

Optimizing the Role of the Department Secretary in Strengthening the Governance of Village Community Empowerment Programs in Intan Jaya Regency

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Article Info

Received: 27/06/2026

Revised: 20/07/2026

Accepted: 23/07/2026

Online: 15/08/2026

Abstract

This study examines the role of the Department Secretary of the Department of Community and Village Empowerment (Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Kampung, DPMK) in strengthening the governance of village community empowerment programs in Intan Jaya Regency, Papua Tengah Province, Indonesia. The research aimed to analyze the Department Secretary's position in program management, to describe the governance mechanisms currently applied, and to formulate strategies for optimizing the Secretary's role in support of more effective, transparent, and accountable program implementation. A qualitative descriptive design was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation review involving five key informants selected through purposive sampling: the head of the department, two division heads, the head of the finance subdivision, and one community leader/village head. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with credibility ensured through source and method triangulation. The findings show that the Department Secretary occupies a strategic position that extends beyond routine administration to encompass coordination, planning, organizing, supervision, and organizational resource management. Governance of the empowerment program generally follows established regional government mechanisms, yet it continues to face constraints in human resource capacity, internal coordination, budget availability, geographic accessibility, and monitoring systems. Optimization of the Secretary's role can be achieved through capacity building for civil servants, more structured internal coordination, digitalization of administrative systems, strengthened monitoring and evaluation, and expanded community participation. The study concludes that the effectiveness of village community empowerment governance is closely tied to how professionally, transparently, and accountably the Department Secretary performs the managerial function, offering practical implications for local governments operating in geographically challenging regions such as Intan Jaya.

Keywords: optimization; department secretary; governance; village community empowerment; Intan Jaya Regency



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INTRODUCTION

Village community empowerment constitutes one of the central strategies of regional development, aimed at strengthening welfare, economic independence, social capacity, and citizen participation in the development process. Villages occupy a strategic position as the government unit closest to the people, so that the success of regional development is closely linked to the achievement of development at the village level (Setiawan, 2024). Empowerment programs typically include the strengthening of local economies, the enhancement of village apparatus capacity, the provision of basic infrastructure, institutional development, and the expansion of citizen participation in development planning, consistent with the tenets of participatory village governance emphasized across the decentralization literature (Aulia & Andhini, 2025).

Since the shift toward decentralization following the enactment of Indonesia's regional government laws, local governments have been given wider authority over public service delivery and community empowerment (Setiawan et al., 2022). Decentralization was intended to strengthen local democracy and accelerate development that responds to local needs; however, its implementation has produced structural dilemmas, including disparities in regional government capacity, weak intergovernmental coordination, and uneven administrative readiness (Aulia & Andhini, 2025). These dilemmas are particularly visible in newly established, geographically remote regions such as Intan Jaya Regency in Papua's central highlands, where difficult topography constrains transportation, service delivery, and monitoring of government programs (Lelyana & Sarjito, 2024; Madubun, 2024).

Within the organizational structure of a regional technical department, the Department Secretary occupies a strategic position as the senior staff element responsible for assisting the head of department in general administrative coordination, program planning, financial management, personnel affairs, and performance control. The Secretary functions as the internal coordination hub that determines how smoothly the department's programs, including village community empowerment programs, are carried out. Evidence from public administration research shows that internal governance arrangements within government organizations strongly shape how effectively an agency contributes to program outcomes, and that a lack of coordination between administrative units can generate internal governance conflicts that reduce organizational reliability (Anderson, 2025). Likewise, digitalized internal communication and administrative processes have been found to enhance the effectiveness of local administrative authorities, particularly where a good-governance orientation mediates this relationship (Hirsch et al., 2022).

Good governance, broadly defined through the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and coordination, remains the normative benchmark against which the management of public programs, including village empowerment schemes, is evaluated. Various studies confirm that village government institutions and empowerment schemes function more effectively when supported by capable civil servants, structured coordination, and digital administrative systems (Sihotang et al., 2023; Karmanis, 2022). Collaborative and mandated governance arrangements at the local level, such as those observed in cross-sectoral programs, further demonstrate that the success of community-facing government programs depends on how well internal coordination mechanisms translate policy mandates into coherent field-level action (Afandi et al., 2023).

Robert Chambers's people-centered development perspective holds that development succeeds only when communities are treated as subjects rather than mere objects of assistance, a principle echoed in the enduring typology of citizen participation proposed by Arnstein (1969), which distinguishes between token consultation and genuine citizen empowerment in program decision-making. Applied to Indonesia's village context, meaningful citizen involvement in deliberation (*musyawarah*), priority-setting, and evaluation is now considered central to legitimate and effective local governance (Setiawan, 2024).

At the same time, the quality of human resources within local government organizations continues to shape program outcomes. Studies of civil-service competence and training consistently find that stronger technical and managerial competencies among personnel translate into improved

organizational performance and service delivery (Saputra, 2025; Adi et al., 2026). This is particularly relevant for village empowerment programs, where administrative bottlenecks, reporting delays, and weak field monitoring are frequently attributed to limited apparatus capacity rather than to flaws in policy design (Kusumasari, 2018).

Digitalization has likewise emerged as a strategic lever for strengthening administrative governance. Electronic government systems and village information systems have been shown to improve transparency, accelerate reporting, and support more effective stakeholder coordination in Indonesian local governance (Andayani et al., 2024; Priowidodo et al., 2024; Rizky et al., 2025; Yoernaldi, 2026). Given the persistent accessibility barriers in geographically isolated regencies, digital administrative tools are widely regarded as a pragmatic strategy for bridging distance-related governance gaps (Rizky et al., 2025).

Despite this expanding body of literature, prior studies of village empowerment governance in Indonesia have concentrated mainly on village-level government structures, e-government adoption, or good-governance principles in general, with limited attention to the specific managerial function of the Department Secretary as a strategic actor in program governance, particularly in geographically isolated regions such as Intan Jaya Regency. This gap motivates the present study, which examines how the Department Secretary's role can be optimized to strengthen the governance of village community empowerment programs, focusing on three areas: (1) the Secretary's role in managing empowerment programs, (2) the governance mechanisms currently applied, and (3) strategies for optimizing the Secretary's role to strengthen program governance in Intan Jaya Regency..

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design intended to provide an in-depth understanding of the organizational processes, apparatus behavior, and dynamics surrounding the Department Secretary's role in village community empowerment governance. A qualitative approach is well suited to research problems concerning managerial practice, bureaucratic coordination, and organizational governance that require direct engagement with participants embedded in the phenomenon under study (Sihotang et al., 2023). The descriptive method was chosen because the study sought to portray, systematically and factually, the objective conditions of the Secretary's duties, the constraints encountered, and the strategies for optimizing the role, rather than to test quantitative hypotheses.

Research Location and Time

The study was conducted at the Department of Community and Village Empowerment (DPMK) of Intan Jaya Regency, Papua Tengah Province. Intan Jaya was purposively selected because of its mountainous topography, limited transportation access, and correspondingly high need for effective village empowerment governance, conditions shown elsewhere to constrain public service delivery in Papua's highland regencies (Lelyana & Sarjito, 2024; Madubun, 2024). Fieldwork, including preparatory observation, interviews, and documentation review, was conducted over a two-month period from May to July 2026.

Informants

Following a purposive sampling strategy, five key informants were selected based on their direct involvement in, and knowledge of, the empowerment program: the Head of DPMK, two Division Heads, the Head of the Finance Subdivision, and one community leader/village head. This sampling logic follows the principle that qualitative informants should be chosen deliberately for their capacity to provide credible, in-depth information relevant to the research focus, rather than for statistical representativeness (Donkoh & Mensah, 2023).

Data Collection

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observation of departmental administrative practices and coordination patterns, and documentation review of organizational charts, strategic plans, program reports, and financial records. The use of multiple data-collection techniques followed the logic of methodological triangulation, which strengthens the credibility of qualitative findings by cross-checking information obtained from different sources and methods (Schlunegger et al., 2024; Donkoh & Mensah, 2023).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, conducted iteratively throughout the fieldwork period. Source and method triangulation, together with member checking, were applied to verify the trustworthiness of findings, consistent with recommended practice for qualitative case study research in public administration and organizational settings (Schlunegger et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Position of the Department Secretary

Findings indicate that the Department Secretary of DPMK Intan Jaya occupies a genuinely strategic position within the organization, extending well beyond routine administrative support. All five informants identified the Secretary as the center of internal administrative coordination, tasked with synchronizing general administration, program planning, financial management, personnel affairs, and reporting across the department's technical divisions. This finding is consistent with research showing that internal governance arrangements shape the reliability of a government organization's contribution to networked or cross-unit programs, and that fragmented internal coordination can generate governance conflicts that undermine program delivery (Anderson, 2025).

The Head of DPMK (Informant 1) described the Secretary as the hub of administrative and managerial coordination that determines the smoothness of program implementation, a view corroborated by the Division Heads (Informants 2 and 3), who emphasized the Secretary's contribution to program planning and cross-unit coordination. The Finance Subdivision Head (Informant 4) further highlighted the Secretary's role in financial administration and budget accountability, while the community leader (Informant 5) viewed the Secretary as the key link between the regional government and program implementation at the village level. Collectively, these accounts affirm that the effectiveness of village empowerment programs is closely tied to how capably the Secretary performs coordinating, planning, organizing, and controlling functions, functions consistent with the classical management framework distinguishing planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling as the core responsibilities of any managerial position.

Current Governance of the Village Empowerment Program

The governance of the village community empowerment program in Intan Jaya generally follows established regional government mechanisms. Program planning begins with the identification of village needs through village deliberation (*musyawarah kampung*), followed by proposal drafting, internal review, budgeting, and synchronization with regional development priorities, an approach that mirrors participatory planning practices documented in other Indonesian village governance studies (Setiawan, 2024; Aulia & Andhini, 2025).

Implementation is carried out by village governments with technical assistance from DPMK, but informants consistently reported weaknesses in field coordination, program monitoring, reporting timeliness, and village apparatus capacity. These constraints echo evidence that geographically difficult regencies in Papua experience persistent service-delivery disparities due to infrastructure limitations,

staffing shortages, and access barriers (Lelyana & Sarjito, 2024; Madubun, 2024). All informants further indicated that program supervision has not reached its full potential, largely because Intan Jaya's mountainous terrain restricts field monitoring, an obstacle also documented in island and remote sub-district governance research, where geography itself becomes a central variable shaping bureaucratic capacity (Madubun, 2024).

Community participation in the empowerment program was described as reasonably good but still requiring strengthening, particularly in the supervisory and planning stages. This finding resonates with the participatory development literature, which holds that the depth of citizen involvement, rather than its mere existence, determines the quality and sustainability of development outcomes (Arnstein, 1969).

Optimizing the Secretary's Role to Strengthen Program Governance

Optimization of the Department Secretary's role emerged as a decisive factor in strengthening program governance. Informants identified several supporting factors, including leadership support, budget availability, personnel competence, an organized administrative system, and effective internal coordination. Conversely, limited operating budgets, an insufficient number of staff, difficult geographic conditions, delays in administrative reporting, and constrained work facilities were identified as the principal barriers.

Human resource competence emerged as a particularly salient theme. Consistent with studies showing that structured competency development and training programs enhance civil servants' organizational performance and service-delivery capacity (Saputra, 2025; Adi et al., 2026), informants argued that continuous training in program administration, financial management, and organizational governance is essential for enabling the Secretary and supporting staff to perform their functions professionally. This aligns with broader public-sector evidence that capacity constraints, rather than a shortage of policy instruments, are often the binding constraint on program effectiveness (Kusumasari, 2018).

Digitalization of administrative systems was also emphasized by all informants as a strategy for accelerating data management, communication, and reporting, and for strengthening the continuity of program monitoring. This finding is consistent with the growing body of evidence on the benefits of e-government and digital administrative reform for transparency, efficiency, and coordination in Indonesian local governance (Andayani et al., 2024; Priowidodo et al., 2024; Rizky et al., 2025; Yoernaldi, 2026; Sihotang et al., 2023). Given Intan Jaya's persistent geographic constraints, digital tools are viewed as a pragmatic means of bridging the distance-related governance gap between the regency government and village-level program implementation, mirroring findings from other remote and island administrative contexts in Indonesia (Madubun, 2024; Lelyana & Sarjito, 2024).

Taken together, these findings suggest that optimizing the Secretary's role should proceed along five complementary strategies: strengthening apparatus human resource capacity through structured training; establishing more systematic internal coordination mechanisms; digitalizing administrative and reporting systems; reinforcing monitoring and evaluation procedures; and expanding active community participation across all program stages. This multidimensional strategy corresponds closely with the good-governance framework emphasizing coordinated, transparent, accountable, and participatory public management as the foundation for effective program delivery (Hirsch et al., 2022; Afandi et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Department Secretary of DPMK Intan Jaya Regency occupies a strategic managerial position in the governance of village community empowerment programs, extending beyond administrative support to encompass coordination, planning, organizing, controlling, and organizational resource management. The current governance of the empowerment program generally follows established regional government procedures, but its implementation remains

constrained by weak internal coordination, limited field supervision, reporting delays, restricted apparatus capacity, and the region's demanding geography. Optimizing the Secretary's role through structured human resource development, stronger internal coordination, digitalization of administrative systems, reinforced monitoring and evaluation, and expanded community participation offers a coherent pathway toward more professional, transparent, and accountable program governance. These findings underscore that the success of village community empowerment in geographically challenging regions such as Intan Jaya depends substantially on the managerial effectiveness of departmental leadership, and they provide a practical basis for regional governments to strengthen secretarial and administrative functions as a strategic lever for improving community welfare.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges Prof. Dr. H. Baharuddin, M.Si., as promotor, and Prof. Apriana Toding, S.T., M.Eng.Sc., Ph.D., as co-promotor, for their guidance, critical feedback, and scholarly direction throughout the conceptualization, fieldwork, and writing of this study. The author also thanks the Master of Management Program, Postgraduate Program, Universitas Kristen Indonesia Paulus, Makassar, for institutional support, and the Department of Community and Village Empowerment (DPMK) of Intan Jaya Regency and all research informants for their time, openness, and cooperation during data collection

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, N.A. and B.; Methodology, B.; Validation, A.T.; Formal Analysis, A.T.; Data Curation, N.A.; Writing-Original Draft Preparation, N.A.; Writing-Review & Editing, A.T.; Project Administration, N.A.; Funding Acquisition, N.A.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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