A Literature Review on Strategic Leadership of Regional Heads: An Examination in Kupang Regency

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A B S T R A C T

Developing and managing 3T areas (Underdeveloped, Outermost, and Frontier) remains a significant challenge due to geographical isolation, limited infrastructure, unequal access to resources and public services, and complex socio-cultural conditions. These challenges require effective strategic leadership from regional heads to ensure responsive governance and sustainable development. This study aims to examine strategic leadership among regional heads in the context of 3T areas, focusing on Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Through a literature review approach, this study explores how regional leaders formulate strategic visions, mobilize local resources, strengthen institutional capacity, and foster cross-sector collaboration to improve regional governance. The findings indicate that adaptive, collaborative, participatory, and data-driven leadership can generate long-term positive impacts on local communities, strengthen organizational resilience, optimize public resource management, and improve policy implementation. Strategic leadership also contributes to inclusive growth, improved public services, community empowerment, and sustainable development. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening leadership capacity and collaborative governance in advancing 3T regions.

INTRODUCTION

National economic growth is influenced by the development processes undertaken by local governments, comprising Indonesia's 514 regencies/cities. Each region implements an annual Work Plan (Renja) and a five-year Strategic Plan (Renstra) to achieve established development goals. In the first quarter of 2024, Indonesia's economic growth reached 5.11% year-on-year, an increase compared to the previous quarter's 5.04%. This growth was supported by increased household consumption and investment in line with the development of National Strategic Projects (PSN).

However, significant development disparities exist between regions. These disparities are caused by various factors, including each region's unique environmental and socio-cultural characteristics, differences in infrastructure, and the distribution of natural and human resources. Furthermore, the leadership of regional heads is crucial. When leadership is ineffective, governance and bureaucratic performance can collapse, hampering overall development.

East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, with its 22 regencies/cities spread across Flores, Sumba, Timor, and other smaller islands (known as FLOBAMORA), is one region that reflects a development gap. Kupang Regency, one of the oldest regencies in NTT, is categorized as a 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, and Outermost) region. Although Kupang Regency's Human Development Index (HDI) increased from 65.04% to 65.82%, significant progress remains elusive, in part due to inconsistent leadership regeneration across successive administrations.

According to (Desi & Sudung, 2022), strategic leadership is the ability to visualize, plan, and lead optimally by utilizing existing resources to implement strategies efficiently and successfully. Strategic leadership significantly impacts organizational performance by driving growth and development in complex environments. However, the effectiveness of strategic leadership can be influenced by external factors and organizational changes (Liden et al., 2025). In the context of local government, strategic leadership is key in facing complex and dynamic challenges, especially in the foremost, outermost, left behind (3T) regions with limited resources and infrastructure (Situmorang et

al., 2019). (Tagscherer & Carbon, 2023) emphasized that strategic leaders must have the ability to adapt, identify opportunities and threats, and develop flexible strategies.

The concept of leadership can also be viewed from the perspective of the trait theory of leadership, which states that leaders possess specific characteristics that make them followable. (Khan et al., 2016) states these traits include skill, responsibility, courage, clear vision, self-confidence, diligence, and agility. In the context of Kupang Regency, strategic leadership is needed to anticipate challenges, maintain flexibility, and create sustainable strategic change, especially in the 24 sub-districts spread across the region.

The leadership of regional heads is often tested by challenging geographic conditions, limited access to basic services, and limited qualified human resources. According to research by (Hombore, 2025a), regional heads in the 3T (Underdeveloped Regions) regions must overcome these challenges by developing relevant and innovative strategies. The 3T regions, as stipulated in Presidential Regulation No. 105 of 2021 concerning the National Strategy for Accelerating the Development of Disadvantaged Regions, have less developed geographical, social, economic, and cultural conditions than other regions.

Strategic leadership is crucial in the successful governance of 3T regions. In Kupang Regency, challenges such as limited infrastructure, limited access to basic services, and economic constraints require appropriate local strategies. Therefore, analyzing the regent's strategic leadership is crucial to understanding strategy implementation within a context full of limitations and complexity.

(Whütington, 2008) defines strategy as achieving organizational goals through procedures focused on long-term targets and resource availability. Various previous studies have explored strategic leadership in different contexts. For example, (Widiastuti et al., 2022) discussed the leadership of the Governor of Bali in responding to the pandemic using a traditional approach and the Tri Hita Kirana concept. Research by (Choirunnisa & Alam, 2023) shows that leadership in sectoral policing can be adapted to conflict motives and the data being managed. More directly relevant to this study, (Tidey, 2018) documents how leadership legitimacy shifted across three rounds of district head elections in Kupang itself between 2007 and 2012, while (Shoesmith et al., 2020) analyze the structural limits on decentralized governance in a neighboring NTT regency, Timor Tengah Selatan.

This study aims to examine data and information on regional leadership and analyze the strategic leadership of the Regent of Kupang Regency in addressing challenges in the 3T (Underdeveloped, Third, and Third Territories) region. It aims to provide relevant insights for improving governance in the 3T (Underdeveloped, Third, and Third Territories) region by exploring formulated strategies, navigating local challenges, and mobilizing resources.

METHOD

Data Collection Strategy

This research method employed a literature review conducted by analyzing several articles from relevant and credible sources. This literature review was followed by a qualitative analysis describing the data from the filtered articles. Based on the selected articles, everything related to the research object was searched for and described as part of the data analysis process. The literature review utilized the Scopus database and Google Scholar.

Data Analysis

The method used was the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA). The inclusion criteria were: 1) documents published within the last five years (2019–2024); 2) documents must be journal articles; 3) research on strategic leadership among regional government leaders in the 3T (Regional and Remote Areas) with a specific focus on Kupang Regency; and 4) articles must be in English. The exclusion criteria were: 1) articles in peer-reviewed articles, reviews, meta-analyses, or the construction and development of measurement tools; 2) articles in a language other than English; 3) duplicate articles. Based on the literature screening results, the authors were limited to publication year (2019-2024), document type (journal article), English language, research on strategic leadership in regional government leaders in the 3T (Regional and Remote Areas), specifically in Kupang Regency, and the subject areas of leadership, governance, strategic management, and regional studies. The authors also ensured that the articles were not duplicates or duplicates published in several databases. A further screening stage was conducted based on titles and abstracts to identify relevant articles.

From both databases, 30 articles were obtained: 10 articles from Google Scholar and 20 from Scopus. After screening the titles and abstracts of relevant articles, 20 articles were obtained: 6 articles from Google Scholar and 14 from Scopus. The title and abstract screening stage identified 10 articles

irrelevant to the strategic leadership of regional heads, and two articles were meta-analyses. Furthermore, 20 articles were selected for further review in this systematic literature review study, with details of 6 articles from Google Scholar and 14 from Scopus.
The search flow for articles in this literature review can be seen in Figure 1.

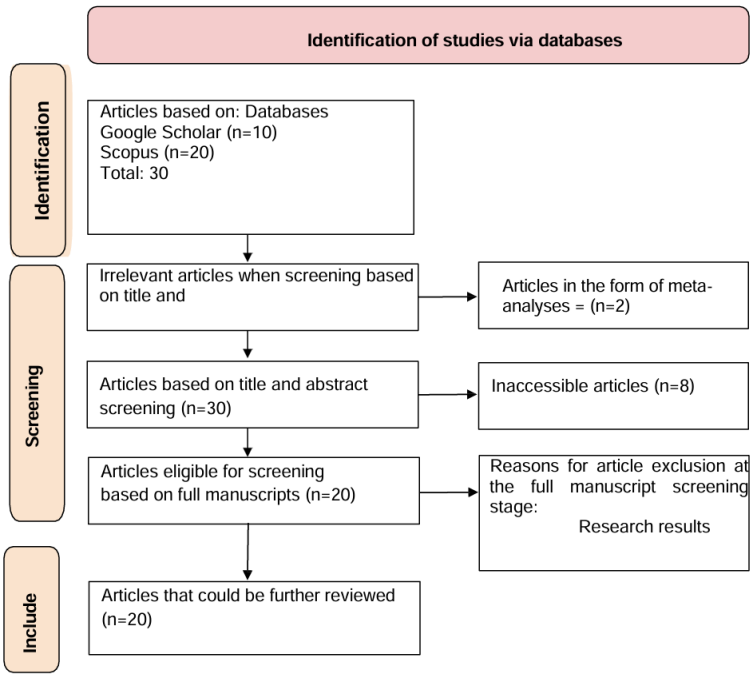


Figure 1. Literature Review Research Method

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This review synthesizes twelve studies that met the full inclusion criteria described above. Table 1 presents each study's identity, the variables examined, the method used, and the key findings, organized to move from the studies set directly in Kupang Regency and neighboring NTT districts to the broader Indonesian and comparative international literature on regional and organizational leadership.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Studies on Strategic Leadership in Regional Governance and 3T Areas

Study	Variables	Method	Key Results
Decentralised Governance in Indonesia's Disadvantaged Regions: A Critique of the Underperforming Model of Local Governance in Eastern Indonesia (Shoesmith et al., 2020)	VD: Governance performance (administrative and fiscal effectiveness). VI: Institutional capacity, resource base, decentralization design.	Qualitative field study in Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS) Regency, West Timor, NTT; document analysis and interviews on district governance under decentralization.	Decentralized governance in a 3T-adjacent NTT regency underperforms in administration and fiscal viability, constrained by limited social capacity, a weak resource base, and strained relations between the regent's office and the district parliament. The study argues that leadership quality interacts with structural limitations to shape governance outcomes in disadvantaged Eastern Indonesian regions.
A Tale of Two Mayors: Configurations of Care and Corruption in Eastern Indonesian Direct District Head Elections	VD: Public trust and perceived legitimacy of regional head leadership. VI: Direct election dynamics,	Ethnographic case study tracing three rounds of direct district head elections in Kupang Regency and Kupang City (2007-2012), combining	Traces how Kupang voters' initial embrace of an anti-corruption district head gave way to the election of a leader later convicted of corruption, illustrating how patronage and care networks shape

Study	Variables	Method	Key Results
(Tidey, 2018)	patronage, anti-corruption framing.	interviews and historical analysis.	strategic leadership choices and outcomes in a 3T-adjacent NTT district.
Regional Head Elections, High-Cost Politics, and Corruption in Indonesia (Agustino et al., 2023)	VD: Quality of regional head leadership and governance. VI: Cost of direct elections, political legitimacy, checks and balances.	Qualitative policy analysis of Indonesia's direct regional head election system, drawing on secondary data and case comparisons across regions.	Direct elections strengthen the political legitimacy of regional heads and institutionalize checks and balances, but high campaign costs create incentives for corrupt practices once elected, shaping how strategic leadership is exercised once in office, including in resource-constrained regions.
Decentralization and Effectiveness of Regional Government: Literature Review on the Implementation of Regional Autonomy in Indonesia (Samsidar, 2025)	VD: Effectiveness of regional government. VI: Institutional capacity, human resource competence, regional head leadership, community participation.	Qualitative literature review of journals, academic books, and policy reports on the implementation of regional autonomy across Indonesia.	The effectiveness of regional government is shaped jointly by institutional capacity, human resource competence, regional head leadership, community participation, and monitoring systems; fiscal dependence on the central government and weak inter-agency coordination remain persistent obstacles, particularly outside Java.
Decentralization without Autonomy: Multilevel Governance Gaps in Indonesia's Borderland Development (Zuhro & others, 2026)	VD: Border governance effectiveness. VI: Fiscal dependency, policy-objective misalignment, institutional capacity, accountability.	Qualitative study combining field observations, 35 semi-structured interviews across governance levels, and policy-document analysis, using the UNPAN seven-gap framework and a multilevel governance typology.	Indonesia's border and 3T regions, including NTT, formally operate under decentralization but function through an interdependent-centralized model in practice; key failures include fiscal dependency, unclear authority distribution between national and regional border-management agencies, and weak executive coordination, underscoring the constrained room for strategic leadership at the regional level.
Smart Village sebagai Solusi Inovatif Pembangunan Daerah Terpencil (Hombore, 2025b)	VD: Effectiveness of remote-area development programs. VI: Digital innovation, local leadership strategy, resource mobilization.	Qualitative literature review of smart-village implementation models proposed for remote and underdeveloped Indonesian regions.	Regional heads in 3T regions can use smart-village and digital-innovation strategies to partially offset infrastructure limitations, provided leadership actively coordinates cross-sector resources and sustains community participation in program design.
Understanding Governance Barriers and Enablers for Municipal and Regional Transition towards Sustainability Wälitalo (2023)	VD: Barriers and enablers to sustainability-oriented governance transitions. VI: Cross-sector collaboration, systemic versus siloed approaches, institutional context.	Field study using focus group discussions with strategic leaders from five cities and one region in Sweden; inductive and deductive analysis mapped against Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD) elements.	Identifies nine recurring categories of barriers and drivers to leadership-driven sustainability transitions in local government (context, economics, clarity, competence, consensus, involvement, inclusion, integration, organization), offering a diagnostic framework transferable to other resource-constrained governance settings.
Examining Leadership Capabilities, Risk Management Practices, and Organizational Resilience:	VD: Organizational resilience. VI: Leadership capabilities, risk management practices.	Quantitative, cross-sectional survey of board members and senior managers across Indonesian state-owned	Leadership capabilities strengthen organizational resilience both directly and indirectly, with risk management practices partially mediating the relationship,

Study	Variables	Method	Key Results
The Case of State-Owned Enterprises in Indonesia (Lisdiono et al., 2022)		enterprises and subsidiaries; structural equation modeling.	indicating that resilient public-sector leadership in Indonesia depends on deliberate risk-management routines rather than leadership alone.
The Influence of Managerial Competence and Achievement Motivation on the Leadership Effectiveness of High School Principals Daulay et al. (2024)	VD: Leadership effectiveness. VI: Managerial competence, achievement motivation.	Quantitative survey of school principals in Medan, Indonesia (sample of 144 drawn via the Cochran formula); path analysis.	Both managerial competence and achievement motivation have significant, independent positive effects on leadership effectiveness among Indonesian public-sector leaders, reinforcing that strategic leadership capacity can be deliberately built through targeted competence development rather than assumed as fixed.
Evaluation of the Impact of Implementing Organizational Culture on Employee Innovative Behavior (Handayani & Pendrian, 2023)	VD: Organizational performance and innovative behavior. VI: Organizational culture, leadership, employment management.	Quantitative survey of 59 employees at the General Bureau of the Regional Secretariat of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) Province, analyzed with the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI).	Staff in an Indonesian provincial secretariat currently experience a competitive, control-oriented leadership culture but express a preference for a more collaborative, people-oriented one; the bureau needs leadership that models engagement, team development, and organizational openness, a pattern relevant to secretariat leadership in other eastern Indonesian provinces.
Collaborative Leadership in Integrated Care Systems: Creating Leadership for the Common Good (Moore et al., 2023)	VD: Resilience and sustainability of collaborative relationships. VI: Integrated governance structures, cross-sector leadership behavior.	Conceptual analysis of policy and organizational-behavior literature on collaborative leadership within integrated public-service systems.	Collaborative, cross-sector leadership oriented toward the common good, rather than structural integration alone, is what sustains resilient partnerships between agencies and communities, a finding directly relevant to how regional heads coordinate across sectors in resource-constrained districts.
Destructive Leadership in Crisis Management (Brandebo, 2020)	VD: Crisis-management outcomes. VI: Destructive leadership behaviors (task-related and relationship-related).	Grounded-theory analysis of interviews with 21 informants involved in regional, local, and operational crisis management in Sweden.	Identifies seven distinct destructive leadership behaviors; task-related behaviors harm the immediate crisis response, while relationship-related behaviors erode subordinates' morale and trust over time, underscoring why flexibility, integrity, and communication are prerequisites for effective strategic leadership under pressure.

Source: Data processed by the authors, 2025.

Findings Directly on Kupang Regency and Neighboring NTT Districts

Three of the twelve studies bear directly on Kupang Regency or its immediate NTT neighborhood, and together they complicate any assumption that formal democratic and administrative reforms automatically produce effective regional leadership. (Tidey, 2018) traces three rounds of direct district head elections in Kupang between 2007 and 2012 and shows that voters initially rewarded a candidate who ran on an anti-corruption platform, only to later elect a leader who was subsequently convicted of corruption. This finding matters for the present review because it demonstrates that strategic leadership legitimacy in Kupang is not static: it is won, tested, and can be lost within a single

electoral cycle, depending on how a leader manages patronage networks and delivers on campaign promises once resources prove scarcer than expected.

(Shoesmith et al., 2020) extend this picture to Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS), a 3T regency bordering Kupang. Their fieldwork finds that decentralized governance in TTS underperforms specifically in administration and fiscal viability, even though political decentralization (the existence of direct elections and a functioning district parliament) has taken hold. They attribute this gap to a combination of limited social capacity, a narrow local revenue base, and, notably, friction between the regent's office and the district parliament, including at least one physical confrontation between a parliament member and a senior civil servant. This is a useful corrective to leadership-centered explanations: it shows that even a capable and well-intentioned regional head in a 3T district operates inside fiscal and institutional constraints that leadership alone cannot resolve. (Zuhro & others, 2026) corroborate this at a broader scale, finding that Indonesia's border and 3T regions, NTT included, remain functionally centralized in fiscal and administrative practice despite the formal architecture of decentralization, which narrows the room for maneuver available to any regional head, however strategically minded.

Findings from the Wider Indonesian Regional-Government Literature

A second cluster of studies examines regional-government leadership across Indonesia more broadly, without a specific NTT focus, and offers findings that are plausibly transferable to Kupang. Agustino, Hikmawan, and Silas (2023) analyze how Indonesia's system of direct regional head elections cuts both ways: it strengthens the political legitimacy of regional heads and institutionalizes checks and balances, but the high cost of campaigning creates strong incentives toward corrupt practices once a leader is in office, a dynamic consistent with what (Tidey, 2018) documents empirically in Kupang. (Samsidar, 2025) , reviewing the broader decentralization literature, finds that the effectiveness of regional government in Indonesia depends jointly on institutional capacity, human-resource competence, regional-head leadership, community participation, and ongoing monitoring, with fiscal dependence on the central government and weak inter-agency coordination remaining persistent obstacles outside Java. This lends empirical weight to the claim, made throughout this review, that leadership is a necessary but not sufficient condition for improved governance in regions like Kupang.

Two Indonesian public-sector studies outside the NTT context add further texture on how leadership capacity is built and can falter. (Lisdiono et al., 2022) , studying state-owned enterprises across Indonesia, find that leadership capabilities strengthen organizational resilience both directly and through their effect on risk-management practices, suggesting that resilience in public institutions is not simply a function of who leads but of the routines leaders put in place. Daulay et al. (2024), studying school principals in Medan, similarly find that managerial competence and achievement motivation each independently and significantly predict leadership effectiveness, reinforcing that strategic leadership capacity in Indonesian public administration is a competence that can be deliberately developed rather than a fixed personal trait. Handayani and Pendrian (2023) offer a more cautionary finding from a provincial secretariat in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), a province that shares much of NTT's socio-geographic profile: staff currently experience a competitive, control-oriented leadership culture, and while they would prefer a more collaborative and people-oriented one, achieving that shift requires leaders who actively model engagement, team development, and organizational openness rather than assuming a cultural shift will occur on its own.

Findings from Comparative International Leadership Literature

The remaining studies are drawn from outside Indonesia but were retained because they offer conceptual or methodological tools directly applicable to 3T governance. (Wälitalo, 2023) study of Swedish municipal and regional leaders identifies nine recurring categories of barriers and enablers to sustainability-oriented governance transitions, several of which, a narrow operational focus on daily

administration, limited cross-sector collaboration, and unclear institutional roles, closely mirror the constraints documented empirically in Kupang and TTS, suggesting the diagnostic framework could be adapted as a practical tool for assessing leadership readiness in Indonesian 3T districts. Moore et al. (2023) examine collaborative leadership in integrated health and social care systems and conclude that resilient cross-sector partnerships depend on leaders who actively cultivate energy, purpose, and courage at every level of the governance system, not on organizational restructuring alone, a finding that speaks directly to the cross-sector collaboration this review identifies as essential for Kupang's development programs. (Brandebo, 2020) finally, offers a needed counterpoint by documenting destructive leadership in Swedish crisis management: her grounded-theory analysis identifies seven distinct destructive behaviors, some task-related and some relationship-related, and shows that a leader who performs adequately on narrow task metrics during a crisis can still severely damage subordinates' trust and long-term morale through poor communication or neglect of relational responsibilities. This distinction between task competence and relational leadership is directly relevant to how destructive leadership is discussed later in this review.

Taken together with (Hombore, 2025b) proposal that smart-village and digital-innovation strategies can help 3T regions partially offset infrastructure limitations, the twelve studies in Table 1 converge on a shared conclusion: strategic leadership in a 3T district such as Kupang Regency cannot be evaluated on leadership quality alone. It must be assessed jointly against the fiscal, institutional, and political constraints documented specifically for Kupang and TTS, against the broader Indonesian evidence that leadership effectiveness is a learnable and improvable competence, and against comparative international evidence on what distinguishes collaborative, resilient leadership from destructive leadership under pressure.

This literature review explores the factors that shape the relationship between leadership and development in underdeveloped, frontier, and outermost (3T) regions. It highlights how strategic leadership can be key to formulating and implementing relevant, innovative, and sustainable policies, particularly in Kupang Regency. The findings summarized in Table 1 point to four interlocking themes: the weight of local context, the need for cross-sector collaboration, the growing role of data and technology, and the risks posed by destructive leadership. Each is discussed in turn below, drawing on both the NTT-specific evidence and the wider comparative literature.

The Role of Local Context in Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership is crucial for adapting strategies to the unique characteristics of Kupang Regency, a 3T region facing complex challenges such as limited infrastructure, resource constraints, and socio-cultural dynamics spread across 24 sub-districts. As (Shoesmith et al., 2020) show for the neighboring TTS regency, effective leadership must align strategy with local needs to promote sustainable development through collaborative governance, because limited social capacity and a weak fiscal base cannot be resolved by leadership intent alone; a regional head who understands this can still direct scarce resources toward the interventions most likely to succeed given local constraints, rather than replicating strategies designed for better-resourced regions. (Tidey, 2018) account of Kupang's own electoral history adds a further layer to this context-sensitivity: local context in Kupang is not only geographic and economic but also political and relational, shaped by patronage networks and clientelist expectations that a strategic leader must navigate rather than ignore. (Zuhro & others, 2026) show that this local context is nested within a national fiscal and institutional structure that itself constrains what any single regional head can achieve, meaning that context-sensitive leadership in Kupang must operate simultaneously at the community level and in negotiation with provincial and national authorities. Leaders who understand this multi-layered local context, and who understand the local cultural context specifically, are better positioned to create more inclusive and effective policies that empower communities in the region rather than imposing generic development templates.

Cross-Sector Collaboration and an Inclusive Approach

A bottom-up leadership approach that actively involves local communities has proven effective in increasing the relevance of regional policies. Cross-sector collaboration is crucial for creating synergy between stakeholders, including communities, the private sector, and government, echoing Moore et al.'s (2023) finding that collaborative leadership oriented toward the common good, sustained by energy, purpose, and courage at every level of the governance system, is what keeps cross-sector partnerships resilient rather than merely formally integrated. This synergy helps integrate local initiatives with national priorities, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and increases efficiency and transparency in policy implementation. (Wälitalo, 2023) diagnostic framework is instructive here: her Swedish case studies show that a narrow, siloed focus on day-to-day operations is one of the most common barriers preventing local leaders from pursuing more ambitious, collaborative strategies, a risk that applies equally to an under-resourced administration like Kupang's, where daily operational demands can easily crowd out longer-term cross-sector planning. (Samsidar, 2025) national review reinforces this point by identifying weak inter-agency coordination as a persistent obstacle to regional-government effectiveness across Indonesia, not a problem unique to any one region. In the context of Kupang Regency, this strategy is particularly relevant for mobilizing local resources, coordinating across the regency's many sub-districts and villages, and building governance that is more adaptive to local challenges than a purely top-down administrative model would allow.

Data- and Technology-Driven Strategic Leadership

This review also highlights the importance of evidence-based decision-making supported by strategic data and technology. Leaders can use this to ensure that formulated policies align with community needs and to measure their impact more effectively, rather than relying on generic assumptions about what 3T communities need. As (Hombore, 2025b) argues, digital and smart-village approaches can help 3T regions like Kupang partially offset infrastructure limitations and accelerate the distribution of public services to remote areas, provided leadership actively sustains community participation in program design rather than treating technology adoption as a purely technical exercise. This theme connects back to the institutional-capacity findings of (Samsidar, 2025) and Shoesmith, Franklin, and Hidayat (2020): digital tools can extend the reach of a resource-constrained administration, but only where the underlying institutional capacity exists to collect, interpret, and act on the data these tools generate. For Kupang Regency specifically, this suggests that data- and technology-driven leadership is likely to be most effective when it is paired with, rather than substituted for, the institutional-capacity building and cross-sector coordination discussed above.

Challenges and Barriers to Leadership

While the potential positive outcomes of strong leadership are significant, destructive leadership behaviors, such as rigidity, neglect of responsibility, or poor communication, can exacerbate challenges, especially in resource-constrained regions like Kupang. Brandebo's (2020) grounded-theory analysis identifies seven distinct destructive leadership behaviors and shows that task-related behaviors primarily damage the immediate response to a crisis or challenge, while relationship-related behaviors erode subordinates' job satisfaction, well-being, and trust over a longer period; critically, she finds that a leader who is competent on narrow task measures during a crisis is not necessarily a good relational leader, and the two should not be conflated when evaluating regional leadership. (Tidey, 2018) account of Kupang's own district head elections illustrates a related but distinct risk: legitimacy gained through anti-corruption positioning can later be undermined by the same patronage pressures that leadership was meant to resist, particularly once campaign financing obligations and clientelist expectations must be reconciled with a limited regional budget, a dynamic Agustino, Hikmawan, and Silas (2023) confirm is a structural feature of Indonesia's high-cost direct-election system rather than a failing specific to any one leader. Handayani and Pendrian's (2023) findings from a neighboring NTB provincial secretariat

add a subtler, everyday version of this risk: even without any single destructive act, a persistently competitive and control-oriented leadership culture can quietly demotivate staff and entrench a defensive, low-engagement bureaucratic style over time. Leaders in 3T regions such as Kupang must therefore demonstrate flexibility, integrity, and a commitment to an inclusive vision, and must be evaluated on both task performance and relational leadership, to avoid stagnation and foster innovative solutions.

Read across these four themes, the Discussion suggests that strategic leadership in Kupang Regency is best understood not as a single trait a regional head either has or lacks, but as an ongoing, multi-level practice: reading and adapting to local context, actively building cross-sector coalitions rather than assuming they will form on their own, using data and technology as an extension of institutional capacity rather than a replacement for it, and remaining accountable to both task performance and relational trust. None of the studies reviewed suggest that any one of these alone is sufficient; rather, the accumulated evidence points to their interaction as the more useful unit of analysis for future empirical research specifically situated in Kupang Regency.

CONCLUSION

This literature review reveals various studies examining the factors influencing strategic leadership in regional governance, particularly in the 3T (Disadvantaged, Frontier, and Outermost) regions, focusing on Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The findings indicate that diverse leadership styles and approaches produce varying impacts. Strategic leadership in 3T regions is crucial in addressing complex challenges such as limited infrastructure, resource access, and socio-cultural dynamics. Effective leaders must formulate relevant, innovative, and sustainable policies that address the community's specific needs. An inclusive, data-driven, collaborative strategic approach can strengthen regional governance and ensure efficient and integrated public services. Leaders who can build an adaptive organizational culture, encourage cross-sector collaboration, and manage resources efficiently can have long-term positive impacts on society and the environment and increase organizational resilience in the face of crises and disruptions.

In the context of the 3T region, Kupang Regency, Kupang, with its 24 sub-districts comprising 17 urban villages and 160 villages, strategic leadership must be flexible and adaptable to local situations to prevent stagnation and find innovative solutions to regional challenges. Destructive leadership behaviors, such as a rigid approach, neglect of responsibility, and poor communication, can exacerbate crises, erode public trust, and demotivate teams. Therefore, leaders must develop a bottom-up approach that empowers local communities and involves them in decision-making. By integrating values such as commitment, integrity, and cross-sector collaboration, regional leaders can leverage local potential as strategic partners to build a more resilient, efficient, and effective system to address the community's needs in Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province.

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