Governance Challenges for Banten Province's Leadership in 2025

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ABSTRACT - The government leadership of Banten Province in 2025 will face significant challenges stemming from the complexities of regional development amid domestic and global transformations. This study examines key issues confronting provincial leaders, including the imperative for transparent governance, political interference-free decision-making, innovation in public service delivery, social conflict management, inter-institutional collaboration, poverty and unemployment alleviation, and evidence-based strategic planning. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, this article draws upon relevant academic literature, official government reports, and contemporary news analyses. Effective leadership will play a pivotal role in determining the success of Banten's governance in 2025, particularly in fostering adaptive and responsive administration under the newly elected governor (2024–2029). Critical to this success is the ability to make policy decisions independent of political pressures, ensuring that governance remains aligned with public welfare. Reflecting on past experiences can provide valuable insights for improving the provincial government's performance, steering it toward a more community-centric approach.

Keywords: *Governance; government leadership; political pressure; decision making.*

Introduction

Banten Province is one of the strategic areas in Indonesia that has great potential for economic and social development. With a continuously increasing population and high cultural diversity, the government leadership in Banten faces various challenges in running the government. Data collected by (BPS, 2020) in June 2024, the population of Banten Province reached 12,081,689 people.

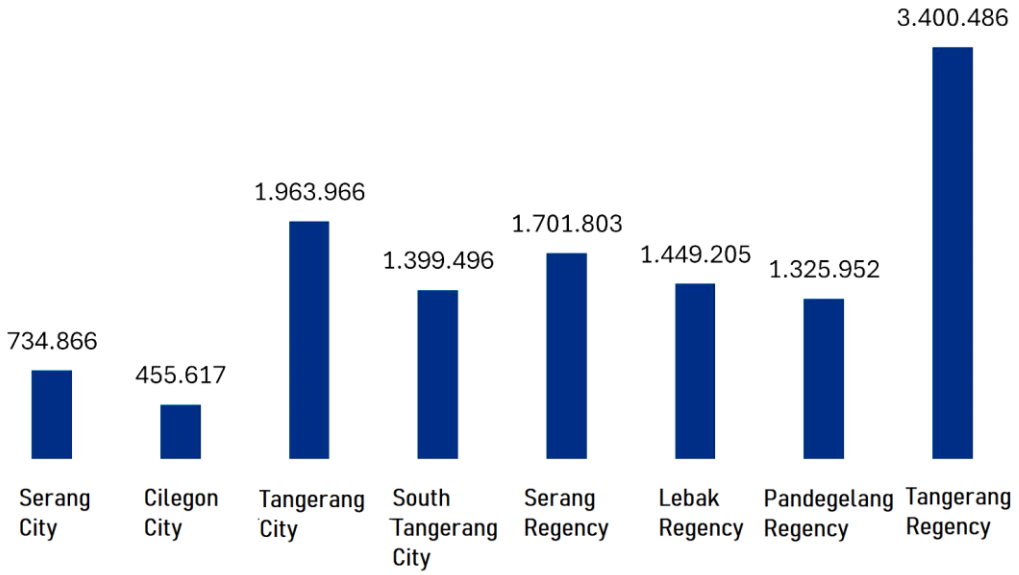


Figure 1. The population of Banten Province in June 2024
Source: BPS Banten, 2024.

The year 2025 is projected to be a pivotal period for the Banten Provincial Government as it enters the final phase of implementing its 2019-2024 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) while simultaneously preparing the foundation for the next development cycle. This

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transitional year carries strategic significance in assessing the achievement of sustainable development targets, particularly in key sectors such as poverty reduction, infrastructure development, and environmental sustainability. The government's leadership is now faced with dual demands: first, to accelerate the resolution of persistent complex challenges inherited from previous administration periods - including regional disparities, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and suboptimal public service delivery - and second, to design innovative policy frameworks that address emerging issues like digital transformation and climate change adaptation. Effective leadership will be measured by the ability to synergize short-term corrective actions with long-term transformational strategies, ensuring continuity of development while adapting to rapidly evolving socio-economic dynamics.

The Banten Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) adopts a comprehensive development approach, extending beyond physical infrastructure development to prioritize human capital advancement, equitable access to public services, and sustainable community empowerment. Key focus areas include education and vocational training programs to enhance workforce competitiveness, healthcare accessibility improvements, and local economic initiatives to foster inclusive growth. However, the implementation of these initiatives faces multidimensional challenges, including substandard public service quality due to bureaucratic inefficiencies, persistently high poverty rates in regions like Lebak and Pandeglang, and rapid urbanization that strains urban infrastructure and complicates governance decisions (Thahir, 2023).

Banten's strategic advantages—including its cultural diversity, abundant natural resources, and proximity to Jakarta—position it as a critical contributor to Indonesia's national development agenda. The province plays a pivotal role in industrial growth, particularly in manufacturing, logistics, and energy sectors, which are essential for job creation and unemployment reduction (BPS, 2020). Nevertheless, realizing this potential requires adaptive and visionary government leadership capable of navigating rapid technological changes, global economic shifts, and sociodemographic transitions. Effective governance must harmonize short-term policy actions with long-term development strategies, ensuring that Banten's growth is inclusive, sustainable, and resilient in the face of future uncertainties.

Effective government leadership plays a critical role in realizing the objectives of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan, as its success depends on how well local governments integrate and enforce good governance practices. Core principles such as transparency, accountability, public participation, and efficient service delivery are critical to driving long-term regional growth (Bovaird & Löffler, 2002; Lockwood, 2010; Swasthaisong et al., 2025). However, local governments are now facing increasing pressure to improve local resource management, accelerate the digitalization of government services, and foster stronger and more inclusive community engagement.

These challenges are further compounded by the rapid advancement of technology and the pressures of globalization, both of which significantly influence local socio-economic and political dynamics. In Banten, for instance, these external forces have necessitated adaptive governance strategies to address shifting community expectations and emerging opportunities (Betaliya et al., 2024). Consequently, the Banten Provincial Government is required to prioritize transparency in decision-making, strengthen accountability mechanisms, and adopt a community-based approach in policy formulation and implementation. By doing so, the government can enhance public trust, optimize development outcomes, and ensure that the RPJMD targets align with the actual needs and aspirations of Banten's residents.

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Based on the description above, this study specifically aims to examine six critical dimensions of regional government leadership in Banten Province in 2025. First, the study will analyze the challenges of governance in balancing various political and bureaucratic interests. Second, it will examine how political pressure influences the strategic decision-making process at the local level. Third, the study evaluates the barriers to public service innovation, especially in digital transformation amidst limited infrastructure and human resources. Fourth, the effectiveness of social conflict management in the midst of cultural diversity and economic disparities is analyzed. Fifth, the government's approach to overcoming structural poverty and unemployment which are exacerbated by the dynamics of industrialization is examined. Finally, the study evaluates the implementation of data-based planning along with its technical and institutional constraints.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with document analysis as the primary method to examine governance challenges in Banten Province. The research design combines a systematic review of multiple data sources, including official reports of the Banten Provincial Government (annual reports, RPJMD evaluation documents, and development indicators), academic literature from reputable journals, and verified news articles from credible media outlets published between 2019 and 2024.

The analysis follows a structured three-phase process. First, thematic coding by identifying recurring patterns in governance challenges, policy gaps, and stakeholder conflicts. Second, critical discourse analysis examines political narratives in policy documents and media representations of governance issues. Finally, data triangulation cross-verifies findings across multiple sources while tracking temporal developments.

The theoretical frameworks guiding the analysis include adaptive leadership theory and collaborative governance principles, which help contextualize the findings within contemporary public administration discourse. This methodological approach was chosen for its capacity to provide nuanced insights into complex governance phenomena while maintaining academic rigor through systematic data collection and analysis protocols. Ethical considerations are maintained through proper attribution of sources, balanced representation of perspectives, and a clear distinction between empirical evidence and analytical interpretation.

Result and Discussion

Challenges to Governance

Based on the report of the (BPS, 2020), the level of public satisfaction with public services is still below the national average, which is 68%. This shows the need for more targeted bureaucratic reform to improve the quality of service and public trust. Budget transparency and program implementation are the main things that need to be improved to create a more open and accountable government.

One step that can be taken is to adopt governance practices that have been proven successful in other regions. For example, West Java Province has succeeded in increasing the level of public satisfaction to 85% through the implementation of an integrated e-budgeting system (Permatasari, 2020). This system allows the public to monitor the allocation and use of the budget directly, thereby reducing the possibility of misappropriation of funds. This success cannot be separated from the commitment of the local government to increase the openness of information to the public and strengthen supervision by independent institutions.

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Technology-based governance in West Java has been able to reduce the potential for corruption by up to 40% (Sedayu & Andriyansah, 2021). The role of technology in increasing the efficiency of government administration and transparency in budget management is very important. The application of digital technology in the budget management system and public services of local governments can reduce the risk of irregularities and accelerate the administrative process. E-budgeting and e-governance systems can be important instruments in creating transparency and increasing accountability in local governments (Nurfaisal et al., 2025).

The adoption of technology must be accompanied by adequate training for government officials so that its implementation runs effectively. Many cases show that digital systems implemented without human resource readiness often do not run optimally. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is needed to develop the capacity of government officials, both through technical training and changes in work culture that are more adaptive to digital innovation (Dwi Nurfaisal et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the challenges of bureaucratic culture that is still thick with nepotism practices and weak internal supervision are also obstacles to improving governance in Banten. A less professional bureaucratic culture can hinder the reforms that are to be implemented (Prastyo, 2024). Therefore, improving work culture through ethics education and increasing human resource capacity needs to be a priority on the government agenda in Banten Province. Transparency in recruitment and promotion must also be improved to ensure that individuals occupying strategic positions have adequate competence (Arianto, 2022).

Increasing accountability can also be done by strengthening the role of the community in overseeing government policies. Public participation in decision-making can increase public trust in the government and ensure that the policies implemented are truly in accordance with the needs of the community (Istianto & Wahyurudhanto, 2023). This participation model can be realized through public consultation forums, development planning meetings (MUSRENBANG), and digital platforms that allow the public to provide input and directly monitor the implementation of government programs (Kusumoningtyas et al., 2025).

In addition, the establishment of an independent supervisory institution is also an important step in ensuring the accountability of local government. This institution can function as an external auditor that evaluates government performance and provides recommendations for improvement (Bormasa, Monica Feronica; Sakir, Ahmad Rosandi; Mustanir, Ahmad; Yunus, Nur Rohim; Ode Amane, Ade Putra; Nengsih, Neng Suryanti; Alaslan, 2023). In several regions, the existence of an independent supervisory institution has proven effective in increasing transparency and preventing budget irregularities. Therefore, Banten Province needs to consider establishing a similar institution that has the authority to oversee the performance of local government (Edward et al., 2024).

In the context of public policy, the implementation of reward and punishment mechanisms can also be an effective tool in improving the quality of governance. Government officials who show good performance in increasing transparency and accountability should receive incentives, while those who are proven to have committed irregularities should be given strict sanctions (Rostiawati, 2020). This step can be a motivation for bureaucrats to work more professionally and responsibly in carrying out their duties.

In addition to internal factors, support from the central government is also very much needed in encouraging governance reform in Banten Province. The central government can provide technical assistance and assistance in implementing a more transparent digital system (Suprianto & Rozi, 2024). In addition, a more flexible decentralization policy can also help local governments develop innovations that are in accordance with the characteristics and needs of the local community.

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As a concrete step, the Banten Provincial Government can start by implementing a broader information disclosure policy, such as providing easier access to financial data and government programs (Permatasari, 2020). The government can also collaborate with academic institutions and civil society organizations to conduct research and evaluation of policies that have been implemented. The results of this evaluation can be the basis for formulating policies that are more effective and oriented towards community needs.

Political Pressure in Decision Making

Political pressure in decision-making often arises from political actors, political parties, interest groups, and local stakeholders. In Banten Province, this pressure is seen in the distribution of regional budgets which tend to be influenced by certain political interests, resulting in unequal allocation of resources. For example, programs oriented towards poverty alleviation are often intervened by political interests, so that their implementation is not optimal and on target (Nurfaisal & Sari, 2025). This phenomenon reflects the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of regional budgets which can result in inefficiency in governance (Suprianto & Rozi, 2024). Political pressure can also trigger conflicts of interest that hinder the integrity of leaders in carrying out their duties. In Banten, several policy strategies that should focus on infrastructure development and community empowerment are often hampered by lengthy political negotiations. This poses additional challenges for government leaders to remain consistent with the planned development vision while accommodating the demands of influential political actors (Sukarman Purba, Erika Revida, 2020). Several studies have shown that high political pressure can lead to policies that are more populist than based on the real needs of society (Aziz et al., 2024).

In addition to influencing policy, political pressure can also threaten the stability of government in Banten Province. Leaders are often faced with a dilemma between meeting the demands of certain political actors and maintaining the stability of the government as a whole. This condition can reduce the level of public trust in local governments, especially if the decisions taken are considered non-transparent or not in the interests of the community in general (Hadi Karyono et al., 2023). A study conducted by (Suprianto & Rozi, 2024) found that the lack of transparency in the decision-making process due to political pressure can contribute to high public dissatisfaction with the performance of local governments.

In the context of Banten Province, political pressure is also seen in the process of filling strategic positions in the local government environment. Several cases show political intervention in the selection of public officials who consider political proximity factors more than competence and professionalism (Nurfaisal & Sari, 2025). As a result, the effectiveness of public policy is reduced because many officials lack the capacity to carry out government duties optimally. Research conducted by (Arianto, 2022) also shows that the meritocratic system in the bureaucracy is often disrupted by political interests, which causes ineffectiveness in the implementation of public policy.

However, after the end of the reign of the Ratu Atut family in 2024, the leadership of Andra Soni - Dimyati Natakusumah has opened up great hopes for the people of Banten Province. This hope is none other than the direction of policies that are oriented or prioritize the interests of the entire Banten Province community without any political pressure that is not in favor of the community. In the first few months of their leadership, they have shown efforts to increase transparency and accountability in the management of regional budgets. Several initiatives, such as the implementation of e-budgeting and a digital-based public monitoring system, have been introduced to minimize political intervention in the policy planning and implementation process (Divantika & Mutiarin,

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2024). The new leadership strategy in Banten also seeks to reduce political pressure in decision-making by increasing public participation in policy formulation. Through public consultation forums and more inclusive deliberation mechanisms, the local government seeks to ensure that the resulting policies are more based on the needs of the community and not just the interests of the political elite (Simamora et al., 2024). These steps are in line with the concept of good governance which emphasizes transparency, accountability, and public participation in the decision-making process.

Challenges to Innovation in Public Services

The Banten Provincial Government has launched various public service digitalization initiatives. However, the biggest challenge is the low digital literacy in the community, especially in rural areas. A study by (Igirisa, 2022) stated that only 45% of the population in Banten has stable internet access, so digitalization efforts are not evenly distributed.

In comparison, digital-based services in DKI Jakarta, such as the JAKI (Jakarta Kini) application, allow the public to access various services, including complaint reports, transportation information, and health services, quickly and transparently. (Edward et al., 2024) the spread of digital infrastructure in Jakarta is utilized for the use of digital-based public services. The use of digital-based public services in Jakarta substantially reduces bureaucratic obstacles and accelerates the government's response time to community needs. This transformation also increases the accountability of local governments, thereby fostering public trust in public services.

The adoption of digital technology in public services can increase operational efficiency by up to 35% and reduce the level of public complaints by 25% (Edward et al., 2024). This is due to the presence of user-friendly technology, better accessibility, and increased transparency and accountability of local governments. With a proactive approach that integrates community data in one digital system, digital-based services in DKI Jakarta not only improve the quality of services but also have the potential to become an effective public service management model for other regions in Indonesia.

Banten needs to adopt a similar approach by focusing on developing digital infrastructure in areas that have not been reached. In addition, collaboration with the private sector to provide free internet access in public places can be a strategic initial step. Then, in another focus, the success of digitalization of public services does not only depend on technology but also on improving the ability of human resources in the government sector to build public trust in the newly implemented system (Bormasa, Monica Feronica; Sakir, Ahmad Rosandi; Mustanir, Ahmad; Yunus, Nur Rohim; Ode Amane, Ade Putra; Nengsih, Neng Suryanti; Alaslan, 2023).

Challenges in Managing Social Conflict

Banten is a region rich in cultural and ethnic diversity. However, this diversity is not free from social challenges that have the potential to trigger conflict, especially agrarian conflicts. One of the conflicts that emerged in 2024 was the agrarian conflict in Lebak Regency. This conflict arose due to the lack of effective communication between the local government and indigenous communities, as stated in the LBH Banten report (2024). This problem reflects the need for a more effective diversity management and conflict resolution strategy in order to create social stability in Banten.

Cultural diversity is often a factor that influences patterns of social and political interaction in an area. Suboptimal diversity management can increase the risk of horizontal conflict, especially in areas that have a history of economic and social inequality(Sjafari, 2014). In Banten, agrarian problems often arise due to imbalances in land ownership and a lack of clarity in regulations that

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protect the rights of indigenous peoples. Another factor that worsens the situation is the low level of community participation in decision-making related to agrarian policies (Sihaloho & Purwandari, 2009; Sinaga et al., 2023).

In comparison, Bali is known as one of the regions that has successfully managed cultural diversity well. The approach applied in Bali refers a lot to local wisdom values such as Tri Hita Karana, which emphasizes harmony between humans and God, humans and others, and humans and the environment (Rinaldi et al., 2024). This local wisdom is the basis for building high tolerance in the lives of Balinese people. In addition, the efforts of the local government in facilitating cross-cultural and religious dialogue forums have strengthened social cohesion amidst the diversity of Balinese society. This can also be seen in development policies that pay attention to the aspirations of local communities in order to prevent conflicts of interest (Bontot, 2023).

One step that can be adopted from Bali to Banten is the implementation of a conflict mediation program involving local community leaders and academics. Mediation programs based on community participation have proven effective in reducing social tensions. With dialogue involving various parties, the conflict resolution process can be more transparent and accepted by all interested parties (Dauh et al., 2020).

Areas with an inclusive approach to diversity tend to have lower levels of conflict UNDP Indonesia (2024). In the context of Banten, an inclusive approach can be implemented by increasing community involvement in the formulation of agrarian policies. This is in line with the concept of good governance which emphasizes transparency, participation, and accountability in the management of public resources (Permatasari, 2020). By involving the community in every stage of policy planning and implementation, it is hoped that their aspirations can be better accommodated.

Strengthening multicultural education in schools in Banten is also an important step in building tolerance from an early age. Multicultural education aims to increase awareness of diversity and reduce social prejudice that can trigger conflict (Aziz et al., 2024). By introducing this concept into the education curriculum, the younger generation in Banten can better understand the importance of living side by side in diversity.

A technology-based approach can also be applied in efforts to resolve agrarian conflicts. The use of geographic information systems (GIS) in land mapping can help clarify land ownership boundaries and reduce the potential for conflict due to overlapping land claims (Arianto, 2022). In addition, digital platforms can be used to accelerate the delivery of community aspirations to local governments so that the decision-making process can be more transparent and accountable.

Challenges in Inter-Institutional Collaboration

Banten Province faces various challenges in managing poverty and unemployment, which are rooted in social, economic, and political complexities involving various factors. As one of the provinces with a high level of urbanization and rapid economic growth, Banten continues to face disparities between rapidly developing industrial areas and underdeveloped rural areas. The main challenges faced in managing poverty and unemployment are the uneven distribution of development and the low quality of adequate education.

Many residents work in the agricultural and small-scale industrial sectors, which tend not to provide adequate income to meet decent living needs. Then, the income disparity between urban and rural areas is one of the factors in increasing poverty, where urban areas, although growing rapidly, cannot fully absorb the entire workforce (Kusumoningtyas et al., 2025).

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The unemployment rate in Banten is also a significant challenge. One of the main causes is the mismatch between industrial needs and the skills of the available workforce (Prastyo, 2024). The manufacturing industry and tourism sector, which are the mainstays of Banten's economy, have not been fully able to create jobs that can be adjusted to local potential. In addition, vocational training and education programs that have not been integrated with the needs of the labour market also exacerbate the unemployment problem in Banten Province (Aziz et al., 2024).

Then, the dynamic dynamics of urbanization in Banten have led to rapid growth in urban areas. At the same time, rural areas tend to lag in terms of infrastructure development and employment opportunities. Urbanization increases pressure on public facilities and infrastructure and exacerbates the social gap between residents who have access to decent jobs and education and those who are marginalized (Maulani & Setiawan, 2024). People in rural areas often have difficulty accessing skills training that is in accordance with industry needs, making it difficult to increase competitiveness in the labour market.

To overcome this challenge, a more comprehensive approach is needed, involving various parties, both government, private sector, and community. The Banten provincial government needs to strengthen policies that support human resource development, including through vocational education and training, that are more in line with industry needs. In addition, increasing access to business capital, especially in rural areas, will encourage the opening of new job opportunities. Community empowerment through entrepreneurship programs can be a solution to reduce poverty and unemployment rates by creating sustainable jobs (Apriyani et al., 2022).

Challenges of poverty and unemployment

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Even though Banten is listed as one of the provinces with high economic growth, the poverty rate in several regions is still quite significant. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), poverty in Banten is influenced by dependence on the informal sector and the low level of education and skills of the community (BPS, 2020). Many residents work in the agricultural and small industrial sectors, which tend not to provide sufficient income to meet the needs of a decent living. The income disparity between urban and rural areas is a driving factor for poverty, where urban areas, although growing rapidly, cannot fully absorb the entire workforce (Rama Muhamad Irfan, Yuliana Musin, 2024).

The unemployment rate in Banten is also a significant challenge. Open unemployment, which is recorded to be quite high in Banten, is closely related to the inability of the job market to absorb the increasing workforce. One of the main causes is the mismatch between industry needs and the skills of the available workforce (BPS, 2020). The manufacturing industry and tourism sector, which are the mainstay of Banten's economy, have not been fully able to create jobs that can be adapted to local potential. Apart from that, vocational training and education programs that have not been integrated with the needs of the job market have also exacerbated the unemployment problem in this province.

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In addition, increasing access to business capital, especially in rural areas, will encourage the opening of new job opportunities. Community empowerment through entrepreneurship programs can be a solution to reducing poverty and unemployment rates by creating sustainable employment opportunities (Igirisa, 2022).

Challenges in Data-Driven Strategic Planning

Utilization of data in strategic planning is another challenge that must be faced. Integrated and accurate data is essential for effective decision-making. A study by (Publik, 2024) shows that 30% of the data used in development planning in Banten is still manual, making it prone to errors.

For example, the Smart Province program implemented in West Java shows how big data can be the foundation for a holistic regional digital transformation. This model can be used as a reference for other provinces that want to optimize the potential of big data in supporting sustainable data-based development (Betaliya et al., 2024). Then, in West Java, there is the "One Data West Java" platform, which has succeeded in utilizing big data output for fast, efficient and evidence-based decision-making, such as the use of data from the "Pikobar" application during the Covid-19 pandemic (Arianto, 2022).

In addition to West Java, DKI Jakarta Province has also been successful in managing big data as a basis for sustainable data-based development. The use of the "Jakarta Smart City" platform utilizes data collected from various sources, such as community applications, city sensors, and field surveys to improve public services and urban governance. One of the main implementations is a data-based transportation system that utilizes real-time traffic analysis to reduce congestion and improve the efficiency of public transportation. This approach not only improves the quality of life of the community but also supports sustainable development goals in metropolitan areas (Beama et al., 2022).

Finally, East Java Province is one of the examples of good big data management that supports data-based development. The "One Data East Java" platform has successfully integrated cross-sector data to support economic development, natural resource management, and public services. For example, the big data system is used to manage the distribution of social assistance more transparently so that it can reach the poor and vulnerable more precisely. This success shows that big data management not only increases efficiency but also encourages social and economic justice at the local level (Igirisa, 2022).

Banten can learn from the success of West Java, DKI Jakarta and East Java Provinces in strengthening data-based development. The role of government leadership can be maximized to be

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implemented in Banten Province, such as training government officials in processing data and developing an integrated data platform that integrates information from various sectors, such as health, education, and infrastructure. In addition, it can collaborate with universities or other educational institutions that are able to produce data-based research and development that is accurate and relevant.

Conclusion

The government leadership in Banten Province in 2025 faces various complex challenges, especially in aspects of governance, the influence of political pressure on decision-making, public service innovation, social conflict management, collaboration between institutions, and poverty and unemployment alleviation strategies. This study shows that transparency and accountability in governance are the main issues that must be improved. Political pressure often hinders effective policy-making that is oriented towards community needs. In addition, efforts to digitize public services still face obstacles in the form of low digital literacy and uneven infrastructure.

In terms of social aspects, cultural diversity in Banten can be both a potential and a challenge if not managed properly. The agrarian conflict that occurred in Lebak Regency shows the importance of better communication between local governments and indigenous communities. Another challenge faced is the high poverty and unemployment rates caused by development inequality and the mismatch of workforce skills with industry needs. In addition, the use of data in strategic planning is still not optimal. with a lot of data still managed manually and less integrated. Comparison with other provinces such as DKI Jakarta, West Java, and East Java shows that the use of big data can improve the effectiveness of public policies and services.

To enhance governance in Banten Province, it is crucial to increase transparency and accountability by implementing comprehensive e-budgeting and e-governance systems, establishing an independent oversight body, and strengthening public participation through inclusive MUSRENBANG and consultation forums. Decision-making should prioritize public interests over political pressures, supported by merit-based appointments to strategic positions. Digital transformation of public services must be accelerated by expanding rural digital infrastructure and upskilling government personnel in technology utilization. Effective social conflict management can be achieved through localized resolution strategies, participatory mediation mechanisms, and promoting multicultural education. Poverty and unemployment should be addressed via industry-aligned vocational training, improved MSME financing, and labor-intensive sector investments. Finally, data-driven planning must be strengthened through integrated digital platforms, partnerships with academic institutions for advanced analytics, and adopting best practices from regions like West Java and DKI Jakarta in big data utilization for development.

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