



Review Article

Evaluation of the Papuan Special Autonomy Fund Policy: A Review of the Literature on Accountability, Targeting, and Justice for the Indigenous Papuans

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Abstract: The Papua Special Autonomy Fund (Dana Otonomi Khusus Papua) represents a key instrument of Indonesia's asymmetric fiscal decentralization aimed at reducing historical inequalities, accelerating regional development, and promoting social justice for Indigenous Papuans. However, after more than two decades of implementation, concerns persist regarding its effectiveness in producing equitable welfare outcomes, particularly with respect to accountability, targeting accuracy, and distributive justice. This literature review critically examines existing scholarly research on the governance, implementation, and impacts of Dana Otsus Papua, with an emphasis on how institutional arrangements shape policy performance and equity outcomes. The study employs a narrative-critical literature review enriched with systematic elements, including transparent search procedures, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, and thematic synthesis. Peer-reviewed journal articles and reputable conference proceedings were analyzed using thematic analysis and conceptual mapping to identify dominant findings, methodological approaches, and research gaps. The synthesis reveals recurring patterns across the literature. Accountability mechanisms remain fragmented and weakly integrated across planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Targeting accuracy is inconsistent, with fiscal benefits frequently failing to reach Indigenous Papuans as intended. Moreover, distributive justice outcomes depend more on institutional recognition, participation, and governance capacity than on the size of fiscal transfers alone. The review also highlights a critical gap in integrative evaluations that link governance arrangements, implementation processes, and equity outcomes. The article concludes that improving Dana Otsus Papua requires a shift from expenditure-focused assessments toward governance- and justice-oriented evaluation frameworks. The study contributes theoretically by integrating accountability, implementation, and distributive justice perspectives, and offers practical insights for strengthening oversight, refining targeting mechanisms, enhancing participatory governance, and embedding digital tools within accountability systems.

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1. Introduction

Policy context and urgency

Papua's Special Autonomy Fund (Dana Otonomi Khusus Papua) constitutes a central instrument of Indonesia's asymmetric decentralization, designed to address historical disparities, accelerate regional development, and promote social justice for Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua, OAP). Since its inception, the policy has channeled substantial fiscal transfers to subnational governments with the expectation of improving welfare outcomes in education, health, and basic services while strengthening local governance capacity. In theory, special autonomy grants are intended to correct structural disadvantages through targeted spending and enhanced local discretion, thereby aligning fiscal decentralization with development objectives (Faguet, 2014). However, after more than two decades of implementation, Papua continues to face persistent challenges related to poverty reduction, human development, and equitable access to public services. Empirical assessments indicate that large fiscal transfers do not automatically translate into improved outcomes without robust accountability mechanisms and effective implementation arrangements (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Prabowo et al., 2019). Consequently, the urgency of evaluating the Special Autonomy Fund has intensified, not only to assess its developmental effectiveness but also to scrutinize the governance structures that mediate the relationship between fiscal decentralization and social justice outcomes in Papua.

Core implementation problems: accountability, targeting, and justice

A growing body of literature identifies three interrelated problems in the implementation of the Papua Special Autonomy Fund: weak public accountability, inaccurate policy targeting, and persistent distributive injustice affecting OAP communities. Studies document deficiencies in financial and performance accountability, including limited transparency, fragmented oversight, and inadequate monitoring of program outcomes (Ginting, 2023; Aziz et al., 2025). These weaknesses are often associated with disproportionate administrative expenditures and limited alignment between budget allocations and substantive development programs, undermining the fund's intended redistributive function. Moreover, evidence suggests that policy benefits are not consistently targeted toward Indigenous Papuans, raising concerns about equity and inclusion within special autonomy governance (Silaban et al., 2025). From a distributive justice perspective, scholars argue that the persistence of inequality reflects not only technical shortcomings but also deeper governance and institutional constraints that marginalize indigenous priorities in planning and budgeting processes (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Together, these findings underscore that the effectiveness of Dana Otsus Papua cannot be evaluated solely through financial absorption rates; rather, it requires a multidimensional assessment that foregrounds accountability and justice as core evaluative criteria.

Existing approaches and methodological tendencies in the literature

Methodologically, prior studies on the Papua Special Autonomy Fund employ diverse approaches, ranging from quantitative analyses of poverty and human development indicators to qualitative case studies of program implementation and governance arrangements. Quantitative research has contributed valuable insights into aggregate outcomes, such as the relationship between special autonomy funds and poverty reduction or human development indices (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). Qualitative and legal-institutional studies, in contrast, have illuminated governance processes, compliance with regulatory frameworks, and political dynamics shaping fund allocation and oversight (Purwadi, 2018; Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). While these approaches offer important empirical contributions, they often remain analytically fragmented, focusing on isolated dimensions such as fiscal performance, sectoral outcomes, or legal compliance. As a result, the literature tends to underexplore the interconnections between accountability mechanisms, implementation processes, and distributive outcomes for OAP. This fragmentation limits cumulative knowledge building and constrains the ability of policymakers to derive integrative lessons from existing research.

Research gap and need for a comprehensive synthesis

Despite the expanding body of empirical work, there remains a notable gap in the literature: the absence of a comprehensive and critical synthesis that evaluates the Papua

Special Autonomy Fund through an integrated lens of public accountability and distributive justice. Existing reviews rarely consolidate findings across methodological traditions or explicitly connect evaluation results to broader theories of policy accountability and implementation (Bovens, 2007; Koppell, 2005). Consequently, key questions remain insufficiently addressed, including how accountability deficits shape targeting failures, and how governance arrangements influence distributive outcomes for Indigenous Papuans. Moreover, limited attention has been paid to the role of planning, budgeting, and digital governance systems in mediating policy performance and transparency. This gap is particularly consequential given the increasing reliance on information systems and performance-based frameworks in public sector governance. Addressing this limitation requires a literature review that moves beyond descriptive aggregation toward a narrative–critical synthesis capable of identifying patterns, contradictions, and unresolved debates within the field.

Objectives and contributions of the article

In response to these gaps, this article aims to conduct a narrative–critical literature review, enriched with systematic elements, to synthesize and evaluate scholarly research on the Papua Special Autonomy Fund. Specifically, the review seeks to (1) map dominant themes and empirical findings related to accountability, targeting accuracy, and distributive justice; (2) critically assess how policy implementation and governance structures shape observed outcomes; and (3) identify conceptual and empirical gaps that inform future research agendas. Theoretically, the article contributes to public policy evaluation scholarship by integrating accountability and justice perspectives within the analysis of asymmetric decentralization. Practically, it offers policy-relevant insights for improving the design, monitoring, and governance of Dana Otsus Papua, with particular attention to enhancing benefits for Indigenous Papuans. By providing a comprehensive synthesis grounded in established evaluation and governance theories, this review seeks to inform both academic debate and evidence-based policy reform in Papua’s special autonomy framework.

2. Literature Review

Public Policy Evaluation Theory and Concepts

Public policy evaluation constitutes a systematic and evidence-based process aimed at assessing the design, implementation, and results of public interventions in relation to their stated objectives and societal values. Classical and contemporary scholars conceptualize evaluation as an analytical activity that examines whether a policy achieves its intended goals, uses resources efficiently, and produces meaningful outcomes for target populations (Bovens, 2007; Prabowo et al., 2019). Beyond technical assessment, policy evaluation serves normative and political purposes by enhancing transparency, strengthening accountability, and informing decision-making processes within democratic governance systems. In the context of decentralization, evaluation becomes particularly critical because policy authority and fiscal discretion are devolved to subnational governments, increasing the risk of implementation gaps and accountability deficits (Faguet, 2014). Consequently, evaluation is not limited to measuring performance indicators but also involves examining governance arrangements, institutional capacities, and incentive structures that shape policy outcomes. For special fiscal arrangements such as the Papua Special Autonomy Fund, policy evaluation provides a foundational framework to assess whether asymmetric decentralization has effectively addressed historical inequalities and development disparities while remaining aligned with principles of public accountability and social justice.

The policy evaluation literature identifies multiple evaluative models, each emphasizing different stages and dimensions of the policy cycle. Process evaluation focuses on how policies are implemented, examining administrative procedures, coordination mechanisms, and compliance with established rules. Output evaluation assesses the immediate products or services generated by policy interventions, whereas outcome evaluation examines changes in social, economic, or institutional conditions attributable to policy implementation. At a more advanced level, impact evaluation seeks to identify long-term and causal effects of policies, including unintended consequences (Prabowo et al., 2019). These evaluative dimensions are complementary rather than mutually exclusive and are often combined to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy performance. In decentralized fiscal systems, such as Indonesia’s special autonomy framework, reliance on output-based indicators alone is

insufficient, as high budget absorption does not necessarily translate into improved welfare outcomes (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020). Therefore, integrating process, outcome, and impact evaluations is essential to capture both administrative performance and substantive policy effects. This multidimensional approach is particularly relevant for evaluating Dana Otsus Papua, where policy success must be assessed not only in terms of expenditure realization but also in terms of social transformation and equity.

Effectiveness and efficiency represent core evaluative criteria in public policy analysis. Effectiveness refers to the extent to which policy objectives are achieved, while efficiency concerns the relationship between inputs and outputs, emphasizing value for money and optimal resource allocation (Ginting, 2023). In the context of special autonomy funds, these criteria are closely intertwined with issues of fiscal governance and planning capacity. Empirical studies on Papua's special autonomy highlight that large fiscal transfers have not consistently produced proportional improvements in human development and poverty reduction, suggesting limitations in both effectiveness and efficiency (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). Sustainability adds a further evaluative dimension by examining whether policy benefits can be maintained over time without undermining institutional capacity or fiscal stability. From a governance perspective, sustainability depends on the integration of evaluation findings into planning and budgeting cycles, as well as the institutionalization of monitoring and feedback mechanisms. Thus, public policy evaluation provides a structured framework for diagnosing not only immediate performance issues but also long-term risks associated with policy design and implementation.

Public policy evaluation theory is particularly pertinent to the analysis of fiscal decentralization and special autonomy arrangements, where policy outcomes are shaped by complex interactions between central and local governments. Faguet (2014) emphasizes that decentralization can enhance responsiveness and efficiency only when accompanied by strong accountability and evaluative mechanisms. In the case of Dana Otsus Papua, evaluation theory offers conceptual tools to assess whether decentralized fiscal authority has translated into improved service delivery and distributive justice for Indigenous Papuans. By applying process, outcome, and impact evaluations, scholars can identify implementation bottlenecks, governance failures, and mismatches between policy design and local needs. Moreover, evaluation theory underscores the importance of linking empirical findings to normative goals, such as equity and social justice, which are central to the rationale of special autonomy. As such, policy evaluation serves as a foundational analytical lens for this study, enabling a systematic and critical examination of the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the Papua Special Autonomy Fund within Indonesia's asymmetric decentralization framework.

Public Accountability Theory in Public Finance and Policy Governance

Public accountability is widely recognized as a foundational principle of democratic governance and a core requirement for the legitimate management of public resources. Conceptually, accountability refers to an institutionalized relationship in which public actors are obliged to explain and justify their decisions and performance, subject to oversight, sanctions, and public scrutiny. In public administration scholarship, accountability is not merely a procedural obligation but a normative commitment to responsible authority and responsiveness to citizens. Bovens (2007) provides a widely used analytical framework that views accountability as a social and institutional practice involving an actor, a forum, and an obligation to provide information, justification, and the possibility of consequences. Complementing this, Koppell (2005) emphasizes that public organizations often experience "multiple accountabilities disorder" when they face competing and overlapping expectations, leading to ambiguity and performance distortions. These conceptualizations are particularly relevant for complex fiscal arrangements, where multiple principals (central government, regional executives, legislatures, auditors, and citizens) demand accountability in different forms. As such, public accountability theory offers a rigorous lens for diagnosing governance failures in special fiscal transfers and assessing whether public funds translate into public value.

In the context of public financial management, accountability is commonly disaggregated into distinct but interrelated dimensions, notably financial and administrative accountability. Financial accountability concerns the integrity, legality, and transparency of public expenditures, including compliance with budgeting rules, reporting standards, and audit requirements. Administrative accountability, in turn, refers to adherence to procedures and performance expectations within public organizations, encompassing implementation

discipline, managerial control, and internal monitoring. Both dimensions are essential in ensuring that public funds are used as authorized and that spending aligns with policy objectives rather than merely achieving high absorption rates. In special autonomy schemes, these dimensions become critical because the policy design grants substantial fiscal discretion to subnational governments while expecting improved service outcomes. Empirical work on special autonomy transfers in Indonesia highlights recurrent challenges in ensuring consistent oversight and robust evaluation of transfer effectiveness, underscoring the need for stronger accountability arrangements (Ginting, 2023). At the operational level, administrative weaknesses can generate implementation gaps, data quality problems, and poor monitoring of outputs and outcomes, thereby undermining both efficiency and effectiveness. Hence, financial and administrative accountability provide a practical evaluative basis for diagnosing governance risks in Dana Otsus Papua.

Beyond financial and administrative dimensions, accountability in public policy also encompasses political and social accountability. Political accountability refers to answerability to elected or formally mandated institutions, including legislatures, political parties, and oversight bodies; it is typically operationalized through budgeting approval, hearings, performance reviews, and formal sanctions. Social accountability extends accountability relationships to citizens and civil society through mechanisms such as participatory monitoring, transparency initiatives, complaint systems, and public deliberation. These dimensions are particularly salient in contexts where public policies are intended to correct historical injustices and deliver benefits to marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Papuans. In practice, however, political accountability may be weakened by fragmented oversight and competing institutional interests, while social accountability often depends on access to information, citizen capacity, and meaningful participation channels. Recent analyses of oversight patterns for special autonomy and special status funds underscore that political dynamics shape how oversight is organized and enforced, affecting the credibility of accountability systems (Aziz et al., 2025). Public accountability theory therefore directs attention to the institutional design of oversight and participation arrangements, not only to the technical accuracy of financial reports, thereby broadening the evaluative lens for Dana Otsus Papua.

Applying public accountability theory to Dana Otsus Papua reveals that persistent governance challenges often center on transparency deficits, weak oversight coordination, and limited public justification of spending priorities—particularly with respect to benefits for Orang Asli Papua. Asymmetric decentralization can enhance responsiveness when local authorities are accountable to their constituents, but it can also exacerbate governance risks when oversight is fragmented and information systems are inadequate (Faguet, 2014). The Papua special autonomy context illustrates this dilemma: while the policy provides fiscal space to address development gaps, empirical evaluations suggest that welfare gains have been uneven and that the relationship between spending and outcomes remains contested (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Prabowo et al., 2019). From an accountability perspective, such outcome gaps raise questions about whether implementing agencies provide sufficient justification for allocation choices, whether oversight forums are empowered to sanction misuse, and whether citizens—especially OAP communities—can access reliable information to evaluate government performance. Moreover, organizational analyses of special autonomy fund management point to institutional capacity constraints and governance arrangements as determinants of accountability performance (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). Thus, evaluating Dana Otsus Papua requires examining both formal accountability structures and their practical functionality.

An accountability-oriented approach to evaluating Dana Otsus Papua requires integrating multiple accountability dimensions into a coherent analytical framework that links governance processes to distributive outcomes. Drawing on Bovens (2007), evaluation should identify key accountability relationships (who is accountable to whom, for what, and with what consequences) and assess whether information, justification, and sanction mechanisms operate effectively in practice. Koppell's (2005) notion of competing accountability demands further suggests that special autonomy funds may be vulnerable to performance distortions when agencies prioritize compliance or political signaling over substantive outcomes. In addition, political oversight research highlights that accountability arrangements are shaped by institutional incentives and power relations, which can either strengthen or weaken fiscal governance (Aziz et al., 2025). For the Papua context, such a framework must explicitly incorporate social accountability toward Indigenous Papuans, given that the normative justification for Dana Otsus is inseparable from equity and justice considerations.

Accordingly, this review treats accountability not as a narrow financial control mechanism but as a multi-dimensional governance architecture that conditions whether special fiscal transfers can deliver sustainable public value and credible distributive justice.

Policy Implementation Theory and Its Relevance to Dana Otsus Papua

Policy implementation refers to the set of administrative, political, and operational processes through which policy intentions are translated into concrete actions, outputs, and outcomes. In implementation research, the central premise is that policy success is rarely determined by design alone; rather, it depends on how rules are interpreted, resources mobilized, and tasks executed across multiple levels of government and service delivery systems. This premise is especially salient in decentralized governance contexts, where authority is distributed and implementation quality varies across jurisdictions (Faguet, 2014). Special autonomy arrangements such as Dana Otsus Papua intensify implementation complexity because they combine substantial fiscal discretion with expectations of redistributive and developmental outcomes. Empirical evaluations of Papua's special autonomy repeatedly indicate that welfare gains have been uneven and that large transfers do not reliably produce proportional improvements in community wellbeing, implying the presence of implementation gaps and governance bottlenecks (Prabowo et al., 2019; Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020). Accordingly, policy implementation theory provides a foundational lens for diagnosing why Dana Otsus Papua's intended benefits may be diluted, delayed, or diverted during execution.

Top-down models of implementation conceptualize implementation as compliance with centrally formulated objectives, emphasizing clear policy goals, hierarchical control, and standardized procedures. From this perspective, implementation performance depends on the clarity of policy mandates, the enforceability of rules, and the capacity of implementing agencies to comply with legal and administrative requirements. Such assumptions resonate with special autonomy fund governance, where regulations often specify eligible sectors, expenditure rules, and reporting obligations. In the Papua context, legal-institutional studies focusing on compliance highlight the importance of adherence to applicable guidelines as a condition for credible fund governance, including the alignment of spending with programmatic priorities rather than administrative overhead (Purwadi, 2018). At the intergovernmental level, assessments of special autonomy transfers underscore that uneven oversight arrangements and weak enforcement can reduce the effectiveness of transfer instruments, suggesting that top-down accountability mechanisms may be insufficiently institutionalized (Ginting, 2023). However, strict top-down control can also be counterproductive if it ignores local heterogeneity and constrains adaptive problem-solving, indicating the limits of purely hierarchical implementation models for Dana Otsus Papua.

Bottom-up approaches shift analytical attention to local implementers, service delivery organizations, and community contexts, arguing that policies are effectively "made" during implementation through discretionary decisions and local negotiation. These perspectives emphasize that frontline actors and local institutions interpret policy directives within constraints of capacity, geography, and social context, which can lead to variation in outcomes across localities. For Papua's special autonomy framework, bottom-up reasoning is essential because policy objectives explicitly concern Indigenous welfare and equity, which are deeply shaped by local social structures and customary institutions. Empirical work linking special autonomy to customary rights recognition in West Papua demonstrates that local institutional arrangements and the politics of recognition shape how autonomy objectives are realized on the ground, often producing uneven distributive effects (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Similarly, organizational analyses of special autonomy fund management in regional government highlight that institutional capacity and governance arrangements condition implementation performance, including coordination, monitoring, and data use (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). Therefore, bottom-up implementation perspectives help explain why formal fiscal transfers may not translate into intended benefits for Orang Asli Papua when local capacity and institutional fit are weak.

Hybrid models reconcile top-down and bottom-up insights by treating implementation as a multi-level governance process shaped by intergovernmental relations, organizational capacity, accountability systems, and local adaptation. In complex fiscal policies, hybrid approaches are particularly suitable because they acknowledge the role of central policy design and oversight while recognizing that local discretion, capacity, and political economy shape execution. The relevance of such models to Dana Otsus Papua is evident in the multi-actor

structure of the policy, where central ministries, provincial and district governments, legislatures, auditors, and citizens each play distinct roles. Accountability scholars further note that overlapping accountability demands can generate coordination problems and distort implementation priorities, especially in politically salient funding streams (Bovens, 2007; Koppell, 2005). Oversight-oriented studies of special autonomy funds also emphasize that governance effectiveness depends on how oversight institutions coordinate and how political dynamics influence enforcement (Aziz et al., 2025). Taken together, hybrid implementation perspectives provide an integrative framework for analyzing Dana Otsus Papua as a policy system rather than a single program, enabling evaluation of both compliance and adaptive governance.

Across implementation traditions, research converges on several determinants of implementation success: actor configuration and incentives, resource adequacy, institutional capacity, information systems, and the broader political-administrative environment. For fiscal decentralization policies, the availability of competent personnel, reliable data, and functioning monitoring systems becomes decisive, because performance hinges on planning–budgeting integration and timely corrective action. Empirical findings on Papua and West Papua suggest that observed outcome gaps—such as limited poverty reduction effects—can reflect weaknesses in implementation capacity and governance arrangements rather than the absence of fiscal resources per se (Silaban et al., 2025; Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020). In addition, studies of transfer evaluation in Indonesia emphasize the importance of strengthening oversight and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that funds are used effectively and align with intended objectives (Ginting, 2023). From an implementation standpoint, these findings imply that improving Dana Otsus Papua requires interventions not only in allocation formulas but also in institutional design: clarifying roles, strengthening capacity, improving monitoring and reporting, and enhancing accountability to citizens—especially Orang Asli Papua—whose welfare constitutes the normative core of special autonomy.

Good Governance in Public Policy and Public Financial Management

Good governance is a central normative and analytical framework in public administration, emphasizing how authority is exercised in managing public resources and affairs in a manner that is transparent, accountable, participatory, effective, and equitable. In governance scholarship, good governance is not limited to administrative efficiency but encompasses the quality of decision-making processes, institutional arrangements, and accountability relationships between the state and society. Within decentralized systems, good governance serves as a corrective framework that seeks to balance local autonomy with public oversight and citizen responsiveness (Faguet, 2014). From this perspective, governance quality shapes whether decentralization enhances public value or instead amplifies inefficiencies and inequities. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that fiscal transfers alone are insufficient to improve development outcomes when governance institutions are weak or fragmented (Prabowo et al., 2019). Accordingly, good governance provides a critical conceptual lens for evaluating public policies that involve substantial fiscal discretion, such as special autonomy funds, by foregrounding not only what governments do, but how decisions are made, justified, and evaluated in relation to public interests.

Transparency and accountability are widely regarded as foundational pillars of good governance in public financial management. Transparency refers to the availability, accessibility, and clarity of information on public decisions, budgets, and performance, enabling oversight by legislatures, auditors, and citizens. Accountability complements transparency by establishing mechanisms through which public officials must justify their actions and face consequences for misuse or underperformance (Bovens, 2007). In fiscal governance, these principles are particularly salient because opaque allocation processes and weak reporting systems increase the risk of inefficiency and misalignment with policy objectives. Studies on special autonomy and intergovernmental transfers in Indonesia indicate that accountability challenges often arise from fragmented oversight and limited integration between planning, budgeting, and evaluation systems (Ginting, 2023). In the Papua context, transparency deficits and uneven accountability practices have been linked to persistent doubts about whether Dana Otsus spending effectively reaches intended beneficiaries. Thus, good governance theory underscores that strengthening transparency and accountability is not merely a technical reform, but a prerequisite for restoring policy credibility and ensuring that public funds generate meaningful social outcomes.

Beyond transparency and accountability, good governance emphasizes participation, effectiveness, and justice as essential criteria for evaluating public policies. Participation involves the inclusion of stakeholders—particularly affected communities—in decision-making, planning, and monitoring processes, thereby enhancing policy legitimacy and responsiveness. Effectiveness relates to the capacity of governance systems to translate resources and plans into tangible improvements in public welfare, while justice concerns the fair distribution of benefits and burdens across social groups. In the context of Dana Otsus Papua, these principles are normatively central because the policy is explicitly intended to address historical marginalization and promote equitable development for Orang Asli Papua. Empirical studies show that governance arrangements that marginalize local participation or prioritize administrative compliance over substantive outcomes tend to produce uneven distributive effects (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Silaban et al., 2025). Moreover, research on customary rights and decentralization in West Papua highlights that governance effectiveness and justice are closely linked to how local institutions and indigenous perspectives are recognized in policy implementation (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Hence, good governance provides an evaluative framework that connects procedural quality to distributive outcomes.

Applying good governance theory to the evaluation of Dana Otsus Papua highlights the interdependence between governance quality and policy performance. Asymmetric decentralization can enhance responsiveness and equity when local governments are accountable and inclusive; however, it can also entrench governance deficits when oversight is weak and participation is symbolic (Faguet, 2014). Evaluations of Papua's special autonomy suggest that governance challenges—rather than the absence of fiscal resources—are key determinants of limited welfare gains and persistent inequality (Prabowo et al., 2019). Organizational analyses further indicate that institutional capacity, coordination mechanisms, and accountability structures significantly shape how autonomy funds are managed and monitored (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). From a good governance perspective, evaluating Dana Otsus Papua therefore requires assessing not only financial performance but also the quality of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and justice embedded in governance processes. This literature review adopts good governance as an integrative framework to understand why policy outcomes diverge from normative expectations and to identify pathways for improving the governance of special autonomy funds in Papua.

Social and Distributive Justice in Public Policy

Social justice and distributive justice constitute central normative foundations in public policy analysis, particularly in contexts marked by historical inequality and structural disadvantage. Distributive justice concerns the fair allocation of resources, opportunities, and public benefits across social groups, while social justice extends this concern to broader questions of recognition, inclusion, and the reduction of systemic inequities. In public administration and policy scholarship, distributive justice is commonly operationalized through principles such as equity, need-based allocation, and affirmative redistribution, rather than strict equality (Faguet, 2014). These principles are especially relevant in decentralized governance systems, where fiscal transfers are expected to correct regional and social disparities. From this perspective, public policy is not value-neutral; it embodies normative commitments regarding who should benefit, to what extent, and under what conditions. Consequently, distributive justice provides an essential evaluative lens for assessing whether public policies advance fairness and inclusion or inadvertently reproduce existing inequalities. In special fiscal arrangements, such as autonomy funds, distributive justice becomes inseparable from policy legitimacy, as the justification for differential treatment rests on addressing historically entrenched disadvantages.

In the allocation of public resources, distributive justice emphasizes the alignment of fiscal instruments with social needs and policy objectives. Equity-oriented allocation frameworks prioritize disadvantaged populations and regions, recognizing that equal distribution may perpetuate inequality when baseline conditions differ significantly. Empirical and theoretical studies in public finance and decentralization highlight that targeted transfers can enhance social outcomes when governance mechanisms ensure that resources reach intended beneficiaries (Bovens, 2007). However, distributive justice is not guaranteed by allocation formulas alone; it depends on implementation capacity, accountability systems, and institutional incentives. In the Indonesian context, evaluations of intergovernmental transfers suggest that substantial fiscal flows do not automatically yield equitable outcomes, particularly

when oversight and monitoring are weak (Ginting, 2023). These insights underscore that distributive justice must be assessed not only at the allocation stage but throughout the policy cycle, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, distributive justice theory complements policy evaluation by foregrounding questions of “who benefits” and “whose needs are prioritized” in public spending decisions.

The concept of distributive justice acquires heightened significance in policies targeting Indigenous populations, where historical marginalization and exclusion necessitate affirmative and context-sensitive interventions. Dana Otsus Papua is normatively grounded in the objective of advancing justice for Orang Asli Papua by addressing persistent socio-economic disparities and recognizing indigenous rights. However, empirical literature indicates that the distributive outcomes of special autonomy have been uneven, raising concerns about whether the policy has effectively translated fiscal resources into equitable benefits for OAP communities (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Silaban et al., 2025). Research on decentralization and customary rights in West Papua further demonstrates that distributive justice is closely linked to institutional recognition of indigenous claims and participation in governance processes (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Where such recognition is limited, fiscal transfers risk being captured by administrative or political interests rather than serving indigenous welfare. Accordingly, distributive justice theory provides a critical framework for evaluating whether Dana Otsus Papua fulfills its normative mandate or whether governance arrangements undermine its redistributive intent.

Integrating distributive justice into the evaluation of Dana Otsus Papua requires moving beyond aggregate performance indicators toward an equity-sensitive assessment of policy outcomes. From a policy evaluation standpoint, this entails examining how benefits are distributed across social groups, regions, and sectors, and whether these distributions correspond to policy goals centered on indigenous welfare. Studies evaluating special autonomy policy outcomes suggest that improvements in human development and poverty reduction have been limited or uneven, indicating potential mismatches between fiscal inputs and distributive outcomes (Prabowo et al., 2019; Dewantara, 2024). Such findings highlight the importance of embedding distributive justice criteria within evaluation frameworks, alongside effectiveness and efficiency. Moreover, distributive justice analysis draws attention to governance processes—such as transparency, accountability, and participation—that mediate resource allocation decisions. In this regard, social and distributive justice theories enrich the evaluation of Dana Otsus Papua by linking normative goals to empirical assessment, thereby strengthening the analytical foundation for policy confirmation, reform, or redesign.

Digital Governance and Government Information Systems in Public Accountability

Digital governance refers to the use of digital technologies, data systems, and information infrastructures to transform the processes, relationships, and outcomes of public governance. In public administration literature, digital governance extends beyond traditional e-government by emphasizing institutional change, cross-sector integration, and data-driven decision-making rather than merely digitizing existing administrative procedures (Mergel et al., 2019). From this perspective, digital governance reshapes how public authority is exercised, how information flows across organizations, and how citizens interact with the state. Scholars argue that digital transformation can enhance transparency and accountability by increasing the availability of information, reducing information asymmetries, and enabling more systematic monitoring of public performance (Haug, 2024). However, digital governance is not inherently transformative; its impact depends on organizational capacity, governance design, and the integration of digital tools into core policy and financial management processes. In decentralized governance contexts, digital governance plays a critical role in coordinating multi-level actors and ensuring that delegated authority remains subject to oversight. Accordingly, digital governance provides a relevant conceptual framework for evaluating how information systems can support accountability in complex fiscal arrangements such as special autonomy funds.

A central promise of digital governance lies in its capacity to strengthen transparency and accountability through systematic information disclosure, standardized reporting, and real-time monitoring. Government information systems can facilitate financial accountability by tracking budget allocations, expenditures, and performance indicators in an integrated manner, thereby enabling oversight bodies and the public to assess policy implementation

more effectively (Bovens, 2007). In public financial management, digital platforms support the alignment of planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation processes, reducing fragmentation and discretionary opacity. Empirical studies on intergovernmental transfers in Indonesia indicate that accountability challenges often stem from weak information integration and limited data accessibility, which constrain effective oversight and evaluation (Ginting, 2023). From a digital governance perspective, information systems are not merely technical tools but institutional instruments that structure accountability relationships—determining who has access to what information, at what time, and for what purpose. Thus, the effectiveness of digital governance depends on governance rules, data quality, and the institutional willingness to use information for corrective action rather than symbolic compliance.

In the context of Dana Otsus Papua, digital governance holds significant potential to enhance transparency, accountability, and coordination across levels of government. Information systems such as planning, budgeting, and monitoring platforms can support evidence-based allocation decisions and facilitate systematic evaluation of whether special autonomy funds reach intended beneficiaries, particularly Orang Asli Papua. Organizational analyses of special autonomy fund management suggest that institutional capacity and governance arrangements are decisive factors confirming whether fiscal resources translate into meaningful outcomes (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). Digital governance can mitigate some of these challenges by standardizing reporting formats, enabling cross-sector data integration, and supporting performance monitoring across geographically dispersed regions. Nevertheless, existing evaluations of Papua's special autonomy indicate that welfare improvements remain uneven, implying that digital tools alone are insufficient without complementary reforms in accountability and implementation (Prabowo et al., 2019). Consequently, the relevance of digital governance for Dana Otsus Papua lies in its role as an enabling infrastructure that can strengthen existing governance mechanisms rather than a standalone solution.

While digital governance offers opportunities to improve accountability and transparency, its implementation in special autonomy contexts faces significant challenges. Geographic constraints, digital divides, uneven administrative capacity, and limited data literacy can undermine the effective use of information systems, particularly in remote regions such as Papua. Moreover, digitalization may reproduce existing power asymmetries if access to information and decision-making remains centralized within bureaucratic elites. Studies of digitally induced change in the public sector emphasize that digital transformation requires organizational learning, leadership commitment, and institutional adaptation to realize its governance potential (Haug, 2024). In evaluating Dana Otsus Papua, digital governance should therefore be assessed not only in terms of system availability but also in terms of actual use, data reliability, and integration into accountability and evaluation processes. By embedding digital governance within broader frameworks of public accountability and good governance, policymakers can better harness information systems to support transparent, equitable, and effective management of special autonomy funds.

3. Materials and Method

Research Design and Approach

This study adopts a literature review research design, employing a narrative–critical review model enriched with systematic elements. The primary objective of this approach is to synthesize, critically evaluate, and conceptually integrate scholarly findings related to the Papua Special Autonomy Fund (Dana Otonomi Khusus Papua), with particular emphasis on public accountability, targeting accuracy, distributive justice for Indigenous Papuans (Orang Asli Papua), and policy implementation performance. A narrative–critical review is appropriate for this study because the existing literature on special autonomy policies is methodologically heterogeneous and conceptually fragmented, encompassing quantitative evaluations, qualitative case studies, legal analyses, and governance-focused research. By incorporating systematic elements—such as explicit search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and transparent selection procedures—this review enhances rigor, reproducibility, and analytical credibility without constraining the interpretive depth required for policy-oriented synthesis (Tranfield et al., 2003; Booth et al., 2016; Snyder, 2019).

Object of Study and Unit of Analysis

The object of this study is the policy of the Papua Special Autonomy Fund, understood as a fiscal and governance instrument within Indonesia's asymmetric decentralization framework. The review examines the design, allocation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Dana Otsus Papua as discussed in the scholarly literature. The unit of analysis consists of peer-reviewed journal articles and reputable conference proceedings that empirically or conceptually address special autonomy policies in Papua and West Papua or closely related themes, including public accountability, governance, policy implementation, distributive justice, public budgeting, and digital governance. The primary body of literature was drawn from the Pustaka Isak Pool, which consolidates rigorously screened and thematically relevant references, supplemented by additional high-quality sources identified during the systematic search process.

Data Sources and Literature Search Strategy

Literature was collected from major international and national academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Google Scholar, and nationally accredited Indonesian journals indexed in SINTA. These databases were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of global and context-specific scholarship on decentralization, governance, and special autonomy. The primary publication window covered the last 5–10 years, with priority given to studies published within the most recent five years (2020–2025) to capture current policy debates and governance reforms.

The search strategy employed combinations of English and Indonesian keywords, including: "Papua Special Autonomy Fund," "Dana Otonomi Khusus Papua," "policy evaluation," "public accountability," "distributive justice," "good governance," "policy implementation," "public budgeting," and "digital governance." Boolean operators (AND/OR) and truncation were used to refine results and improve relevance (Booth et al., 2016).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Explicit criteria were applied to ensure analytical rigor and relevance.

Inclusion criteria comprised: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles or reputable conference proceedings; (2) publications directly addressing Dana Otsus Papua or thematically relevant issues in public policy and governance; (3) studies published within the defined time range; and (4) articles written in English or Indonesian with accessible full texts.

Exclusion criteria included: (1) non-scholarly sources such as opinion pieces or media reports; (2) studies lacking clear methodological explanation; (3) purely descriptive financial reports without analytical linkage to policy evaluation or governance; and (4) duplicate publications across databases.

The selection process followed three stages—identification, screening, and final inclusion—to ensure transparency and replicability (Tranfield et al., 2003; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Data Analysis Techniques

Selected studies were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with conceptual synthesis. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring themes, dominant narratives, and analytical categories related to accountability mechanisms, targeting accuracy, distributive justice, governance quality, and implementation challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Conceptual synthesis was then employed to compare findings across methodological traditions and policy contexts, enabling the identification of convergent patterns, contradictions, and research gaps (Xiao & Watson, 2019). This analytical strategy allows the review to move beyond descriptive aggregation toward an integrative understanding of how governance arrangements shape the performance of special autonomy funds.

Analytical Framework and Theoretical Foundation

The analysis is grounded in three core theoretical frameworks: public policy evaluation theory, public accountability theory, and policy implementation theory, which collectively guide the assessment of policy effectiveness, governance quality, and implementation gaps (Bovens, 2007; Koppell, 2005; Faguet, 2014). These core perspectives are systematically enriched with supporting theories of good governance, social and distributive justice, public

planning and budgeting, and digital governance, enabling a multidimensional evaluation of Dana Otsus Papua. By integrating these theoretical lenses, the study provides a coherent and replicable framework for synthesizing empirical findings and generating policy-relevant insights into the governance and distributive performance of Papua's Special Autonomy Fund.

4. Results and Discussion

Results

The reviewed literature exhibits a heterogeneous evidence base on Papua's Special Autonomy Fund (Dana Otsus Papua), spanning outcome-oriented quantitative studies, governance and oversight analyses, and institutional or legal-compliance inquiries. Across this corpus, a dominant pattern emerges: fiscal transfers under special autonomy are consistently framed as necessary but insufficient for achieving sustained welfare improvement without governance and implementation reforms (Faguet, 2014; Prabowo et al., 2019). Quantitative studies primarily test associations between Dana Otsus (often alongside other transfers) and development indicators such as poverty or human development, whereas qualitative and institutional studies focus on the accountability architecture, oversight dynamics, and organizational capacity shaping fund management (Dewantara, 2024; Rieuwpassa et al., 2025; Silaban et al., 2025). A recurrent tendency is analytical fragmentation: many studies assess either outcomes or governance processes in isolation, resulting in partial explanations for uneven performance. Nevertheless, when findings are read together, they reveal an evaluative trajectory that moves from "transfer volume" toward "governance quality," emphasizing accountability, targeting, and distributive justice as the critical mediating mechanisms of policy performance (Bovens, 2007; Ginting, 2023).

A central thematic cluster concerns the accountability and oversight of Dana Otsus, where the literature converges on persistent weaknesses in transparency, monitoring, and evaluation linkages across governmental levels. Transfer-focused evaluations emphasize that oversight arrangements are frequently fragmented, with uneven enforcement capacity that limits the ability of accountability forums to demand justification and impose consequences (Ginting, 2023). Political-institutional analyses further suggest that oversight patterns are shaped by political dynamics, which may dilute accountability by dispersing responsibility across multiple actors and arenas (Aziz et al., 2025). These findings align with public accountability theory, which warns that complex policy environments can produce competing accountability demands and blurred answerability, undermining coherent performance management (Bovens, 2007; Koppell, 2005). At the organizational level, studies highlight that governance capacity—such as coordination routines, internal controls, and reporting discipline—conditions whether financial accountability translates into performance accountability (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). Overall, the evidence indicates that accountability challenges are not merely technical reporting problems but institutional and political issues that shape how fiscal discretion is exercised and justified within the special autonomy regime.

A second major theme concerns the targeting accuracy of Dana Otsus and its distributive alignment with Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Quantitative evidence suggests that the relationship between special autonomy transfers and welfare outcomes can be positive yet uneven, implying that benefits may not consistently reach intended groups or localities (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). The literature indicates that targeting difficulties are intensified by administrative capacity constraints, weak monitoring of beneficiary incidence, and limited integration between planning and evaluation systems, which together reduce the precision of redistributive spending. From a distributive justice standpoint, studies on decentralization and customary rights recognition underscore that distributive outcomes depend on whether indigenous claims and local institutions are substantively recognized in governance processes, not merely referenced as policy rhetoric (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). This strand implies that "who benefits" is shaped by institutional design and recognition politics, not only by allocation formulas. In sum, the reviewed studies suggest that inequitable benefit distribution is a plausible explanation for why aggregate spending does not reliably translate into improved welfare for OAP communities, reinforcing the need for equity-sensitive evaluation frameworks.

The distributive justice theme in the literature reframes Dana Otsus Papua as a policy whose legitimacy hinges on equity and recognition outcomes, not solely fiscal execution. Empirical accounts emphasize that special autonomy was justified as a corrective to historical

marginalization; therefore, evaluation must assess whether transfers are embedded in governance arrangements capable of translating resources into just outcomes for OAP (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Prabowo et al., 2019). Research on customary rights in West Papua highlights that distributive justice is intertwined with recognition—how indigenous rights are acknowledged and institutionalized in policy implementation—and that weak recognition can constrain distributive effects even where fiscal inputs are substantial (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). This insight is reinforced by accountability frameworks that treat public justification and answerability as integral to legitimacy: when decision rationales are opaque or forums cannot compel explanation, distributive claims become difficult to verify and contest (Bovens, 2007). Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that distributive injustice is not an “externality” but a core evaluative criterion for Dana Otsus, demanding policy metrics that trace benefits to OAP and institutional mechanisms that ensure indigenous priorities are represented in planning, budgeting, and monitoring cycles.

A further thematic cluster concerns implementation performance, with studies repeatedly pointing to an implementation gap between policy intent and realized outcomes. Evaluations of special autonomy policy outcomes suggest that fiscal transfers alone do not ensure consistent welfare improvement, implying bottlenecks in planning quality, coordination, capacity, and oversight (Prabowo et al., 2019; Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020). Compliance-oriented work highlights that adherence to rules and guidelines is necessary for credible governance, yet formal compliance does not guarantee effectiveness when administrative routines are weak or when program design is misaligned with local needs (Purwadi, 2018). Transfer evaluations similarly recommend strengthening evaluation and oversight mechanisms to address systemic weaknesses in implementation pathways (Ginting, 2023). Organizational perspectives from regional government contexts emphasize the role of institutional capacity—such as inter-unit coordination, internal controls, and reporting systems—in shaping how autonomy funds are executed and monitored (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). Taken together, the evidence indicates that Dana Otsus implementation challenges are multi-causal: they reflect not only technical capacity constraints but also governance incentives and accountability arrangements that may prioritize procedural completion over substantive outcomes.

Digital governance emerges in the literature as an enabling mechanism with potential to improve transparency and accountability, yet its practical effects depend on organizational change and data governance maturity. Digital transformation scholarship emphasizes that digitization becomes consequential when it restructures workflows, decision rights, and performance management—not when it merely automates existing routines (Mergel et al., 2019; Haug, 2024). In the Dana Otsus context, this implies that information systems can strengthen accountability by standardizing reporting, enhancing traceability of allocations and expenditures, and supporting monitoring across dispersed geographies. However, outcome-oriented evaluations show that uneven welfare gains persist, suggesting that digital tools alone are insufficient without complementary reforms in accountability, implementation capacity, and evaluative use of data (Prabowo et al., 2019; Dewantara, 2024). Transfer studies also indicate that weaknesses in oversight and evaluation limit the capacity to convert data into corrective action (Ginting, 2023). Overall, the evidence supports a conditional conclusion: digital governance can reduce information asymmetry and facilitate oversight, but only where institutions are willing and able to use data for accountability and learning rather than symbolic compliance.

Discussion

Interpreted through policy evaluation theory, the synthesis suggests that Dana Otsus Papua has often been assessed through partial evaluative lenses—frequently privileging financial absorption or aggregate outcomes—while under-specifying the governance mechanisms linking inputs to distributive results. Public accountability theory clarifies why this matters: accountability is a structured relationship requiring information, justification, and the possibility of consequences, and weaknesses in any element can sever the causal chain from spending to public value (Bovens, 2007). The literature’s emphasis on fragmented oversight and political dynamics echoes the risk of “multiple accountabilities disorder,” where competing demands blur responsibility and distort performance priorities (Koppell, 2005; Aziz et al., 2025). This interpretive frame helps explain why substantial transfers can coexist with uneven welfare improvements and persistent contestation regarding who benefits. Moreover, decentralization scholarship indicates that fiscal devolution produces

responsiveness and efficiency only under robust accountability and governance arrangements (Faguet, 2014). Accordingly, the reviewed evidence supports an evaluative proposition: improving Dana Otsus performance requires shifting from expenditure-centric assessment toward governance-centric evaluation that measures the integrity, answerability, and sanction capacity of accountability systems alongside distributive outcomes for OAP.

Policy implementation theory helps reconcile divergent empirical findings by highlighting that outcomes depend on administrative capacity, actor incentives, coordination quality, and institutional fit. The literature suggests that implementation gaps are sustained not merely by resource constraints but by governance arrangements that do not reliably translate plans into just outcomes, especially for OAP. Organizational perspectives reinforce that institutional capacity and control systems shape how funds are managed, monitored, and adjusted over time (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). From a distributive justice perspective, the evidence implies that equity is mediated by recognition and participation: when indigenous institutions and claims are weakly recognized, redistributive intent may be diluted despite substantial spending (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). This implies that evaluation frameworks must incorporate equity-sensitive indicators—tracking benefit incidence for OAP—and process indicators—tracking participation, justification practices, and monitoring routines. Empirical studies associating Otsus funding with poverty and human development provide important signals, but they also underscore the need for governance diagnostics to explain why effects are uneven (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). The practical implication is that policy reform should combine strengthened oversight with capacity development and institutionalized participation mechanisms to align implementation with the normative mandate of special autonomy.

The synthesis indicates that digital governance should be treated as institutional infrastructure that can strengthen transparency and accountability, but only when embedded in broader governance reforms. Digital transformation research emphasizes that digitally induced change requires organizational learning and adaptation; otherwise, systems risk becoming compliance artifacts rather than tools for performance improvement (Mergel et al., 2019; Haug, 2024). For Dana Otsus Papua, this suggests two implications. First, information systems should be designed to support accountability relationships—enabling oversight forums to access timely data, request justification, and trigger corrective action—consistent with accountability frameworks (Bovens, 2007). Second, digital governance must address context constraints—capacity disparities, data quality, and institutional incentives—so that transparency translates into usable accountability rather than data overload. Transfer evaluations emphasize that weak evaluation and oversight constrain learning and correction; thus, digital systems must be linked to decision routines and sanctions, not only reporting (Ginting, 2023). In sum, the literature supports a governance-centric interpretation: digital tools are necessary but not sufficient. Their value lies in enabling measurable improvements in traceability, monitoring, and equity-sensitive evaluation, thereby supporting policy credibility and more just distributive outcomes for OAP communities.

5. Comparison

Across the state of the art, evaluations of the Papua Special Autonomy Fund converge on a shared recognition that special fiscal transfers are a necessary policy instrument but an insufficient condition for achieving sustained welfare improvements in Papua. Internationally oriented decentralization scholarship typically frames performance as contingent on governance quality, arguing that decentralization yields responsiveness and efficiency only when embedded in credible accountability and institutional arrangements (Faguet, 2014). In the Papua-specific literature, this governance-contingency argument is echoed but operationalized unevenly: some studies emphasize outcomes and macro indicators, while others foreground oversight and institutional compliance. For example, policy evaluation research focused on community welfare identifies uneven performance patterns and calls for stronger evaluation capacity, but often provides limited disaggregation of who benefits (Prabowo et al., 2019). Conversely, transfer evaluations addressing special autonomy across regions emphasize structural weaknesses in oversight and the evaluative architecture of transfers, offering a stronger diagnosis of accountability deficits yet less detailed engagement with distributive justice mechanisms for Indigenous Papuans (Ginting, 2023). This comparison suggests a dominant tendency: outcome-focused studies and governance-focused studies frequently advance parallel arguments without sufficient integration, limiting cumulative explanation.

With respect to accountability, the literature exhibits convergence on the diagnosis of persistent weaknesses in transparency, monitoring, and enforcement, but diverges in causal interpretation and remedy emphasis. Governance and accountability frameworks conceptualize accountability as a relationship requiring information, justification, and consequences; when these elements are fragmented, oversight becomes symbolic rather than corrective (Bovens, 2007). Transfer-oriented evaluations show that accountability weaknesses in special autonomy funds often stem from fragmented oversight structures and limited integration between budgeting and evaluation functions (Ginting, 2023). Political oversight analyses deepen this diagnosis by emphasizing that accountability is shaped by political incentives and institutional contestation, producing dispersed responsibility across multiple actors and forums (Aziz et al., 2025). In contrast, some Papua-focused studies approach accountability more implicitly through compliance and administrative discipline, emphasizing adherence to rules and guidelines as a principal corrective mechanism (Purwadi, 2018). The comparative implication is that accountability debates differ not on whether problems exist, but on whether they are primarily technical-administrative (compliance and reporting) or political-institutional (incentives, enforcement, and sanction capacity). This review positions accountability as a multidimensional governance architecture—financial, administrative, political, and social—rather than a narrow reporting function.

In assessing targeting accuracy and distributive justice for Orang Asli Papua (OAP), the literature reveals a pronounced divide between indicator-based outcome studies and institutionally grounded justice accounts. Quantitative analyses tend to estimate associations between special autonomy funds and welfare indicators (poverty, HDI), producing evidence of partial or uneven impacts, which indirectly signals targeting and equity challenges but rarely specifies benefit incidence for OAP (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). By contrast, institutional and rights-oriented research emphasizes distributive justice as inseparable from recognition and governance design, arguing that outcomes depend on how indigenous rights and customary institutions are acknowledged within decentralization arrangements (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). This divergence matters for evaluation: outcome approaches can identify “whether” development changed, whereas recognition-oriented approaches explain “why” benefits may not reach intended groups, including through institutional exclusion or limited participation. The comparative tendency is that Papua-focused empirical work often treats distributive justice as a normative claim, while governance and rights literature conceptualizes it as an institutional mechanism. The novelty of this review lies in integrating these strands, treating distributive justice as an evaluative criterion operationalized through both outcome indicators and process/recognition mechanisms.

Methodologically, the state of the art displays systematic fragmentation: many studies isolate either outcomes, compliance, or governance features rather than modeling implementation as a multi-level process connecting resources to distributive results. Outcome studies generate useful aggregate inference but are vulnerable to over-attributing causality to transfer volumes when implementation capacity and oversight quality vary substantially across contexts (Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020; Silaban et al., 2025). Compliance-oriented work provides detailed institutional descriptions but may understate how local discretion, capacity, and political economy shape implementation beyond formal rules (Purwadi, 2018). Organizational perspectives bridge these approaches by emphasizing how capacity, coordination, and internal controls condition fund management, yet these studies often remain case-bound and do not systematically integrate distributive justice metrics (Rieuwpassa et al., 2025). From a policy implementation standpoint, this pattern resembles a repeated “missing middle”: evidence about inputs and aggregate outcomes exists, but the causal mechanisms—actor incentives, intergovernmental coordination, and monitoring routines—are insufficiently synthesized across the literature (Prabowo et al., 2019). This review’s contribution is methodological and conceptual: it uses a narrative-critical synthesis enriched with systematic elements to connect outcome findings with governance and implementation mechanisms in a replicable thematic structure.

Compared with prior scholarship, this literature review advances a more integrative state-of-the-art synthesis by explicitly linking evaluation theory, accountability theory, implementation theory, good governance, and distributive justice into a unified analytical framework for Dana Otsus Papua. Prior evaluations often prioritize either welfare outcomes (with limited equity tracing) or governance diagnostics (with limited distributive operationalization), which constrains actionable policy learning (Prabowo et al., 2019; Ginting, 2023). By contrast, this review treats accountability as a multi-dimensional system of answerability and sanctions (Bovens, 2007; Koppell, 2005), and distributive justice as both a

normative mandate and an institutional outcome shaped by recognition and participation (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Furthermore, this review incorporates digital governance as enabling infrastructure, while recognizing that digitization yields governance improvements only when embedded in organizational change and evaluative use of information (Mergel et al., 2019; Haug, 2024). The value added is twofold: theoretically, it clarifies the mechanisms linking transfers to equity outcomes; practically, it identifies leverage points for reform—oversight integration, equity-sensitive evaluation, participatory accountability, and data-governance maturity—thus offering a policy-relevant synthesis for improving the governance and distributive performance of Dana Otsus Papua.

6. Conclusion

This literature review synthesizes a diverse body of scholarship on the Papua Special Autonomy Fund and reveals a consistent pattern across studies: while Dana Otsus Papua represents a substantial fiscal commitment to address historical inequality, its performance is mediated by governance quality rather than transfer magnitude alone. The reviewed literature converges on three interrelated findings. First, accountability mechanisms remain fragmented, with limited integration between planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation functions, constraining the ability of oversight forums to demand justification and enforce corrective action (Bovens, 2007; Ginting, 2023). Second, targeting accuracy is uneven, as empirical studies suggest that welfare gains do not consistently accrue to intended beneficiaries, particularly Orang Asli Papua, due to capacity constraints and weak beneficiary tracing (Silaban et al., 2025; Dewantara, 2024). Third, distributive justice outcomes are closely tied to recognition and participation: where indigenous institutions and claims are insufficiently institutionalized, redistributive intent is diluted despite substantial spending (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023; Mustikawati & Maulana, 2020). Taken together, the literature indicates that Dana Otsus Papua's challenges are systemic and governance-related, underscoring the need for evaluation frameworks that foreground accountability, equity, and implementation dynamics rather than financial execution alone.

From a theoretical standpoint, this review contributes to the development of public policy evaluation by integrating accountability, implementation, and distributive justice perspectives into a unified analytical frame. Existing evaluations often privilege outcome indicators or compliance metrics in isolation; by contrast, this synthesis demonstrates that policy performance in asymmetric decentralization contexts must be understood as a function of accountability relationships, institutional capacity, and recognition mechanisms (Faguet, 2014; Koppell, 2005). The findings reinforce accountability theory by illustrating how fragmented answerability and sanctioning dilute policy effectiveness, even under generous fiscal arrangements (Bovens, 2007). Moreover, the review extends distributive justice debates by operationalizing equity not only as an outcome but as a governance process shaped by participation and institutional recognition. By bridging governance-oriented analyses with outcome-based evaluations, this article advances a more comprehensive evaluative paradigm for special autonomy policies. Theoretically, it underscores the value of narrative-critical synthesis enriched with systematic elements as a means to connect heterogeneous evidence and to generate integrative explanations that are often absent in single-method or single-dimension studies.

The synthesized evidence yields several practical implications for improving the governance of Dana Otsus Papua. First, accountability reforms should prioritize integration across the policy cycle—linking planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation—to ensure that information supports justification, oversight, and corrective action rather than symbolic compliance (Ginting, 2023; Aziz et al., 2025). Second, targeting mechanisms require refinement through equity-sensitive evaluation tools capable of tracing benefits to Orang Asli Papua, thereby aligning redistributive intent with measurable outcomes (Silaban et al., 2025). Third, governance reforms should strengthen participation and recognition of indigenous institutions within planning and monitoring processes, reinforcing distributive justice as a core policy objective (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Fourth, digital governance and information systems should be embedded within accountability routines and decision-making processes to enhance transparency and evaluative use of data, not merely reporting (Mergel et al., 2019; Haug, 2024). Collectively, these recommendations emphasize that improving Dana Otsus performance requires coordinated institutional reforms rather than incremental adjustments to allocation formulas alone.

This review is subject to several limitations inherent in literature-based research. First, the analysis depends on the availability and quality of published studies, which vary in methodological rigor, data granularity, and theoretical framing. Second, although the review prioritizes recent scholarship, temporal gaps remain in longitudinal evidence that systematically tracks governance reforms and distributive outcomes over time. Third, the narrative–critical approach, while integrative, cannot substitute for primary empirical validation of causal mechanisms identified in the literature. Future research should therefore pursue mixed-method designs that combine quantitative impact evaluation with qualitative governance analysis to trace how accountability arrangements and implementation practices shape equity outcomes for Orang Asli Papua. Comparative studies across special autonomy regions would further clarify which governance configurations are most conducive to distributive justice. Finally, research that evaluates the real-world use of digital governance systems for oversight and learning would strengthen understanding of how information infrastructures can support accountable and just policy implementation. Addressing these agendas will enhance both the analytical robustness and policy relevance of future evaluations of special autonomy frameworks.

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