



Political Support in Improving OAP Welfare Programs in Biak Numfor District

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze political support in improving the welfare program for Indigenous Papuans (OAP) in Biak Numfor Regency, with an emphasis on the commitment of political leaders, tolerance for innovation risks, and the stability of political relations. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation, then analyzed interpretively to understand the form of political support, institutional relations, program implementation dynamics, and community acceptance of the OAP welfare program. The results of the study indicate that political support for the OAP welfare program has been present in an affirmative, adaptive, and relatively stable manner. The commitment of political leaders is evident through the placement of OAP as a priority group, the use of Special Autonomy Funds, and the implementation of rehabilitation and construction programs for habitable houses. Tolerance for innovation risks is evident from the ability of local governments to implement programs amidst fiscal limitations, high public demand, recipient selection mechanisms, program data updates, and efforts to open up third-party support. The stability of political relations is evident through the continuity of programs across years, the role of implementing agencies, community acceptance, and the formation of social legitimacy for the program. However, this political support is still stronger in maintaining the sustainability of the program than expanding its reach and encouraging structural welfare transformation. Political support for the Indigenous Peoples' (OAP) welfare program in Biak Numfor Regency has become an important foundation for the implementation of affirmative action policies at the regional level. However, this support still needs to be strengthened through expanding redistributive capacity, institutionalizing collaboration, learning from risks, transparency of targets, and integration between programs so that the Indigenous Peoples' (OAP) welfare program not only functions as basic social protection but is also able to encourage broader, deeper, and more sustainable transformation of Indigenous Peoples' (OAP) welfare.

Keywords: Political Support, Political Leadership Commitment, Innovation Risk, Stability of Political Relations, Welfare of OAP

Introduction

The establishment of Special Autonomy (Otonomi Khusus/Otsus) for Papua was driven by the Indonesian government's recognition that previous development policies had not adequately improved the welfare, prosperity, or protection of the fundamental rights of the Papuan people. Despite abundant natural resources, Papua has long experienced significant disparities in education, economic development, social welfare, cultural recognition, and political participation compared with other regions of Indonesia. Many indigenous communities continue to face severe socioeconomic deprivation, while longstanding concerns regarding human rights and equitable development remain unresolved. These conditions provided the primary rationale for implementing a special governance framework designed to address Papua's unique historical and developmental challenges.

Special Autonomy was introduced as a strategic policy instrument to reduce regional disparities between Papua and the rest of Indonesia while acknowledging the distinctive cultural identity and customary rights of Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua/OAP). The policy expands the authority of provincial and local governments to manage their own development priorities and encourages greater participation of indigenous communities in planning and implementing public programs. Through this approach, the government expected that development policies would become more responsive to local needs, particularly in improving community welfare.

One of the most important components of the Special Autonomy policy is the allocation of Special Autonomy Funds (Dana Otsus), which are intended to accelerate socioeconomic development throughout Papua. When managed effectively, these funds are expected to improve household incomes, strengthen public infrastructure, expand access to education and healthcare, empower local economies, increase community living standards, and promote sustainable utilization of natural resources for the benefit of indigenous communities. Consequently, the effectiveness of Special Autonomy depends not only on the amount of financial resources provided but also on the quality of governance that manages these resources.

Although substantial fiscal transfers have been provided over the years, the outcomes of Special Autonomy have not fully matched public expectations. Various structural challenges continue to hinder policy implementation, including limited human resource capacity, uneven population distribution, weak institutional management, inadequate administrative accountability, and concerns regarding financial leakages. These obstacles have reduced the effectiveness of welfare programs and limited their contribution to improving the quality of life of Indigenous Papuans. Therefore, strengthening coordination among government institutions, improving financial

transparency, and enhancing policy monitoring have become essential requirements for maximizing the benefits of Special Autonomy.

The evaluation of public policy requires careful assessment of its actual impacts rather than merely examining program implementation or budget allocation. According to the policy impact framework proposed by scholars such as Dye and Anderson, policy outcomes should be evaluated based on their influence on the intended beneficiaries and on broader social conditions. Government outputs alone do not necessarily indicate successful policy performance because meaningful evaluation must consider whether policies produce measurable improvements in people's welfare and generate sustainable social change. This perspective is particularly relevant for assessing the effectiveness of Special Autonomy in Papua.

Policy impacts also extend beyond the direct target groups and often generate wider externalities that influence multiple stakeholders. Welfare programs implemented through Special Autonomy affect not only Indigenous Papuans but also local governments, community organizations, educational institutions, healthcare providers, private businesses, and other actors involved in regional development. Understanding these broader spillover effects is essential for evaluating whether Special Autonomy has successfully promoted inclusive development and strengthened institutional collaboration at the local level.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in welfare state theory. Jeremy Bentham argued that governments have a fundamental responsibility to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number of citizens through policies that maximize public welfare. From a utilitarian perspective, public policies should be assessed according to their ability to generate benefits for society while minimizing social suffering. Accordingly, Special Autonomy can be viewed as a welfare-oriented policy designed to improve the well-being of Indigenous Papuans through targeted institutional and fiscal interventions.

The concept of welfare extends beyond economic prosperity and encompasses broader dimensions of human development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines welfare as the expansion of people's opportunities and capabilities, including meaningful participation in public decision-making processes. Similarly, the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia emphasizes welfare as a condition in which individuals and communities are able to fulfill their fundamental rights and live with dignity. These perspectives suggest that welfare should be understood as a multidimensional concept involving economic security, education, health, social inclusion, and political participation.

Social welfare has therefore become a central objective of modern governance. Internationally, welfare is commonly measured through indicators such as income levels, educational attainment, and life expectancy, while social welfare systems also encompass public programs and services that address social, economic, educational, and health needs. From this perspective, effective governance should ensure that public resources are translated into tangible improvements in citizens' quality of life. Consequently, evaluating welfare programs requires consideration of both the benefits received by communities and the extent to which their basic needs are fulfilled. Poverty remains one of the most persistent global development challenges and constitutes the first objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which call for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. Indonesia has consistently prioritized poverty reduction through successive national development plans, establishing ambitious targets to decrease poverty rates through integrated economic and social policies. These national commitments underscore the importance of evaluating whether regional development policies, including Special Autonomy, contribute effectively to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth.

In Indonesia, poverty is officially measured using the basic needs approach developed by the national statistical system, which defines poverty based on the inability to meet minimum food and non-food consumption requirements. At the local level, Biak Numfor Regency continues to experience significant poverty despite the implementation of various welfare and empowerment programs. Poverty increased slightly from 36.38 thousand people in 2021 to 36.80 thousand people in 2022, largely due to the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although long-term trends indicate gradual improvement since 2015, the poverty rate in Biak Numfor remains relatively high compared with many other regions, indicating that development challenges persist despite ongoing policy interventions.

These conditions highlight the importance of strengthening social and economic transformation to improve community productivity and reduce poverty in Papua. Local development strategies emphasize enhancing agricultural productivity, livestock development, fisheries, local economic empowerment, and improved management of regional and village development funds. Equally important is strengthening the institutional capacity of local governments to implement welfare-oriented programs effectively and ensure that Special Autonomy resources produce sustainable socioeconomic outcomes for Indigenous Papuan communities.

Despite the growing body of literature on Papua's Special Autonomy, existing studies have primarily concentrated on educational development, infrastructure investment, and broader provincial governance issues. Limited research has specifically examined how Special Autonomy welfare programs affect local communities in Biak Numfor Regency, particularly Indigenous Papuans. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the impact of Special Autonomy on the welfare of local communities in Biak Numfor Regency. By focusing on this underexplored context, the research aims to contribute empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Special Autonomy as a policy instrument for improving community welfare and supporting more responsive regional development.

Materials And Methods

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore the impact of special autonomy on the well-being of indigenous Papuans in Biak Numfor Regency. The phenomenological approach was chosen

because it allows researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and insights of various parties involved and affected. The primary data sources used in this study include interviews, documentation, and observation. The informants in this study consisted of local residents of Biak Numfor Regency and local government officials acting as policymakers. These informants were selected based on their knowledge and direct experience with the impacts of special autonomy. Local residents were chosen because they directly experience the impacts of the policy. The documentation collected included reports on empowerment programs, previous research reports, innovations and policies, and relevant articles and news. This documentation provides additional information and context essential for understanding and analyzing the impacts of special autonomy. Field observations were conducted to directly observe the economic conditions of the Biak Numfor Regency community, specifically in two sub-districts: Biak Kota and Somofa. These observations provided important empirical data to complement the interviews and documentation.

Data collected through interviews, documentation, and observations were then transcribed in detail to ensure accuracy. Thus, this study focuses on the impact of special autonomy on welfare through policy innovations. For this study, a qualitative method was chosen to investigate the economic activities of the Biak Numfor Regency community supported by the government. This approach was deemed appropriate and relevant because it can provide in-depth insights into subjective and local perspectives that may not be visible in quantitative approaches. Qualitative methods have proven effective in case studies in various locations. Creswell (2015: 135-136) defines a case study as follows: A qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a real-life, contemporary, bounded system (the case) or multiple bounded systems (multiple cases) through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and reports), and reports a description of the case and its themes.

Creswell (2015: 137-138) lists several characteristics of a case study, including the following: (1) A case study begins by identifying a specific case. A case is a "bounded system" (Stake, 2009), so the initial step for case study researchers is characterized by identifying the case. Cases can be simple or complex (Stake, 2009: 300). Cases can be concrete entities, but they can also be more abstract, such as decision-making processes, communities, and relationships (Creswell, 2009: 137). Therefore, the primary task of case study researchers is to describe the case using specific parameters such as place and time; (2) The objectives of a case study depend on the type of case chosen, whether it is an intrinsic, instrumental, or collective case; (3) Another key characteristic of a case study is an in-depth understanding of the case; (4) The approach chosen for case analysis will vary, and for a good understanding, it must involve a description of the case. Typically, case analysis strategies are based on theoretical propositions or develop a case description (Yin, 2003) (5) The case study model often concludes with conclusions drawn from the overall meaning derived from the case.

Next Step: Determining Phenomenological Research. Like case studies or ethnographic research, the research procedures for phenomenology are not significantly different. Research always begins with determining the research topic. At this initial stage, the chosen topic must be aligned with phenomenological research, which involves exploring individuals' experiences of an event, as the goal of phenomenology is an in-depth understanding of phenomena as experienced by individuals (Creswell, 2016: 114). Therefore, the first step before conducting phenomenological research is to determine whether the topic aligns with phenomenological research. If so, the next step is to determine the research questions or problem formulation. Once the topic and problem formulation have been aligned with phenomenological research, the researcher can design the research, collect field data through interviews and other sources, conduct analysis, and then prepare a report.

3. Results and Discussion

The research findings indicate that political support for improving the welfare program for Indigenous Papuans (OAP) in Biak Numfor Regency is a determining factor in the program's existence, direction, sustainability, and acceptability. In this study, political support is not merely interpreted as a statement of support from the local government, but rather as political capacity evident in program decisions, resource allocation, target selection, risk management, sustained community relations, and efforts to build social legitimacy for the welfare program. Thus, political support acts as an institutional force that enables the Indigenous Papuan welfare program to move beyond a normative idea and into a government practice with specific forms, recipients, budgets, documents, and social benefits.

Political support for the Indigenous Papuan welfare program in Biak Numfor Regency is affirmative, adaptive, and relatively stable, but not yet fully expansive and transformative. This support is affirmative because the local government prioritizes Indigenous Papuans in the welfare program, particularly through the use of Special Autonomy Funds to finance basic interventions such as rehabilitation and housing construction. This support is adaptive because implementing agencies strive to implement the program amidst capacity constraints and begin to open up opportunities for third-party support. This support is also relatively stable because the program is not a one-time initiative, but is managed over several years through a list of potential recipients and beneficiaries. However, this political support is not yet fully expansive because the program's reach is still not commensurate with the magnitude of community needs; and it is not yet fully transformative because the program remains stronger as a basic welfare support rather than an instrument of structural change capable of profoundly reducing the vulnerability of indigenous Papuans.

Political Support in the Commitment of Political Leadership

The commitment of political leadership is a fundamental dimension that demonstrates the extent to which the local government prioritizes the welfare of indigenous Papuans. In the context of Biak Numfor Regency, this

commitment is evident in the local government's support for welfare programs aimed at indigenous Papuans through support from the Special Autonomy Fund, the determination of priority recipients, and the implementation of assistance that addresses the community's basic needs. Political commitment in this case cannot be read merely as a symbolic gesture, but as an affirmative decision that seeks to address the socio-economic conditions of indigenous Papuans who still face vulnerabilities in terms of housing, income, and access to adequate welfare. Field findings indicate that the commitment of political leadership is most evident in the rehabilitation and construction of habitable housing programs. Informant 1 stated:

"With support from the 2025 Papua Special Autonomy Fund, the Biak Numfor Regency Government rehabilitated 52 houses and built seven new ones, bringing the total to 59. This program demonstrates the local government's commitment to improving the quality of life of the indigenous Papuan community."

This statement demonstrates that the local government views the housing program as a manifestation of the state's presence in improving the quality of life of the indigenous Papuan community. The program is not only oriented toward physical output, such as the number of houses rehabilitated or built, but also carries political significance as a form of support for the community groups targeted by affirmative action policies. In this context, housing is positioned not merely as a building, but as a basic prerequisite for a safer, healthier, and more dignified life. Thus, the commitment of political leaders works through the government's ability to transform the mandate of Special Autonomy into a form of intervention directly felt by indigenous Papuan families.

However, these commitments need to be read critically. The number of 59 housing units shows concrete alignment, but also shows the limits of the program's capacity. This figure is important as evidence that local governments are making real interventions, but cannot necessarily be read as meeting needs as a whole. In the context of a society that still faces many uninhabitable houses, this number is more accurately understood as an initial indication of political commitment that has worked, but is still at a limited capacity. In other words, this program shows that the state is present, but this presence is not fully commensurate with the extent of the welfare problems faced by the OAP community.

The commitment of political leaders is also visible in the mechanism for selecting beneficiaries. Informant 1 explained:

"The selection of aid recipients is carried out selectively, with priority given to OAP families who really need a decent place to live and have poor economic conditions."

This quote shows that political bias towards OAP has been translated into the logic of administrative selection. The regional government not only sets OAP as a general target, but also gives priority to families who have inadequate housing conditions and limited economic capabilities. This shows that the political leadership's commitment does not stop as a declaration, but is operationalized through a targeting mechanism. At this point, the politics of partisanship meets program administration. Political decisions determine priority directions, while administrative mechanisms determine who is most deserving of benefits in conditions of limited resources.

However, the selection mechanism also shows the limitations of political commitment in practice. Selection is necessary because the amount of aid is not sufficient to reach all families in need. This means that selection is not only an instrument of target accuracy, but also a marker of the limitations of redistribution. When the government has to select some recipients from many families in need, political commitment works in a situation of scarcity. This has an important consequence: the higher the political commitment to OAP, the greater the demand for the government to expand the program's fiscal and administrative capacity. Otherwise, political commitment risks being understood by the public as an affirmative promise that is not yet fully able to reach the reality of their needs.

Program documentation strengthens the findings of ongoing political commitment. Administrative data shows that there is a list of potential recipients and beneficiaries maintained over several years. In 2022 there are 133 potential recipients on the main list and 13 additional potential recipients. In 2023 there will be 124 recipients in the first group and 66 recipients in the next group. In 2024, beneficiaries will be managed in several administrative groups, namely around 51, 32, 6, 19 and 52 beneficiaries. The structure of the document is not completely uniform between years, so it cannot be treated as a completely comparable statistical series. However, qualitatively, the existence of documents across these years shows that the OAP welfare program is not incidental. The program has entered the rhythm of government administration and is managed repeatedly.

Interpretatively, the interannual documentation reveals two important points. First, the local government is committed to maintaining the program across multiple implementation cycles. This demonstrates that the welfare of indigenous Papuans remains on the local government's political and administrative agenda. Second, the recurring lists of potential recipients and beneficiaries also demonstrate that community needs are not addressed within a single program cycle. Therefore, this documentation is not only evidence of the program's success in maintaining the program, but also of the continuing significant needs awaiting intervention. The political leadership's commitment is evident because the program continues to run, but its limited impact is also evident because the list of needs is continually updated.

The social legitimacy of the political commitment is also evident in the community's response. Informant 6 stated that the home construction and renovation program through the Special Autonomy Fund was very well received by the community. This positive response demonstrates the program's strong social relevance. The community believes the program aligns with their needs, particularly because housing assistance directly impacts families' quality of life. However, public enthusiasm must be interpreted with caution. The program is welcomed not solely because the government has successfully provided assistance, but also because the community's needs are indeed significant. Thus, the program's social legitimacy also highlights the depth of welfare issues that remain to be addressed. The commitment of political leaders also has institutional significance. When regional leaders and government officials prioritize indigenous Papuans, welfare programs gain a political foundation for

sustainability. Without political commitment, affirmative action programs have the potential to become sporadic activities that easily disappear when budget priorities change. In the case of Biak Numfor, the program has taken on institutional form through the allocation of Special Autonomy Funds, recipient data, and interannual implementation. This demonstrates that political commitment has moved from the rhetorical to the programmatic level. However, this institutionalization still needs to be strengthened to not only maintain the program but also increase its transformative power.

Thus, the commitment of political leaders to the indigenous Papuan welfare program can be understood as an affirmative commitment that has taken concrete form, but still faces limitations in its expansion. The local government has demonstrated its support through prioritizing indigenous Papuans, supporting Special Autonomy Funds, selection mechanisms, and maintaining recipient data. However, this commitment has not yet fully translated into broad redistributive capacity. The program has provided tangible benefits to some recipients, but remains insufficient to address the scale of community needs as a whole. Therefore, the quality of future political commitment needs to be measured not only by the program's existence, but also by the government's ability to expand coverage, improve targeting accuracy, and link assistance to long-term welfare strategies.

Tolerance for Innovation Risk

Tolerance for innovation risk in Indigenous Papuan (Papua Papuan) welfare programs demonstrates the ability of local governments and implementing agencies to continue implementing programs under less-than-ideal conditions. The Indigenous Papuan (Papua Papuan) welfare program in Biak Numfor Regency faces various risks, including administrative, fiscal, social, and political risks. Administrative risks arise because the program must be managed through data collection, selection, verification, implementation, and accountability. Fiscal risks arise because budget capacity is limited compared to community needs. Social risks arise because not all people in need can immediately receive assistance. Political risks arise because programs with high legitimacy also generate high public expectations. In situations like these, tolerance for innovation risk becomes crucial because the government cannot wait for ideal conditions to act. It must continue implementing the program while managing limitations and seeking ways to strengthen program capacity.

The most significant finding in this dimension is the gap between the high level of community needs and the program's capabilities. Informant 6 stated:

"The housing construction and renovation program through the special autonomy fund budget has been very well received by the community. Public enthusiasm is very high, but demand far exceeds the program's realities."

This quote demonstrates the program's paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the program enjoys strong social legitimacy because the community has enthusiastically welcomed it. On the other hand, this legitimacy actually exposes the program's limitations because public demand far exceeds available capacity. Analytical, public enthusiasm is not only an indicator of acceptance, but also an indicator of the magnitude of unmet needs. Therefore, tolerance for innovation risk is related not only to the courage to implement the program but also to the ability to manage the community's ever-increasing expectations.

This gap between needs and capacity places local governments in a difficult policy position. If the program is not implemented, the government could be seen as not being on the side of the Indigenous Papuans (Papua Papuans). However, when the program is implemented with limited coverage, the government still faces the risk of criticism because many people still have not received assistance. In this context, tolerance for innovation risk becomes crucial. Local governments continue the program despite recognizing that it may not be able to meet all needs. Thus, risk tolerance is evident in the government's willingness to act incrementally, rather than in its ability to solve all problems at once.

The recipient selection mechanism is a form of risk management. Selection is necessary because resources are limited. However, selection also carries social risks because it creates boundaries between recipients and non-recipients. In communities with high needs, decisions about who receives assistance can be sensitive issues. Therefore, selection must be not only administratively correct but also socially acceptable. Prioritizing indigenous Papuan families in genuine need is an effort to maintain distributive justice. However, as long as program capacity remains limited, selection remains a mechanism for managing limitations, not eliminating problems.

Innovation risks are also evident in local government efforts to expand support through third parties. Informant 6 stated:

"To improve the rehabilitation and new housing construction program for the community, the Department of Housing and Settlements (Disperkim) is inviting third parties, namely the private sector and banks, to participate in helping maximize the rehabilitation program by one or two units each year."

This statement demonstrates an awareness that local government support through internal resources is insufficient. Efforts to engage the private sector and banks demonstrate a form of institutional adaptation. The government is not relying solely on the Special Autonomy Fund but has begun seeking additional support from external actors. Positively, this step demonstrates a tolerance for innovation risks, as the government is opening up collaboration outside of regular bureaucratic mechanisms. Critically, however, the reported contribution of only one or two third-party units each year indicates that this collaboration remains limited and has not yet become a robust alternative financing scheme.

Third-party involvement has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it demonstrates innovation in seeking additional support and expanding the resource base. On the other hand, it exposes the weaknesses in the fiscal capacity of local governments. If external contributions remain very small compared to community needs, then the collaboration cannot yet become a structural solution. It is more appropriately read as a complementary effort that has symbolic, social, and administrative value, but is not yet strong enough to change the scale of the program.

To become a more meaningful innovation, third-party involvement needs to be institutionalized within a more planned, transparent, and sustainable collaboration scheme.

Documentation of beneficiaries across years also reveals recurring risks. The continuously updated lists of potential and beneficiary recipients demonstrate the program's sustainability, but also indicate that the problems are not yet resolved. If the list of recipients continues to emerge each year, it indicates a structural need that cannot be addressed through limited interventions. Thus, program documentation can be read as a dual archive: an archive of government commitment and an archive of policy limitations. It demonstrates government presence, but also indicates that this presence is not yet extensive enough to meet community needs.

Tolerance for innovation risk is also related to the nature of programs that still focus primarily on meeting basic needs. Housing assistance, for example, is crucial because it impacts families' quality of life. However, if the program is not linked to family economic strategies, settlement planning, environmental health, and community empowerment, the program risks becoming assistance that improves physical conditions but fails to fully transform structures of vulnerability. Similarly, if third-party assistance only adds one or two housing units per year, collaborative innovation remains at the incremental level, not system transformation.

Tolerance for innovation risk should be interpreted not only as courage to implement the program, but also as the ability to learn from program limitations. Local governments have demonstrated initial tolerance by continuing to implement the program despite high community demand and limited capacity. However, this tolerance needs to be elevated to a reflective capacity. Limited reach, high demand, the need for collaboration, and the repetitiveness of the recipient list should form the basis for designing a program expansion strategy. If risks are simply managed to keep the program running, the program will persist without significant change. If risks are processed into lessons, the program can expand to become broader and more targeted. Tolerance for innovation risks in Indigenous Papuan welfare programs can be formulated as adaptive, but not yet fully strategic. Adaptive because local governments continue to implement the program, conduct selection processes, update recipient data, and attempt to involve third parties. However, it is not yet fully strategic because emerging risks have not yet been fully translated into a systematic program expansion model. The main challenge going forward is shifting risk tolerance from merely a capacity for survival to a capacity for transformation. This means that local governments need to consider risk as a planning element, not merely an obstacle to implementation.

Stable Political Relations

The stability of political relations within the Indigenous Papuan welfare program demonstrates how the local government maintains program continuity, builds public trust, maintains coordination with implementing agencies, and begins to establish relationships with external actors. Stable political relations are crucial because welfare programs cannot operate solely on the commitment of political elites. Programs require relatively stable relationships between regional leaders, implementing bureaucracies, village governments, beneficiaries, and supporting parties. Without stable relationships, programs can easily stall, change direction, lose legitimacy, or become unacceptable to the target community.

Documentation findings indicate that stable political relations are evident through the program's continuity across years. The lists of potential recipients and beneficiaries in 2022, 2023, and 2024 demonstrate that the Indigenous Papuan welfare program is not a one-off activity. The program continues to be a prominent feature of the local government's administrative agenda. Politically, this demonstrates that Indigenous Papuan welfare occupies a relatively stable position within regional policy priorities. The program does not simply emerge as a fleeting response, but has become part of a continually updated government routine.

However, this stability requires a critical examination. While program continuity demonstrates continued government attention, recurring recipient data also suggests that welfare issues have not been fully addressed. If the program continues year after year because community needs remain high, program stability not only indicates the success of maintaining the policy but also indicates that existing interventions are not yet strong enough to significantly reduce needs. Therefore, the stability of political relations in this study has two aspects: it serves as a foundation for program sustainability and as a sign that the community's vulnerability structure continues to demand government attention.

The stability of political relations is also evident in community acceptance of the program. Informant 5 stated: "We hope this program will continue and that in the future the number of recipients will increase, because with this assistance we don't have to spend a lot on house repairs, so the proceeds from fishing can be used for other basic needs."

This quote demonstrates that the community associates program sustainability with reducing the family's economic burden. Housing assistance not only improves the physical structure but also changes the allocation of household income. When families don't have to spend large amounts on house repairs, income from fishing can be used to meet other basic needs. Thus, program stability has strong social significance because the community experiences direct benefits in their daily economic lives.

However, the hope that the program will continue and the number of recipients will increase also reflects high social expectations of the government. The public not only appreciates the assistance but also demands its continuity and expansion. In the context of political relations, this creates both capital and pressure. It is capital because the public has trust in the program. However, it also creates pressure because that trust will continue to depend on the government's ability to expand benefits. If the program fails to expand, the stability of trust can weaken. Therefore, the stability of political relations must not only be maintained through program continuity but also strengthened through capacity building.

Other beneficiaries also indicated that the program's social legitimacy is built through concrete changes. Informant 4 stated:

"I'm grateful to receive this assistance, so I no longer need to buy damaged building materials. The repairs to the building include replacing the zinc roof, walls, windows, doors, and ceramic tiles on the floor, and also repairing the kitchen."

This statement demonstrates that the program has received social support because it addresses very real needs. Repairing the roof, walls, windows, doors, floors, and kitchen is not just a physical change, but also a change in the comfort, security, and quality of life for families. In the context of political relations, concrete benefits like this are crucial because public trust in the government is built not only through policy promises, but through direct experience of the program's benefits. Programs that are experienced and tangible have a greater chance of gaining social legitimacy and public support.

Stable political relations are also formed through the relationship between political leaders and administrative apparatus. The Department of Housing and Settlements (Disperkim) plays a role as a technical implementer, translating the local government's commitment into program stages. The technical apparatus carries out data collection, selection, coordination, supervision, and also seeks to engage third parties. This demonstrates that political support will not be effective without stable administrative capacity. The commitment of political leaders requires an implementing bureaucracy capable of maintaining a work rhythm, maintaining data, connecting programs with the community, and ensuring implementation. Thus, the stability of political relations extends beyond the relationship between the government and the community, but also between political authority and administrative capacity.

Efforts to engage third parties, such as the private sector and banks, also demonstrate that the stability of political relations is beginning to expand into network stability. Local governments are not only maintaining internal relationships but also attempting to build external support networks. However, these networks still appear to be in their infancy and limited. If third-party contributions are small and not yet institutionalized, network stability will not fully strengthen the program. To be more meaningful, relationships with third parties need to be designed as a clear collaborative system: who is involved, what their contributions are, how they are accountable, and how they are sustainable. Without this, external relations risk becoming sporadic additions rather than a source of policy stability.

The stability of political relations in this program can be understood through three layers. First, agenda stability, where the welfare of indigenous Papuans remains a priority for the local government. Second, administrative stability, where the program continues to be managed through beneficiary documents, technical implementation, and coordination with regional agencies. Third, social stability, where the community accepts the program, experiences its benefits, and hopes for its expansion. These three layers demonstrate that the program has a strong political foundation for sustainability. However, this foundation has not yet fully generated transformative stability, that is, stability capable of reducing community dependence on aid.

Critically, stable political relations that are too oriented toward program maintenance can make policies routine. Stable programs are important, but stability should not simply mean repeating aid year after year. Stability must be directed toward improving quality and expanding impact. If stability simply maintains the same program, the government will succeed in maintaining continuity but will not necessarily accelerate changes in welfare. Conversely, if stability is used as a foundation for expanding collaboration, improving data, increasing the scale of aid, and linking aid to economic empowerment, stable political relations can become a cornerstone of transformation.

The stability of political relations within the Indigenous Peoples' Welfare Program in Biak Numfor Regency can be defined as sufficiently strong to maintain the program's sustainability and legitimacy, but still needs to be directed towards expanding its impact. The local government has successfully maintained the program for several years, gaining social acceptance, and building relationships with implementing agencies and external actors. However, this stability has not yet fully transformed the program into an instrument for broad welfare change. The challenge going forward is to ensure that stable political relations not only keep the program viable but also make it increasingly capable of reducing vulnerability and increasing the independence of Indigenous Peoples' Welfare Community (IPC) communities.

Discussion

Political support for the welfare program targeting Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua/OAP) in Biak Numfor Regency should be understood as an institutional capacity rather than merely a normative expression of government commitment. The findings indicate that political support operates through three interconnected dimensions: the commitment of political leaders, tolerance for innovation risk, and the stability of political relationships. These dimensions demonstrate that the sustainability of welfare programs depends not only on fiscal resources and regulatory frameworks but also on the government's ability to maintain policy priorities, manage institutional constraints, build public legitimacy, and sustain collaborative relationships. Consequently, political support should be viewed as a dynamic governance capacity that shapes the effectiveness of welfare policy implementation.

From a public policy perspective, political support serves as the mechanism linking policy objectives with implementation instruments. As argued by Howlett and Cashore (2014), policy success depends on whether policy instruments are capable of translating normative goals into practical government actions. In Biak Numfor, the normative objective of improving the welfare of Indigenous Papuans has been implemented through Special Autonomy Funds, housing rehabilitation and construction programs, beneficiary selection mechanisms, multi-year beneficiary documentation, and limited collaboration with external actors. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that the available policy instruments remain insufficient to match the broad and transformative ambitions of the

policy. While the government has demonstrated commitment to affirmative welfare policies, the scale and coverage of existing interventions remain relatively limited.

The commitment of political leaders represents the foundation of the welfare program. The prioritization of Indigenous Papuans, the allocation of Special Autonomy Funds, and the implementation of housing assistance demonstrate that the local government recognizes OAP as a historically marginalized group requiring affirmative intervention. Rather than treating poverty as a general socioeconomic issue, the government acknowledges the unique historical, social, economic, and political vulnerabilities experienced by Indigenous Papuans. This finding reflects an important institutional commitment to translating affirmative policy mandates into concrete development programs.

Housing assistance illustrates this commitment beyond its administrative outputs. The rehabilitation of 52 houses and the construction of seven new houses symbolize the government's presence in improving the living conditions of Indigenous communities. Adequate housing contributes not only to physical shelter but also to family security, public health, social dignity, and community stability. Therefore, the program demonstrates that welfare is understood as an improvement in everyday living conditions rather than simply the distribution of public assistance. However, the relatively small number of beneficiaries also reveals the limited redistributive capacity of the local government. The existence of a program alone cannot be interpreted as evidence of successful welfare transformation if its coverage remains considerably smaller than the magnitude of community needs.

This limitation is consistent with the implementation framework proposed by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), who argue that successful implementation depends not only on policy decisions but also on the capacity to overcome implementation barriers and generate meaningful change among target groups. In Biak Numfor, political commitment has successfully established administrative structures through beneficiary identification, selection procedures, and resource allocation. Nevertheless, these structures have not yet generated comprehensive improvements in community welfare. Beneficiary selection strengthens program accountability by directing assistance toward households with inadequate housing and limited economic capacity, yet it simultaneously reflects the scarcity of available resources. Selection therefore represents both administrative rationality and evidence of the government's limited redistributive capability.

The continuity of beneficiary documentation across multiple years indicates that political commitment has gradually become institutionalized within the local administrative system. The maintenance of beneficiary records demonstrates that the welfare program has become a recurring element of the regional development agenda rather than a temporary political initiative. Institutionalization is particularly important because affirmative policies often become vulnerable to political leadership changes or shifting budget priorities. However, the continuous updating of beneficiary lists also suggests that welfare needs remain persistent. This distinction highlights the difference between institutionalizing a program and achieving welfare transformation. While administrative continuity has been achieved, long-term reductions in community vulnerability remain limited.

Political commitment is further reinforced through social legitimacy. Positive community responses indicate that the program addresses genuine social needs and strengthens public trust in local government. However, legitimacy also creates rising expectations among communities that have not yet received assistance. As more households observe tangible benefits enjoyed by recipients, demands for broader program coverage inevitably increase. Consequently, political commitment should not be evaluated solely according to the government's ability to sustain existing programs but also according to its capacity to expand fiscal resources, administrative capability, and collaborative partnerships. In line with Denison and Mishra (1995), organizational effectiveness requires not only mission clarity and institutional consistency but also adaptability. Without continuous adaptation, sustained commitment risks becoming administrative routine rather than a driver of meaningful institutional change.

Tolerance for innovation risk constitutes the second dimension of political support. Public welfare policies are implemented under conditions characterized by limited budgets, technical constraints, accountability pressures, and continuously growing public expectations. The findings reveal that the principal risk facing the program is the considerable gap between community needs and program capacity. High public enthusiasm for housing assistance demonstrates strong social legitimacy but simultaneously exposes the inability of available resources to satisfy demand. This creates a policy paradox in which successful programs generate even greater pressure for expansion.

The local government's willingness to continue implementing the program despite these limitations demonstrates an adaptive form of risk tolerance. Rather than postponing implementation until ideal conditions become available, the government continues beneficiary selection, updates administrative records, and seeks additional support from external actors. This adaptive response reflects institutional resilience; however, it remains primarily pragmatic rather than strategic. Osborne and Brown (2011) note that innovation in the public sector tends to develop cautiously because governments operate under greater political scrutiny and accountability than private organizations. The findings from Biak Numfor support this argument, showing that innovation occurs through careful administrative management rather than through more experimental institutional reforms.

Beneficiary selection also functions as an important mechanism for managing policy risk. Administrative criteria help ensure that limited resources are allocated to the most vulnerable households, thereby strengthening procedural fairness. Nevertheless, selection also generates social risks because many eligible households remain excluded from assistance. For this reason, transparency becomes essential. Communities must understand the rationale behind beneficiary prioritization, the criteria used for selection, and the limitations of available resources. Administrative correctness alone is insufficient to sustain public trust if selection procedures are not accompanied by effective communication and social accountability.

Another important indicator of innovation risk tolerance is the government's effort to involve private companies and financial institutions in supporting housing programs. This initiative reflects recognition that local fiscal

capacity alone cannot adequately address the complexity of Indigenous welfare issues. From the perspective of collaborative governance, however, occasional external assistance does not automatically constitute effective collaboration. As emphasized by Ansell and Gash (2008) and Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2015), successful collaboration requires institutional design, clearly defined roles, mutual trust, accountability mechanisms, and shared objectives. In Biak Numfor, collaboration remains at an early stage and has not yet evolved into an institutionalized governance system capable of substantially expanding program capacity.

The findings further suggest that innovation should extend beyond increasing the number of beneficiaries or introducing additional welfare activities. Consistent with the framework developed by De Vries, Bekkers, and Tummers (2016), innovation should encompass improvements in governance processes, beneficiary mapping, transparency, monitoring systems, financing mechanisms, and integration between housing assistance and economic empowerment programs. Without such institutional learning, welfare programs risk becoming repetitive interventions that alleviate immediate needs without addressing the structural causes of poverty. Consequently, policy risks should be treated not merely as implementation obstacles but also as valuable sources of organizational learning and continuous policy improvement.

The third dimension of political support concerns the stability of political relationships. The findings demonstrate that the welfare agenda has remained relatively stable across multiple years through continuous budgeting, beneficiary documentation, and administrative implementation. This stability indicates that Indigenous welfare has secured a consistent position within the local government's development priorities. Moreover, public acceptance of the program has strengthened social legitimacy by reinforcing community confidence in government responsiveness. Nevertheless, stable implementation should not be equated with successful policy outcomes. Persistent beneficiary lists suggest that the underlying socioeconomic challenges remain unresolved despite continued program implementation.

Political stability also depends on the interaction between political leadership and administrative institutions. The Regional Housing and Settlement Agency (Disperkim) plays a crucial role in translating political commitment into operational activities through beneficiary verification, coordination, monitoring, and collaboration with external partners. As Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans (2014) argue, long-term governance effectiveness requires accountability alongside institutional stability. Transparent beneficiary data, clear eligibility criteria, effective monitoring, and measurable accountability are therefore essential to maintaining public trust. At the same time, emerging partnerships with private organizations and banking institutions represent an initial movement toward broader governance networks, although these relationships remain insufficiently institutionalized to generate sustainable long-term support.

The findings indicate that political support for the OAP welfare program in Biak Numfor is substantial but remains in the process of institutional consolidation. Political commitment has successfully established affirmative welfare programs and prioritized Indigenous Papuans within the regional development agenda. Adaptive responses to implementation risks have enabled program continuity under conditions of limited capacity, while stable political relationships have strengthened administrative consistency and public legitimacy. Nevertheless, these three dimensions remain more effective in sustaining existing programs than in producing transformative improvements in community welfare. Therefore, future policy development should shift from maintaining program continuity toward strengthening redistributive capacity, institutional learning, collaborative governance, and long-term community empowerment. Political support should ultimately be understood not simply as sustained commitment but as the institutional capacity to generate inclusive, accountable, and transformative welfare outcomes for Indigenous Papuans.

4. Conclusion

Political support in the Indigenous Papuan (OAP) welfare program in Biak Numfor Regency has emerged as an important foundation for the sustainability of affirmative programs at the regional level. This support can be seen through the commitment of political leaders in placing OAP as a priority group, utilization of Special Autonomy Funds, implementation of rehabilitation programs and construction of livable houses, beneficiary selection mechanisms, as well as sustainable program management from year to year. This shows that political support is not only normative, but has been translated into concrete program instruments. However, this commitment still faces limited redistributive capacity because the scope of assistance is not yet fully commensurate with the magnitude of the needs of the OAP community. Tolerance for innovation risks can be seen from the ability of local governments to continue implementing programs even though they face fiscal limitations, high public demand and the complexity of implementation in the field. Regional governments manage this risk through selection mechanisms, updating recipient data, and efforts to provide support from third parties such as the private sector and banks. However, risk tolerance is still more adaptive than strategic, because program limitations have not been fully processed into a policy learning system capable of expanding coverage and strengthening program design. Meanwhile, the stability of political relations can be seen through the continuity of programs across years, the role of implementing agencies, public acceptance, and the opening of external support networks. This stability strengthens the social legitimacy of the program, but still serves more to maintain the continuity of aid than to encourage structural welfare transformation. Political support in the OAP welfare program in Biak Numfor Regency can be formulated as affirmative, adaptive and relatively stable, but not yet fully expansive and transformative. Affirmative because the local government has shown siding with OAP; adaptive because the program continues to run despite limitations; and stable because the program is maintained and accepted by the community. However, this support still needs to be strengthened through expanding redistributive capacity, institutionalizing collaboration, learning from risks, transparency of targets, and integration between programs.

This strengthening is important so that the OAP welfare program not only functions as basic social protection, but develops into a policy strategy capable of expanding reach, deepening the impact, and encouraging sustainable transformation of the welfare of OAP.

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