanti, 2015) in her research in Purwodadi Village, Grobogan Regency, community



participation can increase the transparency and accountability of village financial management. Through community involvement in the process of planning, implementing, and monitoring village programs, the potential for budget misuse can be minimized (Sayuti et al., 2018).

One form of effective community participation is through the institutionalization of the Village Consultative Body (BPD). In a study conducted by (Nuryanti & Nurwati, 2018) in Jatisari Village, Semarang Regency, it was found that the existence of a strong and well-functioning BPD can improve supervision of village government performance, as well as become a forum for community aspirations. However, realizing meaningful community participation is not easy. Research conducted by (Nugraheni, 2017) in Kalitengah Village, Grobogan Regency, revealed that low levels of education and community awareness are the main obstacles to participation. Therefore, efforts to strengthen community capacity through education and training are needed, as recommended in the study. In addition, transparency and information disclosure from the village government are also important prerequisites for encouraging community participation. This is consistent with the findings of research conducted by (Wida et al., 2019) in Gemarang Village, Tegal Regency, which states that information disclosure from the village government can increase community trust and encourage more active participation.

With reference to this research, it can be concluded that community participation in village governance in Lebak Regency needs to be encouraged and facilitated, both through strengthening community capacity, institutionalizing participation, and increasing transparency and information disclosure from the village government.

Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and Transparency are fundamental principles in good governance, emphasizing the mutually supportive and constructive relationship between the state, private sector, and society. Thus, good governance must apply principles such as excellent service, democracy, accountability, public participation, law enforcement, responsiveness, equality, efficiency and effectiveness, and future orientation (Mardiasmo, 2021). In this context, budget transparency in Village Government is a crucial aspect so that village communities can access and obtain up-to-date information about policies, programs, activities of Village Government apparatus, including openness of information in regional financial management and allocation.

According to Mardiasmo's view (2018), the concept of transparency has several important elements, including: 1) Provision of informative information, including data circulation, news, explanation of mechanisms, procedures, and facts to stakeholders clearly and accurately. 2) Openness in providing information to the public, recognizing everyone's right to access data held by public bodies, and affirming the open and accessible nature of public information. 3) Disclosure to the public or stakeholders regarding activities and performance, including financial conditions, management structure, planning, and activity results (Arianto & Sopiarti, 2022).

Accountability is a fundamental principle for Village Government officials in carrying out their given authority, both duties and functions. Thus, government officials are obliged to account for the policies, programs, and activities implemented. Public accountability is closely related to the pattern of accountability for the effectiveness of activities in achieving policy or program targets or objectives. Accountability can be defined as the obligation of the trustee (agent) to provide accountability, present, and report all activities to the trustor (principal) who has the right to demand such accountability. Public accountability is divided into vertical accountability, which is accountability for fund management to the highest authority, and horizontal accountability, which is accountability to the public. Accountability becomes one of the prerequisites for making good and professional village governance (Arianto & Sopiarti, 2022).

Based on the explanation of good governance principles and the concepts of transparency and accountability, here are several points that can be associated with the context in Lebak Regency:



- 1) The Lebak Regency government needs to encourage the implementation of good governance principles at the village level, such as transparency, accountability, community participation, and law enforcement in village financial management.
- 2) Village governments in the Lebak Regency area must ensure transparency in APBDes (Village Budget) management by providing clear, accurate, and easily accessible information to the community. This aligns with the characteristics of transparency that are informative, open, and disclosing.
- 3) Village officials in Lebak Regency are obligated to account for village financial management vertically to the district/city government (vertical accountability) and horizontally to the village community (horizontal accountability).
- 4) Reporting mechanisms, accountability, and access to information on APBDes management for relevant parties such as BPD (Village Consultative Body), community institutions, and village residents need to be optimized in Lebak Regency.
- 5) The involvement and active participation of village communities in planning, implementing, and monitoring APBDes through forums such as Village Deliberations (Musyawarah Desa) must be increased in the Lebak Regency area.

By applying these principles, it is expected that village governance in Lebak Regency can be improved, becoming more transparent, accountable, and involving community participation in village financial management.

Technology Understanding

In efforts to promote superior performance in village governance and realize quality public services in Lebak Regency, understanding and utilization of technology play a highly strategic role (Nugroho, 2018). In today's sophisticated digital era, information and communication technology (ICT) can function as a catalyst in improving efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of public services provided by villages in the Lebak Regency area.

The adoption of a comprehensively integrated village information system can accelerate administrative processes, data management, and services to the community with higher levels of accuracy and transparency (Wardani & Winarni, 2021). Furthermore, the existence of village websites and open budget information systems that are easily accessible to the public can increase transparency and accountability of village governments in managing finances, planning development, and implementing various programs (Habibi & Nugroho, 2018). The public can easily obtain information related to village financial management, which is one of the main principles of good governance.

Additionally, technology plays a role in facilitating community participation in decision-making and supervision processes at the village level (Suryanto et al., 2020). For example, with digital platforms for village meetings, the community can provide input and monitor village development more effectively. This aligns with efforts to realize quality public services by involving active community participation in the village development process.

However, optimizing the use of technology also requires capacity building of human resources (HR) in village governance (Arianto & Sopiarti, 2022). Through comprehensive training and mentoring programs on technology use, village officials in Lebak Regency can improve their skills and productivity in providing services to the community. Furthermore, technology also opens opportunities for innovation in public services in Lebak Regency villages, such as community complaint service applications that can accelerate responses to community complaints and needs (Kusnandar et al., 2019).



Moreover, technology can facilitate more effective collaboration and coordination between villages, between villages and district/city governments, as well as with other parties involved in village development (Kurniawan et al., 2020). This can support synergy and optimization of resources in achieving better village development goals, which will ultimately contribute to improving superior performance of village governance and realizing quality public services in Lebak Regency in the context of regional autonomy.

4. CONCLUSION

The excellent performance of village governance in Lebak Regency can be supported through the authority given to village governments in managing their community's needs. Village governments in Lebak Regency have the flexibility to carry out tasks according to the needs and conditions of their area. Thus, village governments in Lebak Regency can allocate various resources and arrange services according to community needs effectively and efficiently. Through good performance, village governments in Lebak Regency can provide optimal public services and achieve them through quality state administration. Therefore, village governments in Lebak Regency become the main power holders in providing public services openly to their communities.

By taking control of public services, village governments in Lebak Regency can manage resources according to the needs and desires of the community and be free from elements of nepotism because state administration is based on the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Thus, village governments in Lebak Regency become the main implementing parties in providing real public services to the community to achieve state goals.

The superior performance of public service delivery by village governments to communities in Lebak Regency can be demonstrated through good and professional performance. Through good performance, village governments in Lebak Regency can carry out their service tasks in accordance with applicable laws and regulations so that development and people's welfare in Lebak Regency can be achieved. As a result, the welfare of the people in Lebak Regency can be realized and state goals can be achieved in accordance with the ideals and objectives of the nation.

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