

Development Dynamics in the Framework of Regional Autonomy and the Welfare State: Attributes of Domination over Local Communities in Ende Regency

Dinamika Pembangunan dalam Kerangka Otonomi Daerah dan Negara Kesejahteraan: Atribut Dominasi terhadap Masyarakat Lokal di Kabupaten Ende

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Abstract

This examines describes the dynamics of development within the framework of regional autonomy as a form of dominant attributes imposed on the local communities in Ende Regency. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzes the forms of domination exercised through development implementation under regional autonomy and their implications for the realization of welfare-state principles at the local level. The findings reveal a paradox in the paradigm of local development in Ende Regency: the allocation and distribution of resources are imbalanced, with prioritization leaning heavily toward the bureaucratic dimension rather than the community. Based on these findings, community needs at the grassroots level should be prioritized in development, because community-based development cannot be reduced to a merely technocratic process. Ideally, community development should be rooted in the potential and aspirations of local people; in practice however, it is often trapped in rigid bureaucratic and technocratic approaches. This imbalance indicates that development, which should be grounded in local needs, is instead constrained by elitist and exclusive administrative routines that weaken the welfare-state function of regional autonomy.

Keywords

Development; Regional Autonomy; Welfare State; Domination.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji dinamika pembangunan dalam kerangka otonomi daerah sebagai bentuk atribut dominan yang diterapkan terhadap masyarakat lokal di Kabupaten Ende. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis bentuk-bentuk dominasi yang dijalankan melalui implementasi pembangunan dalam kerangka otonomi daerah serta implikasinya terhadap perwujudan prinsip-prinsip negara kesejahteraan di tingkat lokal. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan adanya paradoks dalam paradigma pembangunan lokal di Kabupaten Ende: alokasi dan distribusi sumber daya tidak seimbang, dengan prioritas yang lebih condong pada dimensi birokratis daripada pada masyarakat. Berdasarkan temuan tersebut, kebutuhan masyarakat di tingkat akar rumput seharusnya diprioritaskan dalam pembangunan, karena pembangunan berbasis masyarakat tidak dapat disederhanakan menjadi sekadar proses teknokratis. Idealnya, pembangunan masyarakat berakar pada potensi dan aspirasi masyarakat lokal; namun, dalam praktiknya, Pembangunan sering kali terjebak dalam pendekatan birokratis dan teknokratis yang kaku. Ketidakseimbangan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembangunan, yang seharusnya didasarkan pada kebutuhan lokal, justru terhambat oleh rutinitas administratif yang elitis dan eksklusif sehingga melemahkan fungsi negara kesejahteraan dari otonomi daerah.

Kata Kunci

Pembangunan; Otonomi Daerah; Negara Kesejahteraan; Dominasi.



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1. Introduction

Regional autonomy is the authority granted to autonomous regions to regulate and manage their own affairs. The implementation of regional autonomy has several objectives, including accelerating the welfare of people in the region (Kholik, 2020). The government is given authority covering various fields in the planning, implementation, and supervision of development projects (Pratiwi, 2024). Within the corridor of autonomy, the self-government model is an ideal model to apply in regional development implementation, as it brings development closer to the community (Surida, 2020). The self-government mechanism can be interpreted as a form of government for the people through a direct relationship between the government and local residents. Some theories of the state suggest that decentralization gives rise to separatist or parochial movements, for example in Africa. The socialist perspective sees decentralization as weakening local institutions, because the community will ultimately be manipulated by the dominant elite group, which is in fact a representation of the central government. Decentralization is also considered part of the liberal reforms carried out by capitalists.

The domain of development originating from decentralization and regional autonomy can be defined as a perspective on development issues, applied in the implementation of development in terms of both process and method, and aimed at improving the quality of human life and the welfare of the people, especially in the regions (Rani, 2020). Indicators supporting the optimization of regional development are influenced by several conditions, such as the economy, human resources, regional financial capacity, adequate infrastructure, and ease of access to public services (Nikodimus & Yovinus, 2022). In development, the regional dimension is an important factor that must be taken into account when analyzing and determining the priority programs to be implemented. The regional context is not always associated with location, but rather with mapping the potential that exists as a product of development.

The potential of local wisdom can become a priority commodity used to preserve the local-wisdom ecosystem. Development that draws on local wisdom is then governed through a policy that sets out technical guidelines for implementation and even includes certain prohibitions, in order to ensure a development process aligned with the objectives that have been set (Karsiman, 2020). Policy implementation concerns not only the conduct of the administrative institutions responsible for implementing programs, but also community participation and the political, economic, and social forces involving various parties. Policies implemented with appropriate and effective targets will be able to solve complex problems.

Development policies implemented at the local-community level must be carried out with in-depth analysis, especially regarding their resulting impacts. The study of policy implementation aims to ensure that a policy does not conflict with or harm the interests of the community. To achieve successful development in local communities, all planning, implementation, and evaluation programs must involve the community (Kamaludin, 2022). The pragmatism of development is reflected in a situation where the community is used only as an object of the development process, owing to the attributes of domination exercised by the state in implementing development (Riskayanti et al., 2022).

Ideal development prospects can be achieved by minimizing the domination exercised by the state through the government. Ideally, development should start from the grassroots community, including development outputs derived from the use of local wisdom (Endah, 2020). The community must be made the subject of development, because it is the group that most significantly experiences the impact of development. The implementation of development should not relegate the

community to the position of a group subordinated to the impact of development policies carried out by the state through the government.

Subordination of society occurs when development policies are used as instruments of social and political control, so that those who are ruled obey those in power. Those who are ruled do not necessarily feel that they must adopt and internalize the values and norms of those in power; rather, they consent to their own subordination (Bidi, 2024). The trickle-down effect, which tends to be top-down, is categorized as conventional development. At the practical level, this development concept integrates community organization and community development into a complementary whole (Agustana, 2020). Combining these concepts can minimize subordination and domination in development carried out through policies directed at the community.

The implementation of development policies targeting local communities can be carried out through a community-based strategy that takes all aspects of locality into account, as a form of attention to community members through efforts toward change (Teja, 2015). Mobilizing local sectors in development can be one of the strategies the government uses to empower local communities. Based on the 2024 Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Daerah [Regional Government Work Plan] of Ende Regency, development in the regency is divided according to several development characteristics that draw on local wisdom and regional foundations:

1. Development Area I: tourism, fisheries, and industry;
2. Development Area II: tourism, home industry, mining, plantations, and agriculture;
3. Development Area III: tourism, agriculture, industry, and mining;
4. Development Area IV: mining, tourism, plantations, and fisheries; and
5. Development Area V: agriculture, livestock, fisheries, industry, and mining.

The main issue in regional development often lies in the resources and potential available for increasing the number and types of employment opportunities for the local community (Batoto, 2017). To achieve this goal, a partnership between the government and the community is needed to identify the region's outstanding potential as a foundation for building the regional economy. Large-scale development driven by a desire for success may fail to place the community in a bargaining position. The community then tends to be used only as a means of production for development, because its participation is merely a formality.

In this context, policy principles are used as an instrument of control and a form of domination by the government (Orlando, 2023). As a system of social control, policy compels the targeted community to act as directed. The development policy of Ende Regency is set out in the 2019–2024 Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah [Regional Medium-Term Development Plan] (RPJMD), in Chapter IV, on strategic issues. This program is intended to develop the potential of small and medium enterprises within the framework of a unified policy that requires community involvement.

Policy projections made by the government must bear on the principle of benefit: the community, as the target, must gain change from the resulting policies. Policies that do not bring about change tend to be exploitative, with the community used merely as an object or means of production rather than as the target group for the desired change. This concern prompted us to study sustainable local-wisdom development—to observe, analyze, and map whether these policies constitute attributes of subordination and domination by the government over local communities within the framework of regional autonomy.

Despite the growing body of studies on regional autonomy, bureaucratic domination, and unequal budget allocation, previous research has generally tended

to examine these issues in a fragmented manner. Most studies focus either on decentralization as a governance mechanism or on budget inequality as a technical issue of public finance. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how bureaucratic domination simultaneously operates within the framework of regional autonomy and constrains the realization of welfare-state principles at the local level.

In this study, we seek to fill this gap by integrating a domination perspective into the analysis of regional development policies, supported by empirical evidence from the Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah [Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget] (APBD) and the RPJMD of Ende Regency. The novelty of this research lies in three main contributions. First, it develops an integrated analytical framework linking regional autonomy, bureaucratic domination, and welfare-state theory. Second, it empirically illustrates how patterns of budget allocation can indicate tendencies toward domination in local governance. Third, it reveals a decentralization paradox, in which autonomy intended to enhance welfare instead reinforces bureaucratic domination. In doing so, this study contributes to critical perspectives on local governance by conceptualizing regional autonomy not merely as an administrative arrangement, but as an arena shaped by power relations and domination.

2. Methods

We employed a qualitative research design to analyze the dynamics of development policies within the framework of regional autonomy, particularly in relation to bureaucratic domination and its implications for local communities. The research was conducted in Ende Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia, from January to June 2025, focusing on the implementation of regional development policies as reflected in official planning and budgeting documents.

Informants were selected using a snowball sampling technique, beginning with key actors involved in regional development policy. The informants comprised local government officials—such as representatives of the Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah [Regional Development Planning Agency] (Bappeda) and relevant regional agencies—community leaders, and local residents affected by development policies. A total of 12 informants participated. The selection criteria were (1) individuals directly involved in policy formulation or implementation and (2) community members who had experienced the impact of development programs.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. The in-depth interviews used semi-structured guides to explore informants' perspectives on development policies, budget allocation, and their impacts on local communities. The FGDs captured collective views and validated findings obtained from individual interviews. In addition, document analysis was conducted on official documents, including the RPJMD and the APBD of Ende Regency, to examine policy orientation and patterns of budget allocation.

Data analysis used an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Creswell, 2019). The analysis involved coding the interview and FGD transcripts; categorizing key themes such as bureaucratic domination, policy orientation, and community impact; and interpreting patterns to identify relationships between policy practices and development outcomes. Thematic analysis was used to examine systematically how domination operates within the framework of regional autonomy and shapes the realization of welfare-oriented development.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Development Priorities and Budget Allocation in Ende Regency

Our findings reveal several dynamics in development implementation in Ende Regency: the orientation of development policy in the RPJMD, inequality in budget distribution, and inequality in the regional spending structure. These conditions have constrained the improvement of community welfare, as reflected in the still-high poverty rate in Ende Regency. To provide a more comprehensive picture, the findings are described systematically, beginning with an analysis of the direction of regional development policy as stated in the RPJMD, followed by a review of budget allocations in the APBD, the regional spending structure, and their implications for the socioeconomic conditions of the community.

Based on the document analysis and the empirical data obtained, the implementation of regional development policies in Ende Regency indicates a gap between the planned policy direction and the realization of budgeting on the ground. The direction of development policy stated in the Ende Regency Regional RPJMD, especially in Missions 3 and 4, emphasizes the use of local-wisdom potential as an object of regional development.

Table 1. The Potential of Local Wisdom as an Object of Regional Development

Mission No.	Mission 3 (Acceleration of Competitive and Sustainable Economic and Tourism Development)	Mission 4 (Development, Structuring, and Improvement of Supporting Infrastructure in Quality and Quantity Based on Regional Potential and Needs in an Environmentally Friendly Manner)
1	Enhancing the competitiveness of tourism as a primary driver of the regional economy	Improving equitable access to social and economic infrastructure
2	Enhancing the competitiveness of leading sectors (manufacturing and processing) and potential sectors (trade, transportation, and warehousing)	Developing efficient and integrated infrastructure to support the industry, trade, transportation, and logistics sectors
3	Increasing investment	Providing adequate basic infrastructure (roads, electricity, water, and telecommunications) to support a conducive investment climate
4	Improving productivity and value added in the agriculture and marine sectors as dominant sectors and primary food sources	Enhancing agricultural and marine infrastructure such as irrigation, farm roads, fishing ports, and distribution facilities
5	Reducing unemployment	Developing infrastructure for education, job training, and community economic activity centers
6	Strengthening inflation control	Strengthening distribution and logistics infrastructure to maintain the stability of the supply and prices of goods

Source: Ende Regency Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2019-2024

Essentially, the Ende Regency RPJMD emphasizes the development of local potential and the improvement of community welfare. The distribution of the budget and the structure of regional expenditure, however, reveal a pattern that is not yet fully aligned with these priorities. The lack of alignment between the policy direction in the RPJMD and the implementation of the local budget is reflected in an expenditure pattern that does not fully prioritize the sectors identified in the development missions. An analysis of the structure of the Ende Regency APBD indicates that expenditure allocations remain dominated by operating expenditures—particularly personnel costs—rather than by expenditures that directly drive productive economic growth and strengthen local potential. This situation was confirmed by a local government informant, who stated: “Most of the

budget is indeed still absorbed by operating and personnel expenditures, so programs that directly benefit the community remain limited” (Informant, Bappeda, 2025). It indicates that the fiscal space to support community-oriented productive programs remains relatively limited.

In this context, the relatively high proportion of operating expenditure indicates the limited fiscal space available to local governments to accelerate strategic programs, particularly in the tourism, agriculture, and marine sectors that are the focus of Mission 3. The public feels this situation directly, as one informant expressed: “Programs for agriculture and tourism exist, but the budgets are small, so the impact is not yet felt” (Informant, Chair of the Inendu Farmers’ Group, Rukuramba Village, 2025). This reinforces the finding that there is a gap between planning and budgeting, in which sectors that should be the main drivers of the local economy have not yet received adequate allocations. The disparity indicates that the structure of local government spending still does not prioritize strengthening productive sectors based on local potential.

Capital expenditure, which should serve as the primary instrument for infrastructure development emphasized in Mission 4, actually accounts for a smaller share and tends to be unevenly distributed across sectors. This has hindered the optimal development of the basic and supporting infrastructure needed to accelerate inclusive regional economic growth. One informant reinforced this point: “Here, the main challenge is that road access remains extremely poor, even though the economic potential here is quite significant—for instance, we have a substantial amount of agricultural commodities” (Informant, farmer, Wiwipemo Village, 2025). This finding underscores that disparities in capital expenditure allocation occur not only at the planning level but are also tangibly felt by local communities. The lack of road infrastructure in areas with significant agricultural potential indicates a misalignment in budget priorities, in which support for productive sectors has not been a primary focus.

Budget distribution disparities are also evident in the disproportionate allocation of expenditures across government functions. Sectors directly linked to improving public welfare and local economic development—such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism, and trade—still receive relatively limited allocations compared with administrative sectors. One informant reinforced this: “We have observed that strategic sectors like agriculture and fisheries have not yet been fully prioritized in local budgeting. Yet these two sectors play a crucial role in supporting the local economy, particularly in rural areas” (Informant, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah [Regional House of Representatives] of Ende Regency, 2025). This indicates that the imbalance in budget allocation across sectors is reflected not only in planning documents but also in the acknowledgment of local stakeholders. Sectors that contribute directly to community welfare have not received adequate fiscal support, which hinders the optimal development of the local economy—even though these sectors hold strategic potential for creating jobs, increasing community income, and reducing poverty.

In the context of equitable regional development, budget allocation is not yet fully based on regional needs (spatial-based budgeting), as indicated by the persistent development gaps between subdistricts. A community leader observed: “There are areas with great potential, but they lack adequate budgetary support” (Informant, community leader, 2025). This finding underscores that areas with strong economic potential do not always receive adequate infrastructure funding, which hinders the optimization of local potential. It indicates that the planning and budgeting processes have not yet been fully and effectively integrated, in terms of both priority setting and technical implementation.

This disparity highlights the gap between the normative policies outlined in planning documents and the fiscal reality on the ground. To convey the extent of this disparity more concretely, it is useful to present quantitative data on the composition of local government spending, the proportion of allocations by sector, and the comparison between operating and capital expenditures in the Ende Regency APBD. The following data present the allocation of Ende Regency's local expenditure across the missions outlined in the RPJMD for 2024. These data make it possible to identify patterns of budget distribution and trends in local government spending priorities, including potential allocation disparities in the missions most directly related to economic development and infrastructure.

Table 2. Allocation of Local Government Expenditure by Mission, Ende Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), 2024

No.	Mission	Budget Allocation (IDR)	Percentage	Regional agencies
1	Mission 1: Improving the Quality and Competitiveness of Human Resources	370,487,733,878	29.29%	3
2	Mission 2: Improving the Quality of Affordable and Equitable Health Services for All People	237,355,624,704	18.77%	3
3	Mission 3: Accelerating Competitive and Sustainable Economic and Tourism Development	60,366,348,364	4.77%	8
4	Mission 4: Building, Organizing, and Improving Supporting Facilities and Infrastructure in Quality and Quantity According to Regional Potential and Needs in an Environmentally Friendly Manner	99,015,079,980	7.83%	4
5	Mission 5: Creating a Clean, Transparent, and High-Quality Government and a Sense of Security, Order, and Comfort for Business Development and Community Life	497,513,890,930	39.34%	36
Total Regional Expenditure		1,264,738,677,856	100%	54

Source: Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah [Regional Development Planning Agency], (2024)

As Table 2 shows, the allocation of local government spending across development missions is imbalanced. Mission 5 accounts for 39.34% of the budget, indicating that spending remains focused on governance and administration. Mission 3, which relates to economic development and tourism, receives only 4.77%, and Mission 4, covering infrastructure, accounts for 7.83%. Productive sectors, which should be the primary drivers of economic growth, have therefore not yet received adequate budget allocations, leaving support for local economic potential and infrastructure development suboptimal. This underscores a mismatch between development priorities in planning and the actual implementation of local budgeting.

The disparities in budget allocation among these missions are reinforced when analyzed from the perspective of the APBD structure. Overall, the composition of

regional revenue is still heavily dominated by transfer revenue, amounting to IDR 1,175,753,622,676, compared with Pendapatan Asli Daerah [Local Own-Source Revenue] (PAD), which reached only IDR 81,479,842,400. This indicates the region's high fiscal dependence on the central government, which indirectly limits the local government's flexibility in setting development spending priorities. On the expenditure side, the budget structure is consistent with the earlier predominance of Mission 5, namely a high allocation to operating expenditures. Of the total regional expenditure of IDR 1,264,738,677,856, operating expenditures reached IDR 815,518,298,320—the largest component.

The largest portion was allocated to personnel expenditure, amounting to IDR 500,818,730,859, followed by goods and services expenditure of IDR 240,805,955,439. By contrast, expenditure directly related to enhancing physical and economic development capacity, such as capital expenditure, amounted to only IDR 171,413,215,136. This predominance of personnel expenditure indicates that most of the regional budget is still absorbed by administrative and bureaucratic needs, as confirmed by an informant from the Badan Pengelola Keuangan dan Aset Daerah Kabupaten Ende [Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency], who stated: "Most of the budget is indeed still spent on personnel and office operating expenses, so the scope for development programs that directly benefit the community is limited" (Informant, Badan Pengelola Keuangan dan Aset Daerah, 2025).

The budget allocation by mission in Table 2 shows a consistent pattern: local government spending focuses more on strengthening government functions than on promoting economic growth and infrastructure development. This underscores a gap between planned development priorities and the reality of local budgeting, as illustrated in the financial management document below.

Table 3. Structure of Regional Revenue, Expenditure, and Financing

Component	Amount (IDR)
Income	
Total regional income	1,269,738,677,856
Local own-source revenue (PAD)	81,479,842,400
Transfer revenue	1,175,753,622,676
Other legitimate regional revenue	12,505,212,780
Expenditure	
Total regional expenditure	1,264,738,677,856
Operating expenditure	815,518,298,320
Personnel expenditure	500,818,730,859
Goods and services expenditure	240,805,955,439
Interest expenditure	0
Grant expenditure	73,801,362,022
Social assistance expenditure	92,250,000
Capital expenditure	171,413,215,136
Equipment and machinery capital expenditure	35,921,441,561
Buildings and structures capital expenditure	56,228,200,256
Roads, networks, and irrigation capital expenditure	71,974,924,254
Other fixed assets capital expenditure	7,258,649,065
Contingency (unexpected) expenditure	2,000,000,000
Transfer expenditure	275,807,164,400
Revenue sharing expenditure	0

Financial assistance expenditure	275,807,164,400
Regional financing	
Financing expenditure	5,000,000,000
Government equity participation (investment)	5,000,000,000

Source: Ende Regency Government. (2024)

In short, Table 3 shows that the Ende Regency APBD is still dominated by dependence on transfer funds, with a larger share allocated to personnel and operating expenditure. This leaves relatively limited fiscal space for development and the productive sector, which in turn implies that poverty alleviation efforts in the region have not been optimized.

Limited budgets for economic development, infrastructure, and community empowerment have prevented productive employment opportunities from growing significantly, particularly in key sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism. As a result, low-income communities struggle to improve their well-being and remain economically vulnerable. Interviews with relevant stakeholders corroborate this. One informant from Bappeda stated: “Our fiscal space is indeed still limited because most of the budget is absorbed by operating expenditures, so poverty alleviation programs have not yet been maximized” (Informant, Bappeda, 2025). In line with this, an informant from a technical regional agency noted: “Community empowerment programs do exist, but their scale remains small because of budget constraints. This is why their impact on reducing poverty has not yet been significant” (Informant, regional agency, 2025).

The persistently high number of people living in poverty indicates that regional economic growth has not yet been fully inclusive. A budget structure that prioritizes operating expenditure over development spending is one factor slowing the reduction of poverty rates in Ende Regency. The benefits of development have not been distributed evenly across all segments of society, particularly vulnerable groups in rural areas. Limited investment in productive sectors and basic infrastructure means that community access to economic opportunities, markets, and public services remains suboptimal. Consequently, the poor tend to be trapped in a cycle of poverty that is difficult to break, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Poverty Rate in Ende Regency, 2021–2024

Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Ende [Statistics Ende Regency], based on the March 2024 Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional [National Socioeconomic Survey].

These data show that the poverty rate in Ende Regency in 2024 remained relatively high, with 62,370 people living in poverty—22.57% of the total population. Although there has been a downward trend in recent years, from 24.13% in 2021 to 22.57% in 2024, the rate of decline has been relatively slow and has not yet shown significant improvement. This indicates that poverty in Ende Regency remains complex and has not been fully addressed through existing development policies. With a poverty line of IDR 528,259 per capita per month, a portion of the population still lives at the minimum subsistence level.

3.2. Bureaucratic Domination and the Development Paradigm

Questions of power and disadvantage are central to understanding the idea of development. This study treats the community-scale approach to development as a far more complex process—one full of dilemmas, problems, and unexpected issues that require distinctive and creative solutions. Models of community work are valuable only insofar as they provide a framework for understanding these problems and dilemmas, because communities are subjective experiences that cannot be described in purely objective terms. Communities are also difficult to grasp because they are qualitative, in the sense that they are always in a state of becoming.

The development of autonomous and independent communities should generally be easier, because they have a smaller base and scope, clear boundaries, a stable population, and stronger community ties (Rizki et al., 2023). This idea connects policy and decentralization with the development of all existing potential in a region. Local governments are given the authority to optimize local economic potential, including by increasing investment and using natural resources.

Development is not a new concept. John Fei and Gustav Ranis (as cited in Jhingan, 2008), in their essay *A Theory of Economic Development*, examined development as a transition that a less-developed economy is expected to undergo in moving from stagnation to self-sustained growth. This terminology also underpins community-based development: local communities, in particular, must become self-sustaining. Rostow (1990) likewise argues that this period is a transition, during which the preconditions for self-sustaining growth must be established. The process of creating these preconditions for traditional societies to “take off” moves in this direction, and developing such an economic foundation is both attainable and is an important prerequisite for other goals that are best pursued once growth reaches a steady state.

This paradigm has become the practice of development within the framework of regional autonomy. Local governments are obliged to create conditions for communities to become self-sufficient—possible because regional autonomy represents a claim made by the community on the government in response to the community’s lack of power (Putri & Putri, 2022). Local economic development is an appropriate paradigm for community development, because development must be carried out in accordance with the conditions and potential of the region and must be able to achieve prosperity for the local community (Blakely, 2002). Local economic development and job creation are more likely to succeed when they begin at the community and local levels rather than elsewhere. Each factor that influences the economy has its own manifestations and causes, which differ slightly across local areas, and solutions to community problems succeed only when they target specific groups and connect to the wider regional economic system. In Ende Regency, local development is funded from regional expenditure of IDR 715,431,329,404, in accordance with [Peraturan Bupati Ende Nomor 38 Tahun 2023 tentang Penjabaran Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah Tahun Anggaran 2024](#) [Ende Regent Regulation No. 38 of 2023 on the Elaboration of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget for Fiscal Year 2024]. This funding supports two mandatory

affairs—those related to basic services and those not related to basic services—together with one optional matter and one supporting matter, carried out by 54 regional agencies within the Ende Regency government: 6 agencies, 23 offices, the Regional Secretariat, the secretariat of the Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, the Regional Inspectorate, the Regional General Hospital, and 21 subdistricts, in order to achieve the target indicators of the five Ende Regency development missions for 2024. Overall, regional expenditure through the Ende Regency APBD for fiscal year 2024 amounted to IDR 1,264,738,677,856, allocated across the missions.

The data on local government expenditure allocations for each mission of the Ende Regency RPJMD for 2024 (Table 2) indicate an imbalance in development proportions. Bureaucratic restructuring is a priority program of the local government, which indirectly contradicts the vision of the Ende Regency RPJMD for 2019–2024—established by [Peraturan Daerah Kabupaten Ende Nomor 6 Tahun 2019](#) [Ende Regency Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2019] and amended by [Peraturan Daerah Kabupaten Ende Nomor 1 Tahun 2022](#) [Ende Regency Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2022]—namely, “Realizing the Characteristics of Ende Regency by Developing Villages and Subdistricts towards an Independent, Prosperous, and Just Society.” The data show a gap in budget distribution, with the bureaucracy receiving the highest allocation. [Myrdal \(1968\)](#) identifies that many development policies fail precisely because of the inability or indifference of state officials in planning and implementing effective programs. In the same vein, policy inequality is also shaped by actors in the bureaucratic arena—a group that exerts influence and intervenes at the policy formulation and implementation stages, in terms of both alignment and differentiation across social, cultural, and economic contexts ([Hidayat et al., 2020](#)).

Development carried out without considering the local social, cultural, and economic context tends to fail. Such outcomes are shaped by the bureaucracy of developing countries, which functions as a political machine that is not neutral and cannot be neutral ([Winarno, 2004](#)). Based on the data presented above, the Ende Regency government prioritizes bureaucratic restructuring and neglects community development. This differs markedly from the bureaucracy in developed industrialized countries, which is highly formal and legalistic. In such settings, officials acting as bureaucrats remain loyal to the constitution and to established conventions, and as officials they do not take actions that simply favor the ruling government.

3.3. Fiscal Decentralization and the Regional Budget

The wave of decentralization and regional autonomy has become a vehicle for developing each region through the use of its potential, natural resources, and human resources ([Nerson et al., 2022](#)). The principle of autonomy has given regions the freedom to plan and carry out development in accordance with their own conditions. [Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 32 Tahun 2004 tentang Pemerintahan Daerah](#) [Law No. 32 of 2004 on Regional Government] emphasizes that the administration of regional government, based on the principles of autonomy and co-administration, is directed at accelerating the realization of community welfare through improvement, service, empowerment, and community participation, as well as at enhancing regional competitiveness, while taking into account the principles of democracy, equity, justice, and the distinctive characteristics of a region within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. In line with the government’s policy direction for development, all aspects of regional government must be supported ([Fitri et al., 2023](#)).

The implementation of regional autonomy policies has clearly strengthened the position of local governments in carrying out their duties and exercising their authority ([Ulfa et al., 2019](#)). This policy is understood as part of a policy process in

which actors, organizations, and procedures work together to achieve policy objectives, including the mandatory development-implementation policies stipulated in Article 14, paragraph 1, point a, of [Undang-Undang Nomor 32 Tahun 2004](#), concerning development planning and control. This is consistent with the reform of the regional government system. Through the development of regional autonomy policy, the concept of decentralization for good governance and development has emerged ([Hidayat, 2021](#)); decentralization is a prerequisite for good governance and development. In the theoretical debate, decentralization is divided between positivists and relativists ([Oyugi, 2000](#)). Positivists hold a strong academic belief in the causal relationship between decentralization and accelerated regional development, whereas relativists dispute that decentralization is a determining factor in regional development. [Ryan \(2024\)](#) advocates decentralization as a means of improving regional public services and reducing tensions and disparities between the center and the regions. In a different vein, relativists remain skeptical about the correlation between decentralization and regional development, arguing that regional development can still occur without decentralization.

Examined historically, the concept most applicable to Indonesia is that of the positivists. The power dynamics of the New Order regime produced a power struggle whose implications included the 1997 crisis, caused in part by the central government's excessive control over local governments, including their internal affairs. The positivist view of decentralization as a strategy to accelerate regional development is therefore borne out in the Indonesian case, and one of the variables used to drive accelerated development is fiscal decentralization. According to [Smoke \(2001\)](#), fiscal decentralization is important as a means of giving regions the authority to manage their own financial resources, including through the APBD. Overall, the APBD is an important instrument for promoting regional development through fiscal decentralization. Accordingly, [Bird and Bahl \(2018\)](#) argue that the success of fiscal decentralization is strongly influenced by clear and consistent policy design.

In implementing fiscal decentralization, it is crucial to assess how regional capacity and independence are reflected in the management of public finances. One of the primary instruments for this assessment is the structure of the APBD, which sets out revenue sources, spending priorities, and the direction of regional fiscal policy. Analyzing the APBD is therefore essential to understanding the extent to which fiscal decentralization genuinely provides space for regions to manage their financial resources independently and effectively in order to drive development.

Table 3 presents the structure of the APBD, which consists of three main components: regional revenue, regional expenditure, and regional financing. Total regional revenue was recorded at IDR 1.27 trillion, comprising PAD of IDR 81.48 billion, transfer revenue of IDR 1.18 trillion, and other legitimate revenue of IDR 12.5 billion. Regional expenditure of IDR 1.26 trillion comprises personnel expenditure of IDR 500.8 billion, goods and services of IDR 240.8 billion, grants of IDR 73.8 billion, social assistance of IDR 92 million, capital expenditure of IDR 171.4 billion, unforeseen expenditure of IDR 2 billion, and transfer expenditure of IDR 275.8 billion. Regional revenue is thus dominated by transfers from the central government, while the contribution of PAD remains relatively low. Regional expenditure, in turn, is devoted more to operating expenditure—especially personnel expenditure—than to the capital expenditure that drives development. This reflects a regional fiscal capacity that is still limited and budget allocations that are not fully oriented toward strengthening economic development and community welfare.

These findings indicate that regional financial management has not been fully oriented toward development outcomes, but remains dominated by administrative

expenditure. This is consistent with broader theoretical perspectives on regional financial management in local development. In local-development terms, regional financial management refers to how local governments regulate and use financial resources to achieve sustainable and equitable development goals. It is therefore not only a matter of technical accounting or administration, but also a strategic instrument for promoting social, economic, and environmental progress at the local level. Critics observe that the absorption of the regional development budget serves development less than it serves personnel costs, office operations, and internal government programs—an emphasis that can make development elitist and exclusive, benefiting only the bureaucratic class.

Examined closely, the predominance of budget expenditure on personnel and administration reflects a tendency to prioritize the government's internal interests over the needs of the community. Yet one of the main objectives of regional autonomy is to encourage more equitable development aligned with local needs. The budget, which should be used to improve the community's quality of life through infrastructure, health, education, and local economic empowerment, is instead used largely to finance bureaucratic routines. As a result, the benefits of the regional budget are not optimally felt by the wider community. This also sharpens social inequality: when the regional budget is used mainly to fund internal government spending, bureaucrats and government officials become the greatest beneficiaries, while the community—who should be the main beneficiaries—are neglected. Inequality deepens, because most public resources are not used to meet the community's urgent basic needs.

This general pattern is also reflected in the empirical case of regional budget allocation at the local level. The data above represent the allocation of regional expenditure in the Ende Regency APBD for fiscal year 2024, amounting to IDR 1,264,738,677,856 across the missions. The largest share is allocated to Mission 5—the bureaucratic sector—aimed at creating a clean, transparent, and high-quality government and a sense of security, order, and comfort for business development and community life. In this dimension, budget implementation has little impact on optimal social and economic outcomes. [Stiglitz \(2012\)](#) argues that spending on bureaucracy that does not translate into services or infrastructure is a misuse of public funds. [Sen \(1999\)](#), in *Development as Freedom*, argues that budgets too heavily focused on bureaucracy can weaken community empowerment; if community development is not prioritized, people's opportunities to improve their lives are also constrained.

3.4. Regional Autonomy and the Welfare State

From the perspective of social contract theory, a state is established to be a fair home for all its members. The United States, for example, sets out “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” as the purpose for which the state was founded; this phrase guarantees the unalienable rights given to all human beings by their creator, and government was created to protect those rights ([Setiyono, 2018](#)). In modern governance, implementing the welfare state is not the responsibility of the central government alone. With the development of decentralization and regional autonomy, new challenges and opportunities have arisen in implement welfare-state principles. [Musgrave \(1959\)](#) argues that the state has three main functions: allocation, distribution, and stabilization. In the context of regional autonomy, the allocation and distribution functions are particularly relevant—the allocation function refers to the provision of public goods and services, while the distribution function emphasizes reducing income inequality between individuals and groups. In a decentralized system, these functions are carried out not only by the central government but also by local governments responsible for their respective

communities (Ibrahim et al., 2020). Improving community welfare and public services is a central objective of autonomy and decentralization.

One of the main goals of a welfare state is to reduce poverty. Poverty is not only a lack of income but also limited access to basic rights such as education, health services, decent housing, and dignified work. The welfare state seeks to break this cycle of poverty through subsidy programs, cash assistance, and long-term social investments oriented towards social justice. Implementing this system, however, is not without challenges; on the one hand, there is the risk of dependence on state assistance and a heavy budgetary burden; on the other, without an active state, poverty can become an inherited condition that is difficult to eradicate. The balance between providing assistance and empowering the community is therefore key to a welfare state's success. Beveridge (1942) emphasized that the state must provide social security "from cradle to grave," arguing that it has a moral and practical responsibility to ensure that every individual can live with dignity, free from poverty and economic uncertainty.

The concept of the welfare state expresses a state's commitment to guaranteeing the basic rights of all citizens, whether in education, health, social protection, or economic opportunity. The state acts not only as a guarantor of security and enforcer of law but also as the main actor in ensuring equitable and just social welfare. Within this framework, regional autonomy is not merely a form of administrative decentralization but also a policy strategy for strengthening the distribution of social and economic justice more inclusively. Through regional autonomy, welfare policies designed at the national level can be implemented effectively and in context, and local governments have the authority to adapt welfare programs—such as social security, health services, social assistance, and education—to better suit local conditions.

In the local context, the principle of the welfare state—implemented through regional autonomy—plays an important role in addressing the social issues that communities in the regions face, including in Ende Regency. Regional autonomy should give the Ende Regency government the flexibility to design and implement development policies aligned with local needs. Yet the implementation of regional autonomy in Ende has not been fully effective in reducing poverty. According to data from Badan Pusat Statistik [Statistics Indonesia] for 2024, the number of poor people in Ende Regency reached 62,370, or about 22.57% of the total population, with 15,190 people living in extreme poverty against a poverty line of IDR 528,259 per capita per month.

These conditions indicate that welfare programs are not yet running optimally, in terms of both planning and implementation. Challenges such as budget constraints, limited bureaucratic capacity, and minimal community participation are major obstacles to implementing the welfare state at the local level. This ineffectiveness can be traced to several factors, including weak local governance, a lack of integration between central and local programs, and low adaptive capacity in the face of local socioeconomic dynamics. Rather than serving as a tool for distributing social justice, regional autonomy in Ende Regency is trapped in administrative routines without contextual policy breakthroughs. A more strategic and evidence-based approach to formulating regional policy is therefore needed—including institutional reform, capacity building for local human resources, and cross-sectoral synergy—to create an intervention model that is not only charitable but also transformative and sustainable.

4. Conclusion

This study reveals that the implementation of development within the framework of regional autonomy in Ende Regency exhibits a mismatch between policy direction

and budget realization. Empirically, regional spending remains dominated by administrative functions, as reflected in the large share allocated to Mission 5 (39.34%) and in high operating expenditures—reaching IDR 815.5 billion, with personnel expenditure of IDR 500.8 billion. Conversely, the productive sectors that drive the local economy, such as agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, receive relatively small allocations: Mission 3 receives only 4.77% and Mission 4 only 7.83% of the total regional budget. This indicates an imbalance in development priorities that are not fully aligned with the policy direction set out in the Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah [Regional Medium-Term Development Plan] (RPJMD).

This finding is reinforced by interviews indicating that fiscal limitations on community-based programs have produced low development effectiveness, reflected in the persistently high poverty rate of 22.57% in 2024. Regional autonomy in Ende Regency has thus not fully encouraged development based on local needs, but remains dominated by narrow interests. This illustrates the paradox of decentralization, in which authority that should strengthen community welfare instead reinforces administrative domination in the management of development.

Based on these empirical findings, we direct recommendations to the local government and relevant stakeholders to improve the effectiveness of budget management and the direction of development in Ende Regency. The Ende Regency government should reorient budget allocations by gradually reducing the predominance of operating expenditure—particularly personnel spending, which reached IDR 500.8 billion—and reallocating funds to productive sectors. Given that the allocation for Mission 3 is only 4.77% and that for Mission 4 only 7.83%, adjustments in budget proportions are needed to better support local economic strengthening and infrastructure development. The local government, together with stakeholders, should also strengthen mechanisms for public participation in development planning, so that policies and budget allocations more accurately reflect the community's actual needs and reduce the predominance of bureaucratic decision-making that is misaligned with those needs.

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