

## The political dynamics of managing The Kelutap Bersatu Joint Village – owned enterprise (BUMDes Bersama) in Kelam Permai Sub-District, Sintang District, West Kalimantan

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### ABSTRACT

The passing of Law Number 6 of 2014 on villages has opened up new opportunities for villages to manage their economic resources on their own, including forming BUMDes. However, the management of BUMDes is actually shaped by local political factors and complex power dynamics. This study explores how power functions within the management of BUMDes Bersama and how these practices affect village governance and community participation. This study used a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The theories applied include Local Politics and Regional Autonomy theory, Michel Foucault's Power Relations theory, and the Good Governance theory. The results show that, although BUMDes aim to improve the welfare of village communities through the collective management of economic businesses, local political intervention changes the function of this institution. Political actors utilize BUMDes to gain political support by directing facility assistance to the farmer groups that support them. This practice causes BUMDes to lose neutrality and reduces community trust in the institution. On the other hand, BUMDes management becomes less transparent, with decision-making dominated by certain parties, without inclusive involvement of all elements of the community.

**Keywords:** Political Dynamics, Local Politics, Power Relations, Good Governance, BUMDes Bersama.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a country that adheres to a decentralized system, provides space for regions to govern themselves, including villages, as the smallest administrative units. Since the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, villages have been recognized as legal entities with inherent rights and authority to govern and develop themselves. (Niga, 2023). This regulation provides a strong foundation for making villages the subject of development rather than passive objects. Villages now have the authority to form Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) as instruments for managing local potential. Government Regulation No. 11 of 2021 reinforces the function of BUMDes in empowering the rural economy. Therefore, villages serve as the basis for achieving independent and innovative national development (*PP No. 11 Tahun 2021, 2021*).

Issues occur when the management practices of BUMDes do not consistently match the legal objectives they are supposed to follow. For example, data from 2019 indicates that in Sintang District, there are 183 BUMDes among a total of 390 villages, but not all of these are functioning actively. (Tribun 2018). This situation highlights the gap between rules and their actual implementation. Many villages deal with limited resources, weak cooperation, and sometimes, local political interference in their management. Elite capture is a widespread problem. Those in power often take control of village organizations and decisions. (Firdaus, 2018). This shows the need for further research on the political factors that affect the management of BUMDes.

The importance of this research is clear when we see that BUMDes act as a tool to improve the well-being of rural communities. According to Law No. 6 of 2014 (Article 87), the primary goal of establishing BUMDes is to improve the living conditions of local residents by effectively managing regional resources. (*UU No. 6 Tahun 2014, 2014*). In practice, it is clear that some actors still strongly influence the direction of BUMDes policies. Serious issues, such as unequal access to resources, lack of transparency, and low involvement from local communities, are major obstacles. (Wijaya et al., 2019). Local political factors influence how well the management works. They can provide support and create obstacles. Studying BUMDes is important for assessing how effectively regulations can be applied in a fair and inclusive way. (Syafuddin, 2018).

Previous research has highlighted the role of BUMDes in village development. Wahyudi (2023) The Village Law shows how local politics impact village growth and development. This demonstrates that how villagers make decisions and cooperate can significantly influence their progress over time. Therefore, understanding and supporting the local political environment is crucial to ensure that the village receives the necessary help and resources to thrive. It also reveals the presence of elite capture practices that allow village heads to dominate the management of BUMDes. Meanwhile, Prastiwi and Ulfah (2022) researched the three best BUMDes in East Java but still found weak community participation in management. What these studies have in common is that they emphasise the importance of good governance at the village level. However, there is a gap in the research because the inter-village context (BUMDes Bersama) has rarely been discussed in depth. This makes the author's research more relevant.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the Kelutap Bersatu Joint Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes) in the Kelam Permai Subdistrict, Sintang Regency. These BUMDes were formed by seven villages that collaborated across administrative boundaries in accordance with Government Regulation No. 11 of 2021, Article 7. The context of collaboration between villages in this study is different from earlier research, which usually focused on only one village or BUMDes. Additionally, the political dynamics involved in building facilities such as drying floors and rice barns show the involvement of representatives at the regency level. This situation provides a new perspective on the effect of power on village development. Therefore, this study presents a new understanding of how various political groups cooperate to manage village economic systems.

This study explores the political factors that influence the administration of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu. Initially, BUMDes operated effectively within a farmer's group structure. However, it faced limitations in facilities, which led to the involvement of the DPRD members. The political motives behind facility development have had various social and political effects at the local level. These effects include differing opinions among community members, opportunities for building a political reputation,

and the use of farmer groups for mobilization. This situation is closely related to the framework of local democracy in Indonesia. Therefore, this study highlights the strong link between political interests and the long-term success of village institutions.

The main goal of this study is to examine how political factors impact the management of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu in the Kelam Permai Subdistrict. First, this study will describe the interactions between local actors, ranging from the village government and BUMDes administrators to regional representatives. Second, it analyzes the impact of political intervention on governance, including transparency, participation, and business sustainability. Third, this study attempts to map the extent to which national regulations, such as the Village Law and Government Regulation No. 11 of 2021, are actually implemented at the local level. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both academically and practically. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a reference by village governments and policymakers to improve the management of BUMDes.

With the background, issues, and literature review described, this study is expected to address the challenges of implementing village policies. BUMDes, as a local economic instrument, still face structural and political obstacles that must be resolved. The involvement of political actors, although bringing benefits in the form of facility development, also carries the risk of politicization. Therefore, a critical analysis of these dynamics is important to strengthen the independence of villages. In addition, this study emphasizes that the principle of good governance must be applied so that the objectives of BUMDes can be achieved in accordance with the mandate of the law. In conclusion, this study presents a new perspective on local politics and village-based development in Indonesia.

## **2. METHOD**

This study utilized a qualitative method with a descriptive qualitative research design that focused on exploring meaning, interpretation, and subjects' experiences related to political dynamics in the management of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu in Kelam Permai Subdistrict, Sintang Regency (Sugiyono, 2020). Data were collected by directly observing the activities of the BUMDes. We also conducted detailed interviews with administrators, village heads, farmer groups, village facilitators, relevant agencies and the community. These individuals provided the key, primary, and supporting information. In addition, we used official and institutional documentation records (Moleong, 2018). The research site was chosen because it includes seven villages with unique regional collaboration. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This method helped researchers collect detailed, narrative, and thorough insights into management approaches, challenges faced, and their impacts on village communities. As a result, this study is expected to provide a full understanding of the relationship between political factors and BUMDe sustainability.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Local Politics in the Management of BUMDes**

Local politics is important in the creation and operation of Joint Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), such as BUMDes Kelutap Bersatu in the Kelam Permai Subdistrict. These BUMDes are established under the Village Law and are further supported by Government Regulation No. 11 of 2021, which emphasizes that their main objective is to improve community welfare through joint business management and inter-village cooperation. However, in practice, the management of BUMDes cannot be separated from the context of local politics, where deliberations between villages regarding organizational structure, secretariat location, and distribution of roles are often colored by competing interests. This is in line with the view that Haris (2005) emphasizes that decentralization opens up space for democratization, but also gives rise to potential competition between local actors. These dynamics confirm that BUMDes are not only economic entities but also arenas for local political interaction influenced by the power of village heads, local elites, and the social networks they have built (Abas, 2018).

BUMDes Kelutap Bersatu, local politics became increasingly apparent when the construction of facilities such as drying floors and rice barns was realized through the assistance of DPRD members. On the one hand, this assistance successfully met the needs of farmer groups, but on the other hand, interviews with administrators and the community revealed the politicisation of this assistance. Jabang (interview, 9 May 2025) stated that the selection of Merpak Village as the secretariat was based on its strategic location and the readiness of village officials, but Andarias (interview, 9 May 2025) added that not all villages felt fully involved in the decision-making process. In fact, Herkulanus (interview, May 10, 2025) said that after receiving assistance, there were political directives to support certain candidates in the elections. This shows that the idealism of BUMDes as a neutral economic institution has shifted to become a practical political instrument (Pakamundi, 2022). Thus, as Abas noted, local political dynamics are not only concerned with development but also with power relations that have the potential to affect the integrity and trust of the community in village institutions.

### **3.2 Relations and Intervention in the Management BUMDes**

The management of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu shows how power dynamics function in a complex manner within local politics. Power is not just exercised through official orders from the village head or other important officials. It also works through indirect methods such as managing information, building personal relationships, and controlling access to economic and political opportunities. Foucault's theory of power relations suggests that power does not always work directly or forcefully. Instead, it often functions quietly in everyday interactions and routine relationships (Afandi, 2012). In BUMDes, this practice stands out when financial reports are not fully shared with all the member villages. Information is considered sensitive, especially when it pertains to funds given for political purposes. A statement by the Secretary of BUMDes, Andarias (interview, 9 May 2025), confirms that transparency is limited to maintain stability in inter-village relations, even though this control of information also serves as a tool to maintain the dominance of certain actors. A similar situation is reinforced by complaints from members of the community, such as Thomas Lambung (interview, May 10, 2025), who mentioned that the deliberative forum is no longer a democratic space but merely an administrative formality. This situation reflects that power does not work through written rules but through control practices that direct the decision-making process according to the interests of the elite (Suparto, 2021). Therefore, information and access to it become key tools in controlling an organization's operations, not merely technical management tools.

In addition to core management, the village head holds a strategic position that greatly determines the direction of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu's policies. Although formally, the management is under a separate team, the village head still plays a major role through its authority to manage village funds and their capacity as local political figures. This can be seen in the initial decision to place the BUMDes secretariat in Merpak Village, which was made based on an agreement between the village heads, rather than through an open selection process involving farmer groups or the wider community (Jabang, interview, May 9, 2025). Power relations are also evident in the often disproportionate distribution of programmes, with villages that have political ties to core administrators or supra-village actors, such as DPRD members, who tend to receive a larger share. Legislative members, through aspiration programs such as assistance for drying floors, often bring hidden political interests in the form of requests for electoral support so that BUMDes function as a means of consolidating power. This reinforces the view that power in local politics is not neutral, but is constructed within a mutually beneficial patron-client network between village elites and external politicians (Chintary & Lestari, 2016). As a result of these dynamics, farmer groups, which should be the driving force behind BUMDes, are in a subordinate position. They more often than not simply carry out instructions without the opportunity to participate in the planning or evaluation stages of programs. The community also perceives that the orientation of BUMDes has shifted from the spirit of economic collectivity to a political arena fraught with conflicting interests, thereby neglecting the effectiveness and fairness of the distribution of business profits (Putri,

2016). Therefore, power relations in the management of BUMDes not only regulate formal structures but also form unofficial hierarchies that reinforce elite domination and weaken community participation.

### **3.3 Governance and Transparency Challenges: Good Governance Assessment**

The management of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu, an inter-village economic institution, should be based on principles of good governance. These principles focus on participation, transparency, accountability, equality, effectiveness, and consensus orientation (Rauf, 2018). However, this situation reveals a significant gap between principle and practice. For instance, financial reports are prepared regularly, but are not always shared with all member villages. Usually, access to this information is limited to village leaders or key administrators; as a result, the general public and farmer groups still do not understand how collective funds are managed. This creates a sense of exclusivity and contradicts the principles of good governance, which promotes open information sharing among all stakeholders. Limited public access to this information restricts community involvement in monitoring. It also allows some individuals or groups to gain more control over BUMDes operations. Consequently, the principle of transparency, which should be a key part of governance, often becomes just another bureaucratic task.

In addition, the implementation of active community participation remains far from ideal. Good governance requires community involvement in every stage of planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs, but at BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu, the participation of farmer groups is only symbolic. They are involved in technical activities such as planting and harvesting, but are rarely asked for their opinions regarding the evaluation or success of the program. This is reinforced by findings in the field that most activities are communicated unilaterally by management, without going through a representative discussion forum. The absence of formal mechanisms, such as open evaluation forums, training on community rights to BUMDes, and a regular schedule for reporting has resulted in a weak sense of community ownership of BUMDes. As a result, the community plays more of a role as a recipient of policy than as controllers or supervisors of the organization. This situation has an impact on declining institutional accountability, in which administrators work without collective supervision. In fact, active community participation is at the heart of sound governance because without direct involvement, the management of BUMDes risks being controlled by a small elite who has access to decisions and resources.

Another significant challenge is the weak capacity for human resources among administrators and the community. The head of BUMDes, Y. Sanda (interview, 9 May 2025), stressed that the community still tends to depend on assistance without developing this support into something productive and sustainable. Help in the form of seeds, fertilizers, training, and facilities such as grinding machines and drying floors often goes underutilized and is sometimes left unused. Farmers usually lack the skills and technical knowledge they need, and continue to rely on traditional methods even after receiving training. These capacity limitations have caused the BUMDes program to remain stagnant, operating only when there is external support from the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) or other relevant organizations. When assistance stops, activities almost reach a standstill. From a good governance perspective, human resources are the foundation of effective and accountable governance (Sheng, 2009). Without the managerial and technical capabilities of the administrators and a participatory culture among the community, the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability cannot be implemented. Ultimately, BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu appears more as a recipient of assistance than as an independent collective economic institution, thus failing to fulfil its original purpose of improving village welfare in a sustainable manner.

### **3.4 The Impact of Political Dynamics on the Sustainability of BUMDes**

The BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu, established under Law No. 6 of 2014, should ideally be transparent, participatory, and accountable instruments for managing local potential. However, practices in the field show the dominance of village elites and the intervention of external political actors, which reduces the community to mere objects of development (Y. Sanda, interview, May 9, 2025). Political

assistance in the form of agricultural facilities such as rice barns, milling machines, and drying floors is indeed available, but it is not being utilized to its full potential owing to a lack of training, planning, and maintenance systems. Within the framework of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, power in the management of BUMDes is exercised covertly through the distribution of assistance, personal connections, and the influence of positions of authority so that policy direction is determined more by the elite than by collective deliberation. (Elyviatino, 2024). This has caused BUMDes to stagnate and reduce public trust, as evidenced by the large number of neglected facilities. Linda, a field instructor, said that most of the facilities built are rarely used and eventually fall into disrepair (interview, 10 May 2025).



**Figure 1. Rice Management Facility of Kelutap Bersatu Village-Owned Enterprise**

Source: Research Documentation

Figure 1 shows that dependence on power weakens a community's capacity to maintain economic initiatives independently. Another impact that has emerged is the passive involvement of the community and some village heads who feel that they are not fairly involved in the BUMDes structure. Information inequality among member villages, decision-making dominance by certain parties, and the absence of a functional deliberative forum have caused a number of actors to withdraw from the process and no longer actively promote the sustainability of the program. In this context, BUMDes governance failed to meet the principles of good governance, particularly in terms of transparency, accountability, and participation. Overall, the political impact on BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu caused a change in institutional orientation. Instead of serving as a platform for community-focused social entrepreneurship, BUMDes have turned into a tool for political distribution that works only when it has backing from those in power. In the long run, this threatens the ongoing functioning of institutions. This leads to loss of trust, weaker organizational structures, and decreased public involvement.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that the management of BUMDes Bersama Kelutap Bersatu in the Kelam Permai Subdistrict has not fully met its purpose as a collective economic institution based on participation and transparency. The institution is still heavily affected by local elites and political interference. This leads to unequal access to resources, weak accountability, and limited involvement of the community. To address these problems, it is important to strengthen governance. This can be done by making financial reports public, including farmer groups in planning and assessment, and creating forums for collaborative decision making. Additionally, establishing independent oversight and local government policies that encourage professionalism and lessen political influence on aid is vital for BUMDes to operate effectively according to Village Law and improve community well-being.

#### **Ethical Approval**

This study does not require ethical approval because it does not involve any risky experiments or interventions with research participants.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

This study did not require informed consent. The data was collected through interviews, observations, and documentation with individuals who willingly agreed to share information.

### **Authors' Contributions**

AKS. developed the concept and wrote the manuscript. They focused on the writing, data analysis, and methodology sections. FAM. offered guidance, provided theoretical input, and helped edit the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and take full responsibility for its content.

### **Disclosure Statement**

The authors have not disclosed any conflicts of interest.

### **Data Availability Statement**

Interview, observation, and documentation data obtained from the field shall be made available to any interested party upon request to the author, with due regard for the privacy of informants.

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### **Notes on Contributors**

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Asri Kurniati Situmorang is an undergraduate student of the Political Science Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of North Sumatra. Her studies have concentrated on local political dynamics at the village level and community empowerment through village economic institutions. This thesis represents her academic contribution toward an analysis of power relation dynamics and governance of Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) within the scope of rural development.

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Faisal Andri Mahrawa is currently a Lecturer in the Political Science Study Programme, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of North Sumatra. Expertise areas include local politics, public policy, and governance. Supervision entails academic guidance, methodological guidance, and polishing the paper.

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