
LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC SERVICE: ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF VILLAGE HEADS IN RURAL GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

This study examines the role of village head leadership in the delivery of public services in villages within the Siwalungun Regency, North Sumatra. Utilizing a qualitative approach and a case study design, the research explores the dynamic and multifaceted responsibilities of village heads, including their influence on public administration, healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. The findings reveal that effective leadership by village heads significantly enhances the quality of public services and increases community satisfaction. Village heads who demonstrate proactive and responsive leadership, act as facilitators and mediators, and initiate programs such as “Healthy Village” can address public needs efficiently. However, village heads face numerous challenges, including limited resources, both in terms of budget and human resources, as well as inadequate infrastructure. Social and political dynamics further complicate their leadership roles, often requiring them to mediate conflicting interests and navigate political pressures. Despite these challenges, village heads who adopt adaptive and innovative strategies, and collaborate effectively with various stakeholders, are more successful in overcoming these obstacles. This study underscores the crucial role of village head leadership in improving public service delivery and fostering community development. The study recommends capacity-building initiatives for village heads through training and mentoring, and the formulation of policies that support their leadership in enhancing public services and community welfare. The insights gained from this study contribute to better governance at the village level and highlight the importance of strong leadership for sustainable and equitable development.

Keywords: *Community development, Public Service Delivery, Siwalungun Regency, Village Head Leadership, Village Governance*

A. INTRODUCTION

The village represents the smallest administrative unit within Indonesia’s governance structure, positioned below the sub-district level and headed by a Village Head elected directly by its residents. The village government, comprising village officials and the Village Consultative Body (BPD), is tasked with delivering various essential services, including population administration, healthcare, and education. Furthermore, the village government is responsible for managing natural resources and local economic potential to enhance community welfare. It possesses the authority to regulate and administer the community’s interests in alignment with the governance system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Munir et al., 2020; Sujana et al., 2020). The village government’s presence forms a fundamental cornerstone within the governance structure, directly impacting the daily lives of the community.

Village revenue is derived from multiple sources, such as Village Funds from the State Budget (APBN), Village Fund Allocations from the Regional Budget (APBD) of districts/cities, Original Village Income from village businesses and assets, and financial assistance from central, provincial, and district/city governments, alongside other non-binding sources (Handayani & Badrudin, 2019; Hastuti et al., 2021). In addition to its administrative and economic functions, the village also serves as the custodian of local customs, culture, and

traditions, thus becoming the hub of social and cultural activities involving all community levels. Effective financial management in the village is crucial to ensuring that all programs and services are delivered optimally, providing maximum benefits to the village community.

The village's role within Indonesia's governance and development system is profoundly significant. As the frontline of government in delivering public services directly to the community, the village constitutes a critical foundation for national development. Villages are instrumental in fostering the potential and capacity of the community through various empowerment programs and the management of local resources. Development initiatives in the village frequently encompass infrastructure improvement, local economic development, and the enhancement of residents' quality of life (Palar et al., 2022; Yatminiwati et al., 2023). Consequently, the success of village development significantly influences the overall success of national development.

Since the enactment of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, village governance has been structured to reinforce democratic and participatory governance while promoting sustainable and equitable village development. The implementation of this law is guided by two principal approaches: "Building Villages" and "Village Development," which aim to improve village community welfare through the optimization of supporting facilities and infrastructure, strengthening the local economy, and the sustainable utilization of natural resources. This law also fosters active community participation in the village development process, ensuring that the undertaken development is closely aligned with the needs and aspirations of the village community (Danu et al., 2023; Myn et al., 2023).

Village development is inextricably linked to national development, encompassing various aspects of life and livelihood. Programs such as the Presidential Instruction on Disadvantaged Villages, rural infrastructure development, village fund allocations, and the PNPM program are specifically designed to accelerate development in rural areas. These initiatives aim to transform villages into regions with robust and independent economies, thereby enhancing the welfare of their residents. Such programs are intended to bolster the capacities of villages across multiple domains, enabling them to contribute more substantially to national development and the overall quality of life for the population.

The Village Head, as the formal leader of the village, plays a pivotal role in both development and public service delivery. The Village Head is responsible for administering village governance, implementing development projects, fostering community development, and empowering village residents. The leadership exercised by the Village Head significantly impacts the village development process, including directing, coordinating, and optimizing available resources to improve community welfare (Djafri et al., 2022; Sobari, 2019). However, Village Heads often encounter various challenges in their leadership roles, such as resource limitations, social and political dynamics, and inadequate infrastructure. These challenges necessitate effective and innovative leadership strategies to be adequately addressed.

This study is highly pertinent for understanding how Village Head leadership can enhance the quality of public services in villages. Specifically, the study aims to analyze the role of Village Head leadership in public service delivery, identify the challenges faced, and assess the impact of Village Head leadership on community satisfaction with public services. By focusing on the analysis of the roles and challenges of Village Head leadership in public service delivery, this research seeks to contribute to improving the quality of village governance in Indonesia.

The findings of this study are expected to make significant contributions to enhancing the quality of village governance in Indonesia. By elucidating the roles and challenges faced by Village Heads in delivering public services, this study can offer relevant recommendations for developing the leadership capacities of Village Heads. The insights gained from this study

are anticipated to inform effective strategies and policies that support the role of Village Heads in improving public service quality and the welfare of village communities.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Leadership Theory

Leadership is defined as the ability of an individual to influence, direct, and motivate others to achieve common goals by integrating a vision and values relevant to the organizational context and social environment. According to the adaptive leadership theory articulated by Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009), effective leaders are those who can comprehend the complexity of modern challenges and navigate dynamic changes with flexibility and resilience. Leaders do not merely function as decision-makers but also as facilitators who enable their teams to learn, adapt, and develop their capacities in the face of uncertain situations (R. Heifetz et al., 2020; R. A. Heifetz et al., 2009). This theory underscores the importance of a leader's ability to distinguish between technical problems, which have clear solutions, and adaptive challenges, which require creative and collaborative thinking to resolve. Consequently, contemporary leadership focuses more on the development of collective potential rather than solely on the achievement of individual targets (R. Heifetz et al., 2020; Shiba & Walden, 2017).

The primary responsibilities of a leader encompass several critical aspects. *First*, leaders work collaboratively with others, including their superiors, staff, coworkers, and other individuals within and outside the organization. *Second*, leaders bear significant responsibilities and accountability. They are tasked with planning, executing, and evaluating tasks to achieve optimal results and ensure the success of their team. *Third*, leaders must balance goal achievement and priority management, taking into account resource limitations. They must be adept at delegating tasks, managing time effectively, and solving problems efficiently. Additionally, leaders should think analytically and conceptually, identifying problems accurately and elucidating the relationships between various tasks. Leaders also serve as mediators, resolving conflicts that arise within the team or organization. Furthermore, they must act as politicians and diplomats, capable of persuading and compromising, and representing their team or organization effectively. Lastly, leaders must possess the ability to make difficult decisions and solve complex problems (Armstrong, 2012; Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Schein, 2004).

Leadership roles are generally categorized into three types: interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. In interpersonal roles, leaders function as role models, team builders, coaches, directors, mentors, and consultants. In informational roles, leaders act as monitors, disseminators, and spokespersons, ensuring that essential information is available and well-distributed within the organization. In decisional roles, leaders operate as innovative entrepreneurs, disturbance handlers, resource allocators, and skilled negotiators (Mintzberg, 2013). Through these roles, leaders are tasked with ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of operations within the organizational environment.

Yukl and Gardner (2020) emphasize the necessity of flexibility, collaboration, and innovation in addressing contemporary organizational challenges. They elucidate that effective leaders are those who can balance internal organizational needs with rapidly changing external demands. They highlight that leadership is no longer merely about formal authority but about the capacity to inspire and empower team members through effective communication, participative decision-making, and skill development. Modern leaders are expected to foster an inclusive organizational culture where every individual feels valued and motivated to contribute maximally. This approach also underscores the importance of continuous adaptation and organizational learning in response to fast and often unpredictable environmental changes (G. A. Yukl & Gardner, 2020; G. Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

These various leadership concepts fundamentally assert that leadership is a process wherein an individual, known as the leader, possesses the ability to influence and direct others or groups to work collaboratively towards achieving specific goals, whether in an organizational or societal context. Leadership involves a blend of science and art, with a focus on the ability to motivate, inspire, and build strong relationships with group members. This includes influencing subordinate behaviour, making sound decisions, and managing conflicts and emerging challenges. Thus, leadership is pivotal in ensuring effective cooperation and the achievement of organizational or group objectives (Northouse, 2021).

2. Public Services in the Village Context

A village, in universal terms, is an agglomeration of settlements in rural areas. In Indonesia, the term “village” refers to an administrative division below the sub-district, led by a Village Head. According to Government Regulation Number 72 of 2005 concerning Villages, a village is a legal community unit with territorial boundaries authorized to regulate and manage the interests of the local community, based on recognized and respected origins and local customs within the governance system of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. A village is not subordinate to a sub-district, as sub-districts are part of the district/city regional apparatus, whereas villages are not considered part of this apparatus. Unlike urban villages (kelurahan), villages have broader authority to manage their territories. However, as a village develops, its status can be changed to that of an urban village (Menteri Dalam Negeri, 2014).

Public service is defined as the provision of services to meet the needs of the community, who have an interest in the organization, by established rules and procedures. Governance is fundamentally about serving the community. Public bureaucracy is obligated and responsible for providing services that are both good and professional (Saud, 2020). According to Moenir (2001), public service is an activity carried out by an individual or group based on material factors through specific systems, procedures, and methods to meet the needs of others according to their rights. The goal of public service is to prepare the services needed by the public and to convey accurately to the public the options and ways to access these services that are planned and provided by the government.

3. Leadership of the Village Head

The leadership of the Village Head is crucial in managing village governance and ensuring that public services are delivered effectively and efficiently. According to Law Number 114 of 2014 concerning Villages, the Village Head is authorized to regulate and manage the interests of the local community based on their origins and local customs. The Village Head also acts as the implementer of public policies at the local level, covering various aspects such as infrastructure development, local economic enhancement, and the provision of healthcare and educational services (Menteri Dalam Negeri, 2014).

The role of the Village Head’s leadership can be viewed from several perspectives. *Firstly*, as a formal leader, the Village Head is responsible for designing and implementing various programs aimed at improving the welfare of the village community. This includes transparent and accountable financial management to ensure that available resources are optimally utilized for the common good. *Secondly*, the Village Head also serves as a mediator, capable of resolving conflicts that may arise within the community, both among residents and between residents and village officials. Effective communication and the ability to listen to the community’s aspirations are vital for maintaining stability and harmony within the village (Siregar & Muslihah, 2019; Susanti et al., 2022).

Moreover, the Village Head must be innovative and adaptable to changes occurring in the surrounding environment. Given the increasingly complex challenges faced, such as resource limitations and socio-political dynamics, the Village Head is required to possess strong managerial skills and a clear vision for advancing the village. This includes the ability to engage the active participation of the community in every development process, ensuring

that the programs implemented are effective and fully supported by the residents (Afifah & Nuswantara, 2021a).

Effective leadership of the Village Head significantly influences the quality of public services in the village. Studies indicate that strong leadership can enhance community trust in the village government and increase residents' participation in various development activities. Therefore, developing the leadership capacity of Village Heads through training and mentoring is essential for improving the quality of village governance and public services (Nani et al., 2023; Solong et al., 2022). Thus, the leadership of the Village Head is a key factor in ensuring the achievement of sustainable and equitable village development goals. The Village Head's ability to manage resources, resolve conflicts, and motivate and empower the community will determine the extent to which the village can develop and enhance the welfare of its residents.

C. METHOD

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore and understand the role of Village Head leadership in the administration of public services within village settings. A qualitative approach was chosen due to its capacity to allow researchers to delve deeply into phenomena in their natural context, thereby gaining insights into the existing dynamics and complexities (Creswell, 2014; Sugiyono, 2017). The research design adopted for this study is a case study. The case study method facilitates an in-depth investigation of one or several cases within a specific context. In this research, case studies were conducted in several villages in North Sumatra, selected purposively based on specific criteria such as population size, community participation levels, and the quality of public services.

2. Participants and Data Collection

The participants in this study include Village Heads, village officials, members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), and village residents. Participants were selected purposively based on their involvement and experience in the administration of public services within the village. A total of 20 participants were invited to participate in in-depth interviews. Data were collected through various techniques, including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with Village Heads, village officials, BPD members, and village residents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the roles and challenges faced by Village Heads in the administration of public services. Participatory observation was employed to directly observe activities and interactions within the village. Document analysis was performed on various official village documents, such as financial reports, development plans, and policy documents.

3. Data Analysis

The data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. The steps of thematic analysis include a) Transcribing interview and observation data; b) Reading and re-examining the data to understand the content holistically; c) Coding the data based on emerging themes; d) Organizing codes into broader themes; and e) Compiling and presenting the findings in a structured narrative format (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, several techniques were employed, including data triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Data triangulation involves comparing information from various sources (interviews, observations, and documents) to obtain a comprehensive picture. Member checking was conducted by seeking confirmation from participants regarding the study's findings to ensure accuracy and validity. An audit trail was maintained to document the entire research process, from data collection to analysis, allowing for replication by other researchers.

Through these approaches and methods, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the role of Village Head leadership in the administration of public services within village contexts, as well as to identify the challenges and strategies that can be adopted to enhance the quality of village governance.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Village Profile and Participants

This study was conducted in several villages located in Siwalungun Regency, North Sumatra. Siwalungun Regency was selected due to its diverse village characteristics, including variations in size, population, and development levels. These villages exhibit a wide range of social and economic conditions, providing a comprehensive picture of the role of Village Head leadership in the administration of public services. The selection of Siwalungun Regency as the study area allows for an in-depth examination of how different village contexts can influence the effectiveness of leadership in public service delivery. By studying villages with diverse characteristics, the research aims to capture a broad spectrum of challenges and successes faced by Village Heads in managing public services.

The participants in this study comprise various elements of village society. Firstly, Village Heads, who are responsible for village governance and the implementation of various development programs. Their leadership is crucial in directing village administration and ensuring that development initiatives are carried out effectively. Secondly, village officials assist the Village Heads in carrying out administrative and operational tasks. These officials play a supportive role, helping to implement policies and manage day-to-day operations within the village. Thirdly, members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), who serve as the representative body of the community and function to oversee the administration of village governance. The BPD members provide checks and balances, ensuring that the Village Heads' decisions align with the community's needs and interests.

Additionally, this study involves village residents as participants to provide perspectives on the quality of public services received and their satisfaction with the leadership of the Village Heads. The inclusion of residents' views is essential for understanding the real impact of leadership on public service delivery. Residents can offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives, highlighting areas of success and those needing improvement. By incorporating feedback from residents, the study aims to present a holistic view of the village leadership dynamics, assessing both the administrative aspects and the lived experiences of the community members. This comprehensive approach ensures that the findings reflect the actual conditions and challenges faced in the administration of public services at the village level.

2. Role of Village Head Leadership in Public Services

The leadership of Village Heads is crucial in various aspects of public service in the village, including population administration, health, education, and infrastructure development. Based on the study findings, Village Heads in the villages of Siwalungun Regency have demonstrated various initiatives and concrete actions aimed at improving the quality of public services.

In the context of the Village Head's leadership role in public service in Indonesia, Village Heads, as leaders at the lowest level of government structure, have significant responsibilities in directing, motivating, and influencing their community to improve the quality of public services. According to leadership definitions, Village Heads are expected to exert a positive influence, use their authority and power responsibly, and act as mediators in resolving conflicts and integrating various interests within the village community. In the context of public service, the leadership of Village Heads also involves formulating strategies

and policies that optimize the use of resources to enhance the quality of life for the community. Additionally, as the representative and spokesperson for the village, the Village Head needs to communicate village policies and activities to external parties to ensure an accurate understanding of the village's needs and potential. Thus, leadership concepts are fundamental in understanding the role of Village Heads in the context of public service administration in Indonesia.

In the area of population administration, Village Heads actively facilitate the processes of population registration, identity card issuance, and birth certificates. They also strive to enhance service efficiency by adopting information technology to digitize population data, thereby making it easier for residents to access these services. In the health sector, Village Heads in Siwalungun Regency collaborate with local health centers to organize health programs such as posyandu (integrated health service posts), vaccinations, and routine health check-ups for the community. For instance, one Village Head in Siwalungun Regency initiated the "Healthy Village" program, which includes providing adequate clean water and sanitation facilities for all village residents. In the education sector, Village Heads encourage school-age children's participation by offering scholarships to high-achieving students and providing adequate learning facilities. Some Village Heads have also established village libraries and initiated literacy programs to increase reading interest among children and teenagers.

Infrastructure development is also a primary focus of Village Head leadership. They endeavor to improve village roads, build bridges, and provide public facilities such as village halls, markets, and places of worship. For example, in one village, the Village Head successfully secured village funds to construct a bridge that connects the village with surrounding areas, which were previously isolated during the rainy season. Development services are realized through the construction of facilities and infrastructure that can foster economic growth in the community. Completed projects include road repairs, irrigation systems, and bore wells, while pending projects include market construction. In any village development program, the community must participate in the development process and be aware that the programmed or implemented development is a necessity. Village development is a process that enhances the rural population's ability to master the social environment, accompanied by an increased standard of living as a result. The community should understand that village development is by the people, for the people, and of the people.

Through these initiatives and actions, Village Heads in Siwalungun Regency demonstrate proactive and responsive leadership to community needs. Their efforts not only enhance the quality of public services but also increase the trust and active participation of residents in various village development programs.

3. Challenges Faced by Village Heads

Village Heads in Siwalungun Regency encounter several significant challenges in executing their leadership duties, which affect the overall effectiveness of their governance. One of the most critical challenges is the limitation of resources, encompassing both human and financial capital. Village Heads frequently operate under constrained budgets, limiting their capacity to implement planned development programs. For example, the village funds allocated often fall short of addressing urgent infrastructure needs, such as road repairs or the construction of public facilities.

The socio-political dynamics within the village also pose substantial challenges. Village Heads must adeptly manage a variety of interests and aspirations from different community groups. Conflicts between groups or differing opinions on development priorities often lead to tensions that require prudent resolution. One Village Head highlighted, *"There are often disagreements between BPD members and village residents regarding the allocation of village*

funds, necessitating my role as a mediator to find solutions acceptable to all parties.” (R1, Personal Interview, 28/11/2023).

Inadequate infrastructure further complicates the execution of governmental duties. Many villages in Siwalungun Regency suffer from limited access to transportation and communication, hindering the implementation of development programs. Village Heads must strive to improve infrastructure conditions despite limited resources. As noted by a village official, *“We often have to wait for months to acquire the necessary building materials for infrastructure projects due to poor road access.”* (R2, Personal Interview, 29/11/2023).

To address these challenges, Village Heads employ various strategies, including collaborating with district governments, seeking support from non-governmental organizations, and mobilizing community participation in development projects. Despite the formidable nature of these challenges, many Village Heads have demonstrated high adaptability and innovation in overcoming these obstacles.

4. Impact of Village Head Leadership on Community Satisfaction

Interviews with village residents reveal that the leadership of Village Heads significantly impacts community satisfaction with public services provided by the village government. The majority of residents expressed satisfaction with the efforts of Village Heads to enhance service quality in various sectors, including population administration, health, education, and infrastructure.

Residents commend the proactive initiatives undertaken by Village Heads to address village issues. For instance, the “Healthy Village” program initiated by one Village Head received acclaim from residents for successfully improving access to health services and providing adequate sanitation facilities. One respondent noted, *“I am greatly helped by this health program. Now we can access health services without having to travel far.”* (R2, Personal Interview, 29/11/2023).

Analysis of the findings indicates that effective and responsive Village Head leadership directly contributes to increased community satisfaction. Village Heads who effectively manage resources, resolve socio-political conflicts, and innovate in delivering public services tend to gain greater trust and support from the community. Active participation of residents in village programs also rises in tandem with increased satisfaction with Village Head leadership.

However, several aspects of public service still require improvement. Some residents reported that despite efforts to enhance services, budget constraints and poor infrastructure remain significant issues. As one respondent articulated, *“Services have improved, but the road to our village is still in very poor condition. We hope the village government can find a solution to this problem.”* (R1, Personal Interview, 28/11/2023). This study’s findings suggest that effective Village Head leadership can bring about positive changes in the quality of public services and community satisfaction. With appropriate strategies and active participation from residents, numerous challenges can be surmounted, thus achieving sustainable and equitable village development goals (Palar et al., 2022; Sujana et al., 2020).

5. Discussions

a. The Role of Village Head Leadership in the Provision of Public Services in Villages

In the provision of public services within villages, the leadership of the Village Head plays a pivotal role. As the lowest tier of leadership within the governmental structure, Village Heads hold significant responsibility for directing, motivating, and influencing the village community to enhance the quality of public services. Research findings in Siwalungun Regency indicate that effective Village Heads can exert a positive influence through the responsible use of their power and authority, as well as act as mediators in resolving conflicts and integrating the diverse interests of the community (Sobari, 2019; Sujana et al., 2020).

Village Heads serve as the primary drivers in determining the direction of development and public service delivery within the village. They formulate visions, missions, and strategic objectives to ensure that public services align with the needs and aspirations of the community. For instance, initiatives by Village Heads to adopt information technology for the digitization of population data have significantly improved the efficiency of administrative services. Village Heads also actively engage in health and education programs, such as the “Healthy Village” initiative, which provides clean water and sanitation facilities, as well as scholarships for academically outstanding students.

Furthermore, Village Heads play a crucial role as facilitators and mediators among various stakeholders involved in public service provision within the village. They mediate conflicting interests and coordinate programs and activities implemented by both government and private entities (Afifah & Nuswantara, 2021b; Djafri et al., 2022). For example, Village Heads in Siwalungun Regency successfully collaborated with local health centers to implement vaccination programs and routine health check-ups, which have been well-received by residents.

As agents of change, Village Heads also contribute to improving the quality of public services within the village. They motivate and inspire both the community and village officials to actively participate in efforts to enhance service quality. Through effective leadership, Village Heads create a conducive and enthusiastic work environment, thereby motivating all parties to work diligently towards enhancing community welfare. Village Heads who can effectively engage community participation and manage resources demonstrate significant impacts on community satisfaction with public services.

However, Village Heads also encounter various challenges, such as resource limitations, socio-political dynamics, and inadequate infrastructure. These challenges necessitate adaptive and innovative leadership strategies (Rosyida & Sasaoka, 2018; Taufiq & Hidayat, 2022). For instance, budget constraints often compel Village Heads to seek support from non-governmental organizations and mobilize community participation in development projects. Despite these challenges, many Village Heads in Siwalungun Regency exhibit high adaptability and innovation in overcoming these obstacles.

The role of Village Head leadership in the provision of public services in villages is highly complex and multidimensional. They function not only as decision-makers but also as mediators, facilitators, and agents of change, responsible for the overall progress and welfare of the village community. Therefore, Village Head leadership significantly influences the direction and quality of public services at the local level and is a key factor in achieving sustainable development in Indonesia. This study underscores the importance of the Village Head’s role in fostering positive change and improving the quality of life for the community through enhanced public services (Danu et al., 2023; Munir et al., 2020).

b. Challenges Faced by Village Heads in Performing Leadership Roles in Villages

Based on the description of the study findings, it is evident that, in addition to having a vital role in the provision of public services in villages, Village Heads also face numerous challenges in performing their leadership roles. The challenges faced by Village Heads are diverse and complex, encompassing resource limitations, socio-political dynamics, and inadequate infrastructure.

1) Resource Limitations

One of the primary challenges faced by Village Heads is resource limitations, including budget constraints, human resources (HR), and infrastructure. Limited budgets often pose a significant barrier to implementing programs and activities aimed at improving the quality of public services in the village. The restricted budget limits the Village Head’s ability to build necessary infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and other public facilities. For instance, a

Village Head in Siwalungun Regency mentioned, *“The limited village budget forces us to find alternative solutions to finance infrastructure projects, such as seeking assistance from private entities or raising funds through community self-help initiatives.”* (R3, Personal Interview, 29/11/2023).

In addition to budget constraints, limited human resources also hinder the effective delivery of public services. The available staff is often insufficient to meet the community’s needs, particularly in civil administration, health, and education services. This shortage affects service efficiency and causes villagers to wait longer for essential services. *“We often lack staff to handle civil administration, resulting in long queues for residents needing ID cards or birth certificates,”* explained a village official (R3, Personal Interview, 29/22/2023).

2) Infrastructure Limitations

Infrastructure inadequacies also present a significant challenge for Village Heads. Poor infrastructure, such as damaged roads or limited accessibility, can hinder the distribution of goods and public services to the village community. This situation increases operational costs and the time required to access public services, thereby reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of the provided services. For example, in one village, poor road conditions made it difficult to distribute food aid and healthcare services to remote areas. As stated by study respondent (one of village heads): *“We struggle to distribute food aid because the village roads are in terrible condition.”* (R1, Personal Interview, 28/11/2023).

3) Socio-Political Dynamics

Socio-political dynamics within the village community can also impact the performance of Village Head leadership. Differences in opinions, conflicting interests, and internal conflicts can hinder decision-making processes and the implementation of development programs. Political pressure from certain groups can also affect the independence and integrity of the Village Head in carrying out their duties. A Village Head disclosed, *“There are often pressures from certain groups seeking to influence village policies for their own interests, so we have to be cautious in making decisions.”* (R1, Personal Interview, 28/11/2023).

To address these challenges, Village Heads need the capability to identify problems, formulate appropriate strategies, and efficiently mobilize available resources. Effective Village Heads can overcome budget constraints by seeking alternative funding sources, such as collaborating with private sectors or raising community self-help funds. Collaboration with various stakeholders, including local government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, can also assist in overcoming the challenges faced. As stated by a Village Head in Siwalungun Regency: *“We collaborate with NGOs to obtain technical and financial assistance in building village infrastructure.”* (R2, Personal Interview, 29/11/2023).

With the right strategies and effective collaboration, Village Heads can remain effective and productive in addressing various challenges in providing public services in the village. The ability to adapt and innovate in overcoming these obstacles is crucial to ensuring that the village development goals are achieved.

c. Impact of Village Head Leadership on Community Satisfaction Levels

Referring to the study’s findings, it is evident that the impact of Village Head leadership on public services is fundamentally reflected in the community’s satisfaction levels with public services within the village. Effective leadership enhances trust and community involvement in the decision-making process and facilitates effective communication between the village government and the community. This fosters an environment where public services are delivered optimally, contributing to improved quality and accessibility of public services, ultimately increasing community satisfaction with the village government’s performance.

Effective leadership by the Village Head significantly impacts community satisfaction with public services in the village (Munir et al., 2020; Solong et al., 2022). Such leadership

creates a conducive and enthusiastic working environment within the village government, encouraging active community participation in decision-making and the implementation of development programs. High levels of trust in the Village Head and other village officials can also increase community involvement in various development activities and strengthen a sense of ownership over the development process in their respective villages.

Furthermore, effective communication between the village government and the community is a hallmark of good leadership. A Village Head who listens attentively to the aspirations and needs of the community and conveys information clearly and transparently enhances trust and satisfaction with the village government's performance. Effective communication facilitates ongoing dialogue between the village government and the community, ensuring that feedback and input from the community are well integrated into the planning and implementation of village development programs.

With effective leadership and robust communication as integral parts of the Village Head's approach to providing public services, the quality and accessibility of these services in the village are expected to improve significantly. Higher quality and more accessible public services will ultimately have a positive impact on community satisfaction with the village government's performance. The community will feel that their needs and aspirations are adequately addressed by the village government, thereby increasing their trust and loyalty toward the village administration.

The impact of Village Head leadership on community satisfaction with public services in the village is profound. Effective leadership and excellent communication between the village government and the community enhance trust, involvement, and satisfaction with the village government's performance, thereby improving the overall quality and accessibility of public services (Partono et al., 2021; Steenbergen, 2016).

E. CONCLUSION

This study examines the role of Village Head leadership in the administration of public services in the villages of Siwalungun Regency, North Sumatra. The findings indicate that the leadership of the Village Head significantly impacts the quality of public services and the level of community satisfaction. Effective Village Heads are capable of directing, motivating, and influencing the village community to enhance public service quality. Additionally, they act as facilitators and mediators, coordinating various programs and activities implemented by both government and private institutions. Initiatives such as the "Healthy Village" program and infrastructure improvement efforts have yielded positive effects on public services in the village.

Village Heads encounter several challenges in executing their leadership roles, including limited resources, both in terms of budget and human resources, as well as inadequate infrastructure. Social-political dynamics also affect the leadership performance of Village Heads, particularly in managing internal conflicts and political pressures. However, effective Village Heads can surmount these challenges through adaptive and innovative strategies, as well as collaboration with various relevant stakeholders. The study's findings suggest that Village Heads who manage resources efficiently, resolve social-political conflicts, and innovate in delivering public services tend to gain greater trust and support from the community.

Overall, this study underscores the critical importance of Village Head leadership in administering public services at the village level. Effective and responsive leadership not only improves the quality of public services but also enhances community trust and active participation in various village development programs. The challenges faced by Village Heads can be addressed with appropriate strategies and effective collaboration, thereby achieving the goals of sustainable and equitable village development. This study provides recommendations for developing Village Head leadership capacities through training and mentoring, as well as

strategies and policies that support their role in enhancing the quality of public services and the welfare of the village community.

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