



LEADERSHIP STRATEGY DURING TRANSITION PERIOD IN OPTIMIZING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS (A STUDY OF ACTING REGENTS IN LANGKAT REGENCY IN 2024-2025)

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the leadership strategies of regional heads during the transition period in optimizing development programs in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. The research focuses on how the Acting Regent designs, implements, and optimizes strategies through special programs during the transition period. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, and data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, literature review, and documentation. The results indicate that regional heads play a strategic role in initiating the Bubur Pedas (Bupati Collaborates to Pursue Regional Development Until Completed) program, a form of adaptive, collaborative, and innovative leadership. This program is able to build synergy between stakeholders and the community. However, obstacles such as limited fiscal resources, short terms in office, and negative public stereotypes pose challenges. This study confirms that the success of optimizing development programs is greatly influenced by the capacity and leadership style of regional heads during the transition period.

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1. INTRODUCTION

A decent standard of living is a fundamental issue faced by many countries, particularly developing nations like Indonesia. Its vast territory and population pose significant challenges for the government in achieving the lofty ideals outlined in the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. For example, unequal access to infrastructure, healthcare, and education is often concentrated in areas close to the capital, while remote areas experience isolation, ultimately widening the gap between the rich and the poor (Daniel et al. 2021).

Poverty can be defined as a state where well-being is lacking. Prosperity, also known as prosperity, is a state where people are able to meet their needs beyond basic needs. Poverty is not merely an economic issue. Rather, it is intertwined with the political order (Shalfiah, 2013). Democracy will falter, or even cease to function if poverty remains unresolved. General elections will be marred by money politics manipulation. The lower economic classes, struggling to meet their basic needs, appear apathetic toward government policies. (Sulistiyani, 2004).

Efforts to optimize development programs play a central role as the key owner of the leadership. Credible and capable leadership will determine the policies and strategies used to optimize development

programs. It is undeniable that a leader has a fundamental influence on social and community life. A leader is not merely a commanding officer but also a controller and compass for those who follow him, ensuring they remain on the right track and in the right direction (Siagian, 1999).

In reality, leadership cannot be embodied in life, especially in governance. Leadership plays a highly strategic role. The greatest determining factor in whether a government will fail or succeed lies in leadership skill or ability. A leader's ability to determine and design performance and organize institutions or agencies under their leadership, as well as the achievement of goals and how someone demonstrates their ability to influence the behavior of others (Thoha, 2010).

Within the framework for implementing the 2019–2024 Langkat Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), the local government has established various strategic priorities, including improving the quality of human resources, strengthening infrastructure, providing public services, and reforming governance. As the leadership transition period begins in 2024–2025, the primary challenge is maintaining the continuity of these development programs and ensuring they align with the region's vision and mission. In this context, an effective leadership strategy is crucial for bridging change and optimizing development outcomes (Rambe et al., 2023).

Leadership strategies during this transition period require an adaptive, innovative, and collaborative approach to ensure that the development priorities outlined in the RPJMD not only continue but also become increasingly responsive to community needs. The ability of regional leaders to identify critical transition points and align planning and policy implementation is key to creating government stability and improving development outcomes (Purba et al., 2025).

The power relations theory approach will also be a relevant analytical tool. This theory explains how power does not always reside in the hands of those who formally hold the highest position, but rather how power is constructed and exercised through relationships between figures, including regional leaders, political elites, local bureaucracies, and civil society (Soedarmayanti, 2011; Solihin, 2018). In this context, the launch of the "Bubur Pedas" program can be read as a symbolic and practical strategy by an Acting Regent to negotiate his position of power amidst complex local dynamics.

The program is also inextricably linked to the relationship between the interim regional head and other local figures with interests and influence. This is the crucial point this research aims to examine: how leadership strategies during transitional periods optimize development programs and the extent to which power relations during leadership transitions contribute to the success or failure of these optimization programs. This study highlights the practice of power within the context of transitional leadership.

This study is expected to enrich the study of local political science, particularly in understanding how social action is carried out not only based on the logic of bureaucratic leadership but also on the logic of power relations. This research is also expected to be able to provide a critical overview of the importance of stability, continuity, and political commitment in the process of poverty alleviation in a time full of political uncertainty, therefore the author made the title of this Scientific Paper work, namely "Leadership Strategy during the transition period in optimizing the development program of the case study of the Acting Regent in Langkat Regency in 2024-2025".

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a Qualitative approach, with the aim of explaining and discovering various social phenomena that occur in a certain scope, for example in society. According to Creswell (2008), qualitative research relies heavily on information from participants or objects studied, with a broad scope and general questions. The process involves collecting, explaining, and analyzing data in the form of words or tests, and is carried out subjectively. This research will be conducted in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra province, as a basis for selecting the location; The Langkat Regency area explores the progress of improving regional welfare in leadership during the transition period, with a program that is quite good in optimizing development programs to improve community welfare or poverty alleviation. The program, called Bubur Pedas, is unique because the regional leader in the transition period is less than 2 years and still has a focus on completing regional development, and also what makes researchers interested in developing research in the Langkat Regency area to analyze philosophically how the existence of regional autonomy and leadership in order to solve social problems that are basically unsettling.

No	Research Subject	Informant Status	About the informant
1	Regional Leadership (Acting Regent)	Muhammad Faisal Hasrimy	The Acting Regent is the leader during the 2024-2025 transition period.

2	Government Institutions (Head of BAPPEDA)	Isrofan Zaini	She is a stakeholder in the Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) of the Regional Development Planning Agency (BAPEDA) with a commitment to the Acting Regent's programs.
3	Bureaucratic (ASN)	Apparatus Ika Damayanti	Ika Damayanti is a civil servant within the Langkat Regency government.
4	MSMEs	Suhendro	She is an MSME actor connected to the Acting Regent's programs during the transition period.
5	Local Communities/Community Leaders	Muhammad Jamil	She is a stakeholder in the BAZNAZ institution, specifically as the executive chairperson.
6	Local Communities/Community Leaders	Juli Hukman	She is a stakeholder in the MUI institution, as the head of PINBAS, and a figure with the capability to mentor MSMEs in Langkat Regency with a certified expert.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Langkat Regency 2019–2024 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) document explicitly commits to poverty alleviation and strengthening basic public services. This policy direction is directly reflected in the regional development mission, which emphasizes improving community welfare, empowering the local economy, and fulfilling the basic rights of the poor, such as healthcare and education. In this context, the Regent's Collaborative Program to Pursue Regional Development to Completion (Bubur Pedas) can be positioned as a concrete manifestation of the policy direction mandated by the RPJMD.

The Bubur Pedas Program, an initiative of the Acting Regent, explicitly addresses key issues prioritized in the RPJMD: high poverty rates, low bureaucratic productivity, and weak basic health services. Strategies implemented through this program include the active involvement of all regional apparatus organizations (OPDs), strengthening the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, and optimizing social services such as direct cash assistance and health insurance. This approach aligns with the RPJMD's policy direction, which focuses not only on macro indicators but also prioritizes micro and locally-based efforts to achieve social justice.

Leadership transitions in regional governments are crucial for sustainable development, particularly on crucial issues such as poverty alleviation. During the transition of power, there are shifts in policy direction, adjustments to bureaucratic structures, and the potential for stagnation in the implementation of social programs. Therefore, the role of regional political leadership is crucial, particularly in maintaining the continuity of strategic programs that directly impact the poor.

The leadership of regional officials during the transition of power is crucial for understanding how local government systems can maintain social and economic stability. Transition periods are often prone to program uncertainty. Several previously implemented priority programs may be halted, revised, or even replaced by new programs that may not necessarily be based on the community's real needs. This demonstrates that leadership during transitions requires strategies that are not merely reactive but also adaptive and long-term oriented (Nasir, 2020).

This phenomenon is inseparable from the reality that poverty is not only an economic issue but also a structural and political one. Regional budget policies, resource allocation, development priorities, and the distribution of social assistance are all the result of political decisions made by regional elites. Thus, regional leaders are strategically positioned to effectively intervene to optimize regional development, provided they possess commitment and competence (Muhtar, 2016).

Leadership strategies during transition periods play a crucial role in maintaining government continuity while responding to the pressing needs of the community. In Langkat Regency, the Acting Regent initiated the "Bubur Pedas" program as a policy intervention aimed, among other things, at optimizing regional

development. This program not only reflects a commitment to the community's economy but also represents efforts to build socio-economic resilience amidst local political dynamics.

Adaptation Strategy

The adaptation strategy is one of the key approaches used by the Acting Regent in designing and implementing the BUBUR PEDAS (Bupati Collaborates to Pursue Regional Development Until Completion) Program. In the context of a transitional government, an adaptive approach is highly relevant because it is able to respond to dynamics. As a strategy, adaptation not only reflects the regional leader's ability to adapt programs to local conditions but also demonstrates openness to input from various stakeholders. Head of the Government and Human Development Division, Isrofan Zaini, stated that program implementation is not simply an adaptation of the previous government's program; regular evaluations ensure the adaptation program is running smoothly. With an adaptive approach, policies or programs already implemented during the incumbent regent's administration retain the support of local elites who formed the previous regent's base of support, while minimizing community resistance. Adaptation becomes a form of leadership skill that not only adapts to the existing bureaucratic structure but also bridges change without sacrificing program effectiveness. Thus, adaptation is not merely an attitude but also serves as a concrete managerial strategy and policy to ensure program sustainability during the transitional government. Ongoing programs, such as stunting reduction, are already in place under the incumbent regent. However, with the credibility of a transitional leader, these programs become more vibrant and are not simply neglected, especially in the limited timeframe, coupled with the busy schedule of preparing for major five-yearly agendas. These programs not only address stunting reduction, poverty reduction, inflation control, and good governance, but also adapt policies and programs from the government during normal times (Rizwan, 2019).

Faisal Hasrimy demonstrates the leadership characteristics described in Carlyle's Great Man Theory of Leadership, utilizing limited time as an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to public service. Despite serving in a transitional period, Acting Regent Faisal Hasrimy does not remain passive, simply awaiting instructions from above or even postponing strategic initiatives. Instead, Acting Regent Faisal Hasrimy emphasizes that the Pedas porridge program is not a ceremonial program, but rather part of a concrete solution to improve public welfare. This type of leadership is rare in the context of transitional leaders, where policies are typically merely administrative and maintain the status quo.

Collaborative Strategy

Collaborative strategies are crucial in transitional leadership because they can mitigate the uncertainty that typically arises when formal authority changes. By involving various stakeholders, from internal bureaucracy and private sector stakeholders, community leaders, to religious organizations and business actors, an acting regional head can build a network of trust while ensuring program continuity. Collaboration also facilitates the transfer of institutional knowledge and emphasizes that decision-making processes are participatory, not elitist.

The 2019-2024 Langkat Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) emphasizes a collaborative and integrative approach to development implementation, particularly in the face of fiscal and resource constraints. This is also evident in the implementation of the Bubur Pedas Program, which involves various cross-sectoral funding sources, such as the Regional Budget (APBD), Village Funds, corporate CSR funds, and support from non-governmental organizations (Sitio & Anisykurillah, 2014).

Findings from an interview with Isrofan Zaini, Head of the Governance and Community Development Division, indicate that the financing approach used in the Bubur Pedas Program demonstrates cross-sectoral synergy. In practice, non-priority activities from various regional government agencies (OPD) are refocused to support direct interventions for the extreme poor. This approach aligns with the spirit of budget efficiency and effectiveness in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) and strengthens the principle of mutual cooperation (gotong royong) in development.

In the context of the bubur pedas program, the Acting Regent of Langkat places collaboration as the program's "spirit" to accelerate the achievement of development targets, particularly poverty alleviation. Cross-sector synergy is implemented through regular coordination forums and the active involvement of village officials and grassroots communities. This approach not only strengthens vertical and horizontal coordination but also fosters a sense of ownership among the community in development outcomes (Dalimunthe et al., 2024).

The Acting Regent of Langkat Regency's leadership strategy demonstrates responsive and adaptive leadership, as explained in the Great Man Theory, which posits that great leaders are born in crisis situations and possess the capacity to create significant change. As also explained in collaborative leadership theory,

teamwork, or synergy, is essentially the bond and coordination between each individual within a group. This is necessary to ensure all activities are aligned to achieve agreed-upon targets.

Bureaucratic Mechanism Optimization Strategy

Under transitional leadership, the Acting Regional Head essentially lacks the authority to implement structural bureaucratic reform. However, this limitation does not prevent the emergence of strategic innovations in the form of optimizing bureaucratic mechanisms. This strategy focuses on accelerating coordination flows, reducing cumbersome procedures, and increasing the efficiency of public services without having to overhaul formal institutional structures. This approach is an effective way for a transitional leader to ensure that priority programs remain responsive and on-target.

The Langkat RPJMD also emphasizes the importance of bureaucratic reform, particularly in strengthening the capacity of regional institutions to implement development. In this regard, the Bubur Pedas Program is an effective reform tool because it encourages a shift in bureaucratic culture from a passive one to a proactive and innovative one. Through training, coaching, and the obligation of each Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) to produce programs with direct impact, this reform becomes tangible and measurable. In fact, one tangible impact is an increase in the Langkat Regency Government Agency Performance Accountability System (SAKIP) score to 4.9—a record high in North Sumatra.

These efforts demonstrate how program strategies during the transition period can still support the direction of sustainable bureaucratic reform as outlined in the RPJMD. Transitional leaders not only run the government administratively but also lay the foundation for a system that can be passed down to the next administration. In implementing the "Buruh pedas" (spicy porridge) program, the regent collaborated to pursue regional development through to completion. This strategy was evident in the Acting Regent's efforts to encourage the bureaucracy to be more agile and responsive to community needs. Several practical steps were taken, such as forming cross-sector teams, simplifying communication channels between regional government agencies (OPDs), and expediting the aid disbursement process through existing technical instruments (Harianto et al., 2023).

Regional leadership must also be based on the principles of transparency and accountability. Many cases demonstrate that transitional periods are vulnerable to abuse of authority and a breakdown in accountability for development programs. Therefore, transitional officials must be able to maintain program continuity while remaining open to relevant innovations. In the context of poverty, transparency in the distribution of social assistance, beneficiary data collection, and program impact evaluation are key indicators of successful leadership during transitional periods.

Strategy, Adaptiveness, Collaboration, and Optimization of Bureaucratic Mechanisms reflect strategic leadership responsible for creating harmony between the demands of the external environment of government organizations, strategy, and organizational implementation, with rewards and punishments based on performance achievements, not loyalty or political affiliation. In the context of regional governments often caught up in the politics of reciprocity, an approach of leadership with integrity represents a kind of small reform within the bureaucratic structure (Kholil et al., 2024; Humaizi et al., 2024). Within the context of Michel Foucault's Theory of Power Relations, the approach implemented by Faisal Hasrimy and his team depicts a form of power that is productive, diffuse, and forms independent subjects. Power is not merely interpreted as an instrument of domination, but as a mechanism that encourages officials, stakeholders, and the community to become part of social change. When Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) are required to foster Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), CSR programs are encouraged to participate, and the poor are involved in data collection, a productive and mutually reinforcing network of power is formed.

In this case, power is no longer exclusively in the hands of leaders, but spreads to various lines, as described by Foucault that power works through discourse, norms, and daily practices that form collective consciousness. The statement of one of the people as a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Owner also shows that the transitional leadership carried out by Faisal Hasrimy is not only a leader who is at a symbolic level, but also a firm, humanistic, and accommodating leadership. A Regional Official has the agility to go directly to the regions, even without complicated administrations or protocols. In this context, the strength of the strategy lies in the collaboration between leaders and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise actors who are able to become concrete solutions to the problems that have been felt by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise actors.

The author believes that the Bubur Pedas program is not merely an economic strategy, but also part of an effort to restore grassroots resilience to the pressures of worsening poverty following a leadership vacuum. In a power transition situation, where many regional heads typically adopt a wait-and-see approach,

the acting regent's strategy demonstrates progressive leadership, leveraging the critical moment to create an opportunity for consolidation.

The author believes this step represents a form of visionary leadership in the local context: the courage to assess the situation and act within a short timeframe with a swift yet measured strategy. The Bubur Pedas program demonstrates that policies based on empathy and supported by data can create significant impact, both socially and politically.

However, the author also acknowledges that this policy remains at risk of discouraging others from carrying out their duties, especially if not institutionally integrated. A strategy that relies heavily on a leader can weaken when a regional head changes. Therefore, the author believes that this program should not stop at merely technocratic achievements, but rather should be considered part of a more inclusive and sustainable local governance reform agenda. Through this dialectic, the author concludes that the transitional leadership strategy implemented by the Acting Regent has significant leverage in optimizing regional development, particularly because he is able to integrate social sensitivity, bureaucratic assertiveness, and economic prominence into a single, collective movement. In such a limited situation, the presence of a leader capable of orchestrating local potential is crucial, not only as an emergency solution but also as a new form of transformative leadership.

4. CONCLUSION

The transitional leadership strategy implemented by Faisal Hasrimy in the Bubur Pedas Program demonstrates an adaptive, collaborative leadership style focused on bureaucratic efficiency in efforts to optimize development programs. This approach does not rely on long-term planning, but rather is rooted in swift action and synergy across local actors. This strategy has proven capable of implementing the program amidst the limited authority of an Acting Regent. However, the program's success faces institutional constraints, a sluggish bureaucratic culture, suboptimal cross-sectoral coordination, and the absence of regulations that strengthen program sustainability. Dependence on a leadership figure makes the program vulnerable to interruption after the transition period. Therefore, the sustainability of poverty alleviation strategies in the region requires strengthened governance. These findings indicate that a transitional leadership strategy can have a positive impact on optimizing development programs if implemented adaptively and collaboratively. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish a regulatory framework that allows innovative programs to be institutionalized and allocated within regional medium-term planning to ensure their sustainability across tenures and leadership roles.

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