

# The Contribution of Quality Human Resources of Village Heads to the Achievement of Independent Villages

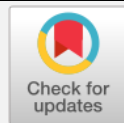
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## ABSTRACT

The limited availability of quality human resources within the bureaucracy, particularly in village governments, often results in stagnation and delays in achieving Independent Village status. One of the primary challenges faced by villages in Indonesia is the relatively low quality of village heads' human resources. This study employs a quantitative research approach, utilizing documentation studies for data collection and simple statistical tests for analysis. The findings were then interpreted, discussed, and concluded. The study reveals that, as of 2023, the Special Region of Yogyakarta (D.I. Yogyakarta) had the highest proportion of village heads with Doctoral (S3) and Master's (S2) degrees, correlating with the successful attainment of Independent Village status. Gorontalo Province, with the highest percentage of village heads holding Bachelor's (S1) and Diploma (D.IV) degrees, achieved Advanced Village status. Similarly, the Riau Islands Province, with a predominance of village heads educated to the Senior High School level or equivalent, also attained Advanced Village status. Conversely, West Papua Province, characterized by the highest percentage of village heads with education below Senior High School, remained categorized as a Disadvantaged Village. These findings underscore the significant impact of village heads' educational qualifications on the Village Development Index (VDI) growth and scores. Village heads with higher education levels (S3, S2, S1, and Diploma) and those with high school or equivalent education positively influence VDI growth rates and scores. In contrast, village heads with education levels below Senior High School demonstrate slower and lower VDI growth rates. This highlights the crucial role of high-quality village heads in advancing village development, accelerating progress, and achieving Independent Village

*status.*

**Keywords:** *Educational Quality; Human Resources; Independent Village; Village Development Index (VDI); Village Heads*

## 1. Introduction

The Village Head (*Kepala Desa*, abbreviated as Kades) plays a pivotal role in all aspects of village governance and development. As such, the Village Head's human resources must exhibit high quality and competence. The primary factor in assessing the quality of these human resources is their level of education. High-quality human resources among Village Heads serve as essential human capital for driving village development. Suhendra emphasizes that human capital—manifested through high-quality human resources—plays a significant role in fostering development, including economic progress (Suhendra, 2020). Similarly, Benawa highlights that development requires educated, skilled individuals proficient in science and technology. Improving the living standards of a nation and its people can be effectively achieved through mastery of knowledge and technology (Benawa, 2012).

The same principle applies to village development efforts aimed at achieving progress, independence, and community welfare. High-quality human resources, particularly among Village Heads as managers and decision-makers, are crucial for effective village development policies. According to Sunggoro, development in villages is essential because a significant portion of Indonesia's population resides in rural areas, many of which suffer from high poverty rates (Sunggoro, 2022). In this context, Hilmawan et al. argue that poverty eradication and rural community welfare improvements are pursued through development and community empowerment (Hilmawan et al., 2023). It is within this framework that the government introduced the village fund policy, monitored through the Village Development Index (VDI).

The Village Head is a key actor in implementing development initiatives and empowering communities to advance village independence and improve welfare. Independent Village status represents the highest classification a village can achieve under the VDI framework. According to the Ministry of Village, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration of the Republic of Indonesia, only 0.46% of villages in Indonesia held Independent Village status in 2018, a stark contrast to the 99.54% of villages categorized as Advanced, Developing, Disadvantaged, or Very Disadvantaged (Kementerian Desa Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal dan Transmigrasi, 2018). However, by 2023, the number of Independent Villages increase to 15.22% (Kementerian Desa Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal dan Transmigrasi, 2023).

Despite this progress, several challenges remain, particularly the limited access to qualified human resources. A significant factor in evaluating the competence of Village Heads is their educational background. Currently, most Village Heads in Indonesia have an educational background of Senior High School or lower, with only a small proportion holding higher education degrees. Moreover, there are noticeable regional disparities in the educational levels of Village Heads. While some provinces have the highest percentage of Village Heads with education below Senior High School, others lead in having Village Heads with Senior High School, diplomas, bachelor's, or postgraduate degrees (Dihni, 2022). These disparities reflect the uneven distribution of Village Head competencies across regions.

This uneven educational distribution raises concerns about its potential impact on village progress and independence. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on provinces with the

highest percentage of Village Heads possessing various levels of education, from below Senior High School to postgraduate qualifications. It examines the extent of their contributions to the Village Development Index (VDI) growth and achievement.

This study aims to analyze the extent to which the educational levels of Village Heads, as represented by provinces with the highest percentages at each educational level, contribute to the average growth rate of the Village Development Index (VDI).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Human Resources in the Public Sector

Human resources (HR) in the public sector refers to personnel managed and directly supervised by the government to deliver public services, including civil services, as part of the bureaucratic and governance system (Setyabudi, 2020). Professional and competent public sector employees form the backbone of effective public service delivery, which is a fundamental responsibility of the bureaucracy (Irianto, 2012).

Santa and Ngesti highlight a strong correlation between public service quality, human resource competence, and public satisfaction (Santa & Ngesti, 2022). High-quality human resources demonstrate robust knowledge, practical skills, organizational and planning capabilities, and strong motivation, all of which contribute to increased public satisfaction. According to Pirantika et al., the quality of human resources is the most dominant factor influencing performance (Pirantika et al., 2023). Skilled and knowledgeable personnel directly enhance the achievement of organizational goals.

Rahayu defines human resources as sources of potential, strength, and ability within individuals, which determine their behavior and quality (Rahayu, 2020). Organizations with high-performing human resources are more likely to be effective, efficient, and competitive. The quality of human resources is influenced by factors such as skills, educational background or knowledge level, experience, maturity, attitudes, and values (Sidabutar, 2022). In the context of development, human resources are the driving force behind innovation, leading to the creation of systems and methods that contribute to societal progress (Abdillah & Ramadhan, 2023).

### 2.2. Villages and Village Governance

Kartohadikoesoemo defines a village as a legal entity consisting of a community within a specific area that possesses the authority to govern itself (Kartohadikoesoemo, 1984). This autonomy grants villages the right to manage and regulate their affairs. The more recent Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages (Republik Indonesia, 2014) defines a village as a legal community unit with defined territorial boundaries authorized to manage and regulate governmental affairs and local community interests. This is based on community initiatives, customary rights, and/or traditional rights recognized within Indonesia's governance system.

Law No. 6/2014 outlines that village governance is conducted by the Village Government, which comprises the Village Head and is supported by the village apparatus. This apparatus includes:

- 1) The village secretariat;
- 2) Territorial implementers; and
- 3) Technical implementers.

The Village Head and apparatus are thus integral to the lowest administrative level of government, forming part of the national bureaucratic structure.

### 2.3. Village Development Index (VDI) and Independent Villages

The Village Development Index (VDI) is a composite index designed to measure village development across social, economic, and cultural dimensions. The VDI aims to support efforts in achieving village development goals by increasing the number of Independent Villages and reducing the number of Disadvantaged Villages. A key feature of the VDI is its adaptability to the unique characteristics of each village, fostering new strengths and revitalizing the spirit of village life.

The VDI promotes progress and community empowerment through development processes driven by local initiatives and capacities. It incorporates various aspects, including social, economic, and ecological resilience, with an emphasis on strengthening village autonomy through community empowerment.

An Independent Village is defined as a developed village capable of implementing development initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life and well-being of its community. This status reflects sustainable social, economic, and ecological resilience. According to Regulation No. 2 of 2016 on the Village Development Index, Independent Villages represent the pinnacle of achievement under the VDI framework (Menteri Desa, Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal, 2016).

### 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between the educational qualifications of Village Heads and the growth rate of the Village Development Index (VDI). Data were collected through documentation studies, focusing on secondary sources such as official reports, statistical records, and government publications related to village governance and development.

The data were processed and analyzed using simple statistical methods, including the calculation of average growth rates for VDI achievements across selected provinces. These provinces were chosen based on the highest percentages of Village Heads with specific educational levels. The analysis focused on identifying patterns and relationships between educational attainment and VDI outcomes.

The results were interpreted within the context of existing literature and discussed to draw meaningful conclusions regarding the contribution of Village Heads' educational quality to village development.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Research Findings

##### 4.1.1. Quality of Village Heads' Human Resources Based on Education Level

The quality of Village Heads' human resources is a critical determinant of successful village development. In other words, having qualified Village Heads is essential for villages across Indonesia. The primary and most general indicator for assessing the quality of a Village Head is their educational level.

**Table 1. Distribution of Village Heads' Educational Levels by Province and Percentage**

Education Level	Province	Percentage (%)
Below Senior High School	West Papua	58.47
Senior High School	Riau Islands	76.81
Bachelor's (S1) or Diploma	Gorontalo	44.75



Education Level	Province	Percentage (%)
Master’s (S2) or Doctoral (S3)	Special Region of Yogyakarta	11.22

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2022 (Dihni, 2022)

Educational attainment among Village Heads varies significantly across regions. The research focuses on data indicating the highest percentages of Village Heads’ educational levels in specific provinces, as follows:

- 1) Village Heads with education below Senior High School  
The province with the highest percentage of Village Heads with education below Senior High School (58.47%) is West Papua.
- 2) Village Heads with Senior High School and equivalent education  
The Riau Islands province has the highest percentage of Village Heads with Senior High School education (76.81%).
- 3) Village Heads with Bachelor’s (S1) or Diploma education  
Gorontalo province has the highest percentage of Village Heads with a Bachelor’s degree or Diploma education (44.75%).
- 4) Village Heads with Master’s (S2) or Doctoral (S3) education  
The Special Region of Yogyakarta has the highest percentage of Village Heads with Master’s and Doctoral degrees (11.22%).

This data highlights significant regional disparities in the educational levels of Village Heads. Overall, most Village Heads in Indonesia have educational qualifications at or below the Senior High School level. However, the four provinces listed above lead in terms of specific educational categories, illustrating notable regional variations in the quality of Village Heads’ human resources.

#### 4.1.2. Village Development Index (VDI) Achievement Levels and Independent Villages

The Village Development Index (VDI) achievement levels, based on the educational attainment of Village Heads in the four provinces (D.I. Yogyakarta, Gorontalo, Riau Islands, and West Papua), were analyzed for the period 2015–2023. The results are summarized in **Error! Reference source not found.**

**Table 2. The Achievement of Village Development Index (VDI), 2015–2023**

No.	Province	VDI Achievement								Status
		2015	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
1.	Special Region of Yogyakarta	0.6940	0.6939	0.7264	0.7503	0.7684	0.7837	0.8128	0.8322	Independent
2.	Gorontalo	0.5870	0.5873	0.5950	0.6346	0.6580	0.6736	0.7068	0.7317	Advanced
3.	Riau Islands	0.5590	0.5589	0.6092	0.6310	0.6562	0.6681	0.6914	0.7101	Advanced
4.	West Papua	0.4600	0.4580	0.4580	0.4819	0.4963	0.5045	0.5184	0.5196	Under-Developed

Source: (Kementerian Desa Pembangunan Daerah Tertinggal dan Transmigrasi, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023)

**Error! Reference source not found.** demonstrates variations in VDI achievement levels across the provinces. In 2023, the provinces achieved the following:

- 1) Special Region of Yogyakarta  
VDI score of 0.8322, attaining the status of Independent Village.
- 2) Gorontalo  
VDI score of 0.7317, achieving the status of Advanced Village.
- 3) Riau Islands  
VDI score of 0.7101, also attaining the status of Advanced Village.
- 4) West Papua  
VDI score of 0.5196, remaining categorized as an Underdeveloped Village.

These results indicate that provinces with higher educational levels among Village Heads tend to achieve higher VDI scores and better development outcomes. Conversely, West Papua, where most Village Heads have education levels below Senior High School, continues to face challenges in advancing its VDI score and remains underdeveloped.

#### 4.2. Analysis Results

The analysis of the average growth rate of the Village Development Index (VDI) across the four provinces studied (2015–2023) reveals significant differences. The findings, summarized in Error! Reference source not found., highlight the impact of Village Heads’ educational levels on VDI growth rates.

**Table 3. Growth Rate of Village Development Index (VDI), 2015–2023**

No.	Province	Growth Rate of VDI by Year								Average Annual Growth Rate of VDI
		2015	2016	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
1.	Special Region of Yogyakarta	-0.001	0.034	0.024	0.019	0.015	0.030	0.019	-0.001	0.020
2.	Gorontalo	0.0003	0.008	0.039	0.023	0.015	0.033	0.024	0.0003	0.020
3.	Riau Islands	-0.001	0.049	0.022	0.024	0.012	0.023	0.019	-0.001	0.021
4.	West Papua	-0.002	0	0.024	0.014	0.009	0.014	0.001	-0.002	0.009

Source: Secondary Data Processing Results, 2023

The data indicate that provinces with Village Heads possessing higher educational levels tend to achieve higher average annual VDI growth rates. Conversely, provinces where Village Heads have lower educational attainment exhibit slower growth.

- 1) Special Region of Yogyakarta  
With the highest percentage of Village Heads holding postgraduate (S2/S3) degrees, the province achieved an average annual VDI growth rate of 0.020, attaining Independent Village status in 2023.
- 2) Gorontalo  
Village Heads with Bachelor’s (S1) and Diploma IV (D.IV) qualifications contributed to an average annual VDI growth rate of 0.020, resulting in an Advanced Village status.

3) Riau Islands

The province achieved the highest average annual VDI growth rate of 0.021, driven by Village Heads with Senior High School or equivalent education, earning Advanced Village status.

4) West Papua

With the majority of Village Heads educated below Senior High School, the province recorded the lowest average annual VDI growth rate of 0.009, maintaining an Underdeveloped Village status.

These findings underscore the critical role of education in enhancing village development outcomes. Higher educational levels among Village Heads significantly correlate with accelerated VDI growth and the attainment of higher village development statuses, such as Independent or Advanced Village. Conversely, lower educational qualifications impede progress, as seen in the case of West Papua.

### 4.3. Discussion

#### 4.3.1. The Contribution of Village Heads to VDI Achievement and Independent Villages

The statistical analysis reveals significant differences in the average Village Development Index (VDI) growth rate, indicating a correlation between the VDI growth rate and the education level of Village Heads (*Kepala Desa*, abbreviated as Kades). Generally, regions where Kades possess higher education levels tend to demonstrate higher VDI growth rates. The average VDI growth rate is analyzed based on the provinces with the highest percentages of Kades' educational attainment from 2015 to 2023.

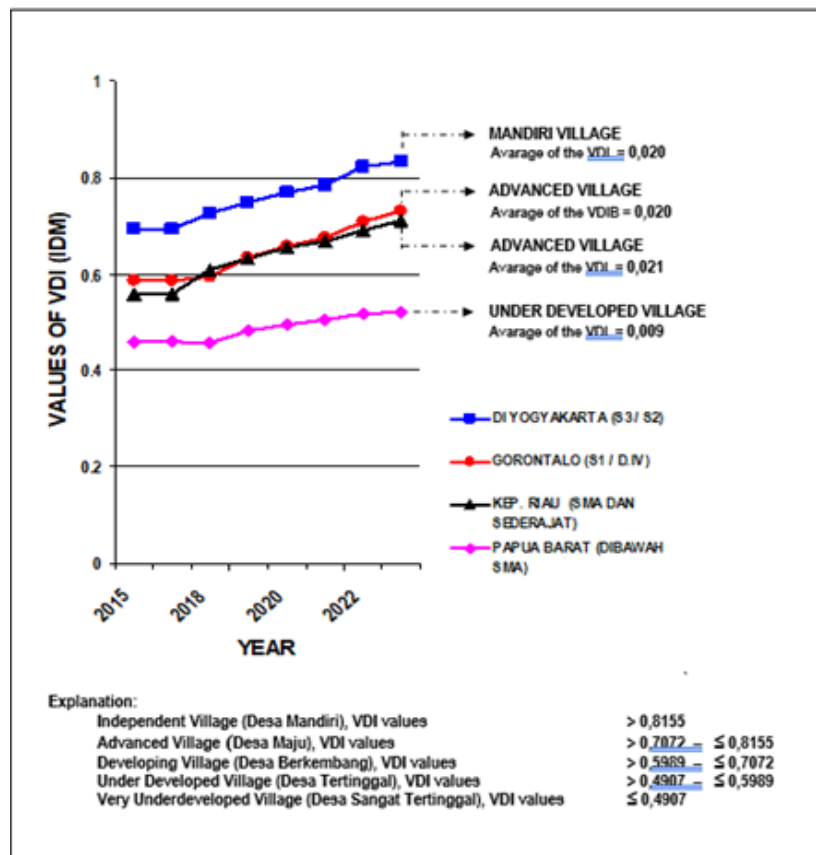


Figure 1. The Growth Rate of Village Development Index (VDI), 2015–2023

The VDI values and growth rates illustrate the dynamics of village development across regions. In general, the VDI growth rate in the provinces of Special Region of Yogyakarta (D.I. Yogyakarta), Gorontalo, and Riau Islands is relatively high, at 0.020 per year (D.I. Yogyakarta and Gorontalo) and 0.021 per year (Riau Islands). Conversely, West Papua shows a relatively low growth rate of 0.009 per year. These figures reflect the speed of village development program implementation, where higher growth rates indicate more rapid progress in achieving higher VDI scores.

In 2023, the Special Region of Yogyakarta became the fastest province to achieve the status of Independent Village. This achievement highlights the dynamic nature of village development in the region, facilitated by Kades with higher educational qualifications, such as postgraduate degrees (Strata-2/S2 or Strata-3/S3). These Kades have effectively contributed to development efforts, mobilizing community participation in collaboration with local institutions. As noted by Nurkomala et al., institutions such as the Community Empowerment Agency play a pivotal role in fostering community involvement, particularly in prioritizing development programs and ensuring the sustainability of their outcomes (Nurkomala et al., 2023).

The attainment of Independent Village status in D.I. Yogyakarta, based on VDI scores, signifies a high level of development across social, economic, and ecological dimensions. Independent Villages are defined by composite indices—Social Resilience Index (SRI), Economic Resilience Index (ERI), and Environmental Resilience Index (EnRI)—all exceeding the threshold of 0.815. This status reflects the successful cultivation of community strengths and initiatives, leading to significant empowerment and resilience within village life.

In Independent Villages, external interventions are expected to decrease, allowing villages to sustain their development autonomously. As Hadiwibowo et al. suggest, villages



with higher VDI indices tend to focus on enhancing social and environmental outcomes rather than relying on external support (Hadiwibowo et al., 2023).

In 2023, the provinces of Gorontalo and Riau Islands achieved the status of Advanced Village, demonstrating dynamic growth in their VDI rates. These provinces benefitted from Kades with higher education levels, such as a Bachelor's degree (S1) or Diploma IV (D.IV) in Gorontalo and Senior High School or equivalent in Riau Islands. Advanced Village status, characterized by VDI composite indices ranging from 0.707 to 0.815, indicates considerable progress but also ongoing developmental needs.

By contrast, West Papua remains in the Underdeveloped Village category, with a low average VDI growth rate of 0.009. This reflects limited development activity, largely attributed to Kades, whose education levels are predominantly below Senior High School. Such educational gaps hinder their capacity to effectively contribute to village development initiatives, resulting in low VDI growth.

The Underdeveloped Village status, with VDI indices between 0.491 and 0.599, signals significant vulnerabilities in social, economic, and ecological dimensions. These villages lack sufficient community initiatives and capacities for empowerment, requiring substantial external interventions to stimulate growth and lay the groundwork for sustainable development.

#### **4.3.2. The Role of Human Resources in Village Development**

High-quality Human Resources (HR) among Kades play a critical role in accelerating village development. Kades, with strong educational qualifications, possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to manage village assets, foster socio-economic resilience, and empower communities effectively (Che & Mbah, 2021). This is evident in the success of regions such as D.I. Yogyakarta, Gorontalo, and Riau Islands, where higher educational attainment among Kades correlates with rapid VDI growth and the achievement of Independent or Advanced Village status.

Conversely, the challenges faced by West Papua underscore the importance of enhancing the education levels of Kades to support more equitable development outcomes across regions. Higher education levels among Kades contribute to improved knowledge, skills, and organizational capabilities, which directly impact productivity and the effectiveness of village governance (Irawan et al., 2022; Lesmana & Lestari, 2022).

In addition to the qualifications of Kades, active community participation is indispensable for sustainable village development. Institutions such as the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and other local stakeholders are crucial in planning and resource allocation to achieve development goals (Muhtar et al., 2023). Public spaces, as highlighted by Lukas Ley (2023), facilitate engagement between citizens and government officials, fostering collaboration and driving development priorities (Ley, 2023).

Improving the quality of HR among Kades and enhancing community participation are key strategies for advancing village development in Indonesia. These efforts are vital not only for achieving Independent and Advanced Village status but also for promoting sustainable development and resilience across all regions.

## **5. Conclusion**

The research findings indicate that the province of D.I. Yogyakarta, which has the highest percentage of Village Heads (*Kepala Desa* or Kades) with postgraduate education (S3 and S2), successfully achieved the status of Independent Village. Similarly, Gorontalo, with the highest proportion of Village Heads holding Bachelor's degrees (S1) and Diplomas (D.IV), attained the

status of Advanced Village. The province of Riau Islands, where most Village Heads have a Senior High School or equivalent education, also achieved Advanced Village status. In contrast, West Papua, which has the highest percentage of Village Heads with education levels below Senior High School, remains categorized as an Underdeveloped Village.

The quality of human resources (HR) in Village Heads significantly impacts the achievement of Village Development Index (VDI) scores and the realization of Independent Village status. High-quality Village Heads with better educational backgrounds accelerate VDI growth rates and facilitate the transition to higher village statuses. This underscores that the education level and overall quality of Village Heads are critical factors influencing the success of village development and the attainment of Independent Village status.

To address these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1) **Strengthen and Improve the Quality of HR in Village Heads**  
Initiatives should be implemented to encourage and provide opportunities for skilled and highly educated individuals living in urban areas to return to their villages and actively participate in local development. Additionally, Village Heads and their staff should pursue continuous learning and professional development, including higher education.
- 2) **Provide Active and Systematic Support from the Government and Stakeholders**  
Governments and relevant parties must actively engage in addressing challenges and obstacles to village development. This includes offering targeted support and creating practical solutions to enhance the administrative and operational capacities of village leadership.
- 3) **Create and Foster a Conducive Environment for Creativity and Innovation**  
Stakeholders and policymakers should consistently promote and develop spaces that encourage innovation and creativity in villages. This includes fostering new ideas and innovative approaches to addressing local challenges and supporting sustainable development initiatives that align with the unique characteristics of each village.

Enhancing the quality of HR among Village Heads, coupled with systematic government support and fostering innovation, is essential for accelerating village development and ensuring equitable growth across all regions.

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## 7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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