

The Relevance of Regional Autonomy in Human Resource Empowerment to Achieve Good Governance: A SWOT Analysis Study

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ABSTRACT

Regional autonomy grants extensive authority to local governments to manage human resources (HR) as part of efforts to achieve good governance. However, its implementation still faces challenges such as HR capacity gaps, budget constraints, and the influence of globalisation. This study aims to analyse the relevance of regional autonomy in HRD to strengthen the principles of good governance and formulate appropriate development strategies. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a SWOT analysis approach. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and observations in several local governments selected purposively based on criteria of active HRD programmes. Secondary data were collected from official government documents, publications from the Central Statistics Agency, and relevant policy reports. The analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, while data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. The results indicate that the success of good governance is highly dependent on the quality of human resources and an adaptive bureaucratic structure. Strengths include local autonomy, demographic potential, and regulatory support, while weaknesses include disparities in human resource quality and limited performance evaluation. The greatest opportunities lie in the utilisation of digital technology and strategic partnerships, while threats include brain drain and inconsistent regulatory changes. The implications of this study emphasise the importance of an integrated strategy that combines human resource capacity building, technology utilisation, and national character building as instruments of national power in facing the challenges of globalisation.

INTRODUCTION

Since the enactment of regional autonomy policies through Law No. 22 of 1999, which was later refined by Law No. 23 of 2014, local governments in Indonesia have gained broader authority to regulate and manage government affairs and the interests of the local community in accordance with the potential and characteristics of their regions. This decentralisation of authority is expected to accelerate development, improve the quality of public services, and optimise human resource development (HRD) as the driving force for regional progress. In this context, regional autonomy is not only viewed as an administrative instrument but also as a political and social strategy to achieve responsive and accountable governance.

However, after more than two decades of implementation, the effectiveness of regional autonomy in achieving these objectives still faces significant challenges. Capacity gaps among regions remain evident, particularly between urban and rural areas or the 100 most underdeveloped districts (). Weak governance in some regions is characterised by low integrity, rigid bureaucracy, and abuse of authority. This phenomenon has become increasingly complex amid the tide of globalisation that demands high competitiveness, while not all regions are able to adapt quickly. This condition needs to be examined

comprehensively, considering that Indonesia's constitutional objectives as stated in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution are to promote general welfare, educate the nation, and uphold social justice.

This study focuses on the relevance of regional autonomy in human resource development to achieve *good governance*. This focus is based on the understanding that human resources are a key factor in the success of regional administration. Unlike previous studies, which tended to focus on evaluating the performance of the bureaucracy in general, this study combines three core variables—regional autonomy, human resource empowerment, and *good governance*—into a single integrated analytical framework. This approach allows for a more in-depth examination of how regional autonomy can be utilised to build human resource capacity so that the principles of *good governance*, such as transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness, can be realised.

In this research framework, regional autonomy is positioned as a policy variable that provides a framework of authority for local governments to act independently and adaptively. Human resource empowerment is a strategic variable that functions as a driving instrument to optimise this authority, while *good governance* acts as an outcome variable that serves as a measure of success. The relationship between these three variables reflects that the success of regional autonomy is not solely measured by the extent of authority granted, but also by the ability of regions to manage and empower human resources as the primary asset of development.

Previous studies have discussed the relationship between regional autonomy and governance (Sutrisno, 2018; Prakoso, 2021) as well as the role of human resources in improving the quality of public services (Rahayu, 2020). However, most of these studies remain fragmented, focusing solely on institutional aspects or bureaucratic performance indicators without integrating the three variables into a comprehensive analytical framework. Recent research by Hasanah (2022) identified a competency gap in human resources that impacts the low implementation of *good governance* principles, but has not examined this using a strategic approach such as SWOT analysis, which can systematically reveal the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced.

Based on these research gaps, this study offers a novel approach by integrating SWOT analysis to examine the relevance of regional autonomy to human resource empowerment as a strategy for achieving *good governance*. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of public policy and local governance studies through a holistic analytical approach. Practically, this study is expected to produce applicable policy recommendations to strengthen the capacity of regional human resource management (), optimise the authority of regional autonomy, and ensure the achievement of *good governance* principles. The main objective of this study is to analyse the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the implementation of regional autonomy in human resource development, as well as to formulate strategies that are in line with the ideals of the nation as stated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Regional Autonomy

Regional autonomy is the right, authority, and obligation of autonomous regions to regulate and manage their own affairs and the interests of the local community in accordance with the laws and regulations (Law No. 23 of 2014). The implementation of regional autonomy in Indonesia is expected to accelerate equitable development, improve public services, and optimise regional potential, including human resource management (HRM).

Previous studies have shown that regional autonomy has the potential to improve governance, but its effectiveness depends on the quality of human resources and oversight mechanisms (Irwan, n.d.; Rachayu, 2019). Thus, the success of regional autonomy does not lie solely in the transfer of authority, but in the ability of regions to utilise that authority optimally and accountably.

Human Resource Empowerment

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the process of planning, organising, directing, and supervising the recruitment, development, compensation, integration, maintenance, and termination of employment to achieve organisational goals (Mondy & Noe, 1995). HRM aims to improve the quality of individuals in terms of competence, skills, and moral integrity.

From an Islamic perspective, humans are regarded as vicegerents on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30), with a mandate to preserve and prosper the earth. Therefore, HRD is not only technical but also ethical and spiritual, combining professionalism with moral values.

Several studies (Riva'i, 2004; Kuntowijoyo, 2001) emphasise that high-quality human resources are a key factor in the success of an organisation and a nation in facing the challenges of globalisation, where competitive advantage is more important than comparative advantage.

Good Governance

Good governance refers to the principles of government administration that uphold transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, the rule of law, and justice (UNESCAP, 2018).

Dwiyanto (2005) states that good governance in Indonesia is still an ideal that has not been fully realised, as indicated by weaknesses in public service delivery, high levels of corruption, and low levels of community participation. To achieve good governance, comprehensive improvements in bureaucracy, strengthening of human resource capacity, and consistent law enforcement are needed.

SWOT Analysis in the Study of Regional Autonomy and Human Resource Empowerment

SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) is a strategic analysis method that maps internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) that influence an organisation (Rangkuti, 2016).

In the context of this study, SWOT analysis is used to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses of local governments in managing human resources, as well as external opportunities and threats that influence the implementation of good governance. This approach helps formulate realistic strategies based on actual conditions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with SWOT analysis to examine the relevance of regional autonomy in human resource (HR) empowerment to achieve *good governance*. This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by local governments in managing human resources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research location was determined purposively in several areas representing urban, rural, and underdeveloped regions, with criteria including having a human resource development programme based on regional autonomy, having measurable government performance data, and the availability of key informants who understand policy implementation in the area (Sugiyono, 2022).

Research data was obtained from two primary sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data

was collected through in-depth interviews with local government officials, heads of relevant departments, community leaders, and academics with expertise in local autonomy and government administration (Moleong, 2019). Additionally, participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the HR development process and the delivery of public services. Secondary data was obtained through document studies, including official documents such as the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), Strategic Plan (Renstra), government agency performance reports, regulations, and official publications from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), reports from relevant ministries/agencies, and previous research findings (BPS, 2023; Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2023).

Data collection was conducted by combining semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document review to ensure the depth of information obtained (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). All data were then analysed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing stages. A SWOT analysis was applied to map field findings into internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) (Rangkuti, 2016). The results of this mapping serve as the basis for formulating integrated human resource development strategies aligned with regional autonomy policies and *good governance* principles. To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation and method triangulation by comparing interview results, observations, and documentation, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are scientifically accountable (Patton, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The research results indicate that the success of *good governance* is greatly influenced by the existence of infrastructure and superstructure that accommodate the values of transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness. Human resource development (HRD) emerges as a strategic infrastructure that is a prerequisite for the creation of quality governance. Meanwhile, the bureaucratic organisational structure functions as the hardware that ensures decision-making processes and policy implementation run effectively. An adaptive structure enables a continuous *learning process* that strengthens the competence of officials and their ability to adapt to change.

Field data indicates that although *good governance* has long been an aspiration of the Indonesian people (Dwiyanto, 2005), its realisation still faces various obstacles. These obstacles include uneven HR capacity across regions, weak integrity and work culture in the bureaucracy, and low public participation in policy formulation. Regions with competent human resources, high integrity, and visionary leadership tend to show significant progress in the quality of public services and government accountability.

Through SWOT analysis, factors influencing the effectiveness of human resource empowerment were mapped. Strengths include regional authority in designing contextual human resource policies, large demographic potential with a majority of productive age, local wisdom that supports mutual cooperation, and national regulatory support for bureaucratic reform. Weaknesses include disparities in human resource quality across regions, limited budgets for human resource development, low integrity among some officials, and minimal competency-based performance evaluations. Opportunities available include the development of digital technology, strategic partnerships with the private sector and higher education institutions, support from central government programmes and international donors, and access to the global job market. Threats include the risk of *brain drain*, the influence of instant culture that weakens work ethic, global competition demanding high competency standards, and inconsistent regulatory and political changes.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Human Resource Empowerment within the Framework of Regional Autonomy to Achieve Good Governance

Internal Factors		External Factors	
Strengths		Opportunities	
1. Local autonomy allows for contextual human resource policies.		1. Development of digital technology for training and public services.	
2. Large demographic potential with a majority of productive age population.		2. Strategic partnerships with universities and the private sector.	
3. Local wisdom and cultural values that support mutual cooperation.		3. Support from central government programmes and international donors.	
4. National regulatory support for bureaucratic reform.		4. Access to regional and global labour markets.	
Weaknesses		Threats	
1. Disparities in human resource quality across regions.		1. <i>Brain drain</i> due to the migration of skilled workers.	
2. Limited budget for training and development programmes.		2. The influence of instant culture that weakens work ethic.	
3. Low integrity and work ethic among some government officials.		3. Global competition that demands high standards of competence.	
4. Insufficient competency-based performance evaluation.		4. Inconsistent regulatory and political changes.	

Based on the analysis results, four development strategies have been formulated:

1. S–O (Growth Strategy): Maximising regional authority and demographic potential by leveraging technology and strategic partnerships for human resource training.
2. W–O (Development Strategy): Reducing human resource quality disparities through collaboration with the education and digital training sectors.
3. S–T (Defensive Strategy): Strengthening the character and integrity of human resources to face global competition and prevent *brain drain*.
4. W–T (Survival Strategy): Formulating adaptive policies to anticipate political and regulatory changes while minimising the negative impacts of globalisation.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Regional Autonomy and Human Resource Development (HRD)

The results of this study indicate that regional autonomy policies provide space for local governments to design HR development programmes that are in line with local potential and needs. The authority granted through Law No. 23 of 2014 creates opportunities for regions to formulate innovative policies, ranging from capacity building for civil servants to community training based on local potential.

These findings are in line with Rachayu's (2019) research, which states that regional autonomy can promote human resource empowerment in rural areas through improved skills and access to education. Sartika (2024) also supports this finding, showing that regional autonomy strengthens the effectiveness of public policies, including in the field of human resource development.

However, the results of this study differ from Hasanah (2022), who found that regional autonomy has not been able to overcome human resource capacity gaps between regions, especially in areas with limited resources. This difference may be due to Hasanah's focus on disadvantaged regions with limited infrastructure and budgets, while this study involved regions with varying levels of progress, resulting in a more balanced picture.

The Relationship Between Human Resource Empowerment and the Implementation of Good Governance

This study found that human resource empowerment plays a strategic role in promoting the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, public participation, effectiveness, and efficiency of services. Qualified human resources will be able to manage public resources responsibly, make data-based decisions, and build healthy communication with the community.

These findings align with Annisa's (2024) research, which confirms that enhancing human resource capacity at the local level positively impacts accountability and transparency in public services. Harisoesyanti (2023) also found that systematic empowerment programmes strengthen the work ethic of public officials and reduce the potential for maladministration.

On the other hand, this finding differs from Prakoso (2021), who stated that human resource empowerment has not significantly influenced good governance in several regions due to weak integrity and low ethical awareness among officials. This difference can be explained by the presence of leadership and organisational culture as intervening variables, which were identified in this study as reinforcing the relationship between human resources and good governance.

The Relationship Between Regional Autonomy and Good Governance through Human Resource Empowerment

The research findings indicate that regional autonomy has a positive impact on good governance when accompanied by appropriate human resource empowerment strategies. Regional authority enables more responsive policies; however, without adequate human resources, the principles of good governance are difficult to achieve. Thus, human resource empowerment plays a crucial mediating role.

These findings support the Sino Indonesia-Journal (2023) study, which through SWOT analysis found that demographic strength and autonomy can be utilised to create a more participatory and accountable government. Dwiyanto (2005) also argued that the quality of public services is highly dependent on the capacity of the apparatus as policy implementers.

However, this study differs from Akhlak (2025), which assesses that regional autonomy has not optimally improved governance quality due to low coordination between the central and regional governments. This difference arises because this study positions human resource empowerment as a strategic connecting variable, while Akhlak's research focuses more on institutional aspects.

Unlike most previous studies that discuss the relationship between two variables separately, this study integrates three key variables—regional autonomy, human resource empowerment, and good governance—into a single analytical framework. Additionally, this study employs SWOT analysis to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, thereby generating more practical policy strategies. This approach has not been widely used in similar studies in Indonesia, making it a new contribution to the field of local government governance research.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the effectiveness of regional autonomy in human resource empowerment plays a strategic role in realising *good governance*. The quality of human resources, in terms of both competence and integrity, is a determining factor in the successful implementation of good governance principles. The findings indicate that the utilisation of regional autonomy can be optimised through contextual HR policy planning and implementation, supported by an adaptive bureaucratic structure and synergy with technological developments and strategic partnerships. However, this success is still hampered by capacity gaps between regions, budget constraints, and the challenges of globalisation, which require adaptive responses.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept that effective human resource management is a fundamental infrastructure in *good governance* and can be an instrument of *national power* in the era of globalisation. The integration of SWOT analysis in the study of regional autonomy policies and human resource empowerment provides a systematic approach to identifying strategic priorities. Practically, the findings of this study provide guidance for local governments in formulating human resource development policies based on local potential, strengthening the integrity of the bureaucracy, and building partnership networks to expand access to training and job opportunities relevant to global demands.

This study has limitations in terms of geographical scope and the number of informants, so the findings do not fully represent the conditions of all regions in Indonesia. Additionally, the data used is primarily qualitative and descriptive, so it does not quantitatively analyse the relationships between variables or measure the effectiveness of policies. Political dynamics and regulatory changes during the research period may also have influenced the completeness and depth of the information obtained.

Further research is recommended to expand the geographical scope and number of informants to obtain more nationally representative results. A quantitative or *mixed-methods* approach could be used to more objectively measure the relationship between human resource development, regional autonomy, and the achievement of *good governance*. Furthermore, follow-up studies could examine the role of technological innovation and digital transformation in accelerating the equitable distribution of human resource quality, as well as test the effectiveness of government-private-public partnership models in enhancing the capacity of public officials in the era of globalisation.

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