



Integrating Marind Indigenous Knowledge into Public Sector Human Resource Development: A Pathway to Sustainable Public Management in Merauke

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Abstract

Introduction: This study investigates the integration of Marind indigenous knowledge into public sector human resource development (HRD) as a strategy to strengthen culturally responsive governance in Merauke, South Papua, highlighting the importance of aligning HRD with local socio-cultural realities. Research Objectives: The study aims to (1) identify Marind cultural values relevant to HRD, (2) examine their alignment with governance principles and professional competence, and (3) propose a culturally grounded HRD model to enhance service quality. Research Methods/Approaches: A qualitative case study design was employed, involving 20 purposively selected informants including government officials, Marind customary leaders, academics, and civil society representatives. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis, and analyzed thematically to reveal intersections between local culture and governance practices. Research Results: Findings indicate that Marind values such as collective solidarity, customary leadership ethics, communal responsibility, and human-nature harmony support ethical governance, participatory engagement, culturally sensitive communication, and accountability, yet standardized national HRD frameworks often neglect these local contexts, resulting in limited trust, weak legitimacy, and suboptimal service delivery. Conclusions: The study proposes a contextualized HRD model emphasizing curriculum redesign, co-training with indigenous leaders, and continuous evaluation to strengthen culturally responsive governance and promote inclusive, effective public service in South Papua.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge, Public Management; Human Development; Marind Culture; Local Governance*

Abstrak

Pendahuluan: Studi ini menyelidiki integrasi pengetahuan adat Marind ke dalam pengembangan sumber daya manusia (SDM) sektor publik sebagai strategi untuk memperkuat tata kelola yang responsif secara budaya di Merauke, Papua Selatan, dengan menyoroti pentingnya menyelaraskan SDM dengan realitas sosial-budaya lokal. Tujuan Penelitian: untuk (1) mengidentifikasi nilai-nilai budaya Marind yang relevan dengan SDM, (2) memeriksa keselarasan nilai-nilai tersebut dengan prinsip-prinsip tata kelola dan kompetensi profesional, (3) mengusulkan model SDM yang berlandaskan budaya untuk meningkatkan kualitas pelayanan. Metode Penelitian: Desain studi kasus kualitatif digunakan, melibatkan 20 informan yang dipilih secara purposif termasuk pejabat pemerintah, pemimpin adat Marind, akademisi, dan perwakilan masyarakat sipil. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen, dan dianalisis secara tematik untuk mengungkap keterkaitan antara budaya lokal dan praktik tata kelola. Hasil Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai Marind seperti solidaritas kolektif, etika kepemimpinan adat, tanggung jawab komunal, dan harmoni manusia-alam mendukung tata kelola yang beretika, keterlibatan partisipatif, komunikasi yang peka budaya, dan akuntabilitas, namun kerangka kerja pengembangan sumber daya manusia (SDM) nasional yang terstandarisasi sering mengabaikan konteks lokal ini, sehingga mengakibatkan kepercayaan yang terbatas, legitimasi yang lemah, dan penyampaian layanan yang suboptimal. Kesimpulan: Studi ini mengusulkan model pengembangan sumber daya manusia yang kontekstual yang menekankan perancangan ulang kurikulum, pelatihan bersama dengan pemimpin adat, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan untuk memperkuat tata kelola yang responsif secara budaya dan mempromosikan pelayanan publik yang inklusif dan efektif di Papua Selatan

Kata Kunci: *Pengetahuan Adat; Manajemen Publik; Pengembangan Manusia; Budaya Marind; Tata Kelola Lokal*

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1. Introduction

Global changes in public management in the digital era have driven a fundamental transformation in governance, where policy complexity, accelerated information flow, and increasing demands for public transparency require human resource capacity that is more adaptive, innovative, and responsive to the dynamics of the strategic environment (Balaji, 2025). Around the world, particularly in developing countries, governments face pressure to build public management models that are not only efficient but also sustainable and able to adapt to the socio-cultural diversity of the communities they serve (Magliacani, 2023). Digitalization, technology integration, and the need to provide inclusive public services make civil service capacity development a crucial agenda (Djarmiko et al., 2025). However, without a strong contextual understanding, bureaucratic reform is often ineffective in addressing complex local issues. Therefore, the creation of public management models that integrate cultural values, local wisdom, and community-based approaches is increasingly urgent to ensure governance that is relevant, sustainable, and able to address evolving global challenges (Kurniawan et al., 2023).

Human Resource Development (HRD) is a key foundation in modern bureaucratic reform because the success of public governance is largely determined by the capacity, competence, and professionalism of the personnel who carry it out (Zolak Poljašević et al., 2025). HRD encompasses not only technical skill development but also strengthening the ethics, character, and adaptability of personnel to changing policies and the increasingly complex demands of public services (Narenji Thani et al., 2022). Various global studies have shown that HRD programs often achieve limited results when designed uniformly without considering local cultural values, community identity, and traditional knowledge, which are integral to the social environment in which personnel work (Adegoriola et al., 2023). When HR training and development ignore the cultural dimension, such programs tend to fail to build social sensitivity, are less effective in improving service quality, and fail to foster harmonious relations between the government and local communities. These findings emphasize that integrating cultural values and local context into HRD strategies is a crucial step in creating a more inclusive, responsive, and socially relevant apparatus capable of delivering public services.

In recent decades, international attention to indigenous knowledge as a source of innovation in public governance has increased rapidly, along with the recognition that local knowledge systems often offer a more contextual, adaptive, and sustainable perspective than modern, uniform administrative approaches (Wonglangka et al., 2025). Various global institutions, including UNESCO and UNDP, emphasize the strategic value of local wisdom in building more inclusive governance models, particularly in regions with high cultural diversity. Integrating local values into decision-making processes, program planning, and public service mechanisms can strengthen sustainability because this approach aligns with local lifestyles, respects human-nature relationships, and encourages active citizen participation (Svitlichna et al., 2024). Furthermore, public policies that adopt traditional knowledge tend to be more effective because they consider identity, social norms, and cultural practices that have historically been proven to maintain social harmony. Therefore, utilizing indigenous knowledge in public management is not merely about cultural preservation, but also a key strategy for realizing responsive, equitable governance that can meet community needs in a sustainable manner (Ajitha et al., 2025).

Indonesia is known as one of the countries with the highest levels of cultural plurality in the world, with thousands of ethnic groups, regional languages, and value systems shaping social dynamics across its various regions. This diversity presents unique challenges to governance, particularly related to the disparity in civil service capacity across regions, which remains significant between western and eastern Indonesia (Mappisabbi & Natsir, 2024). In the eastern region, including Papua and South Papua, limited infrastructure, low access to formal education for civil servants, and a lack of locally context-based competency development programs exacerbate the disparity in public service performance. National policies such as Special Autonomy for Papua and various strategic human resource development agendas launched by the central government emphasize the importance of a culture-based approach to strengthening bureaucratic capacity. However, the implementation of these policies often fails to fully adapt to the social structures, traditional values, and local community identities that underpin social life in Papua.

Merauke, located at the eastern tip of Indonesia, is home to the Marind indigenous people, an ethnic group with a rich system of local wisdom deeply rooted in the values of collectivity, harmonious relations between humans and nature, mutual cooperation, and deliberation-based traditional leadership. These cultural values not only guide Marind social interactions but also hold significant potential for integration into the competency development of public officials (Baracska, 2021). The principle of collectivity, for example, can strengthen teamwork and build solidarity among officials; human-nature relations can foster officials' sensitivity to environmental issues; while the values of mutual cooperation and traditional leadership can enhance work ethics, effective communication, and participatory leadership in public service. However, the integration of Marind local wisdom into public sector human resource development programs in Merauke remains very limited and has not yet been formalized as a systematic model. The disconnect between local traditions and modern HRD strategies has rendered many policies and civil service training ineffective in

addressing the needs of local communities, reinforcing the urgency of developing new approaches that are more contextual, inclusive, and rooted in Marind cultural values (Oyelude, 2023).

This research is highly urgent because there remains a significant scientific gap regarding the integration of Marind local wisdom into human resource development (HRD) within the local government sector in Merauke. Previous studies have focused primarily on educational, social, or cultural aspects, while empirical research directly examining how Marind values, practices, and indigenous knowledge can strengthen public management remains very limited. The lack of a model or conceptual framework explaining the mechanisms for integrating indigenous knowledge into public apparatus capacity building has rendered the current HRD approach lacking contextualization and often ineffective in addressing local sociocultural complexities. In the context of South Papua's development, the success of public services and accelerated development in Merauke depend heavily on the local government's ability to develop HRD strategies rooted in the realities and identities of indigenous communities. Therefore, this research is crucial for formulating a local wisdom-based HRD model that not only improves service quality and policy effectiveness but also strengthens government legitimacy and promotes inclusive and sustainable governance. The aim of this research is to develop a public sector human resource development model that integrates Marind local wisdom as a strategy to strengthen the capacity of the apparatus and realize more inclusive, effective, and sustainable public management in Merauke.

2. Literatur Review

Human Resource Development (HRD) in the public sector is widely recognized as a strategic tool to enhance organizational performance, service quality, and citizen trust (Knies et al., 2024). Effective HRD programs focus not only on technical competencies but also on fostering ethical behavior, leadership, and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for achieving sustainable governance outcomes (Mukhty et al., 2022). However, many national HRD frameworks adopt a standardized approach that often overlooks the socio-cultural context of local communities, particularly in regions with diverse cultural identities. Such generic programs may limit employee engagement, reduce motivation, and weaken the effectiveness of public service delivery (Alamri, 2023). In response, scholars have emphasized the importance of contextualizing HRD initiatives to align with local norms, values, and organizational realities (Rodriguez et al., 2025). Contextualized HRD supports culturally sensitive communication, participatory decision-making, and conflict resolution, thereby enhancing legitimacy and trust in public institutions. Integrating local cultural dimensions into HRD is particularly critical in areas where indigenous communities maintain strong social structures and traditional governance systems, ensuring that training programs are relevant, sustainable, and accepted by both officials and the community.

Indigenous knowledge (IK) refers to the accumulated wisdom, practices, and ethical norms developed by communities over generations, often grounded in ecological stewardship and social cohesion (Yerramilli, 2025). Research has shown that incorporating IK into governance frameworks can strengthen legitimacy, ethical decision-making, and community participation, especially in culturally diverse regions (Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2023). Indigenous knowledge provides valuable insights into resource management, social norms, and conflict resolution, which can complement formal governance structures and improve public service effectiveness. Despite its potential, studies reveal that IK is often underutilized in formal HRD and governance initiatives, with most programs designed around universalized competencies rather than locally relevant practices (Wardiyanto et al., 2025). In Indonesia, recognizing and leveraging local wisdom has been identified as a pathway to promote inclusive governance and culturally responsive HRD. Empirical research remains limited on how indigenous knowledge can be systematically integrated into public sector HRD to enhance service quality, ethical governance, and sustainable management outcomes, highlighting a critical research gap for regions like Merauke.

The Marind community in South Papua embodies core cultural values such as collective solidarity, customary leadership ethics, communal responsibility, and the relational harmony between humans and nature. These values align closely with principles of ethical governance, accountability, and participatory decision-making, suggesting strong potential for integration into public sector HRD programs. Marind cultural norms emphasize collaboration, mutual respect, and long-term stewardship, which can enhance officials' competencies in conflict resolution, community engagement, and culturally sensitive communication. However, despite the clear alignment between Marind values and HRD objectives, there is a lack of formal mechanisms to integrate these indigenous principles into public administration practices. National HRD programs remain largely generic, often neglecting the socio-cultural realities of indigenous regions, resulting in limited trust, weak legitimacy, and suboptimal service delivery. This gap underscores the need for empirical studies that develop HRD models grounded in Marind indigenous knowledge, providing practical frameworks for sustainable, inclusive, and culturally responsive public management in Merauke.

3. Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth how Marind local wisdom can be integrated into public sector human resource development in Merauke. The case study design was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically within a concrete cultural, social, and institutional context, thus providing a comprehensive picture of local practices, values, and dynamics that influence apparatus capacity and the effectiveness of public management in the region. This research was conducted in Merauke Regency, South Papua, with a primary focus on local government agencies directly involved in human resource development, such as the Human Resources Development and Personnel Agency (BKPSDM), the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), and several districts with Marind indigenous populations as a representation of the local cultural context. The location selection was based on its relevance to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the human resource development policy that is the focus of the research. The research activities took place from May to August 2025, encompassing initial observation, data collection through in-depth interviews, documentation, and field data verification to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and institutional dynamics that influence the integration of Marind local wisdom into local government apparatus development.

This study involved subjects and informants selected through purposive sampling, a selective selection of participants based on their relevance, knowledge, and direct involvement in the issue of integrating Marind local wisdom into public sector human resource development. A total of 20 key informants were selected to provide in-depth and representative data, consisting of 8 local government officials including structural and functional officials at BKPSDM, Bappeda, and related regional apparatus organizations; 6 traditional figures and Marind community leaders who understand traditional values, norms, and practices that have the potential to be integrated into apparatus capacity development; 4 academics or practitioners with expertise in local wisdom, Papuan culture, or public management; and 2 local NGO activists working on issues of governance, empowerment of indigenous communities, and preservation of Marind culture. The selection of informant characteristics was based on their ability to provide authentic and in-depth perspectives, reflecting direct experience, substantive competence, and strong cultural understanding so as to enrich the analysis related to the strategy of integrating local values in local government human resource management. With this approach, the research obtains a diversity of relevant information to build a holistic understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional dynamics that influence the development of local wisdom-based human resources in Merauke.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the integration of Marind local wisdom in public sector human resource development. In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview format, which allowed researchers to explore the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of informants flexibly while remaining focused on the research focus. The interview process was conducted directly at the apparatus' work locations and within the Marind indigenous community environment from May to August 2025, with each session lasting between 45 and 90 minutes to ensure the depth of the data obtained. The interview instrument was developed based on several key indicators, namely the identification of Marind local wisdom values and practices such as solidarity, communal ethics, human-nature relations, and indigenous leadership structures; apparatus and indigenous community perceptions regarding the relevance of these values in improving competency, work ethics, and leadership behavior; the implementation and challenges of human resource development in government agencies; the potential integration of local cultural values in apparatus training and development programs; and its implications for the effectiveness of public management and service quality. In addition to interviews, field observations were conducted to directly observe the dynamics of social interactions, cultural practices, and work patterns of officials related to the cultural context of the Marind community. Documentation studies supplemented the data through a review of policy documents, personnel regulations, HRD program reports, and local cultural archives, ensuring that all these data collection techniques provided a holistic and valid picture of the phenomenon under study.

The data analysis technique in this study uses a thematic analysis approach, which is carried out through several systematic stages, starting with the process of transcribing data from interviews and observations, followed by coding to group units of meaning relevant to the research focus. The next stage is the identification of recurring themes in the data, which are then organized to describe the pattern of relationships between Marind local wisdom values and public sector human resource development practices. Once the themes are formed, an interpretation process is carried out to understand the dynamics of the integration of these local cultural values in the context of public management in Merauke, as well as how these values influence the quality, ethics, and effectiveness of the apparatus' work. The analysis stage then concludes with the drawing of reflective and comprehensive conclusions, thus producing findings with theoretical and practical value regarding the integration of local wisdom in HRD. To ensure the validity and validity of the data, this study applies various verification strategies, including source triangulation and method triangulation to confirm the

consistency of information from various informants and data collection techniques. In addition, member checking is carried out by asking informants to re-verify the results of the preliminary interpretations obtained by the researcher to ensure the accuracy of meaning and prevent data distortion. The analysis process was also strengthened through peer debriefing, which involves discussions with colleagues or methodologists to assess the logic of the analysis and the accuracy of the interpretations. All stages of the research were systematically recorded in an audit trail, ensuring transparency, traceability, and adherence to the credibility standards of qualitative research.

4. Hasil & Pembahasan

Before presenting the research findings, it is essential to outline the contextual foundation that shapes the dynamics of public sector human resource development in Merauke. The integration of Marind indigenous knowledge into public management practices emerges as a critical response to the growing need for culturally grounded and community-responsive governance in South Papua. This study explores how local values, leadership traditions, and collective identities can enrich the capacity-building processes of government officials, offering a perspective that bridges administrative professionalism with the socio-cultural realities of the Marind community. The following section presents the empirical findings derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis, highlighting key themes that illustrate both the opportunities and challenges of embedding indigenous wisdom within the HRD public sector.

Table 1. Thematic Findings of Marind Local Wisdom Values Relevant to HRD

Main Theme	Description of Field Findings	Informant Quotes (Evidence)
Mutual Cooperation (Dema-dema)	The value of collective work, which is the basis of social solidarity and collaboration in community activities, has the potential to strengthen teamwork and apparatus coordination.	"Marind people always work together... one task, everyone gets involved." (Informant A, Traditional Leader)
Harmonious Relationship between Man and Nature	The principle of human-nature balance forms a sustainability-oriented leadership ethic, relevant for public officials in the management of customary areas.	"A leader's job is to protect the land and its people. If one is damaged, everything is affected." (Informant B, Village Official)
Traditional Leadership (Dimaro)	Leadership based on example, deliberation, and moral responsibility has the potential to improve the communication, mediation, and conflict resolution skills of civil servants.	"Dimaro is an example. He doesn't give orders, but instead invites people to talk first." (Informant C, Traditional Leader)
Collective Identity & Village Solidarity	The social identity of "one village" strengthens a sense of belonging, loyalty, and community-based work; it can strengthen the work culture of government organizations.	"If one person has a problem, the whole village helps." (Informant D, Marind Resident)
Lack of Integration in HR Policies	Marind values have not been adopted in civil service training programs; HRD remains generic and follows national modules.	"Our training uses national modules; no one teaches Marind culture." (Informant E, BKPSDM Official)

Table 1 shows that public sector human resource development in Merauke has significant potential to be strengthened through the integration of Marind local wisdom values, including the principle of dema-dema (mutual cooperation), a leadership ethic based on human-nature harmony, the traditional dimaro leadership model that emphasizes exemplary behavior and deliberation, and a collective identity that builds village solidarity as the foundation of work culture. All of these findings are reinforced by empirical quotes from informants, which illustrate how these values are still alive and practiced within the community but have not yet been accommodated in local government HRD policies. This underscores the opportunity and urgent need to adapt the apparatus development program to be more contextual, inclusive, and aligned with the socio-cultural structure of the Marind community.

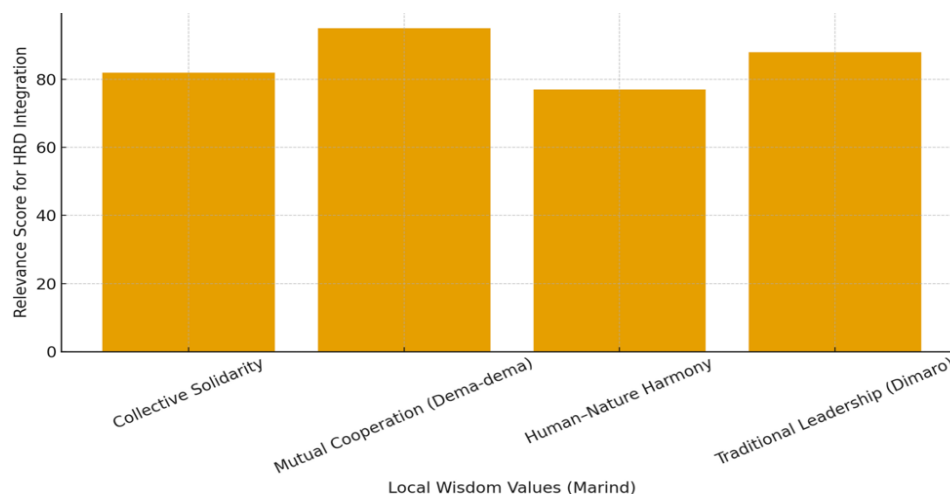


Figure 1. Relevance of Marind Indigenous Values for Strengthening Local-Government Human Resource Development

The bar chart illustrates the varying levels of relevance of key Marind indigenous values for strengthening local-government human resource development in Merauke. Mutual cooperation (*dema-dema*) emerges as the most influential value, reflecting its strong potential to enhance collaborative work culture within public institutions. Traditional leadership (*dimaro*) also scores highly, indicating its importance in shaping ethical, responsible, and community-centered governance. Collective solidarity shows substantial relevance for building team cohesion and shared responsibility among civil servants, while the human nature harmony value, although slightly lower, remains essential for promoting sustainable leadership practices aligned with local ecological wisdom. Overall, the data highlights that integrating these cultural values into HRD policies can significantly improve government performance and align public services with the social-cultural identity of the Marind community.

Table 2. Thematic Findings of Research Results on the Actual Conditions of Human Resource Development in the Merauke Regional Government

Main Theme	Sub-Findings	Description of Field Findings	Example of Informant Quotation (Verbatim)
HRD is Generic and Non-Contextual	Uniform curriculum	The training uses national modules without adapting to the Marind cultural context.	"The material is always the same as training in other areas; there's nothing that touches on local culture." (BKPSDM official)
	There is no local wisdom content	The 2021–2024 training documents show an absence of local content in the curriculum.	"There has never been any training explaining how to interact with the Marind people." (District Official)
Technocratic Training	Focus on administrative aspects	Training emphasizes reporting, procedures, and government system applications.	"The material is always about administration; no one teaches a social approach." (Training Participant)
	Minimal socio-cultural perspective	Observations show that the training did not discuss government–indigenous people relations.	"We're confused when we have to explain the program to the villagers; the method is different." (District Apparatus)
Minimal Involvement of Traditional Leaders	No cultural consultation	Traditional leaders are not involved in preparing materials or training.	"We were never asked to provide input for employee training." (Marind Traditional Leader)
	Lack of government–community collaboration	There is no formal forum for collaboration in HRD.	"The training is entirely a government matter, we were not consulted." (Community Leader)
Cultural Competence Gap among Civil Servants	Marind cultural understanding is low	The apparatus admitted that they did not yet understand the values, symbols and social structure of Marind.	"We often mispronounce things, so people feel like the government doesn't respect their culture." (OPD official)
	Miscommunication in public services	Mismatched approaches cause resistance in development programs.	"The program was rejected because the method did not fit with village customs." (District Apparatus)

Table 2 shows that human resource development in the Merauke Regional Government is still carried out in a generic manner without considering the cultural context of the Marind indigenous community, with a training curriculum that adheres entirely to national standards and does not incorporate elements of local wisdom. The training tends to be technocratic and focuses on administrative procedures, thus failing to equip officials with the socio-cultural competencies needed for public services in indigenous areas. The minimal involvement of traditional leaders in the training formulation process results in a lack of collaboration between the government and local communities, making the HRD approach less suited to field needs. As a result, officials experience a gap in cultural understanding that triggers miscommunication and community resistance, particularly when development programs are delivered without considering Marind values and ways of life.

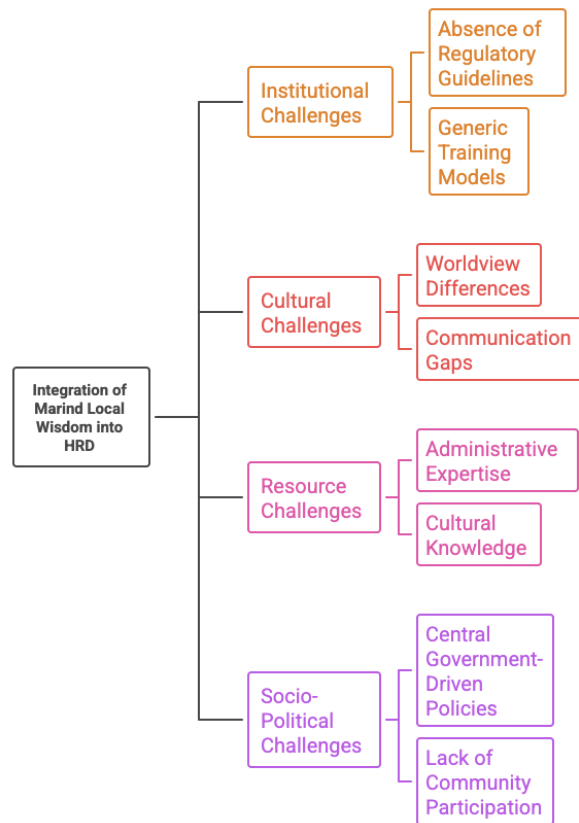


Figure 2. Challenges in Integrating Marind Local Wisdom into HRD

The study found that the integration of Marind local wisdom into public sector human resource development faces several interrelated challenges. Institutionally, the absence of regulatory guidelines or formal frameworks for incorporating cultural values into HRD programs has resulted in training models that remain generic and detached from local realities. Culturally, significant differences in worldview between modern bureaucratic structures and the traditional social systems of the Marind people create gaps in understanding and communication, limiting the effectiveness of public service delivery. From a resource perspective, there is a shortage of qualified facilitators who possess both administrative expertise and deep knowledge of Marind cultural practices, hindering culturally grounded training implementation. In addition, socio-political constraints persist as HRD policies continue to be shaped by top-down, central government-driven approaches rather than participatory, community-based models that reflect indigenous priorities. Together, these barriers underscore the systemic complexities that inhibit meaningful integration of Marind indigenous knowledge into HRD practices in Merauke.

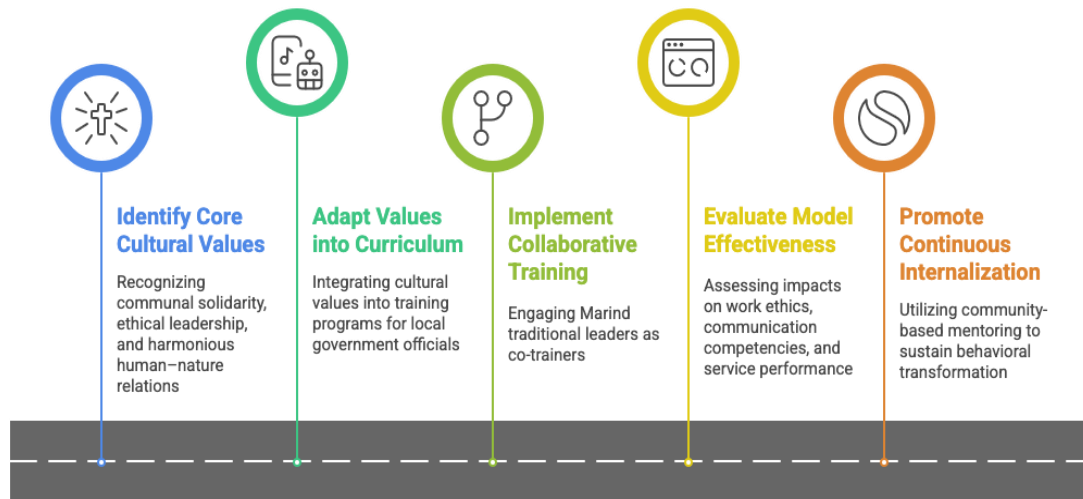


Figure 3. Integrating Marind Wisdom into Public Sector HRD

The findings of this study produced a conceptual model for integrating Marind local wisdom into public sector human resource development, beginning with the identification of core cultural values such as communal solidarity, ethical leadership, and harmonious human–nature relations that hold direct relevance for public service professionalism. These values are then adapted into the training curriculum for local government officials to ensure that capacity-building programs are contextually grounded and culturally responsive. The model further emphasizes collaborative training mechanisms in which government institutions engage Marind traditional leaders as co-trainers to strengthen cultural resonance and mutual understanding between public servants and indigenous communities. To assess its effectiveness, the model incorporates a systematic evaluation of the impacts on work ethics, communication competencies, and overall service performance. Finally, the model promotes continuous internalization through community-based mentoring, enabling sustained behavioral transformation and reinforcing culturally aligned governance practices across public institutions in Merauke.

The cultural values embedded in the Marind community such as collective cooperation (*dema-dema*), communal responsibility, and respect for harmonious relationships demonstrate strong alignment with the fundamental principles of good governance. These values reflect essential governance dimensions including participation, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Abhayawansa et al., 2021). The practice of decision-making through communal deliberation mirrors democratic and inclusive administrative processes, indicating that indigenous values can serve as strategic resources to enhance governance quality. Integrating these values into human resource development provides an opportunity to contextualize public management reforms in ways that are culturally grounded and socially legitimate (Knies et al., 2024). Marind leadership traditions, particularly the role of *Dimaro* (traditional leaders), emphasize moral responsibility, respect for communal welfare, and the importance of maintaining social harmony. These principles resonate with modern frameworks of public service ethics, which promote integrity, compassion, fairness, and a strong commitment to citizen well-being. Embedding Marind ethical norms into HRD programs strengthens the moral foundation of public officials, ensuring their conduct aligns with both administrative standards and community expectations. Such cultural-ethical synergy is especially important in regions where public trust in government is inseparable from the recognition of indigenous identity and respect for local customs.

The Marind worldview prioritizes relational harmony among individuals, clans, and the natural environment providing a cultural basis for empathetic and culturally sensitive communication. For public officials serving indigenous communities, communication that reflects empathy and cultural awareness is central to building trust and preventing social friction (Mota et al., 2024). When civil servants internalize Marind values, they become more capable of interpreting local expressions, understanding implicit cultural cues, and engaging with communities in ways that validate their identity and traditions. These competencies significantly enhance the quality of state citizen interactions, particularly in facilitating dialogue, managing community issues, and delivering inclusive public services (Licsandru et al., 2025). The collective orientation of Marind society also reinforces a community-based sense of accountability, where individual actions are assessed based on their contribution to collective welfare. This norm aligns with public administration expectations that officials demonstrate accountability both upward to their institutions and outward to the communities they serve (Overman & Schillemans, 2022). Incorporating this communal accountability into HRD improves bureaucratic responsiveness by encouraging civil servants to prioritize community needs, address grievances

efficiently, and ensure equitable service delivery. The Marind emphasis on maintaining balance with the natural environment further contributes to a culturally grounded perspective on sustainable governance, strengthening the legitimacy and long-term effectiveness of public sector performance in Merauke.

Generic, national-standards-based government Human Resource Development (HRD) programs tend to be ineffective in the Merauke context because they fail to consider the socio-cultural complexities of the Marind indigenous community. Civil servant competency development policies are typically designed with a uniform approach, emphasizing the achievement of administrative and technocratic competencies without considering the need to adapt to local values, village social structures, and communal interaction patterns that differ from those in other regions in Indonesia (Rengen et al., 2025). Consequently, training materials, performance indicators, and capacity-building models are not aligned with the social dynamics of the Marind community, which strongly emphasizes moral relations, equality, and social harmony in public service processes. This lack of cultural adaptation in HRD policies makes it difficult for civil servants to build trust and legitimacy when interacting with the Marind community. Civil servants accustomed to a formal, bureaucratic approach are often unable to enter communication spaces based on customary principles, village deliberations, and relational practices such as mutual cooperation and respect for traditional leaders (Dlamini, 2025). This situation creates emotional and social distance because the community perceives that services are delivered without cultural sensitivity, resulting in rigid, transactional, and empathetic interactions. The inability of officials to translate messages, understand context, and adapt communication styles ultimately weakens public perception of the government's integrity and commitment to serving indigenous communities (Grey & Severin, 2022).

The gap between uniform HRD policies and the socio-cultural realities of Merauke is at the root of the low quality of public services in indigenous territories. This lack of synchronicity hinders the accountability and responsiveness of officials because they lack the relevant cultural competencies to address the realities on the ground (Wardiyanto et al., 2025). HRD programs that are not connected to local wisdom result in services that are not adaptive, lack participation, and fail to accommodate the expectations of indigenous communities, who view service not only as an administrative process but also as a social relationship that must reflect respect, honesty, and equality. Therefore, this gap needs to be addressed through a local culture-based HRD model so that the capacity building of officials aligns with the values, social structure, and dynamics of Marind community relations.

The integration of Indigenous Knowledge into Human Resource Development (HRD) programs faces significant institutional and structural challenges, primarily due to the lack of regulations explicitly governing the mainstreaming of local wisdom values in civil service development (Moges et al., 2024). This lack of a policy umbrella has resulted in sporadic integration initiatives lacking national and regional benchmarks. Furthermore, the minimal involvement of Marind traditional leaders in HRD policy formulation has prevented local perspectives from being incorporated into training curriculum design and civil service performance indicators. The dominance of a top-down approach at the central policy level further exacerbates the gap between program design and the real needs of indigenous communities, whose socio-cultural characteristics differ from generic national assumptions (Anderson et al., 2024). Modern bureaucracies operate based on a rational-legal paradigm that emphasizes efficiency, hierarchy, and procedural certainty, while Marind social structures are built on collectivity, kinship, and spiritual values that govern relationships between individuals and between humans and nature. This paradigm conflict complicates the integration of Indigenous Knowledge, as bureaucratic governance prioritizes administrative performance standards and procedural linearity, while the Marind community views public services as a relational process that must reflect respect, village solidarity, and customary legitimacy. This difference creates a lack of synchronicity, often making it impossible for officials to translate central government policies into service practices that align with the social expectations of indigenous communities (Figueroa Huencho, 2021).

The lack of facilitators who understand both modern governance and local culture is a significant practical obstacle. Facilitators who lack cultural competence often fail to mediate the paradigm differences between the bureaucracy and indigenous communities, resulting in training for civil servants that is overly theoretical, lacking contextualization, and unable to equip them with relevant communication strategies and social approaches. Consequently, civil servants struggle to build trust, initiate customary-bureaucratic collaboration, and demonstrate cultural sensitivity in service delivery. This lack of a mediator directly impacts the low effectiveness of HRD implementation in indigenous areas, as the transformation of civil servant capacity depends on the ability to harmoniously integrate local values with governance principles (Sikwela & Diedericks, 2024). Collaboration between local governments and Marind traditional leaders opens up strategic opportunities to strengthen local wisdom-based Human Resource Development (HRD), particularly through the internalization of cultural values in civil servant training. Involving traditional leaders as co-trainers or resource persons in training programs enables civil servants to understand core concepts such as village solidarity, customary leadership structures, and Marind communication ethics that emphasize respect and reciprocity.

This collaborative approach bridges the gap between bureaucratic knowledge and local knowledge, so that training materials are not only regulatory-based, but also relevant to the social context of the communities served.

Field findings indicate that officials with a better understanding of local wisdom tend to be more effective, particularly in conflict resolution, cross-cultural communication, and the management of village development programs. They are able to build more productive dialogue with indigenous communities, avoid misunderstandings related to Marind symbolic language, and are more sensitive to the social norms that govern public interactions (Chew, 2024). In the context of conflict resolution, officials who understand the social structure and mechanisms of customary deliberation can facilitate mediation processes that are more credible and accepted by various parties. This effectiveness demonstrates that the integration of Indigenous Knowledge is not merely normative but also provides operational benefits for bureaucratic performance. In addition to improving the technical and social capacity of officials, collaboration between government and indigenous leaders can also strengthen the legitimacy of local governments in the eyes of Marind communities. When training and policies reflect respect for local cultural identity, communities view the government as an inclusive institution that is responsive to customary values (Osebor, 2024). This increases public trust, strengthens community support for development programs, and reduces resistance to policies previously deemed inappropriate to local realities. Thus, this collaboration is not merely an HRD strategy, but a crucial foundation for sustainable, local wisdom-based governance in Merauke.

The Marind local wisdom-based HRD conceptual model developed in this study directly addresses the research gap related to the lack of a systematic framework that integrates Indigenous Knowledge into the capacity development of local government officials. This model not only offers a theoretical approach but also provides practical guidance that the Merauke Regency Government can use to design training programs that are culturally sensitive, adaptive, and relevant to the social needs of indigenous communities. By connecting Marind values with public management principles, this model bridges the gap between the modern bureaucratic paradigm and the socio-cultural realities of South Papua, thereby addressing the conceptual gap that has hampered the effectiveness of HRD implementation. This model is built through four interrelated main components: identification of cultural values, adaptation of the training curriculum, co-training with traditional leaders, and ongoing evaluation. Identification of cultural values serves as a foundation that ensures that the entire HRD process is based on a deep understanding of social ethics, human-nature relations, customary leadership structures, and the Marind Gotong Royong pattern. These values are then translated into a training curriculum tailored to the local context, including case studies, cross-cultural communication principles, and village empowerment. The co-training phase involves traditional leaders as co-facilitators, enabling two-way knowledge transfer and ensuring that cultural perspectives remain a key element in the learning process. Continuous evaluation is conducted through field feedback, monitoring of staff performance, and regular dialogue with traditional institutions to ensure the model remains relevant and adaptable to community social dynamics (Mahmoud Saleh & Karia, 2024).

This model has enormous potential for improving the quality of public services in Merauke, as officials trained with a local wisdom-based approach have proven more effective in communicating, resolving conflicts, and building public trust. The integration of cultural values into training also promotes performance efficiency, as officials are able to understand community work patterns, avoid miscommunication, and implement development programs with stronger public participation. Furthermore, this model contributes to sustainable governance by creating a more harmonious relationship between the government and indigenous communities, increasing policy legitimacy, and strengthening an inclusive public service orientation. Thus, this conceptual model is not only academically relevant but also offers significant practical impact for governance transformation in South Papua. This research makes a significant theoretical contribution to the literature on public management, indigenous governance, and human capital development by demonstrating that the integration of Marind local wisdom can form the basis for establishing a new paradigm in developing regional bureaucratic capacity based on socio-cultural contexts. These findings confirm that indigenous values are not merely cultural elements but also a source of strategic knowledge that can improve the effectiveness of policy implementation and the quality of public services. Practically, this research highlights the importance of drafting regional regulations that recognize the role of local wisdom in HRD, developing culture-based training modules through collaboration between the government and traditional leaders, and strengthening the capacity of civil servants with a sustainable intercultural approach. The integration of this model has strategic implications for the transformation of South Papua, as it strengthens a development agenda oriented toward sustainability, inclusivity, and improving the welfare of indigenous communities. Its successful implementation in Merauke has the potential to become a national model for other indigenous regions in Indonesia seeking to develop more responsive, equitable, and value-driven public governance.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that integrating Marind indigenous knowledge into public sector human resource development presents a strategic pathway for strengthening culturally responsive governance in Merauke. The findings demonstrate that key Marind values including collective solidarity, customary leadership principles, and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature hold significant potential to enhance public officials' competencies in communication, ethical conduct, conflict resolution, and community engagement. However, the current HRD practices within the local government remain predominantly standardized and technocratic, with limited contextual adaptation to the socio-cultural realities of the Marind community. This gap is reinforced by institutional constraints, such as the absence of regulatory frameworks, insufficient cross-cultural facilitators, and minimal involvement of indigenous leaders in HRD planning and implementation. The research provides a conceptual model that outlines how Marind cultural principles can be officially incorporated into HRD processes through contextual curriculum redesign, co-training with indigenous leaders, and continuous performance evaluation grounded in local values. This model offers both theoretical contributions to the literature on public management and indigenous governance as well as practical insights for local governments seeking to strengthen legitimacy, improve service delivery, and promote inclusive development in South Papua. Overall, the study underscores the urgency of adopting culturally grounded HRD strategies to ensure that public sector reform in Merauke is effective, sustainable, and aligned with the aspirations of the indigenous Marind community.

5. Referensi

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