ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR IN RESPONDING TO SPECIAL AUTONOMY POLICY IN THE EMERGING MARKET: GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES IN A CONFLICT-PRONE REGION

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Abstract

This study investigates the ineffective implementation of the Special Autonomy Policy (Otsus) in Papua, driven by organizational behavior (OB), leadership dynamics, and governance challenges within local institutions. The research aims to analyze how internal governance processes and external socio-political contexts influence policy outcomes in a conflict-prone region. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participatory observation, and document analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of local governance dynamics. Findings reveal that the effectiveness of Otsus is shaped by internal factors such as leadership quality, institutional capacity, and bureaucratic performance, alongside external factors including fragmented socio-political conditions and Papua's unique socio-cultural context. Key governance challenges include weak inter-agency coordination, regulatory misalignment, overlapping authority between central and regional governments, and internal bureaucratic resistance. These issues contribute to jurisdictional ambiguity, governance inefficiencies, and declining public trust. The study concludes that improving Otsus implementation requires inclusive, context-sensitive policy approaches that integrate local traditions, cultural diversity, and community participation. This research contributes to the broader discourse on governance and public policy, offering practical insights for enhancing policy effectiveness and refining autonomy frameworks in conflict-prone and decentralized regions.

Keywords: Organizational Behavior, Special Autonomy Policy, Governance Challenges, Policy Implementation, Papua Decentralization

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1. INTRODUCTION

Papua, as Indonesia's easternmost province, has been the site of enduring socio-political tensions, stemming from historical grievances, economic marginalization, and cultural exclusion. In response to these complex and deeply rooted issues, the Indonesian government enacted the Special Autonomy Policy (Otsus) in 2001. This policy was intended to grant Papua greater authority in managing its resources, developing local institutions, and preserving indigenous identity within the framework of the unitary state. However, more than two decades later, the effectiveness of the policy remains in question. Although various institutional and fiscal mechanisms have been put in place, the results on the ground have been inconsistent and, in some cases, counterproductive (Ulloa-Suárez, 2023). These outcomes raise questions not only about the policy design but also about the behaviors and internal dynamics of the organizations tasked with its implementation (Capano & Lepori, 2024).

In fragile and conflict-prone regions such as Papua, the success of public policy is strongly influenced by how government institutions interpret and operationalize policy frameworks. Organizational behavior (OB) becomes a crucial lens for understanding how bureaucracies respond to complex governance mandates (Kanon, 2024). Challenges such as unclear regulations, overlapping authorities, and a lack of coherent coordination between central and local governments often trigger institutional inertia or maladaptive practices (Salvador & Sancho, 2023). Moreover, pervasive mistrust between local communities and state institutions exacerbates the governance deficit (Akinlabi, 2025). While considerable attention has been given to evaluating the policy outputs of special autonomy, less is known about the decision-making processes, internal routines, leadership dynamics, and informal strategies within local governance bodies that shape its execution. This research takes a closer look at these micro-level organizational aspects that are often overlooked in macro-policy evaluations.

Another critical challenge is the deep-rooted mistrust between local communities and state institutions. Historical grievances, perceptions of exploitation, and unfulfilled promises have fueled widespread skepticism toward government-led initiatives (Abb, 2024). This distrust is directed not only at the central government but also at local bureaucracies, which are often perceived as extensions of external power (Schiff et al., 2025). As a result, even well-intentioned policies under Otsus frequently struggle to gain public legitimacy or meaningful community participation (Seeberg-Gordon, 2024). The resulting social distance between institutions and the populace reinforces feelings of alienation, limiting the potential for inclusive governance, particularly in areas marked by conflict and trauma (Muldoon et al., 2021). Studies on Otsus have predominantly focused on political controversies, fiscal transfers, or macroeconomic impacts. However, there is a significant research gap regarding how OB, shaped by institutional culture, leadership, incentives, and informal norms, influences the implementation of public policy in conflict-affected settings. In such fragile contexts, understanding the behavior of government organizations is essential to unpacking why certain reforms succeed or fail. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the behavioral responses of local institutions to the Otsus framework, offering fresh insights into governance performance in one of Indonesia's most complex regions.

The urgency of this research lies in the persistent governance challenges surrounding the implementation of Papua's Otsus policy within a context of historical conflict, social fragmentation, and political mistrust. Designed to address underdevelopment, inequality, and autonomy, Otsus has been constrained by limited institutional capacity, inadequate regulatory alignment, and resistance to central interventions. Ethnic tensions, entrenched local power structures, and weak central-local coordination further undermine policy effectiveness, while substantial financial resources and legal mandates have yielded limited progress due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and low community participation. These conditions highlight critical gaps in prevailing decentralization and OB models when applied to conflict-prone regions, underscoring the need for adaptive governance frameworks that integrate local socio-cultural dynamics, strengthen institutional capacity, and foster meaningful community engagement. Therefore, understanding the OB of local government institutions and how these actors interpret and enact the policy amidst these challenges is crucial (Salvador & Sancho, 2023). This study seeks to uncover the root causes of policy shortcomings and provide insights for developing adaptive, context-sensitive governance frameworks that address local dynamics to improve implementation, strengthen stability, and advance socio-economic development in Papua.

This study applies a multi-theoretical framework integrating OB theory, governance theory, and the conflict-sensitive policy framework to analyze the dynamics of Papua's Otsus. OB theory explains how institutional behavior shapes decision-making, governance theory examines structures and accountability in decentralized contexts, and the conflict-sensitive framework assesses the influence of local conflict dynamics on policy outcomes. In Papua's context of historical conflict, indigenous rights issues, and political contestation, this approach shifts the focus from macro-political or financial perspectives to the internal workings of local bureaucracies. By highlighting institutional behavior, the study underscores the need for adaptive governance models that incorporate local interpretations and expectations to enhance policy effectiveness in fragile, conflict-affected regions.

The insights generated from this study have practical implications for designing regulatory interventions and institutional reforms that are sensitive to social complexity and political fragmentation. By unpacking the behavioral dynamics underlying the implementation of Otsus, the findings can inform the formulation of future governance strategies aimed at improving legitimacy, accountability, and inclusivity in public service delivery. In doing so, the research offers valuable lessons for policymakers and governance scholars working in similarly contested regions.

The core problem addressed in this study is the persistent governance challenges and regulatory obstacles that undermine the effective implementation of the Otsus in Papua. These challenges are compounded by complex socio-political conditions, deep-rooted mistrust, and institutional limitations in a conflict-prone environment. This study aims to analyze the OB of local governments and related actors in responding to the Otsus, with a specific focus on identifying governance challenges and regulatory barriers that hinder policy outcomes in Papua.

The structure of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on OB, governance challenges, and policy implementation in conflict-prone regions. Section 3 explains the research methodology, including the qualitative case study approach, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures. Section 4 presents the research findings on governance dynamics, regulatory barriers, and institutional challenges in implementing Otsus. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings, highlighting the roles and interactions of various stakeholders in shaping policy outcomes. Finally, Section 6 provides the conclusions, policy recommendations, and directions for future research, along with the study's limitations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Before presenting the literature review, it is essential to contextualize the research within the broader discourse on the implementation of the Otsus in Papua. Although the policy was formulated to promote regional development, strengthen local governance, and reduce socio-economic disparities, its execution has encountered substantial challenges. These include limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination between central and regional authorities, insufficient alignment with local socio-cultural contexts, and low levels of community engagement. A comprehensive understanding of these systemic issues is critical for framing the theoretical foundations of this study and identifying existing knowledge gaps, thereby providing a solid basis for the subsequent examination of relevant literature.

2.1. Organizational behavior in conflict zones

Organizational behavior examines how individuals and groups interact within institutions and how these dynamics influence overall organizational performance (Neto et al., 2024). Within public institutions, OB plays a critical role in shaping decision-making processes, leadership styles, communication patterns, and organizational culture, all of which directly affect the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation (Abawari et al., 2024). Understanding these behavioral dynamics becomes particularly important when public policies require cross-institutional collaboration and adaptation to local contexts (Onyango, 2025). In conflict-prone regions such as Papua, OB theories must be contextualized to account for historical grievances, socio-cultural complexities, and political tensions that shape bureaucratic behavior. Public administration in these settings often blends formal governance structures with informal practices, heavily influenced by customary norms, community trust, and traditional power relations (Uche & Uche, 2025). These dynamics create unique organizational challenges, where local decision-making processes are intertwined with indigenous values and collective identities, requiring a more flexible and culturally sensitive approach to governance (Jacob et al., 2024). Within Papua's local government institutions, challenges such as distrust toward authorities, low bureaucratic motivation, and resistance to centrally imposed policies remain significant (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). These factors have contributed to the limited effectiveness of Otsus implementation, as bureaucratic adaptation tends to be slow and informal practices often dominate policy processes. A deeper understanding of OB in this context provides critical insights into governance and regulatory barriers, highlighting the need for reforms that integrate local socio-cultural realities with institutional capacity-building to improve policy outcomes (Eisenberg et al., 2024).

2.2. Governance in decentralization

Governance within decentralization highlights the distribution of authority, decision-making, and policy implementation across multiple levels of government, involving not only state institutions but also civil society and private actors (Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024). In the context of Papua's Otsus, governance is shaped by a complex interplay of political dynamics, ethnic diversity, and historical conflicts, which have contributed to persistent challenges in building trust between central and regional authorities (Elayah et al., 2025). These dynamics require governance approaches that are not only administrative but also socio-culturally adaptive, ensuring that policies resonate with local contexts and community expectations (Uddin & Hoque, 2025). Scholars argue that effective governance in Papua necessitates the integration of formal institutions with indigenous leadership structures to strengthen legitimacy and foster inclusive participation (Parsons et al., 2025). Indigenous leaders often hold significant influence within local communities, and their involvement in decision-making can enhance acceptance of government policies and reduce potential conflicts (Grote, 2024). This collaborative model promotes a bottom-up approach, enabling policies to better reflect local needs while balancing broader national objectives. The decentralization process under Otsus continues to face obstacles, including limited institutional capacity, unclear accountability, and skepticism toward central government initiatives. Tensions between formal government systems and traditional leadership frequently create both synergy and conflict, complicating policy implementation (Muchaku & Magaiza, 2024). To improve governance outcomes, policy reforms must focus on aligning legal frameworks with local socio-cultural practices, enhancing institutional capabilities, and fostering transparent, participatory mechanisms that encourage trust and collaboration among all stakeholders (Jansen & Kalas, 2024).

2.3. Regulatory challenges in the implementation of Otsus

Regulatory frameworks play a pivotal role in determining the success of Otsus implementation in Papua, as they provide the legal foundation for policy formulation, resource allocation, and governance practices. However, the current regulatory environment is characterized by fragmented legal frameworks, inconsistent policy interpretations, and limited institutional capacity, which collectively impede effective implementation (Gesualdi-Fecteau et al., 2025). The absence of comprehensive and harmonized regulations has resulted in significant policy gaps, reducing the effectiveness of developmental programs intended to address local needs and priorities. In addition, overlapping regulatory mandates, unclear divisions of authority, and the complex interplay between state institutions and traditional leadership structures create significant challenges for policy coherence and execution (Karataş, 2025). Conflicting frameworks between central and local governments frequently lead to institutional inefficiencies and delays in delivering Otsus-related services. Existing regulatory mechanisms often fail to integrate local socio-cultural contexts, leaving indigenous governance systems underrepresented in decision-making processes and reducing the overall responsiveness of Otsus policies to community needs (Sakapaji et al., 2024). Another key challenge lies in the limited capacity of local regulatory bodies to design, enforce, and monitor Otsus-related policies effectively. Weak enforcement mechanisms, underutilized legal instruments, and inadequate human resource development have contributed to persistent implementation gaps (Boufounou et al., 2024). Furthermore, tensions between local autonomy and central government control exacerbate compliance difficulties, undermining policy legitimacy at the grassroots level. Addressing these challenges requires context-sensitive reforms that integrate indigenous knowledge, strengthen institutional accountability, and improve intergovernmental coordination to ensure that Otsus regulations effectively support sustainable development and social equity in Papua.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the OB, governance, and regulatory challenges in the implementation of the Otsus in Papua. The selection of a qualitative approach is driven by the need to understand the intricate dynamics of local contexts, social relationships, and institutional factors that shape policy outcomes in a region with complex political and social structures. A case study methodology is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth examination of the specific challenges and opportunities faced by different regions within Papua, particularly Jayapura and Mimika, which represent contrasting social, political, and economic landscapes. By focusing on these areas, the study aims to provide insights into how the Otsus is implemented under varying local conditions and how these implementations are influenced by local governance structures and regulatory frameworks.

Data collection will be conducted through a combination of in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participatory observation, and document analysis, ensuring a comprehensive and multi-dimensional understanding of the research problem. In-depth interviews will serve as the primary method for collecting qualitative data, with an estimated 25 interviews planned to reach data saturation. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a diverse range of key informants, including local government officials, representatives of indigenous communities, civil society leaders, and academic experts. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in, or expertise on, the implementation of Otsus and related governance processes. The interviews will explore their perspectives on the effectiveness and challenges of implementing Otsus, as well as the OB of various stakeholders, particularly the local bureaucracy. Interviews will focus on understanding how these actors navigate governance structures and respond to regulatory frameworks in the context of Papua's unique socio-political environment. While every effort will be made to ensure balanced representation across stakeholder groups, potential limitations include restricted access to certain government officials due to bureaucratic constraints and the possibility that political sensitivities in conflict-prone areas may limit the openness of responses.

FGDs will be used to gather collective insights from different stakeholders. These discussions will include a range of participants, such as local government officials, community leaders, indigenous representatives, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the region. The goal of the FGDs is to capture group perspectives on the Otsus policy's impact on governance and regulation, as well as to identify common challenges and opportunities from multiple viewpoints. The interactions within the FGDs will help to reveal how the policy is perceived, how stakeholders interact with each other, and the governance practices that emerge as a result of these interactions. Participatory observation will also be employed to provide a first-hand account of the local dynamics in the implementation of Otsus. The researcher will engage in the local community and government activities related to the Otsus policy, observing how government officials, community members, and other stakeholders interact and implement policy initiatives on the ground. This will allow the researcher to gather contextual data that may not be captured through interviews and FGDs alone, providing a more holistic understanding of the actual practice of governance and the regulatory challenges faced by local actors.

Document analysis will complement the qualitative data gathered from interviews, FGDs, and observations. Relevant policy documents, government reports, regulations, and legal frameworks will be reviewed to understand the formal governance structures and regulatory mechanisms in place to support the implementation of Otsus. This analysis will help identify gaps in the regulatory framework, inconsistencies in policy implementation, and the broader legal environment that impacts the effectiveness of the policy. Additionally, historical documents and previous

studies on the implementation of Otsus in Papua will be examined to contextualize the current situation and assess changes over time. The data will be analyzed using thematic analysis and content analysis methods. Thematic analysis will identify key themes and patterns across interviews, FGDs, and observational data, focusing on OB, governance challenges, and the regulatory barriers encountered by local stakeholders. Content analysis will be used to examine official documents and policies to uncover insights into how these regulations are designed and how they function in practice. Thematic and content analyses will be conducted iteratively, allowing the researcher to refine codes and categories as new insights emerge. By combining these two analytical approaches, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the governance challenges in the implementation of Otsus. To ensure validity and reliability, the study will employ triangulation by cross-checking data from interviews, FGDs, participatory observation, and document analysis to enhance consistency and credibility. Potential biases will be minimized through transparency, a clear audit trail, and critical self-reflection on the researcher's role. Ethical considerations will guide all stages of the research: participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, provide informed consent, and be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Ethical clearance will be obtained from relevant institutional review boards, and all procedures will comply with established social research guidelines to safeguard participants' rights and dignity.

An alternative methodological approach suitable for this research would be a mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative strategies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Otsus in Papua. While the current study adopts a qualitative case study to explore OB and governance challenges in depth, incorporating quantitative methods such as structured surveys or social network analysis could complement the findings by capturing broader patterns of stakeholder perceptions, policy impacts, and institutional performance across multiple regions. Surveys distributed to a larger sample of government officials, community members, and civil society actors could provide measurable data on satisfaction levels, perceptions of governance effectiveness, and the extent of regulatory challenges. Additionally, quantitative indicators, such as budget allocation, policy compliance rates, and development outcomes, could be analyzed to triangulate qualitative insights and enhance the study's robustness. By integrating statistical evidence with rich qualitative narratives, the mixed-methods approach would allow for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between policy design, OB, and socio-political contexts, thereby strengthening the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings.

4. RESULTS

This study identifies key aspects of OB affecting Otsus implementation in Papua, including divergent official views, bureaucratic rigidity, and limited policy adaptation to local contexts. Political pressures, resource constraints, and weak intergovernmental coordination emerge as central factors shaping these dynamics.

Table 1. Organizational behavior of local government actors in the implementation of Otsus

Aspect	Key findings	Academic summary
Local government officials' views	Divergent understanding, coordination, and budget constraints	Otsus' goals are undermined by administrative inefficiencies and fiscal limitations.
Bureaucratic response patterns	Procedural and technical focus	Emphasis on compliance over contextual responsiveness limits policy impact.
Bureaucratic flexibility	Low adaptability	Regulatory rigidity and slow decisions hinder local policy alignment.
Factors influencing OB	Political, resource, and cultural constraints	Decision-making is shaped by political pressures, scarcity of resources, and cultural contexts.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The implementation of Papua's Otsus is hindered by differing understandings among officials, coupled with coordination challenges and fiscal constraints. Bureaucratic practices remain procedural and rigid, prioritizing compliance over responsiveness to local contexts. Political pressures, resource scarcity, and cultural factors further limit policy adaptability and overall effectiveness.

Interviews with key regional government officials revealed diverse perspectives on Papua's Otsus, with many acknowledging its potential to enhance regional autonomy and improve community welfare, yet emphasizing persistent implementation challenges. Respondents identified slow decision-making, attributed to bureaucratic inefficiencies and poor coordination between central and local governments, alongside fragmented responsibilities and overlapping mandates that hinder policy execution. Bureaucratic rigidity was highlighted as a critical barrier, with stringent regulations limiting adaptation to district-specific cultural and political contexts. Officials noted that political pressures, limited resources, and cultural considerations significantly shaped their responses, often prioritizing local interests over the broader objectives of Otsus and constraining the policy's intended impact. The following table presents a summary of the key factors influencing OB in the implementation of the Otsus in Papua.

Table 2. Matrix of factors affecting organizational behavior in the implementation of Otsus

Factor	Impact on Otsus implementation	Level of impact
Political pressure	Local elite and interest groups influence the delayed implementation and shift priorities.	High
Inter-unit coordination	Fragmented coordination causes rollout delays and inefficiencies.	Medium
Bureaucratic flexibility	Regulatory rigidity and hierarchy limit policy adaptation to local needs.	High
Resource constraints	Limited fiscal and human capacity undermine effective implementation.	High
Cultural considerations	Cultural contexts shape governmental responsiveness and adaptation.	Medium

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Otsus implementation in Papua is shaped by several critical factors, including high political pressure from local elites and interest groups that delay execution and redirect priorities, and fragmented inter-unit coordination that creates inefficiencies. Bureaucratic rigidity, reinforced by strict regulations and hierarchical structures, further limits adaptation to local needs, while severe financial and human resource constraints undermine policy capacity. Cultural contexts also influence government responsiveness, with some regions demonstrating better adaptation than others.

Figure 1. Governance challenges in Papua's Otsus
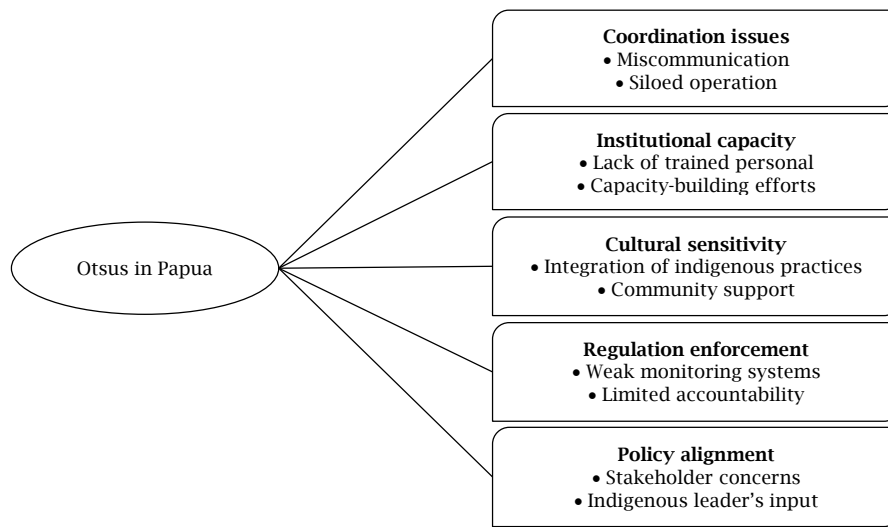
Source: Authors' elaboration

The figure illustrates the key governance challenges in the implementation of Papua's Otsus. It highlights the complexities arising from weak coordination between central and local governments, inconsistencies in regulatory enforcement, and limited involvement of indigenous communities in decision-making. Additionally, the figure emphasizes institutional weaknesses such as inadequate civil society oversight and insufficient capacity-building at the local government level, which contribute to the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of policy implementation. These challenges underscore the need for a more cohesive, inclusive, and transparent governance framework to improve the outcomes of Otsus in Papua.

Table 3. Institutional strengths and weaknesses in governance, regulations, and oversight in Otsus implementation

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses
Governance mechanisms	Implementation teams in some areas, monitoring and evaluation initiatives.	Poor intergovernmental coordination; low indigenous inclusion.
Regulatory framework	Clear legal basis for autonomy; provisions for the indigenous role.	Weak enforcement; national and local legal conflicts.
Oversight and accountability	Monitoring systems; audit commitments.	Limited civil oversight; no strong sanctions.
Institutional capacity	Targeted capacity-building; local adaptations.	Limited training; institutional fragility.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 3 outlines the strengths and weaknesses of institutional mechanisms in implementing Otsus in Papua across governance, regulatory, and oversight domains. Strengths include implementation teams, monitoring initiatives, and a solid legal basis for autonomy, while weaknesses involve poor intergovernmental coordination, weak regulatory enforcement, and limited civil oversight. Persistent gaps in local training and expertise further constrain policy effectiveness, underscoring the need for stronger coordination, enforcement, and capacity-building.

Table 4. Gaps in the implementation of Otsus

Regulatory aspect	Findings (document analysis)	Regulatory gaps	Impact on Otsus implementation
Local economic empowerment	No defined fund allocation mechanism	Unclear allocation creates aid disparities	Weakens community empowerment in some areas
Education and health	Regulations overlook remote areas	Non-responsive provisions impede service delivery	Declines in education and healthcare quality in remote Papua
Indigenous community participation	The decision-making role is undefined	Limited participation in resource management	Social tensions and erosion of trust in government
Transparency and accountability	Lack of monitoring provisions	Weak transparency in fund utilization	Greater risk of misuse and public dissatisfaction

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Policy document analysis identifies critical gaps in Otsus implementation, including the absence of clear mechanisms for fund allocation, inadequate provisions for remote-area education and healthcare, and unclear frameworks for indigenous participation. These deficiencies contribute to unequal resource distribution, declining service quality, social tensions, and weakened public trust. Moreover, insufficient regulatory support for monitoring and transparency heightens risks of fund mismanagement, collectively undermining the policy's effectiveness.

Figure 2. Barriers to compliance with Otsus policy
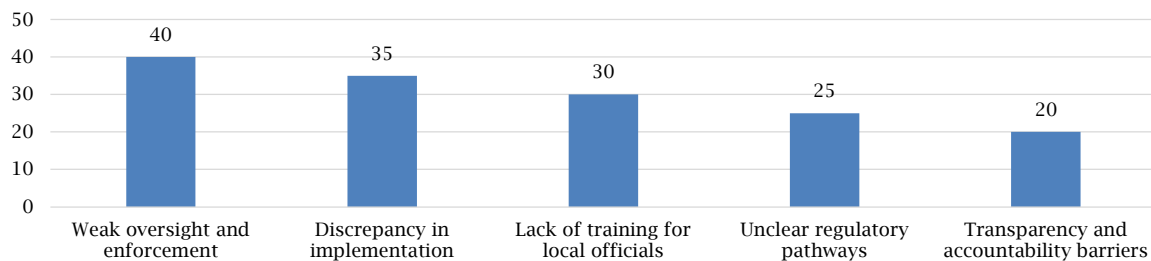
Source: Authors' elaboration.

Figure 2 shows key barriers to Otsus compliance, with weak oversight from poor inter-agency coordination (40%) as the most cited, followed by central-regional implementation gaps (35%) and insufficient local official training (30%). Unclear regulations (25%) and limited transparency (20%) further impede execution, underscoring the need for regulatory clarity, capacity-building, and stronger governance in Papua.

Table 5. Social and political contexts influencing the implementation of Otsus in Papua

Contextual aspect	Key findings	Data source	Implications
Ethnic and cultural factors	Indigenous exclusion from policy-making	Interviews with customary leaders, village heads	Erodes legitimacy
Community participation	Largely symbolic involvement	FGDs with NGOs, church leaders	Weakens accountability
Political fragmentation	Elite competition over funds	Observations, bureaucrat interviews	Disrupts governance
Ethnic tensions and security	Indigenous-migrant conflicts	Field reports, conflict records	Limits service delivery
Role of elites	Otsus is used for power consolidation	Parliament and media interviews	Distorts policy goals

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 5 synthesizes the key social and political dynamics affecting the implementation of the Otsus in Papua. It draws on qualitative data from interviews, FGDs, and field observations, highlighting how ethnic identity, political fragmentation, elite influence, and limited community participation shape governance outcomes. The matrix format not only presents empirical insights but also illustrates their practical implications, offering a structured and evidence-based view of contextual challenges that must be addressed in future policy design and regulatory reform.

Table 6. Comparative governance and regulatory practices in the implementation of Otsus

Analytical aspect	Jayapura	Mimika	Comparative analysis and notes
Governance structure	More centralized at the provincial level	Decentralized with strong local actor roles	Mimika displays more active local decision-making.
Regulatory practices	Formal and administrative in nature	Flexible and adaptive to context	Mimika shows greater responsiveness to social dynamics.
Community involvement	Limited, mostly consultative	High, with regular dialogues with local groups	Mimika's participatory model is replicable elsewhere.
Main challenges	Weak vertical coordination	Inequity in benefit distribution	Different challenges require tailored responses.
Social dynamics	Heterogeneous, with frequent actor tensions	More homogeneous, socially cohesive	Social dynamics affect policy success significantly.
Best practices identified	Digital reporting system for Otsus funds	Regular customary consultation forums	Combining these practices can improve future outcomes.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Table 6 compares Otsus implementation in Jayapura and Mimika, showing Jayapura's centralized, formal governance with limited participation versus Mimika's decentralized, adaptive model with stronger local engagement. Mimika's social cohesion and flexible regulations enhance governance effectiveness. Integrating Jayapura's digital transparency systems with Mimika's participatory forums offers a replicable framework for context-sensitive policy in conflict-affected Papuan regions.

5. DISCUSSION

The results affirm the applicability of OB theory in explaining variations in responses to Otsus within conflict-prone contexts. In regions with high levels of inter-agency cooperation, policies tend to be more flexible and adaptive to local needs, resulting in better outcomes for communities. In contrast, in regions characterized by hierarchical control and limited inter-agency collaboration, the policy faces significant hurdles. The differences in organizational responses across Papua illustrate the importance of fostering a more adaptive and collaborative governance structure, particularly in conflict-sensitive regions (Bruch et al., 2024). This research contributes to the broader discourse on governance in regions with complex social and political dynamics, highlighting the critical role of OB in shaping policy outcomes.

The study reveals a persistent disconnect between national-level regulatory frameworks and local institutional practices, which creates dissonance in policy implementation. The provincial and district governments, tasked with executing Otsus, often operate within a framework that is insufficiently aligned with their actual capabilities or local needs (Chasib, 2024). This misalignment leads to policy failures, where local governments either fail to implement the policy adequately or interpret regulations in a manner inconsistent with the central government's objectives. Furthermore, there is a lack of effective inter-agency coordination, where different governmental and non-governmental entities responsible for policy implementation are not sufficiently integrated into a cohesive governance structure. The findings underscore the importance of designing a governance framework that is more adaptive and contextually sensitive to the complex socio-political environment of Papua. The inefficiencies resulting from the unclear division of roles, coupled with institutional fragmentation, reinforce the need for reforms in both policy design and governance practices (Lidén & Nyhlén, 2024). Drawing on governance theory, the study suggests that a more responsive and inclusive approach, which integrates both top-down and bottom-up governance strategies, is crucial for overcoming these challenges (Adisa et al., 2024). This would involve not only decentralizing power but also strengthening local capacity and ensuring that policies are tailored to the specific political, social, and economic conditions of Papua. Such an approach could increase public trust and improve the effectiveness of Otsus in the region.

The discussion concludes by underscoring this study's contribution to advancing the understanding of decentralization and OB in conflict zones through the lens of the Otsus in Papua. It demonstrates that prevailing models of decentralization, which often assume clear authority divisions and uniform regulatory frameworks, are insufficient in contexts marked by fragmented governance, overlapping authority, and complex socio-political dynamics. The analysis highlights the necessity of more flexible, context-specific regulations and participatory governance mechanisms that meaningfully involve local communities and non-governmental actors. By showing how organizational capacity, institutional adaptability, and socio-cultural alignment critically shape policy outcomes, the study both supports and extends existing OB theory, emphasizing its applicability in explaining diverse responses to policy in volatile settings. These insights provide a foundation for refining decentralization models to better address the realities of conflict-prone regions, guiding the design of more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable governance frameworks.

The initial discussion focuses on how the OB of local government institutions in Papua affects the implementation of the Otsus. Based on field data, it was found that local bureaucratic responses are significantly influenced by leadership factors, institutional capacity, and inter-agency relations. In areas where the leadership demonstrates a more inclusive and transparent approach, the implementation of Otsus policies tends to be more effective (Agustus et al., 2025). Conversely, in regions with rigid and centralized bureaucratic control, the policy encounters resistance, leading to slower adaptation and reduced impact on local development. This underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational responses to regional autonomy initiatives, reinforcing the view that leadership styles are pivotal determinants in public policy implementation. Institutional capacity critically influences Otsus implementation, yet many Papuan local governments face resource shortages, weak infrastructure, and limited expertise, leading to fragmented service delivery; however, some mitigate these gaps through community engagement and NGO partnerships, underscoring the need for adaptive, context-responsive institutional frameworks in conflict-prone regions, which in turn can strengthen governance resilience and improve long-term policy outcomes. This aligns with OB theory, which underscores the role of organizational capacity in determining the success of public policy (Atobishi et al., 2024).

Inter-agency coordination is another critical factor affecting the implementation of Otsus in Papua. The study found that in regions where inter-agency collaboration is strong, the policy implementation is more cohesive, as different sectors work together towards common goals. In areas where coordination is weak, the policy suffers from fragmentation, with various agencies pursuing divergent objectives that do not align with the broader goals of Otsus. This reflects the complexity of governance in Papua, where multiple actors, including local governments, the central government, and civil society, must collaborate to ensure effective policy implementation (Masuda et al., 2022). The lack of effective coordination often results in overlapping responsibilities and the duplication of efforts, which undermines the overall success of the policy (Dombrowsky et al., 2022).

The issue of governance gaps and institutional fragmentation emerges as a significant challenge in the implementation of Papua's Otsus. One of the key findings from the field research is the ineffective decentralization of governance structures that were supposed to support the policy's implementation. While the Otsus policy aimed to grant substantial autonomy to local governments, the actual execution reveals that the central government retains substantial control, creating a complex power dynamic. This imbalance in governance authority results in a delayed or inefficient response to local needs and aspirations, further exacerbating the existing challenges faced by local institutions in Papua. The lack of clarity regarding the division of powers between the central and provincial governments adds to the problem, as both levels of government often overlap in their responsibilities, leading to inefficiencies and confusion (Da Silva, 2022). The centralization of key decision-making powers, despite the policy's original intentions, limits the capacity of regional governments to act autonomously (Tang, 2021). The central government's top-down approach, combined with local governments' limited adaptation to regional needs, has weakened policy coordination in Papua, where socio-political complexities demand flexible, decentralized governance; compounded by resource constraints and fragmented institutional capacities across governmental and non-governmental actors, these factors undermine Otsus's intended governance and development outcomes.

The discussion continues with an analysis of the regulatory challenges found both in policy documents and in field practices. One of the primary issues identified is the centralization of the Otsus, which was formulated with limited consideration for the local social and cultural dynamics of Papua. This centralization has resulted in a disconnection between the objectives outlined in the national policy and the realities faced by local governments and communities (Wang & Liu, 2022). In Papua's ethnically diverse and consensus-based governance context, the top-down, uniform design of Otsus misaligns with local structures, overlooking the region's nuanced needs; its implementation is further hindered by limited comprehension of its provisions among both communities and officials, particularly regarding technical and legal aspects. This knowledge gap creates a divide between the policy's intended goals and its practical application on the ground, leading to a sense of alienation and confusion. Furthermore, the decentralized regulatory framework often lacks clear, actionable guidelines, making it difficult for local authorities to adapt national-level policies to local contexts (Kapelela et al., 2025). Such a disconnect fosters resistance and undermines the policy's effectiveness, preventing it from fully achieving its objectives. The analysis underscores the necessity of a conflict-sensitive regulatory approach in Papua, integrating legal, political, and socio-cultural dimensions to enhance policy relevance and accessibility. Incorporating local wisdom, indigenous governance practices, and community participation can foster a more adaptive and responsive governance framework. Such integration would strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of Otsus, enabling it to address Papua's unique challenges while promoting inclusive policymaking.

The role of non-governmental actors, such as indigenous communities, religious leaders, NGOs, and youth groups, plays a critical part in the implementation of the Otsus in Papua. These actors serve as key players in fostering more inclusive governance practices, especially in a region marked by social and political complexity (Sánchez-Soriano et al., 2024). Indigenous communities, with their deep-rooted knowledge of local customs and traditions, often serve as mediators between the government and the population. Their involvement helps bridge gaps between formal policy structures and the lived realities of the people. Religious leaders, on the other hand, hold considerable influence in promoting dialogue and peace-building within communities, especially in conflict-prone areas (Odak, 2024). NGOs contribute by offering technical expertise, mobilizing local resources, and advocating for marginalized groups, thus enriching the policy's implementation process. While these actors significantly contribute to the governance process, their involvement remains sporadic and often unstructured. In many instances, the collaboration between governmental bodies and non-governmental actors lacks formal institutionalization, which leads to inconsistent outcomes. The absence of clear frameworks for collaboration results in ad hoc initiatives that are not sustained over time (Perera et al., 2023). Consequently, despite the potential for enhanced policy impact through these partnerships, the lack of coordination between government agencies and non-governmental stakeholders limits the overall effectiveness of policy implementation in the region. Without institutional mechanisms that enable ongoing participation and engagement, the contributions of these non-governmental actors tend to fade after short-lived interventions. This highlights the critical need for integrating both top-down and bottom-up approaches in public governance, particularly in conflict-sensitive areas like Papua. A more inclusive and participatory governance structure can be achieved by institutionalizing the roles of these non-governmental actors within the formal policy framework (Ye et al., 2024). Active engagement of local communities, civil society, and indigenous groups in decision-making and implementation fosters a more responsive, sustainable policy environment. This approach enhances the effectiveness of special autonomy while building social capital and trust, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits.

In comparing the two case study regions, Jayapura and Mimika, this section explores the differences in institutional capacity, bureaucratic responses, and regulatory adaptation strategies. While both regions are part of the Otsus framework, they exhibit varying levels of institutional strength and government engagement in policy implementation. In Jayapura, a more centralized and politically engaged leadership has facilitated quicker responses to Otsus-related challenges, although bureaucratic fragmentation remains an issue. On the other hand, Mimika's leadership, characterized by its decentralized structure and local autonomy, has led to more innovative regulatory solutions but also resulted in slower decision-making processes due to a lack of clear coordination between local government units. The comparison of these two regions highlights

that the success of Otsus implementation is significantly influenced by local context, including the nature of governance structures and leadership styles. The adaptability of the bureaucracy to Otsus policies is not solely determined by the political will of the central government but also by the local governance culture and the degree of community involvement in decision-making processes. In regions where leadership is more decentralized, there is often greater flexibility in addressing local needs but also challenges in maintaining consistency and accountability across governance levels. This complex interaction between governance systems and local contexts underscores the importance of considering regional variations in the design and implementation of policies like Otsus (Chasib, 2024). From a theoretical perspective, the findings contribute to the broader discourse on governance theory, particularly in post-conflict and conflict-prone regions. This study suggests that there is no one-size-fits-all model for governance in special autonomy regions, as local political, social, and cultural factors deeply shape policy outcomes. The research empirically supports that effective governance in contexts like Papua demands adaptive regulatory frameworks, locally attuned leadership, and strengthened institutional capacity. These findings challenge conventional top-down models, advocating for flexible, context-sensitive approaches that address the complexities of diverse regional governance.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the challenges in implementing the Otsus in Papua, particularly in the context of OB and governance shaped by complex social, political, and cultural dynamics. The findings indicate that OB at the regional government level is influenced by internal factors, such as institutional capacity and leadership, and external factors, including fragmented socio-political conditions. While there are examples of successful implementation, persistent challenges remain poor inter-agency coordination, regulatory misalignment with local contexts, and bureaucratic resistance to reform. Governance has not been fully decentralized, with overlapping central regional authority causing

inefficiency and eroding public trust. Furthermore, regulations that fail to accommodate local socio-cultural contexts significantly limit policy effectiveness. Developing inclusive, conflict-sensitive, and contextually adaptive policies is therefore essential for effective governance in complex regions like Papua. This research enriches the literature on governance and public policy in conflict-prone areas, emphasizing the value of context-sensitive and participatory approaches. The limitations of this research primarily relate to scope, data access, and contextual constraints. First, the study focuses on selected regions, particularly Jayapura and Mimika, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other Papuan districts with different socio-political dynamics. Second, restricted access to certain government officials and sensitive policy documents, due to bureaucratic and political constraints, may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the data. Third, given the conflict-prone context of Papua, some participants may have exercised caution in expressing their views openly, potentially affecting the depth and candor of the responses. Lastly, the qualitative case study approach limits the ability to provide quantitative measurements of policy outcomes, suggesting the need for future studies to integrate mixed-methods or broader surveys for more robust comparisons across regions.

The findings suggest several directions for policy reform and future research. Policy reforms should strengthen decentralization by clarifying central-regional authority, aligning regulations with local socio-cultural contexts, enhancing institutional capacity through targeted training and resource allocation, establishing stronger coordination and participatory mechanisms involving indigenous communities, and integrating transparency tools such as digital reporting with community-led oversight to build trust. Future research should include comparative studies of Otsus implementation across Papuan districts to identify scalable best practices, longitudinal assessments of governance reforms to evaluate sustainability and impact, examinations of the role of non-governmental actors, particularly customary leaders and civil society in shaping policy outcomes, and investigations into how conflict-sensitive governance models can be adapted to other multi-ethnic and politically sensitive.

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