

Between Formal Independence and Substantive Empowerment: A Critical Assessment of P3MD Implementation in Kampar Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Village Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) in Kampar Regency, Riau, with a particular focus on its effectiveness in realizing the ideal goals of the Independent Village policy. The research is important because, although the number of formally classified independent villages has increased significantly between 2015 and 2024, the substantive achievements of village self-reliance remain questionable. Employing a qualitative multi-case study design, six villages were purposively selected based on the Village Development Index (IDM). Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, and validated using source triangulation. The findings reveal that P3MD implementation has not been efficient or effective, hindered by overlapping ministerial regulations, central government dominance, sectoral ego between institutions, and policies that lack contextual sensitivity. Additional obstacles include weak community participation, fragile village institutions, and limited administrative as well as human resource capacity. These results imply that a centralized regulatory framework and fragmented institutional arrangements undermine genuine empowerment and delay substantive village transformation. The originality of this study lies in its critical evaluation of the gap between the formal classification of independent villages and their actual capacity for autonomy, offering new insights for policy reform and village governance studies.

Keywords: Community empowerment; Independent village policy; P3MD implementation; Village governance; Village self-reliance.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengevaluasi implementasi Program Pembangunan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa (P3MD) di Kabupaten Kampar, Riau, khususnya terkait efektivitasnya dalam mewujudkan tujuan ideal kebijakan Desa Mandiri. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada adanya peningkatan signifikan jumlah desa mandiri secara formal antara 2015 hingga 2024, namun pencapaian kemandirian substantif masih jauh dari harapan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain studi multi-kasus, enam desa dipilih secara purposif berdasarkan Indeks Desa Membangun (IDM). Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan analisis dokumen, serta divalidasi melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelaksanaan P3MD belum berjalan efisien maupun efektif akibat berbagai hambatan struktural, seperti tumpang tindih regulasi antar kementerian, dominasi pemerintah pusat, ego sektoral antar lembaga, dan kebijakan yang tidak kontekstual. Hambatan lainnya mencakup rendahnya partisipasi masyarakat, lemahnya kelembagaan desa, serta keterbatasan kapasitas administrasi dan sumber daya manusia. Implikasi dari temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kerangka regulasi yang sentralistik dan kelembagaan yang terfragmentasi justru melemahkan pemberdayaan desa serta memperlambat transformasi menuju kemandirian yang sejati. Orisinalitas penelitian ini terletak pada evaluasi kritis mengenai kesenjangan antara klasifikasi formal desa mandiri dengan kapasitas otonomi yang nyata, sehingga memberikan kontribusi baru bagi reformasi kebijakan dan studi tata kelola desa.

Kata Kunci: Pemberdayaan masyarakat; Implementasi P3MD; Kebijakan desa mandiri; Pemerintahan desa; Kemandirian desa.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the reform era, the paradigm of village development in Indonesia has undergone a significant shift. The state no longer positions villages as objects of policy, but rather as subjects that have the capacity to formulate and manage development independently (Sunu & Utama, 2019). This shift was realized through various systematic policies that placed villages as the main actors of development. An important milestone of this transformation was the birth of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, which was later strengthened through Law No. 3/2004, which affirmed the state's commitment to recognizing the political, administrative, and fiscal independence of villages. The law became the legal basis for the implementation of various village-based strategic programs.

As a concrete implementation, the government launched the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (*Program Pembangunan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa—P3MD*) and the Village Fund, which is allocated directly from the State Budget (APBN) to village accounts (Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi Republik Indonesia, 2016; Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2023). P3MD serves as an operational framework to encourage participatory development and community empowerment through facilitation, institutional strengthening, and village assistance. Meanwhile, the Village Fund is the main fiscal instrument to accelerate the development of basic infrastructure, improve social services, and develop the local economy based on the potential and needs of each village. The emergence of these programs reflects the state's commitment to strengthening the process of decentralization and local democratization, as well as a response to development inequality that has been centralized and has not touched the root causes of rural communities (Widianingsih & Morrell, 2007). By prioritizing local authority and participatory principles, village development is directed to be more inclusive, sustainable, and socially just, and to strengthen the role of villages as autonomous government units that are responsive to the needs of their citizens.

This phenomenon is important to highlight because it reflects a paradox in the implementation of village development policies in Indonesia. On the one hand, the Village Fund allocation has increased significantly, with a cumulative total of IDR 609.9 trillion until 2024 (Kementerian Keuangan Republik Indonesia, 2024). On the other hand, structural and institutional issues in villages have not undergone substantive changes. Poverty levels, social inequality, and dependence on the central government are still high, indicating a failure to realize true village independence (Mardikanto & Soebiato, 2013). In Kampar Regency, Riau Province, for example, around 66.67% of the poor still live in rural areas (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kampar, 2023), indicating that villages remain the center of the regional poverty burden. Furthermore, inequality in resource distribution, weak institutional capacity, and low levels of local participation and initiative reinforce village dependence on central intervention. These conditions indicate that budget increases do not automatically improve the quality of life of rural communities.

Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the village development approach is needed, which not only emphasizes the amount of funding allocation, but also strengthens inclusive planning, institutional capacity, and community empowerment as the subject of development. Nevertheless, positive achievements have been recorded in the administrative dimension, particularly through the Village Development (*Index Indeks Pembangunan Desa*, IPD) developed by the Ministry of Villages since 2016. The IDM classifies villages into five categories: independent, developed, developing, underdeveloped, and very underdeveloped. The 2024 data shows a significant shift in the status of villages nationally: underdeveloped and very underdeveloped villages decreased from 63.82% in 2016 to only 5.24%, while developing villages reached 45.83%, developed villages 27.40%, and independent villages 8.44%. In Kampar Regency, Riau Province, the increase in independent village status is also striking, from only 14

villages in 2022 to 174 villages in 2024, out of a total of 242 villages (Marta et al., 2025). However, these administrative achievements do not fully reflect substantive changes in the quality of life of the community. There is still a gap between formal independent status and the socio-economic reality on the ground. Therefore, further research is needed to ensure that the improvement in village status is not merely symbolic, but also has a real impact on the welfare and independence of villagers in a sustainable manner.

Increases in Village Fund allocations and the acquisition of 'independent village' status do not necessarily reflect real improvements in the welfare of village communities. 'Independent village' status is generally determined based on administrative indicators, such as the availability of education and health services, access to basic infrastructure, and the presence of local economic institutions (Kementerian Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, dan Transmigrasi, 2022). However, these indicators do not reflect substantive dimensions of welfare, such as household income, economic independence, and quality of life. As a result, many villages are administratively categorized as independent, but still face fundamental problems, such as high poverty rates, hidden unemployment, and social inequality.

This shows that there is a real gap between administrative achievements and the real conditions of village communities. This gap is evident in the context of Kampar Regency, Riau Province. Data from BPS Kampar (2023) shows that 66.67% of the poor are located in rural areas, including independent villages. Poverty reduction has also been slow: only 1.79% in the period before the Village Fund (*Dana Desa*) (2010-2014) and 2.25% after the P3MD program and Village Fund (2015-2024), with an average annual decline of less than 1%. The limited impact of the Village Fund on poverty reduction is due to low budget planning and management capacity at the village level, weak community participation, and the dominance of local elites in decision-making. As a result, the Village Fund is mostly used for short-term physical projects, rather than for sustainable empowerment programs that address the root causes of poverty and economic dependency.

Research on the effectiveness of *Dana Desa* (Village Fund) in improving community welfare has been widely conducted and can be categorized into several themes. First, a number of studies demonstrate the positive contribution of *Dana Desa* to rural development. Permatasari et al. (2021) found that *Dana Desa* reduced extreme poverty while simultaneously improving road infrastructure quality. Agusta & Khoirunurrofik (2024) also confirmed improvements in quality of life through the construction of basic facilities such as roads and bridges, while Gaspersz (2023) highlighted better access to education and health services in remote villages. From an economic perspective, Anam et al. (2023) noted the positive impact of *Dana Desa* on increasing household consumption and reducing inequality. Furthermore, Sunu & Utama (2019) demonstrated the role of *Dana Desa* in strengthening local economic capacity through support for microenterprises and job creation.

Second, several studies underline the unequal impacts of *Dana Desa* across regions and social groups. Afiah et al. (2021) found that *Dana Desa* was more effective in villages with strong institutional capacity, while low-capacity villages showed no significant improvement. Yuliani (2020) noted regional disparities, as the poverty reduction effects in Eastern Indonesia were far smaller than in the western regions. The World Bank (2020) also stressed that *Dana Desa* allocations remained overly focused on physical infrastructure, with limited contributions to household economic empowerment. Degodona & Ginting (2020) further revealed that the annual decline in rural poverty nationwide between 2021 and 2024 never exceeded 1%. Meanwhile, studies by Rasanjani (2018), Arifin et al. (2020), Ernawati et al. (2021), and Badrudin et al. (2021) indicated that the establishment of *Badan Usaha Milik Desa* (BUMDes) had not been fully effective in reducing income inequality or improving overall village welfare.

Third, the literature emphasizes governance challenges in the implementation of *Dana Desa*, particularly concerning accountability, participation, and elite domination. Vel et al. (2020) showed that *Dana Desa* often became trapped in short-term project logics, thereby weakening the empowerment dimension. This finding aligns with Arifin et al. (2020), who noted that community participation in program planning remained largely symbolic and dominated by village elites. Other studies have also revealed weaknesses in accountability, limited capacity of village officials, and a uniform policy approach that ignores the local context Ekayanti et al. (2016). Sociological studies Permatasari et al. (2021) show that corruption of Village Funds is still rampant due to the neglect of community oversight and structural cultural factors. Additionally, reports from the Corruption Eradication Commission and Indonesia Corruption Watch note that corruption cases involving Village Funds have increased significantly since 2015, creating serious obstacles to achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development (Yunus & Nasution, 2022).

Although the literature above demonstrates that *Dana Desa* has made important contributions, several limitations remain unresolved. Most studies emphasize quantitative and aggregate outcomes, while in-depth analyses of implementation dynamics at the village level remain scarce. Research has not sufficiently explored how local contexts, power structures, and institutional capacities influence program success or failure. In addition, multi-village case studies that can capture local variations are still limited, even though such approaches are crucial for comprehensively understanding the complexities of village policy. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by evaluating the implementation of the Village Development and Community Empowerment Program (*Program Pembangunan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa (P3MD)*) within the framework of the independent village policy through a multi-case study, employing public policy theories that emphasize effectiveness, efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD)* in Kampar Regency and to identify the inhibiting factors that constrain its effectiveness in realizing the goals of the independent village policy. Unlike previous studies that predominantly adopt quantitative approaches and fail to capture the nuances of local dynamics, this research employs a qualitative, multi-village case study design within the framework of public policy theory. By doing so, it not only addresses the literature gap regarding the lack of contextual and theoretically grounded analyses of *P3MD* implementation but also provides practical policy insights that are relevant for strengthening village development governance in the future.

The central argument of this study is that while the expansion of *Village Fund* allocations has contributed to infrastructure development and improved the administrative status of villages, the substantive goals of *P3MD* in enhancing community welfare remain hindered by persistent structural and implementation challenges. These challenges include the dominance of centralized policy design, limited flexibility in adapting to local contexts, and weak institutional capacity at the village level. Furthermore, the low degree of community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring undermines accountability and reduces the program's long-term impact. Within a public policy evaluation framework, this study argues that the effectiveness of village development initiatives is not determined solely by the magnitude of financial resources but depends fundamentally on the quality of governance, the strength of institutional arrangements, and the ability of policies to adapt to local socio-political realities.

RESEARCH METHODS

The unit of analysis in this research is the villages in Kampar Regency that are the locus of P3MD policy implementation, namely Karya Indah, Rimbo Panjang, Tarai Bangun, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah Villages. The main focus of this research is on the implementation of the P3MD policy as a strategic instrument to realize independent villages at the village level, by examining the process of program implementation, the performance of village institutions, and the roles of the actors involved, such as the village head, village officials, local facilitators, and the community. The evaluative focus includes three main aspects: (1) policy implementation, namely the extent to which P3MD is implemented in accordance with the objectives and principles of the program; (2) policy performance in practice, including effectiveness, efficiency, compliance of implementers, as well as obstacles and factors affecting implementation; and (3) independent village achievements, namely the success of the program in encouraging village capacity building through infrastructure development, economic empowerment, and community participation. Thus, this research combines analysis at the policy level, village institutions, and individual actors in the context of P3MD implementation concretely in the field.

This research uses a qualitative case study approach referring to Yin (2017), as it is considered most appropriate for evaluating the implementation of P3MD policy in the real context of villages in Kampar Regency, where the boundaries between policy and socio-political environment are not firm. Case studies allow for in-depth exploration of “how” and “why” questions to understand the processes, actors, and local dynamics that influence the achievement of independent villages. This approach utilizes various data sources such as documents, budget reports, interviews, and field observations, to capture the complexity of implementation in a contextual manner. Quantitative methods were not used due to their inability to explain the social context, while a mixed approach was considered irrelevant as the research focused on deepening the process rather than testing hypotheses.

The sources of information in this study were obtained through a combination of primary and secondary data that were purposively selected to capture the complexity of P3MD policy implementation at the village level. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with 24 key informants, including provincial and district DPMD (*Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Desa*) officials, village heads, village officials, local facilitators, BUM Desa directors, community leaders, and residents from various backgrounds in six sample villages in Kampar Regency. Informants were selected based on diversity of roles, level of engagement, and reflective capacity on local dynamics. Secondary data came from official documents such as P3MD policies, Village Fund reports, RPJMDes (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa*), RKPDes (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Desa*), APBDes (*Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Desa*), and other technical reports. Six villages were selected based on the 2016-2024 Village Development Index (IDM) classification, covering underdeveloped to independent villages, to reflect institutional variations, implementation dynamics, and village development achievements.

The data for this study was collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis, in accordance with the triangulative approach suggested by Creswell (2014) and Yin (2017). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with flexible guidelines, recorded with informants' consent, then transcribed and thematically analyzed. Field observations in six villages were conducted with systematic recording through field notes and documentation, to capture social dynamics and policy implementation practices. Document analysis used checklists to assess the content and consistency of documents such as RPJMDes, RKPDes, APBDes, and Village Fund reports. The initial coding process was done manually using a thematic matrix to assess policy consistency and relevance. These three techniques were integrated to build a holistic understanding of P3MD policy implementation at the village level.

Data analysis was conducted manually with an inductive approach using an interactive analysis model from Huberman and Saldana (2014), through three stages: (1) data reduction to filter and focus information from interviews, observations, and documents; (2) data presentation in the form of narratives, tables, or graphs to clarify thematic patterns; and (3) iterative conclusion drawing to ensure consistency and validity of findings. The coding process was conducted in three stages: open coding to identify themes, axial coding to link main categories with subthemes, and selective coding to formulate core themes. The analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of policy implementation from Shafritz et al. (2022), Grindle (1980), and Knill & Tosun (2012), which are used to structure the findings and explain the factors that influence the success or failure of P3MD implementation. Theory serves as a conceptual guide as well as an interpretative tool in understanding the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) in Kampar Regency

The organizational structure of the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) operates in a hierarchical and multi-level framework from the national to the village level, as illustrated in Figure 1. At the top of the structure, the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendesa PDTT) functions as the main policy formulator and strategic director of the program. This central authority provides regulatory guidelines and allocates resources to ensure alignment with national development priorities.

At the provincial and district levels, the Community and Village Empowerment Offices (Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Desa—DPMD) act as coordinators responsible for technical assistance, training facilitation, and policy supervision within their jurisdictions. These offices are supported by expert staff and village facilitators who bridge communication between administrative levels. At the village level, implementation is carried out directly by the Village Government, consisting of the Village Head, Village Consultative Body (BPD), Activity Implementation Team (TPK), and Local Village Facilitators (PLD). They are responsible for translating policy directives into local action plans and ensuring community participation in program activities.

However, as shown in Figure 1, this hierarchical structure—while comprehensive—has not functioned optimally in practice. Field findings in six villages in Kampar Regency indicate persistent challenges such as weak institutional capacity, limited inter-agency coordination, dominance of local elites in decision-making, and insufficient understanding of empowerment principles. As a result, P3MD implementation tends to be administrative and procedural rather than transformative. The program often focuses on reporting and compliance with formal requirements rather than achieving substantive goals of community empowerment, economic self-reliance, and sustainable village governance.

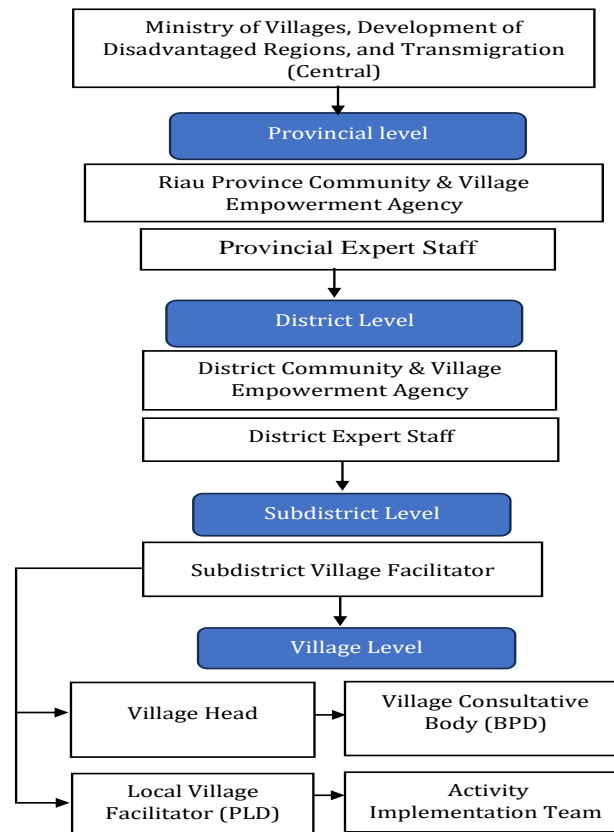


Figure 1. Institutional Structure of the P3MD Implementation from National to Village Level
Source: Adapted from Ministry of Villages and P3MD Technical Guidelines, Riau Province

During the 2015–2024 period, the allocation of the Village Fund in the six sample villages of Kampar Regency demonstrated a consistent upward trend, reflecting the government’s continued policy commitment to positioning villages as the locus of rural development. Despite temporary budget adjustments during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021), fiscal allocations remained stable, averaging between IDR 950 million and IDR 1.2 billion per village per year. This steady increase indicates the government’s prioritization of rural development under the framework of fiscal decentralization and empowerment through the P3MD program, whose institutional structure was illustrated previously in Figure 1.

This upward trend in fiscal allocation, however, does not automatically translate into proportional improvements in the quality of empowerment outcomes. The effectiveness of Village Fund utilization largely depends on local governance capacity, community participation, and the alignment of spending priorities with genuine development needs. In several observed cases, a significant portion of the funds was still directed toward physical infrastructure projects rather than toward strengthening institutional and human resource capacities that could ensure long-term self-reliance. To provide a clearer picture of this allocation pattern and its evolution over time, Table 1 summarizes the average funding per village and the primary areas of expenditure in Kampar Regency during the 2015–2024 period.

Table 1. Average Allocation and Primary Uses of Village Funds in Six Villages, Kampar Regency (2015–2024)

Year	Average Allocation per Village (IDR)	Primary Uses of Village Funds
2015	650,000,000	Basic infrastructure, initial village fund administration
2016	750,000,000	Infrastructure, initial training, technical assistance
2017	850,000,000	Infrastructure, small economic empowerment program
2018	900,000,000	Physical development and village institutional strengthening
2019	950,000,000	Infrastructure, BUMDes development
2020	970,000,000	BLT Village Fund, basic infrastructure
2021	1,020,000,000	Village economic recovery, BLT, cash labor intensive activities
2022	1,080,000,000	Village infrastructure, business training, BUMDes revitalization
2023	1,110,000,000	Human resource strengthening, village economic transformation
2024	1,200,000,000	Village SDGs integration, digitization of village services and governance

Source: Processed from APBDes and Official Reports, 2015–2024.

As shown in Table 1, the allocation of Village Funds in Kampar Regency has steadily increased over the past decade, signaling a growing government commitment to strengthening village-level development. In the early years (2015–2018), most of the funds were focused on basic infrastructure projects such as roads, sanitation, and public facilities to meet essential physical needs. Starting in 2019, the allocation began to include economic empowerment initiatives, notably through the establishment and revitalization of BUMDes (village-owned enterprises). During the COVID-19 period (2020–2021), the priority temporarily shifted toward social protection programs such as BLT and labor-intensive activities to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic. In the most recent years (2022–2024), the focus evolved toward human resource development, digital governance, and alignment with the Village SDGs agenda, reflecting a gradual transition from infrastructure-oriented spending to more sustainable and capacity-building investments.

To further illustrate the fiscal dynamics described in Table 1, Figure 2 presents the trend of average Village Fund allocations per village in Kampar Regency from 2015 to 2024. This visual depiction helps clarify how funding levels have evolved over time and highlights the government’s consistent fiscal commitment to rural development despite external shocks. The gradual and steady increase in allocations underscores the central government’s intention to strengthen village autonomy through continuous budget expansion. However, the graph also indicates a brief stagnation during the COVID-19 period (2020–2021), reflecting necessary budget reallocations for national health and economic recovery efforts. Overall, the trend reinforces that while financial inputs to villages have steadily grown, their translation into effective empowerment outcomes depends heavily on governance quality and absorptive capacity at the village level.

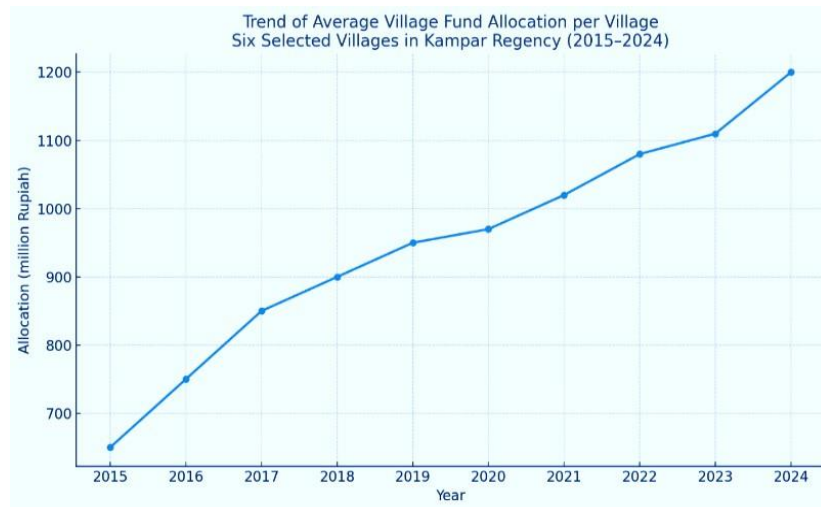


Figure 2. Average Village Fund Allocation Trend per Village in Six Villages, Kampar Regency (2015-2024)

Source: Processed from Village Fund Realization and Transfer Data (DJPK & Ministry of Villages), 2015- 2024.

As shown in Figure 2, the average allocation of Village Funds in the six villages of Kampar Regency has continued to rise steadily from 2015 to 2024. The amount increased from around IDR 650 million in 2015 to about IDR 1.2 billion in 2024, showing strong government support for village development. However, the graph also shows a slight slowdown in 2020–2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced budget adjustments for health and social programs. After that period, the allocation grew again in line with economic recovery efforts and the government’s focus on strengthening village self-reliance and digital transformation. Overall, the figure clearly illustrates that funding for villages has increased every year, reflecting the government’s long-term commitment to empowering rural communities.

To gain a clearer understanding of how the Village Funds were utilized beyond their yearly allocation trends, this study also examines the average composition of expenditure categories across the six sample villages. As illustrated in Figure 3, the distribution of spending reflects the program’s continuing emphasis on physical development rather than on social or capacity-building initiatives. The data show that approximately 60% of the total Village Fund was allocated for physical infrastructure projects such as road construction, drainage systems, and clean water facilities. Meanwhile, about 25% of the funds were directed toward community empowerment activities, including training programs, the development of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and institutional capacity strengthening. The remaining 15% was used for direct cash assistance (BLT) and other social services, such as *posyandu* activities, early childhood education (PAUD), and pandemic-related support.

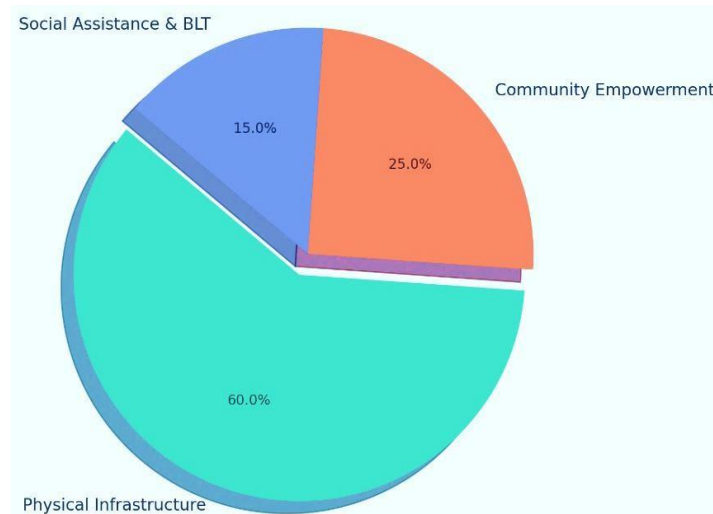


Figure 3. Average Allocation of Village Fund Expenditure in Six Villages, Kampar Regency (2015-2024)

Source: Processed from Village Fund Realization Reports and APBDes Documents (2015-2024)

Building on the spending pattern illustrated in Figure 3, which highlights the dominance of physical infrastructure projects in Village Fund utilization, it is important to examine whether these investments have translated into measurable improvements in village development outcomes. To capture the program's broader impact, this study analyzes changes in the Village Development Index (IDM) status across the six sample villages in Kampar Regency over the 2015–2024 period. As shown in Figure 4, the IDM trajectory reflects a gradual but positive progression—from the “Developing” category toward “Advanced” and, in some cases, “Independent.” This upward movement indicates that, despite implementation challenges, the P3MD Program has contributed to enhancing basic services, infrastructure quality, and local institutional capacity, aligning with the program's goal of achieving sustainable and autonomous village development.

As shown in Figure 3, most of the Village Fund spending in Kampar Regency during 2015–2024 was still concentrated on physical infrastructure development, which accounted for about 60% of the total budget. This means that village governments generally prioritized the construction of roads, clean water facilities, and other basic infrastructure to meet immediate community needs. Meanwhile, community empowerment programs only reached around 25%, covering activities such as entrepreneurship training, institutional strengthening, and the development of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). The smallest portion, about 15%, was allocated to social assistance and BLT, including support for *posyandu* services, early childhood education, and pandemic-related aid. The composition shown in Figure 3 reflects that while infrastructure remains a dominant focus, the shift toward empowerment and social welfare programs has started to emerge gradually, signaling an effort to balance physical and human development at the village level.

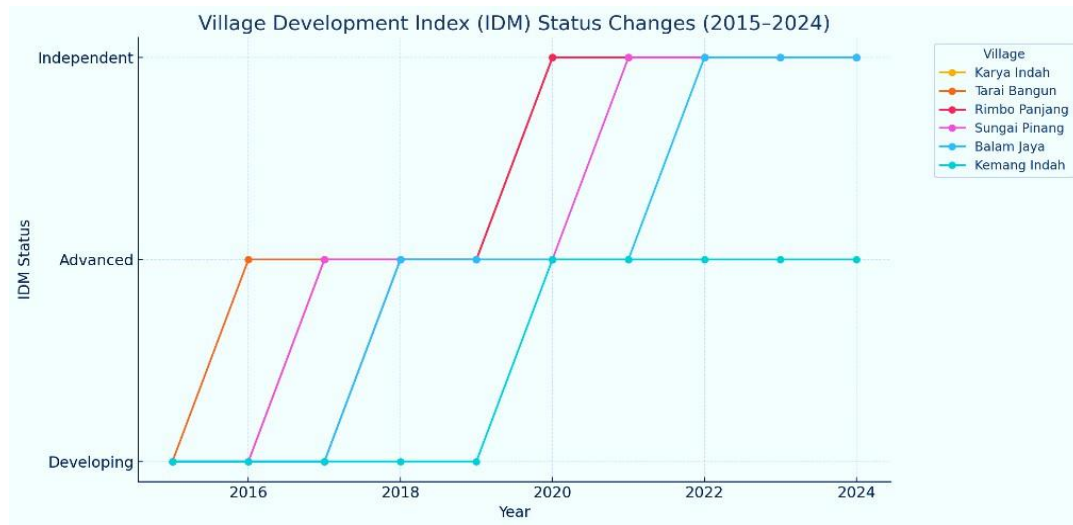


Figure 4. Trends in Village Development Index (IDM) Status in Six Villages, Kampar Regency, 2015-2024

Source: Processed from Ministry of Villages Data (2024)

The development of the Village Development Index (IDM) status of six villages in Kampar Regency from 2015 to 2024 shows a positive trend but with varying speeds of improvement. All villages started from “Developing” status in 2015, then gradually increased to “Advanced” status, and most reached “Independent” status within the 2020 to 2024 timeframe. Tarai Bangun village showed the earliest acceleration by reaching “Advanced” status in 2016 and “Independent” in 2020, followed by Karya Indah and Rimbo Panjang which steadily improved to “Independent” in the same year. Sungai Pinang and Balam Jaya followed to become “Independent” in 2021 and 2022. Meanwhile, Kemang Indah is the only village that will remain at “Advanced” status until 2024, indicating the need for institutional capacity strengthening and more effective development interventions to encourage its status upgrade. Furthermore, this study also explains the achievements of the P3MD program using three main indicators, namely the Village Development Index (IDM), the achievement of Village SDGs, and the local poverty rate.

Based on the data in Table 2, the P3MD program achievements in the six selected villages show generally positive results, although not evenly distributed across all indicators. In terms of the Village Development Index (IDM), five villages have achieved Independent Village status and one village is at the Advanced Village level, with IDM scores all above the 0.72 threshold, with some villages even approaching the maximum score, such as Karya Indah Village (0.9567). This reflects the successful improvement of institutional capacity and basic services. However, the achievement of the Village SDGs is still moderate, with a range of achievements between 31.77% and 51.04%. This shows that there are still challenges in achieving sustainable development goals at the local level, especially in cross-cutting aspects such as education, health, and green economy. Meanwhile, the poverty rate in each village shows significant variations, from 6.1% to 13.2%, indicating that the status of Independent Village is not yet fully proportional to the success of poverty alleviation. Thus, although the aggregate program achievements show a positive direction, disparities between villages are still quite evident, so that intervention strategies that are more contextual, adaptive, and responsive to the specific conditions of each village are needed.

Table 2. Development Indicator Achievements in Six Selected Villages (2024)

Village	IDM Status 2024	IDM Score	SDGs Achievement (%)	Percentage of Poor Population (%)
Karya Indah	Independent Village	0.9567	43.21%	6.1%
Tarai Bangun	Independent Village	0.8673	50.75%	7.3%
Rimbo Panjang	Independent Village	0.8605	31.77%	8.5%
Sungai Pinang	Independent Village	0.8754	44.66%	11.9%
Balam Jaya	Independent Village	0.8416	51.04%	12.7%
Kemang Indah	Advanced Village	0.7298	40.83%	13.2%

Source: Research Data Processing in 2024

Based on the data in Table 2, the P3MD program achievements in the six selected villages show generally positive results, although not evenly distributed across all indicators. In terms of the Village Development Index (IDM), five villages have achieved Independent Village status and one village is at the Advanced Village level, with IDM scores all above the 0.72 threshold, with some villages even approaching the maximum score, such as Karya Indah Village (0.9567). This reflects the successful improvement of institutional capacity and basic services. However, the achievement of the Village SDGs is still moderate, with a range of achievements between 31.77% and 51.04%. This shows that there are still challenges in achieving sustainable development goals at the local level, especially in cross-cutting aspects such as education, health, and green economy. Meanwhile, the poverty rate in each village shows significant variations, from 6.1% to 13.2%, indicating that the status of “Independent Village” is not yet fully proportional to the success of poverty alleviation. Thus, although the aggregate program achievements show a positive direction, disparities between villages are still quite evident, so that intervention strategies that are more contextual, adaptive, and responsive to the specific conditions of each village are needed.

Evaluation of P3MD Implementation: Compliance, Efficiency, and Effectiveness

Based on the results of research in six villages in Kabupaten Kampar (Karya Indah, Tarai Bangun, Rimbo Panjang, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah), the level of compliance with policies and regulations implementing the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) shows a relatively uniform pattern in administrative aspects, but is still weak in terms of substance and meaningfulness of implementation. In general, the villages have fulfilled formal obligations such as the preparation of the RPJMDes, RKPDDes, APBDes, and the implementation of Village Deliberations using standardized formats and digital applications (e.g. *Siskeudes*). However, the process of preparing these documents was often rushed and less participatory, and most were simply copies of the previous year's documents. This indicates that the compliance achieved is more oriented towards bureaucratic procedures than sustainable development outcomes based on the real needs of the community.

In addition to administrative compliance, variations in P3MD implementation between villages are also influenced by structural and institutional factors such as the presence of village local assistants (PLD), human resource capacity, and supervisory effectiveness. Villages such as Tarai Bangun and Karya Indah that are accompanied by active PLDs show better quality of program implementation and administrative compliance. In contrast, villages such as Rimbo Panjang and Kemang Indah experienced bottlenecks due to the lack of consistent PLD support and too frequent rotation of assistants. On the other

hand, internal supervision by the Village Council (BPD) as well as external supervision from the district (*Kecamatan*) and inspectorate has not been optimal. In some villages, the BPD is passive and only symbolically present in the deliberation forum. Meanwhile, overlapping regulations from various ministries, which change frequently and are overly technical, add to the administrative burden without being accompanied by an increase in the capacity of village officials. This condition narrows the space for innovation and inhibits village flexibility, which in turn makes the implementation of P3MD tend to be formalistic, less transparent, and not fully accountable.

Research results in six villages (Karya Indah, Tarai Bangun, Rimbo Panjang, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah) show that the efficiency of the implementation of the P3MD is still not optimal. Over a decade of implementation, the program has been supported by an increase in Village Fund allocations, fairly complete regulations, the presence of local assistants, and access to training from the central and regional levels. However, the outputs produced have mostly focused on physical infrastructure achievements, such as the construction of roads, bridges, clean water channels, and other public facilities. While the Village Development Index (IDM) score has increased in general, aspects of community empowerment—including capacity building, strengthening the local economy, and social transformation—are still far from expectations. In Kemang Indah Village, for example, community leaders stated that *“changes are only felt on the surface; the program has not reached the real problems of the poor.”* This reflects the disparity between the magnitude of program inputs and the resulting impact on the ground.

Several structural and technical constraints also influence the low efficiency of P3MD. First, village development planning is still elitist and not participation-based. In Rimbo Panjang and Sungai Pinang, the process of preparing documents such as RPJMDes and RKPDes is often carried out in a short time with minimal involvement of vulnerable groups. Activities are selected based on ease of implementation, not the urgency of community needs. In contrast, Tarai Bangun with an active facilitator showed a more open and selective practice of village deliberation in determining programs. Secondly, the limited technical and managerial capacity of the apparatus is also an obstacle. In Balam Jaya and Kemang Indah, village officials had difficulty using applications such as Siskeudes and often relied on assistants. This is in contrast to Karya Indah, which shows more independent internal capacity and a well-organized documentation and evaluation system. Third, the program's procedural success orientation causes villages to focus more on document completeness and budget absorption rather than substantive results. In Sungai Pinang, the indicator of success was determined more by the “neatness of the report” than the welfare of the community.

Based on the conceptual framework of Shafritz et al. (2017), Wu et al. (2008), Dunn (2018), the efficiency of P3MD implementation was measured by focusing on the balance between the resources used (input) and the results achieved (output). This study found that in the six villages studied, P3MD has been implemented with the support of village funds, village facilitators, regulations, and technology. However, the implementation of the program has not been fully in line with the objectives and priorities of the established policy. This shows that the overly technocratic policy design distances P3MD from the spirit of empowerment and sustainable development. The inequality of efficiency between villages also emphasizes the importance of contextual interventions to strengthen institutions and real community participation. Furthermore, researchers compared the efficiency of P3MD program implementation in six villages (Karya Indah, Tarai Bangun, Rimbo Panjang, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah).

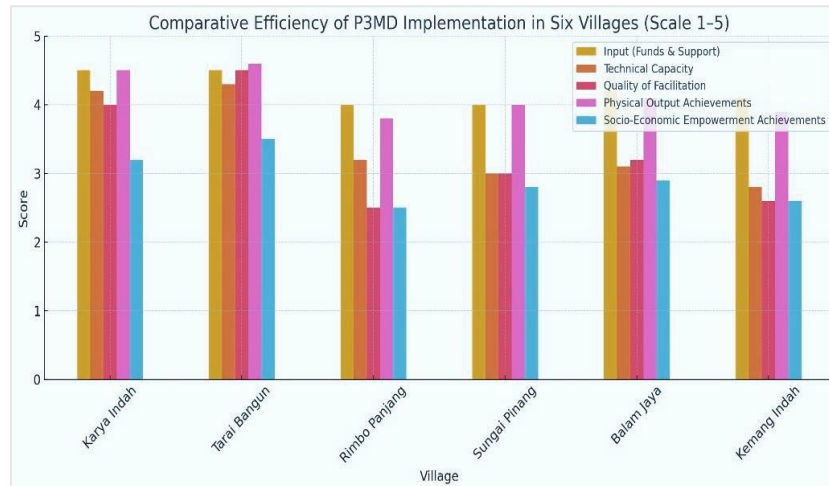


Figure 5. Comparative Efficiency of P3MD Implementation in Six Villages (Scale 1-5)

Source: Based on Internal Program Evaluation and Field Interviews (2024)

As shown in Figure 5, the comparative analysis of P3MD implementation efficiency across six villages in Kampar Regency highlights five key indicators: input (funds and support), technical capacity, quality of facilitation, physical output achievements, and socio-economic empowerment outcomes. The figure clearly shows that Tarai Bangun and Karya Indah achieved higher scores across almost all indicators, reflecting strong technical capacity, active facilitation, and well-managed use of resources. In contrast, Rimbo Panjang and Kemang Indah recorded lower performance levels, particularly in the areas of facilitation quality and socio-economic empowerment, indicating weaker institutional capacity and limited community participation. Meanwhile, Sungai Pinang and Balam Jaya demonstrated moderate efficiency levels, with good achievements in physical outputs but less progress in empowerment aspects. Overall, Figure 5 illustrates that the effectiveness and efficiency of P3MD implementation depend significantly on the combination of technical support, local human resource capacity, and adaptive management strategies at the village level.

The implementation of the P3MD in the six research villages (Karya Indah, Tarai Bangun, Rimbo Panjang, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah) shows that program effectiveness is still partial. Significant improvements were achieved in the area of public services, especially the construction of basic infrastructure such as village roads, clean water channels, and learning spaces. For example, in Tarai Bangun, residents felt the direct impact of the construction of the village road which now facilitates access to health services. The same thing happened in Sungai Pinang and Balam Jaya. However, this physical development has not been accompanied by a good maintenance system, as seen in Rimbo Panjang and Kemang Indah, where the infrastructure built is starting to deteriorate due to the absence of operational funds and technical institutions. This shows that program effectiveness in the public service sector is more focused on short-term physical outputs, rather than service sustainability. In contrast, in the aspects of economic empowerment and poverty reduction, P3MD achievements are still weak. Programs such as BUMDes, skills training, and productive business assistance have not produced a meaningful impact on

increasing community income. In Kemang Indah and Rimbo Panjang, for example, BUMDes failed to survive due to weak management and the absence of a viable business model. In contrast, Karya Indah has a more stable BUMDes although it is still small-scale. This fact shows that the success of economic empowerment is highly dependent on institutional capacity, the competence of managers, and the support of partnership networks and markets.

The increase in community participation in the P3MD program does occur, but it is more quantitative and not substantially inclusive. In some villages such as Balam Jaya and Tarai Bangun, village meetings have become routine, but the dominance of local elites is still strong. Women's groups, youth, and the poor are often only symbolically present with no influence on program decisions. *"We come to the meetings, but it's the old people who talk,"* said a female cadre representing young people. Ratnawati as a cadre for the empowerment of the Tarai Bangun village community (Interview, July 4, 2024).

This reflects that participatory processes are not fully democratic or representative, making it difficult to achieve social justice in village development. Differences in effectiveness between villages are strongly influenced by the strength of local institutions and the quality of assistance. Villages with active mentors and functioning institutional structures—such as Karya Indah and Tarai Bangun—performed better in aspects of program management and participatory planning. In contrast, villages such as Kemang Indah and Rimbo Panjang, which experience high vacancy or rotation of mentors, and have passive institutions, lag behind in program effectiveness. This emphasizes that the successful implementation of P3MD is highly dependent on internal village factors, including human resource capacity, institutional sustainability, and the consistency and quality of technical assistance that villages receive on an ongoing basis.

Table 3. Effectiveness of P3MD Implementation across Six Villages Based on Four Key Indicators

Village	Public Services		Economic Empowerment		Poverty Reduction		Community Participation	
	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%	Score	%
Karya Indah	4.5	90%	3.5	70%	3.2	64%	4.0	80%
Tarai Bangun	4.4	88%	3.6	72%	3.3	66%	4.1	82%
Rimbo Panjang	3.8	76%	2.5	50%	2.4	48%	3.2	64%
Sungai Pinang	4.0	80%	2.8	56%	2.7	54%	3.5	70%
Balam Jaya	4.2	84%	3.0	60%	2.8	56%	3.8	76%
Kemang Indah	3.7	74%	2.4	48%	2.3	46%	3.0	60%

Source: P3MD Evaluation Survey and Field Interviews (2024)

As shown in Table 3, the effectiveness of the P3MD Program implementation in six villages of Kampar Regency demonstrates clear variations across four key indicators—public services, economic empowerment, poverty reduction, and community participation. The table highlights that Karya Indah and Tarai Bangun achieved the highest effectiveness levels, particularly in public service delivery (90% and 88%) and community participation (82% and 76%), supported by well-developed infrastructure and active village deliberation processes. In contrast, Kemang Indah and Rimbo Panjang scored the lowest, especially in economic empowerment and poverty reduction (below 50%), due to weak BUMDes management, limited innovation, and the absence of sustainable local business initiatives. Sungai Pinang and Balam Jaya occupied an intermediate position, performing adequately in public service delivery but showing moderate progress in empowerment and inclusivity. Overall, Table 3 illustrates that the

effectiveness of P3MD remains concentrated in the physical and administrative dimensions, while its socio-economic and participatory impacts are still limited—indicating that the program's transformative goals have not yet been fully realized.

Obstacles Affecting the Achievement of P3MD Goals in Kampar Regency

Based on Grindle's (1980) public policy implementation theory, the obstacles to the implementation of the P3MD Program in Kampar Regency can be explained through two main aspects: policy content and policy implementation context. In terms of content, the substance of the P3MD policy is considered complex and multi-interpretive, with a strong emphasis on fulfilling administrative procedures and physical outputs such as village infrastructure. Technical regulations originating from various ministries (MoV, MoHA, BPK) are often misaligned and changing, confusing village governments in their implementation. A village official in Balam Jaya complained, *"Every year the rules change, and sometimes one is different from the other. We are confused about which one to comply with"*. This regulatory inconsistency indicates that the policy content is not realistic enough and does not consider local capacity.

In addition, the top-down design of the policy is also an obstacle. Although the Village Law promises autonomy, villages must rigidly follow technical guidelines and national priorities. A village head in Rimbo Panjang stated, *"We have to follow all the technical guidelines and priorities from the central government, so sometimes the village programs we design cannot work because they are not in accordance with the rules"*. Digital technologies such as *Siskeudes* and *OmSpan* increase transparency, but they also increase administrative burdens, especially in villages that lack human resources and technological infrastructure.

In terms of policy context, weak inter-ministerial coordination and overlapping roles mean that villages lack clear implementation guidance. Village governments rely heavily on village local assistants (PLDs), who are also subject to frequent rotations or vacancies. Supervision of the Village Fund emphasizes formalities and audits over program effectiveness. As a result, the implementation of P3MD has not fully addressed local needs because villages are not given the space to adjust policies to their own characteristics and priorities. In line with Grindle's (1980) view, the success of policy implementation is highly dependent on the compatibility between policy content and the context of implementation. Therefore, a comprehensive reform of the substance and design of the P3MD policy is needed to truly support participatory, adaptive, and real needs- based village development.

One of the main obstacles in the implementation of the P3MD is the weak institutional and organizational structure at the village level. Village government organizations generally still use old models that have not been adapted to the demands of Village Law No. 6/2014. This structure tends to be formal administrative and has not been able to support strategic and participatory development management (Annahar et al., 2023).

Research results in six villages show that the village work system is not yet standardized, lacks internal documentation, and relies heavily on the figure of the village head or secretary. This dependency causes program implementation to be more personal than institutional. A local village facilitator in Kemang Indah stated, *"If the village head is active, it works. If he is passive, everything is stuck. There is no system that makes the working tools automatic even if the leader is weak"* (Muhammad Nuh, Village Secretary Kemang Indah, Interview, May 28, 2024). The weakness of village institutions is also evident in the non-optimal functioning of institutions such as the BPD, LKD, and RKPDes drafting team. In Rimbo Panjang and Balam Jaya, the BPD was only present as a formality without carrying out its supervisory function. A village official said, *"The BPD exists, but it works more like an audience. They never ask for explanations about the budget or activities"*. This weakens internal accountability and opens the door to

procedural violations in the implementation of the Village Fund (Jasri, Community Leader of Balam Jaya Village, Interview, May 28, 2024). Leadership factors are also a determinant of successful implementation. Not all village heads have sufficient managerial capacity or regulative understanding. Some newly appointed village heads had difficulty understanding the reporting system and technical regulations, relying heavily on operators or assistants. A village head in Sungai Pinang said, *"We are elected leaders, not everyone has a background in governance. We haven't had time to learn, we are already chasing reports"*. (Paleman, Head Village Sungai Pinang, Interview, May 17, 2024). The lack of continuous training, weak regeneration, and the absence of a capacity building system have prevented village organizations from developing as independent development institutions. In accordance with Grindle's (1980) framework, these obstacles show that successful implementation depends heavily on the capacity of implementing organizations and the effectiveness of institutional relations at the local level. Without institutional reform and human resource capacity building, P3MD risks not achieving its objectives.

One of the crucial obstacles in the implementation of the P3MD is the weak administrative capacity and human resources (HR) at the village level. Findings in the six research villages show that village officials still do not have sufficient technical and managerial competencies to deal with the complexity of P3MD policies, from planning to Village Fund management and digital reporting. This limitation is reflected in the statement of a village official in Rimbo Panjang: *"We are often confused by new applications. Sometimes we have just learned one system, and a new regulation has come out. Not all staff can follow"*. The lack of ongoing training makes administrative processes slow, inaccurate and error-prone (Junaidi, Head of the Community Welfare Section of the Rimbo Panjang Village Government, Interview, May 16, 2024).

The problem is exacerbated by a shortage of skilled labor in public administration and finance. In villages like Kemang Indah and Sungai Pinang, only one or two people are capable of operating systems like *Siskeudes* and *Om-SPAN*, so the workload is concentrated on certain individuals. A village facilitator said, *"In many villages, only one person can use the computer. If that person is sick or away, all work stops"*. Instead of speeding up the process, digitalization becomes a burden due to the high gap in human resource capacity (Eko Hardianto, Local Village Facilitator of Kemang Indah, Interview, July 31, 2024).

In Grindle's (1980) framework, the success of policy implementation is strongly influenced by the readiness of implementing actors. Low HR capacity not only slows down implementation, but also weakens the function of internal control and public accountability. Village officials who are not confident in making decisions tend to avoid innovation and play a passive role. Therefore, capacity building through technical training, intensive mentoring, and performance-based incentives is an urgent strategic step so that P3MD can be carried out effectively and sustainably.

One of the significant obstacles in the implementation of the P3MD is the low level of substantive community participation in the process of program planning, implementation, and supervision. Observations in six villages (Karya Indah, Tarai Bangun, Rimbo Panjang, Sungai Pinang, Balam Jaya, and Kemang Indah) show that community participation is still procedural, limited to formal attendance at village meetings without active involvement in decision-making. A resident in Rimbo Panjang said, *"We come because we are invited, but usually everything has already been decided by village officials or community leaders. We only listen, not decide"*. This indicates an imbalance in power relations, where local elites dominate the deliberation process, and vulnerable groups such as women, youth and the poor are less involved (Sumiati, Resident of Rimbo Panjang Village, Interview, September 29, 2024).

The lack of initiative from the community is also a challenge. Several village officials stated that residents rarely provide program proposals during the preparation of the RKPDes. As a result,

activities are often repeated from year to year or refer to 'safe' proposals that do not cause debate. A village secretary in Balam Jaya explained, *"When asked what they want to propose, many residents are silent. Sometimes they participate in meetings but don't understand, so only a few people are active"*. This reflects low policy literacy and dependence on village officials or assistants, indicating that the spirit of empowerment is not yet deeply rooted in the community (Salmi Rahmad, Village Secretary of Balam Jaya, Interview, August 5, 2024).

According to Grindle's (1980) framework, community participation is a crucial aspect of the policy context that influences policy acceptance and success. When participation is only symbolic and does not open space for inclusive dialog, the goal of social transformation in P3MD is difficult to achieve. Low participation also weakens the social control function of the Village Fund, thereby reducing horizontal accountability between residents and village governments. Therefore, increasing the effectiveness of P3MD requires inclusive participation strategies, such as village policy education, facilitating open discussions, and strengthening the capacity of community groups so that they play a role as actors of development, not just objects of government programs.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the implementation of the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) in Kampar Regency demonstrates a mixed pattern of achievements and persistent challenges. First, the results show that while the institutional structure of P3MD is well-established from the central to the village level, its operation in practice remains largely administrative and procedural. The Village Fund allocation in six research villages has consistently increased from 2015 to 2024, with significant investments in infrastructure, community empowerment, and basic social services. These inputs contributed to improvements in the Village Development Index, where five villages reached Independent Village status and one achieved Advanced Village status. However, disparities remain evident, particularly in the achievement of the Village SDGs and poverty reduction, which suggests that administrative progress has not been fully matched by substantive socio-economic transformation.

Second, the evaluation of P3MD implementation in terms of compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness highlights that most villages fulfilled their formal obligations through planning documents, reporting systems, and digital applications. Yet, compliance was predominantly bureaucratic, with limited participation and innovation. Efficiency varied across villages, where program outputs were dominated by physical infrastructure, but efforts to strengthen local economies and empower communities remained weak. Similarly, effectiveness was partial: improvements in public services were evident, but economic empowerment programs, poverty alleviation, and inclusive participation were still underdeveloped.

Third, the research identifies several structural obstacles that hinder the realization of P3MD objectives. These include complex and overlapping regulations, weak institutional capacity, and insufficient human resources at the village level. Village governance remained highly dependent on individual leaders rather than institutional systems, while limited technical and managerial skills constrained administrative performance. In addition, community participation was largely symbolic, with local elites dominating decision-making and vulnerable groups being marginalized. Taken together, these findings emphasize that while P3MD has achieved certain administrative and physical development goals, its capacity to drive genuine empowerment and sustainable village self-reliance is still constrained by structural, institutional, and participatory barriers.

The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the P3MD in Kampar Regency remains dominated by administrative compliance and physical development, while empowerment and

institutional strengthening are relatively weak. This pattern occurs because of the mismatch between central policy design and local capacity. Uniform technical regulations from different ministries create confusion at the village level, forcing village governments to prioritize bureaucratic conformity over contextual innovation. As Knill and Tosun (2012) and Shafritz et al. (2022) argue, strict compliance frameworks tend to emphasize reporting obligations and procedural uniformity rather than substantive problem-solving. Consequently, village officials focus on producing neat documents and ensuring budget absorption, which explains why the program is administratively successful but substantively weak.

Another reason why program efficiency remains low lies in the bias of policy orientation towards material outputs. As Mardikanto and Soebiato (2013) highlight, Indonesian development policies often prioritize visible physical results, such as roads and public facilities, over less tangible processes like human resource development and empowerment. This explains why Village Funds in Kampar are mostly used for infrastructure, while empowerment programs such as BUMDes or training remain underdeveloped.

The weakness of program effectiveness, especially in poverty reduction and empowerment, is also explained by structural and institutional constraints at the village level. Limited competence of village officials, lack of standardized systems, and dependence on individual leaders reduce the ability of village institutions to function professionally (Annahar et al., 2023). Furthermore, the persistence of patron-client political culture means that village meetings are dominated by local elites, while marginalized groups are excluded (Antlöv, 2003; Hadiz, 2004). This pattern explains why participation appears quantitatively high but qualitatively shallow. In line with Grindle's (1980) theory, policy implementation fails when institutional capacity and local political context are not aligned with policy objectives.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research that highlighted the significant role of *Dana Desa* in improving rural infrastructure and basic services. Similar to the results of Permatasari et al. (2021) and Agusta & Khoirunurrofik (2024), this research also found that village funds have contributed to the development of roads, bridges, clean water facilities, and other basic infrastructure, which in turn improved access to health and education services, as emphasized by Gaspersz (2023). Likewise, the economic dimension resonates with the findings of Agusta & Khoirunurrofik (2024), which showed positive effects on household consumption and inequality reduction, although the impacts remain uneven across different villages.

At the same time, this study also confirms the observations of Nadira et al. (2020) that the effectiveness of *Dana Desa* is strongly shaped by local institutional capacity and spatial disparities. In Kampar Regency, variations between villages such as Tarai Bangun and Kemang Indah reflect the uneven impact of *Dana Desa*, similar to the broader national trend noted by the World Bank (2020) and Ginting (2021). Moreover, consistent with Vel et al. (2020) Widianingsih & Morrell (2007) this study found that community participation often remains procedural and dominated by local elites, while weak accountability mechanisms and regulatory overlaps hinder substantive outcomes.

However, this research advances beyond previous studies by offering a multi-village case analysis that not only identifies disparities in outcomes but also maps the structural, institutional, and participatory obstacles that shape program performance. While earlier studies tended to emphasize quantitative impacts or aggregate patterns, this study provides a contextualized evaluation that highlights how centralized policy design, weak institutional capacity, and symbolic participation undermine the transformative goals of P3MD. This approach contributes new insights into the literature by bridging the gap between administrative achievements—such as improved *Village Development Index* scores—and the

lack of substantive socio-economic transformation, thus underscoring the need for policy reforms that are more adaptive to local dynamics.

Historically, the findings of this study illustrate that P3MD continues the legacy of state-driven rural development that has been present since the New Order era, where central government policies determined village priorities (Hadiz, 2004). Although Village Law No. 6/2014 was intended to decentralize authority, in practice P3MD reflects a form of “re-centralization” within decentralization (Vel & Bedner, 2015). The continuity of this top-down orientation explains why villages in Kampar still function as implementers of central policies rather than autonomous policy-makers. Thus, this research highlights the historical paradox of rural development in Indonesia: decentralization at the legal level has not necessarily translated into substantive autonomy at the village level.

Socially, the study shows that P3MD has not yet transformed power relations in villages. The dominance of local elites in deliberation processes, combined with passive community involvement, indicates that hierarchical structures and patron-client ties remain deeply rooted (Antlöv, 2003). This has significant implications: while infrastructure development has improved access to services, the absence of inclusive participation has weakened social accountability and reinforced inequality in decision-making. The finding resonates with Gaventa’s (2004) idea that genuine participatory governance requires not only institutional mechanisms but also cultural transformation to open democratic space. Without this, village governance in Kampar risks reproducing social exclusion rather than fostering empowerment.

Ideologically, this study reflects the tension between two competing paradigms of rural development. On one hand, P3MD embodies the state’s developmentalist ideology that emphasizes administrative order, measurable indicators, and physical achievements. On the other hand, the spirit of empowerment envisioned by Village Law seeks to position villages as autonomous, participatory, and innovative communities. The dominance of the first paradigm over the second explains why P3MD in Kampar has produced administrative and physical progress but limited social and economic transformation. This ideological tension reinforces the critique of uniform policy design as an instrument of bureaucratic control rather than genuine decentralization (Vel & Bedner, 2015).

The findings of this study highlight both the functional and dysfunctional consequences of P3MD implementation. Functionally, the program has succeeded in providing financial resources for villages, improving physical infrastructure, and raising the administrative status of villages through measurable indicators such as the Village Development Index. These achievements have contributed to better access to health, education, and basic services, thus strengthening villages’ roles as development units at the local level.

However, dysfunctionally, the program has reinforced administrative burdens, fostered dependency on central regulations, and marginalized local innovation. The focus on compliance and budget absorption has trapped villages in a cycle of reporting, rather than encouraging them to solve substantive socio-economic problems. As Saragi et al. (2021) and Waluyo (2006) note, direct assistance such as BLT often creates dependency without addressing structural poverty. Similarly, weak BUMDes management and low participation have undermined the sustainability of empowerment programs (Wijaya et al., 2020). These dysfunctions reflect what Fischer et al. (2015) describe as a policy failure in which inputs are substantial, but outputs do not meet long-term objectives.

Overall, the dual function and dysfunction of P3MD in Kampar underscore the importance of policy reformulation that is adaptive and contextual. A shift from uniform, compliance-oriented governance to participatory, capacity-building approaches is needed. Without such changes, villages will continue to be

trapped in symbolic independence—administratively “independent” but substantively dependent on central interventions.

The dysfunctional aspects identified in the implementation of the P3MD in Kampar Regency highlight the urgent need for corrective policy actions. While the program has successfully improved physical infrastructure and administrative indicators, its effectiveness in achieving empowerment, poverty reduction, and inclusive participation remains limited. To transform P3MD into a truly empowering and sustainable development instrument, several strategic actions are required at both the regulatory and practical levels. These actions aim to address structural weaknesses, reduce dependency, strengthen institutional capacity, and enhance citizen participation in a more inclusive and contextual manner.

First, to reduce the administrative burden and move beyond compliance-oriented governance, the implementation of P3MD must be reoriented towards outcome-based performance indicators. This requires revising the regulatory framework so that evaluation does not only rely on the completeness of documents and the absorption of budgets, but also includes indicators of substantive empowerment, such as the level of community participation, improvements in household income, and the sustainability of local institutions. As Ernawati et al. (2021) suggests, introducing flexible and contextual regulations will allow villages to innovate according to their unique socio-economic conditions, while still being held accountable through measurable outcome indicators.

Second, to address the problem of dependency and the limited impact of direct cash transfers (BLT), village fund allocations need to be gradually redirected toward productive empowerment programs. Policies should prioritize long-term investments, such as vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and the development of sustainable business models for BUMDes. In line with Syahza et al. (2025) and Hossain (2024) poverty reduction requires integrated, multi-sectoral measures and participatory institutional strengthening rather than reliance on short-term financial assistance. By strengthening human capital and productive sectors, village funds can foster structural economic change instead of perpetuating dependency.

Third, institutional weaknesses at the village level must be addressed through capacity building and professionalization of village governance. Continuous training, certification schemes, and performance-based incentives should be introduced to enhance the managerial, financial, and technological skills of village officials. Additionally, clarifying the employment status of village apparatus, as emphasized by Riza et al. (2024), will strengthen institutional accountability and reduce dependence on individual leaders. Strengthening the role of institutions such as the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and village-level working teams is also critical to ensure internal checks and balances in the use of village funds.

Fourth, to overcome the problem of symbolic participation and elite domination, participatory mechanisms need to be redesigned to ensure inclusive citizen engagement. This includes conducting participatory budgeting forums that actively involve women, youth, and marginalized groups, as well as providing policy literacy education so that citizens can meaningfully contribute to decision-making. As Gaventa (2004) notes, inclusive participation requires creating safe and open spaces for dialogue, not just formal attendance. By empowering community groups and strengthening horizontal accountability, villages can transform participation from symbolic routines into substantive democratic practices.

Finally, to ensure long-term sustainability, P3MD needs to be integrated into a broader adaptive and contextualized rural development strategy. This means encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration between ministries, aligning village programs with local potentials (agriculture, handicrafts, eco-tourism), and promoting horizontal learning networks among villages. Such an approach would reduce the rigid

top-down structure and foster local innovation, ensuring that the vision of “independent villages” moves beyond administrative classifications toward substantive social, economic, and institutional transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of the Village Community Development and Empowerment Program (P3MD) in Kampar Regency has produced a mixed pattern of achievements. On the one hand, the program has succeeded in improving physical infrastructure, expanding access to basic services, and raising the administrative status of villages, as reflected in the increase of the Village Development Index (IDM) where most research villages reached Independent Village status. On the other hand, substantive goals such as economic empowerment, poverty reduction, and inclusive community participation remain constrained by structural, institutional, and participatory barriers. The findings show that the program is more successful in administrative compliance and physical outputs than in realizing sustainable empowerment and genuine village self-reliance.

The main contribution of this study lies in its contextual evaluation of P3MD implementation through a multi-village case study, which highlights the structural and institutional dynamics that have been overlooked by previous quantitative research. By integrating public policy evaluation theory with grounded field evidence, this research advances the understanding of how centralized policy design, weak village institutions, and symbolic participation hinder the effectiveness of rural development programs. The study also contributes to the literature by offering new insights into the structural gap between uniform national policies and diverse local realities, providing a framework for policy reformulation that is more adaptive, participatory, and responsive to local socio-economic conditions.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The research was limited to six villages in Kampar Regency, which may not fully represent the diversity of village contexts across Indonesia. Furthermore, the qualitative approach focused on institutional dynamics and participatory processes, without incorporating quantitative measurements of long-term economic impacts at the household level. Future research could expand by employing mixed-method approaches, larger samples, and longitudinal data to capture the broader and deeper impacts of P3MD. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study provide critical evidence and theoretical contributions that can inform both academic debates and practical policy reforms in the field of village governance and empowerment.

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