

NEGLECTED GOVERNANCE IN STATE BORDERLANDS: Policy Disparities In Autonomy And The Erosion Of Local Loyalty Along The Indonesia–Malaysia Boundary In West Kalimantan

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's border governance is structured through a comprehensive regulatory framework, including Law No. 43/2008, Presidential Regulation No. 31/2015, and the 2025 National Border Management Action Plan issued by the National Border Management Agency (BNPP). However, persistent social disparities and limited public service delivery remain evident in the Indonesia –Malaysia border region, particularly in West Kalimantan. This study investigates the underlying factors that contribute to the misalignment between these regulatory mandates and the lived realities of border communities. A document synthesis method was employed, integrating statutory regulations, field observations, academic studies, and media reports into a consolidated qualitative analysis. The results indicate a recurrent pattern of multi-level governance failure, characterized by weak policy implementation at subnational levels, constrained fiscal and institutional capacity, and the absence of effective collaborative governance arrangements. These deficiencies have increased

community dependence on Malaysian services, ranging from healthcare and education to markets and media, thereby eroding national loyalty and weakening state legitimacy. The study highlights that these governance gaps arise from ineffective coordination, asymmetrical authority distribution, and fragmented accountability mechanisms across government tiers. Strengthening border governance requires redesigning fiscal instruments, improving vertical and horizontal coordination, and expanding community-oriented public service provision.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's border regions—particularly the Indonesia–Malaysia land border in West Kalimantan—constitute a strategic space that reflects the quality of governance, state presence, and political legitimacy in the eyes of local communities. Within various national regulations, border areas are positioned as the nation's “front porch,” which must receive development priority. Law Number 43 of 2008 on State Territory explicitly underscores that border regions must be managed in a planned and integrated manner to safeguard territorial integrity, improve community welfare, and maintain national stability. (Undang-Undang Nomor 43 Tahun 2008 Tentang Wilayah Negara, 2008). Furthermore, Presidential Regulation Number 31 of 2015 outlines the spatial planning of border areas in Kalimantan as a guiding framework for the development of infrastructure, economic hubs, and public service facilities (Peraturan Presiden Nomor 31 Tahun 2015, 2015). These regulations are further reinforced by BNPP Regulation Number 2 of 2025 on the Action Plan for State Border Management, which establishes coordinated measures involving cross-ministerial agencies, local governments, and security actors (Peraturan BNPP Nomor 2 Tahun 2025, 2025). However, despite the seemingly comprehensive legal and policy framework on border management, various empirical realities indicate a persistent mismatch between policy intentions and policy outcomes.

Communities in Entikong, Jagoi Babang, Sajingan Besar, Badau, and other remote border areas continue to face limited road access, inadequate healthcare services, insufficient educational facilities, and weak information and broadcasting networks. In several cases, border residents choose to seek medical treatment, shop, or even send their children to school in Sarawak, Malaysia, because services in Indonesia are perceived as less responsive and substandard. This phenomenon is not incidental but systemic—reflecting the weak presence of the state in providing basic services guaranteed by the constitution. One visible dimension of social inequality in border regions is the poor quality of educational services received by local communities, as highlighted by (Mawar, 2021) who found that collaboration among education actors in the Entikong–Sekayam area remains suboptimal and fails to meet community learning needs equitably. These findings indicate that education issues in border regions are not merely a matter of physical access, but also stem from weak institutional coordination, which contributes to disparities in human resource quality.

As a result, the social gap continues to widen, as children living in border areas grow up with educational services that lag far behind those available in other regions. Furthermore, the socio-economic conditions of border communities reveal significant disparities compared to other regions in West Kalimantan. Pratama and Yacoub (Pratama, 2025a) found that most low-income families in the interior border areas live on only Rp1–2 million per month—an amount insufficient to meet basic needs. Local commodities such as pepper, cocoa, and langsung are more profitable

when sold to Malaysia, thereby strengthening the community's economic dependence on the neighboring country (Madjid, 2021).

The gap between regulatory expectations and empirical realities points to a fundamental problem in governance within border regions. The theoretical framework of multi-level governance emphasizes that the effectiveness of public policy in border areas depends heavily on coordination across levels of government—national, provincial, district, and village—as well as cross-sectoral collaboration. However, various studies show that local governments often lack both the operational authority and adequate fiscal capacity to implement mandates issued by the central government (Setiawan, 2020). Consequently, the burden of development and public service provision in border areas becomes disproportionate: the central government formulates regulations and policy designs, but their implementation depends on local governments that struggle with limited budgets and human resources. This imbalance creates a chronic implementation gap.

In the context of the Indonesia–Malaysia border, various studies indicate that unsynchronized development policies and an overly dominant security-oriented approach—as reflected in findings on the trade-off between security stability and economic activity in border area (Rahman et al., 2021). Thus, social inequality in border regions not only reflects the problem of lagging public services but also underscores the need for more integrated governance so that development and security initiatives can progress in balance without undermining the well-being of local communities. Governance problems in border areas are also driven by institutional fragmentation. BNPP, which is mandated to coordinate border development, has not yet been fully effective in harmonizing cross-sectoral programs. Simandjuntak's research shows that ministerial agendas often remain focused on their respective priorities, resulting in strategic infrastructure development—such as the Integrated Border Crossing Posts (PLBN)—not being accompanied by the development of supporting facilities in the surrounding villages. (Simandjuntak, 2020). The presence of the grand Entikong Border Crossing Post (PLBN), for example, has not automatically improved basic services for surrounding communities. Many villages remain isolated, with severely damaged roads and ambulances struggling to reach residents. The viral case in 2025 of an ambulance sinking into a muddy road and having to be replaced with a motorcycle in Entikong vividly illustrates the stark gap between the image of national development and the actual conditions experienced by local communities.

In the political context, this issue points to the risk of eroding community loyalty toward the state. Border studies emphasize that border communities inhabit not only a geographic space but also an identity space; their loyalty is shaped by the quality of state services and their everyday interactions with state symbols. When communities interact more frequently with services, markets, and broadcasting from Malaysia, their social identification may gradually shift. This aligns with (Van Houtum, 1999) findings, which argue that borders are not merely physical lines but also cultural and political representations that can weaken when the state fails to maintain a consistent presence. Based on this background, this article seeks to answer the question: why does the governance gap in border areas persist despite the presence of comprehensive and ambitious national regulations? To address this, the article synthesizes regulatory findings, field realities, and scholarly literature by employing governance theory, particularly the frameworks of multi-level governance and collaborative governance. This analysis is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics behind governance failures and to offer a more systematic approach for improving border development.

The theoretical framework of this study is strengthened by employing the concept of multi-level governance (MLG) to explain why a comprehensive national policy architecture has not

produced effective governance outcomes in the border region of West Kalimantan. Hooghe and Marks (2001) emphasize that MLG focuses on dispersed authority across governmental levels and the ways in which inter-level misalignment can generate implementation gaps. In the context of border governance, regulatory mandates such as Law No. 43/2008 and Presidential Regulation No. 31/2015 have not been effectively realized due to the limited fiscal and administrative capacity of subnational governments. Accordingly, MLG underscores that border-related challenges are not merely technical in nature; they represent structural deficiencies in the design and coordination of authority, which explain why national directives often fail to translate into public services capable of reducing social and economic disparities.

Beyond structural issues across levels of government, the effectiveness of border governance is also shaped by how public and non-public actors build inclusive mechanisms of cooperation. Collaborative governance theory, as articulated by Ansell and Gash (2008), posits that policy implementation is more likely to succeed when supported by formal arenas for dialogue, trust-building processes, equitable access to resources, and facilitative leadership that bridges diverse actor interests. Conditions in the West Kalimantan border region reveal that weak coordination mechanisms and the absence of cross-actor deliberative spaces exacerbate policy fragmentation and diminish the presence of the state in citizens' everyday lives. Applying this theoretical lens demonstrates that collaborative failures are key contributors to the poor quality of public services and the continued reliance of local communities on Sarawak.

The integration of multi-level governance and collaborative governance provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding the roots of governance challenges in West Kalimantan's borderlands. MLG elucidates how asymmetries in authority and capacity generate implementation gaps, while collaborative governance explains why the absence of inclusive dialogue inhibits policy synchronization and service provision. These structural and procedural shortcomings contribute to the emergence of functional proximity—where border residents increasingly depend on Malaysian services—which, over time, may influence their sense of identity and allegiance. This aligns with the perspectives of Van Houtum (1999) and Newman (2006), who argue that borderlands are identity-shaping spaces formed through everyday interactions with state services and symbols. Together, these theoretical insights offer a robust analytical lens for explaining why governance gaps persist despite the presence of an ostensibly comprehensive national regulatory framework.

METHOD

This study applies the principles of multi-level governance (MLG) and collaborative governance as its core analytical lens. Within the MLG framework, analysis focuses on three structural components: how authority is allocated across tiers of government, the fiscal and administrative capacity of local institutions, and the alignment of national and subnational policy agendas. The collaborative governance perspective is operationalized through four analytical dimensions—dialogue platforms, mechanisms for cultivating trust, equitable resource access, and facilitative leadership—which collectively assess the robustness of cross-actor coordination and the effectiveness of joint policy implementation. By integrating these frameworks, the study advances beyond descriptive analysis and systematically connects empirical evidence to theoretical explanations for the enduring governance gaps in the West Kalimantan border region.

This study employs a qualitative approach based on document-based qualitative synthesis, integrating regulatory sources, empirical data, media reports, and academic literature to produce a

comprehensive analysis of governance in the Indonesia–Malaysia border region of West Kalimantan. This approach is aligned with the multidimensional nature of border issues, which encompass policy, institutional, economic, social, and geopolitical aspects. The study is structured using a descriptive-analytical approach, aiming not only to describe but also to critically examine the gap between government-issued regulations and their actual implementation in border areas. By utilizing a document synthesis approach, this research enables the integration of diverse information across multiple layers of policy and governance practice, allowing the relationship between policy design and implementation to be understood more holistically.

Data collection was conducted through the identification of primary documents such as laws, presidential regulations, and government regulations; a literature review of academic sources from various databases; the gathering of relevant news reports; and the development of thematic coding. Data analysis refers to the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles, 2014) which includes data reduction by organizing information into categories such as regulatory frameworks, implementation discrepancies, cross-border dependence, and coordination failures; data display through tables and diagrams; and conclusion drawing through an iterative process based on emerging patterns. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, cross-checking between regulatory mandates and field-level implementation realities, and contextual analysis to avoid interpretive bias. This approach ensures that each conclusion is derived from a combination of diverse empirical evidence rather than from a single type of data.

This study has several limitations. The absence of in-depth interviews means the analysis relies primarily on documents; the research scope does not cover all national border areas; and dependence on publicly available data means the findings are constrained by the availability of official reports. Nonetheless, these limitations do not diminish the validity of the analysis, as the study focuses on constructing a macro-level overview and providing an academic critique of border governance more broadly. Data collection was carried out through the identification of primary documents such as laws, presidential regulations, and government regulations; a review of academic literature from various databases; the compilation of relevant news reports; and the development of thematic coding. The data analysis followed the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Miles, 2014), which includes data reduction by categorizing information into themes such as regulatory frameworks, implementation discrepancies, cross-border dependency, and coordination failures; data display in the form of tables and diagrams; and conclusion drawing through an iterative process based on emerging patterns. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, cross-checking between regulatory mandates and field-level implementation realities, and contextual analysis to minimize interpretive bias. This approach ensures that each conclusion is grounded in a combination of diverse empirical evidence rather than a single type of data.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the gap between national regulatory mandates and on-the-ground conditions in West Kalimantan's border areas is not merely the result of fragmented

implementation but reflects deeper structural governance failures. From an MLG perspective, national regulations such as Law No. 43/2008 and Presidential Regulation No. 31/2015 provide a comprehensive normative mandate; however, authority structures and fiscal capacity at the provincial, district, and village levels are not aligned with the operational requirements of these mandates (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). This imbalance—where the central government outlines major programs (e.g., state border posts) while local governments shoulder responsibility for basic services with limited budgets—explains why normative policy commitments fail to materialize as tangible public services. The ambulance incident in Entikong and persistent village road damage are not isolated events, but manifestations of a governance mismatch between institutional design and implementation capacity (Setiawan et al., 2022; Peters, 2019).

Beyond authority structures, process-level analysis reveals failures in collaborative mechanisms that should ideally bridge actor-level gaps. Collaborative governance theory (Ansell & Gash, 2008) posits that cross-sectoral policies require inclusive dialogic forums, facilitative leadership, incentive-sharing, and trust-building to operate effectively. In West Kalimantan, sectoral programs tend to operate independently without binding coordination mechanisms—BNPP has a normative action plan but insufficient executive authority to enforce interministerial alignment—resulting in major interventions failing to cascade to surrounding villages, and local communities being inadequately engaged in planning processes. The absence of collaborative processes explains why chronic policy fragmentation persists despite ambitious national regulations (Simandjuntak, 2020; Mawar et al., 2021).

Closer examination reveals that the structural roots of these problems comprise three mutually reinforcing factors: (1) a fiscal design that is not tailored to border needs—where the division of governmental functions (Law No. 23/2014) burdens local governments without adequate thematic funding; (2) weak coordination institutions—BNPP acts as a coordinating body but lacks strong executive authority to harmonize cross-sectoral programs; and (3) limited local capacity—insufficient human resources, supporting infrastructure, and information systems, resulting in a state presence that exists normatively in documents but is absent in everyday service delivery. These combined factors produce functional proximity to Malaysian services (Madjid & Setiawan, 2021), positioning border communities to choose the most effective services available rather than those provided by their own state a dynamic with implications for political identity and loyalty shifts (Van Houtum, 1999; Newman, 2006). The analytical and policy implications of these findings call for a dual approach: structural interventions to reform fiscal design and strengthen institutional mandates, and procedural interventions to develop genuine collaborative mechanisms. Structurally, recommended actions include establishing thematic border-specific funding (e.g., a Border Special Allocation Fund), revising fiscal transfer schemes to link funding with border service performance indicators, and enhancing BNPP's authority to enforce interministerial synchronization within integrated implementation plans. Procedurally, a permanent collaborative forum comprising relevant ministries, provincial and district governments, customary leaders, and community representatives should be established, supported by independent facilitators and incentive-sharing mechanisms (e.g., co-financing village projects), along with capacity-building programs for local officials and community digital literacy initiatives. Together, these interventions would not only improve public service outcomes but also reduce functional proximity to the neighboring state and gradually mitigate the erosion of national loyalty.

The gap between regulatory mandates and field realities aligns with the observations of (Pratama, 2025b), who argue that the border regions of West Kalimantan experience structural poverty due to physical isolation and the limited presence of the state in providing basic services.

Regulations move forward, but execution remains stagnant; the state appears in policy documents, yet is absent in delivering even the most elementary public services.

A comparison between legal mandates and field findings reveals disparities that are structural in nature. Law Number 43 of 2008 emphasizes the state's obligation to be present in an integrated manner in border regions, yet villages remain underdeveloped and vital infrastructure is still unavailable. Presidential Regulation 31/2015 sets out detailed spatial plans for border areas, but settlements remain scattered with uneven access to services. BNPP has formulated an integrative action plan, but ministerial programs continue to operate in partial and sectoral ways. Law 23/2014 provides a clear division of governmental functions, yet districts shoulder disproportionate responsibility without adequate fiscal support. Even Government Regulation 20/2024 on industrial zoning has shown little effect, as border villages still lack meaningful economic activity and remain dependent on Malaysia for basic needs.

This misalignment cannot be separated from the limited capacity of local governments. Setiawan notes that local governments in border areas lack both the operational authority and sufficient fiscal capacity to carry out mandates assigned by the central government (Setiawan, 2020). This creates a phenomenon of asymmetric responsibility: the central government formulates regulations, designs programs, and constructs the Integrated Border Posts (PLBN), while local governments must handle village roads, healthcare services, surveillance of informal crossing routes, and migration dynamics—all with minimal budgets. The imbalance between authority and resources illustrates a governance mismatch, as described by Peters, namely a misalignment between structural design and implementation capacity (Peters, 2019).

This misalignment cannot be separated from the limited capacity of local governments. (Setiawan, 2020) demonstrates that local governments in border areas lack both the operational authority and the fiscal capacity required to carry out mandates from the central government. This situation produces a form of asymmetric responsibility: the central government formulates regulations, sets programs, and develops the Integrated Border Posts (PLBN), while local governments must manage village roads, health services, surveillance of informal crossings, and population mobility—often with very limited budgets.

The gap between authority and resources illustrates a governance mismatch, as described by (Peters, 2019), namely a lack of coherence between institutional design and implementation capacity. Limitations in basic public services also drive residents to rely on Malaysia. Numerous studies demonstrate that border communities are functionally closer to service centers in Sarawak than to the nearest autonomous regions in Indonesia. (Madjid, 2021) shows that residents of Entikong prefer markets, health services, and daily necessities from Malaysia because they are more accessible and more affordable. The consequences are not merely economic but extend to identity and loyalty formation. (Newman, 2006) emphasizes that borders are “living spaces” where identity is shaped by the services and conveniences people can access. When basic services from one's own country are absent, communities naturally develop functional proximity to the neighboring state.

As a result, residents seek medical treatment in Serikin and Bau, students cross to Tebedu for schooling, workers pursue livelihoods in Sarawak, local commodities are sold in Malaysian markets, and Malaysian television broadcasts are easier to receive than national ones. These patterns indicate symptoms of state retreat, where the state withdraws from its fundamental service

functions. Furthermore, disparities in basic services are closely linked to the phenomenon of dual identities described by (Gustina, 2021) , where some residents opt to utilize Malaysian public facilities because they are perceived as more adequate and affordable. This phenomenon illustrates that the inequality in service quality between Indonesia and Malaysia shapes how border residents perceive their rights, citizenship, and social orientation. When the state fails to provide sufficient basic services, border communities naturally develop more fluid identities and affiliations, which ultimately deepen their social and legal vulnerabilities.

Limitations in basic public services also compel residents to depend on Malaysia. Various studies show that communities in the border region are functionally closer to service centers in Sarawak than to the nearest autonomous regions in Indonesia. (Madjid, 2021) demonstrates that residents of Entikong prefer Malaysian markets, health services, and daily necessities because they are more accessible and more affordable. The consequences are not merely economic but also extend into the realms of identity and loyalty. (Newman, 2006) asserts that borders are “living spaces” where identity is shaped by the services and conveniences people can access. When basic services from one’s own state are absent, communities naturally develop functional proximity to the neighboring country.

As a result, residents seek medical treatment in Serikin and Bau, students commute to Tebedu for schooling, workers pursue livelihoods in Sarawak, local commodities are sold in Malaysian markets, and Malaysian television signals are easier to receive than national broadcasts. These patterns illustrate symptoms of state retreat, in which the state withdraws from its fundamental service obligations. Furthermore, disparities in basic services are closely linked to the phenomenon of dual identity described by (Gustina, 2021) where some residents choose to utilize Malaysian public facilities because they are perceived as more adequate and affordable. This phenomenon shows that unequal service quality between Indonesia and Malaysia shapes how border residents perceive their rights, citizenship, and social orientation. When the state is unable to provide sufficient basic services, border communities naturally develop more fluid identities and affiliations, which ultimately deepen their social and legal vulnerabilities.

Limited access to basic public services has also pushed border residents to rely heavily on Malaysia. Numerous studies indicate that communities in the border region maintain closer functional ties with service centers in Sarawak than with the nearest autonomous regions in Indonesia. (Madjid, 2021) demonstrates that residents of Entikong frequently choose Malaysian markets, healthcare facilities, and daily necessities because they are more accessible and more affordable. The consequences are not merely economic but also extend to identity and loyalty formation. (Newman, 2006) argues that borders function as “living spaces” where identities are shaped by the services and conveniences people can access. When basic services from the state are absent, functional proximity to the neighboring country becomes a rational adaptation.

This dynamic is evident in everyday practices: residents seek medical treatment in Serikin and Bau, students cross to Tebedu for schooling, workers earn their livelihoods in Sarawak, local commodities are sold in Malaysian markets, and Malaysian television broadcasts are more easily received than national channels. These patterns reflect a broader phenomenon of state retreat—the gradual withdrawal of the state from its fundamental service-delivery functions. Moreover, the disparity in basic services is closely linked to the emergence of dual identities, as described by (Gustina, 2021) , wherein some residents prefer Malaysian public facilities because they are perceived as more adequate and affordable. The unequal quality of services between Indonesia and

Malaysia ultimately shapes how border citizens interpret rights, citizenship, and their social orientation. When the state fails to provide essential services, border communities naturally develop more fluid identities and affiliations, deepening their social vulnerabilities and precarious legal status.

Limited access to basic public services has also driven border residents to depend on Malaysia. A range of studies shows that communities in the border region maintain closer functional ties with service centers in Sarawak than with the nearest autonomous regions in Indonesia. Madjid (2021) illustrates how residents of Entikong prefer Malaysian markets, healthcare facilities, and daily necessities because they are more accessible and more affordable. The consequences extend beyond economic factors and penetrate the realms of identity and loyalty. Newman (2006) emphasizes that borders constitute “living spaces” where identities are shaped by the services and conveniences people are able to access. When the state fails to provide basic services, communities naturally develop functional proximity to the neighboring country.

This dynamic is reflected in daily practices: residents seek medical treatment in Serikin and Bau; students cross to Tebedu for schooling; workers earn their livelihoods in Sarawak; local commodities are sold in Malaysian markets; and Malaysian television broadcasts are received more clearly than national channels. These patterns signal a broader phenomenon of state retreat—the withdrawal of the state from its fundamental service-delivery responsibilities. Furthermore, disparities in basic services are closely linked to the phenomenon of dual identities described by Gustina (2021), in which some residents choose to utilize Malaysian public facilities because they are perceived as more adequate and affordable. This inequality in service quality between Indonesia and Malaysia shapes how border residents interpret their rights, citizenship, and social orientation. When the state cannot provide sufficient basic services, border communities naturally develop more fluid identities and affiliations, deepening their social vulnerabilities and precarious legal status.

Another dimension of state underperformance is visible in the dominance of Malaysian media in the border region. Findings from the West Kalimantan Broadcasting Commission (KPID) indicate that more than half of border residents primarily access Malaysian broadcasts due to weak Indonesian transmitters and limited internet coverage. The lack of digital literacy programs tailored to the border context further reinforces the formation of identities that lean more toward Malaysia. This aligns with (Van Houtum, 1999) argument that borderland identities are shaped through everyday interactions rather than by the state’s territorial boundaries alone.

Governance fragility is also evident in the persistence of informal crossing routes, illegal migration, and human trafficking. Each year, hundreds of border residents are deported from Malaysia due to irregular migration, the absence of official documentation, and trafficking practices that exploit weak border surveillance. Rupita highlights the vulnerability of women in Jagoi Babang, who are easily exploited due to poverty and inadequate migration governance (Rupita, 2020). These cases collectively reflect the state’s failure to provide safe and legal mobility mechanisms for its citizens—an omission that constitutes a significant lapse in border security governance. The root of these problems lies in policy fragmentation that prevents the realization of collaborative governance. Infrastructure, security, social services, transmigration, and trade programs often operate in isolation, with no integration into a coherent and operational master plan. (Simandjuntak, 2020) emphasizes that the construction of grand PLBN facilities does not automatically revitalize surrounding villages because border development has not been designed through a holistic approach. Weak institutional design, the absence of shared motivation, and the

lack of collaborative incentives leave little room for collaborative governance to function. As a result, border development continues to operate within chronic silo working.

From a theoretical perspective, the failure of border governance is systemic. At the level of multi-level governance, the asynchronicity between central and regional governments causes central policies to be non-operational, while the burden of public services falls to the regencies (districts). From the perspective of collaborative governance, there is no formal dialog space and no mechanism for building trust among actors. In the perspective of border governance, the services received by citizens shape their identity, and when Malaysia provides better services, citizens' loyalty shifts. From the viewpoint of good governance, the failure is evident in low effectiveness, fragmented accountability, poor responsiveness, and imbalanced service justice (equity). All these findings can be summarized in a conceptual model regarding the "border governance gap," which consists of three main root problems. First, the regulatory gap, which is the existence of comprehensive regulations without realistic operational mechanisms. Second, the institutional gap, characterized by the weak authority of the BNPP (National Border Management Agency) to encourage cross-sectoral synchronization. Third, the public service gap, where limited regional budget (APBD) makes regencies unable to bear the burden of border development. The interaction of these three gaps results in social disparity, cross-country dependency, erosion of loyalty, and fragility of national identity. Thus, the border problem must be understood not merely as an infrastructure issue, but as a governance crisis that requires comprehensive structural reform.

CONCLUSION

A substantial implementation gap persists between Indonesia's comprehensive regulatory framework for border governance and the empirical realities observed in the Indonesia–Malaysia border region of West Kalimantan. Multi-level governance failures—characterized by weak vertical coordination, limited subnational fiscal and institutional capacity, and fragmented policy execution—have produced chronic deficits in public service provision, inadequate infrastructure, and heightened community dependence on Malaysian services. These conditions undermine national loyalty and diminish the functional presence of the state. Addressing these shortcomings requires targeted governance reforms. Strengthening BNPP's coordinating role necessitates the assignment of executive authority to operationalize an integrated action plan, define minimum border service standards, and enforce alignment between national and subnational programs. In parallel, fiscal redesign is required through border-specific earmarked funds, structured co-financing between central and local governments, and performance-linked transfer mechanisms for essential services.

In addition, a permanent multi-actor coordination platform is required to facilitate joint program design, real-time data exchange, and continuous monitoring of border development. This platform should serve as an operational problem-solving mechanism for cross-sectoral issues, including health and education service delivery, population mobility, and border security management. These institutional measures must be complemented by targeted capacity-building for subnational officials and digital literacy programs for border communities to enhance implementation readiness. Collectively, these interventions will strengthen state visibility, reduce functional dependence on the neighboring country, and consolidate national identity and legitimacy in the border region.

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