

# Unraveling the Tangled Threads of Discrimination and Political Inequality, Analysis of Oddicials' Careers

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## Abstract

Discrimination and political inequality have long been problems surrounding the careers of native Papuan officials outside the Papua region. This can be seen from the minimal representation of native Papuan officials in strategic positions, both at the national and regional levels outside Papua. The aim of this research is to analyze the phenomenon of discrimination and political inequality experienced by native Papuan officials who work outside the Papua region. This research uses quantitative research methods. Data was collected through surveys using questionnaires and literature studies. The data that has been collected is then analyzed using a regression test using the SPSS program. The research results show that there are several factors that cause discrimination and political inequality in the careers of native Papuan officials outside the Papua region, namely negative stigma and stereotypes towards Papuans, lack of political networks and connections, discrimination in the selection and promotion process for positions as well as cultural and language barriers.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Political Inequality, Official Careers

## Introduction

Indigenous Papuans, especially West Papuans, who ethnically belong to the Melanesian group, have faced prolonged acts of racism for more than five decades, since their fruitless efforts for independence and self-determination in 1969 (Rakhman et al., 2021). This condition not only illustrates historical injustice, but also reflects deep structural inequalities in Indonesia's political and social structure. In the midst of protracted political struggles, important figures such as Silas Papare, Nicholaas Jouwe, and Frans Kaisiepo have emerged as symbols of resistance and integration. Even though they have succeeded in penetrating the national political structure, representing the aspirations of indigenous Papuans (OAP) at a broader level remains a challenge. Despite affirmative initiatives such as Special Autonomy and increased representation of OAP in government, discrimination and political inequality continue to influence OAP's political careers, especially outside the Papua region (Safiudin, 2023).

This phenomenon cannot be separated from the history of political and social conflict in West Papua, which has given rise to a series of complex dynamics between the Indonesian government and the indigenous Papuan population. From the armed struggle of the Free Papua Organization (OPM) to the escalation of confrontation in recent years, Papuan independence aspirations have become a focal point in national and international political discourse (May, 2021). In order to understand the dynamics of political representation of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) outside the Papua region, there are several key concepts that must be defined. Indigenous Papuans (OAP), as an ethnic group in the West Papua region and its surroundings,

are included in the Melanesian ethnic classification (Kirsch, 2010). They have a cultural identity that is different from the majority of the Indonesian population, with unique characteristics of language, traditions and socio-political history. This identity is not only tied to physical and cultural aspects, but also to historical interactions with colonial and national powers.

Political representation, in this context, refers to the way certain groups or individuals are represented in political structures. This is important for OAP because it indicates the extent to which they have a voice and power in the policy-making process that affects them. Political inequality is a term that refers to the unequal distribution of political power between various groups in a society, especially seen in the lack of access by OAP to positions of power and decision making. This research identifies discrimination and inequality as the main variables that influence the political careers of OAPs (Kirsch, 2010). Discrimination here can be interpreted as unfair treatment or prejudice against OAP, which is often rooted in colonial history and ethnic stereotypes. Meanwhile, inequality is often related to the unequal distribution of resources, access to education, and political opportunities, affecting the ability of OAP to participate effectively in politics (Elliott, 2021).

The relationship between discrimination, inequality and the political careers of OAPs is complex and multidimensional. Discrimination and inequality can create structural barriers that prevent OAP from full political participation. On the other hand, the success of OAP individuals in political careers can serve as positive role models, help reduce stigma, and have the potential to change existing power structures. This research seeks to provide comprehensive insight into how these socio-political dynamics influence OAP in the national and regional political context in Indonesia, by paying attention to how power structures and individual agency interact with each other and shape the political reality of OAP. In relation to the phenomenon of representation of indigenous Papuans in politics, a dissertation entitled "Ethnography of a Colonial Present: History, Experience, and Political Consciousness in West Papua" by Kusumaryati (2018), explains in depth how West Papua, which is the eastern part from Indonesia, experienced a complex political and historical process after the handover of power from the Netherlands to Indonesia in 1963.

This research (Kusumaryati, 2018) provides a comprehensive analysis of the colonial history and experiences of the Papuan people under Indonesian rule, there is room for further exploration of the political aspects of the representation and participation of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) in national political power structures. In particular, there is a gap in understanding how OAP adapt, respond and participate in national political systems outside the Papua region, as well as how these dynamics contribute to the formation of their political identity and political awareness. The proposed dissertation aims to fill this gap by focusing on how OAP, through various forms of agency, interact with the Indonesian political structure and how this interaction shapes the trajectory of their political careers. In addition, this research seeks to expand understanding of the concept of "current colonialism" put forward by Kusumaryati by exploring how this concept influences the political representation and careers of OAPs.

Furthermore, the dissertation reference entitled "Model of Bureaucratic Behavior in the Implementation of Regional Autonomy in West Papua Province" by Mandacan (2020) shows that the performance of ASN in West Papua has not been effective, with various determining factors consisting of problems with bureaucratic performance, quality of human resources, accountability, and fulfillment of good bureaucratic prerequisites. From the FGD, eight important themes were identified in bureaucratic practices, including optimizing main tasks

and functions (Tupoksi), elements of Papuan culture, and the recruitment system. Based on these findings, Mandacan developed the Mandacan Bureaucracy Model which integrates the values of state government and the socio-cultural system of the West Papuan people.

This model (Mandacan, 2020) highlights the importance of adaptation to change and the combination of government systems with local cultural aspects. Even though they have succeeded in penetrating the national political structure, the challenge of representing the aspirations of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) at a broader level remains a significant obstacle. Initiatives such as Special Autonomy and increasing the representation of OAP in government have been carried out, but discrimination and political inequality continue to be obstacles in the development of OAP's political careers, especially outside the Papua region.

This research design also aims to reveal how the diverse political realities in West Papua, including economic influences such as the exploitation of natural resources and demographic shifts due to transmigration, have formed the basis for OAP's political representation. The results of this research are important for understanding how bureaucracy and government practices in West Papua influence the political participation and careers of OAPs.

### **Research Method**

In this research, qualitative methods were adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the political dynamics of Indigenous Papuans (OAP) in Indonesia. This method allows detailed and contextual exploration of the experiences, perceptions and challenges faced by OAP in the political arena (Hamied, 2017). One of the main components of this approach is in-depth interviews with OAP individuals who have had careers in politics, including those who have succeeded and failed. These interviews are designed to reveal personal experiences, challenges faced, and strategies used to overcome obstacles in their political careers. This provides insight into the personal and structural factors that influence OAP's political participation.

Apart from that, this research also involved various stakeholders, including activists, academics and civil society, through interviews and focus group discussions. This approach aims to capture various perspectives on the political situation of OAP, as well as to understand the broader socio-political context in which they operate. Through interactions with various stakeholders, this research seeks to explore diverse and in-depth perceptions regarding political representation, inequality and discrimination faced by OAP.

Furthermore, this research also includes the collection and analysis of government documents, policy reports, and media publications. This was done to strengthen the findings from interviews and discussions with relevant secondary data. Documents and media often reflect official and public narratives regarding OAP and politics, so they are important sources for understanding the broader context and discourses circulating in society. Analysis of this document will help in identifying and understanding policies that affect OAP, as well as the way they are represented in public discourse and the media. In this research, data analysis was carried out through an in-depth qualitative approach.

### **Result And Discussion**

Papua is an inseparable part of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), historical facts and administrative processes that occur prove this. In the past, the Papua region has also been part of existing kingdoms, such as the kingdom of Sriwijaya, Majapahit, and the Sultanate of Tidore. According to official legal aspects, the majority of indigenous Papuans have expressed their desire to join the Republic of Indonesia through the Act of Free Choice in 1969 (Latif & Shiddiqy, 2023). The planned expansion of the Papua and West Papua regions, in line

with the planned revision of Indonesian Law Number 21 of 2001, has created pros and cons among the Papuan people. In general, people in coastal areas and 7 customary territories support the plan to expand the Papua region to accelerate development. Meanwhile, disapproval of the plan generally comes from the Papuan political elite, on the grounds that it is not in accordance with Indonesian Law Number 21 of 2001. Therefore, the Government needs to accelerate the implementation of the expansion of the Papua and West Papua regions in accordance with the provisions of the applicable laws and regulations and input from various parties including indigenous Papuans. Thus it is hoped that development in the Papua region can run smoothly, to further improve the welfare and security of the Papuan people. In addition, it will also be able to narrow the space for the KKB to move and weaken it (Buana & Heddezul, 2021).

The issue of Papuan cultural roots involving the perspectives of the founding fathers and tracing past history is very crucial in confirming Papua's status as an integral part of the Republic of Indonesia. History regarding cultural roots is the first node that determines the effectiveness of subsequent nodes (Anugrah, 2019). The causes of conflict in Papua are largely due to clashes of interests and social change. In addition, differences in human life can be the source of conflict between people, such as differences in religion, organization, different parties, differences in understanding or perception, customs, knowledge, values, and interests. The roots of conflict are also triggered by basic human needs that are not met or hindered, both physically, psychologically, and socially (Hasibuan, 2022).

In Papua, money holds power and money is power itself. Who holds the power, holds the people, when people are held by money, it is as if land becomes irresistible to be commodified as capital that produces capital. Position in the market becomes very central as a supporter of the distribution of power distributively in patronage groups. Papuan political economy is not different from political economy in general terms. Entrepreneurs-rulers or rulers-entrepreneurs are things that happen according to the cycle of domination and structuralization of the state and citizen resistance (Ajo, 2016).

The issues of ethnic identity political campaigns issued by the Maybarat ethnic group to indigenous Papuan ethnicities (ethnicities that are large in terms of the number of Teminabuan ethnicities and Raja Ampat ethnicities in Sorong City) and non-Papuans in Sorong City are, don't make the wrong choice, if you don't want your land, house, business to be taken back by the Moi ethnic group if the Moi ethnic group is in power, the Moi ethnic group has no ability to lead and embrace indigenous Papuan ethnicities and non-Papuan ethnicities, the Moi ethnic group is not a development figure in this city. Special autonomy in Papua and West Papua Provinces, so that all indigenous Papuan ethnic groups join hands to develop their regions according to conditions in the Papua region. Thus, there will be community economic development, accelerated development of human resources, accelerated development of government institutions, and accelerated political education for the community and so on (Snanfi et al., 2018).

The occurrence of conflict in Papua is a complex of factors, including dissatisfaction with regional autonomy, socio-economic inequality, human rights violations, and conflict over natural resources. Tensions between the central government and separatist groups, along with identity, cultural and economic issues, have resulted in a tense and sometimes violent situation. Conflict resolution requires a holistic and inclusive approach, which recognizes the needs and aspirations of the various parties involved and promotes dialogue, reconciliation and sustainable development to achieve long-term peace and justice in Papua.

Internal conflict is a prominent phenomenon for four reasons: (1) internal conflicts can spread, (2) internal conflicts are important because of their potential to produce large numbers of casualties, (3) internal conflicts can influence and invite the intervention of other countries, such as producing refugee flows due to conflicts, and (4) the international community has begun to pay attention to the relationship between internal conflicts and global stability (Ramdhan, 2021). Thus, decentralization and Regional Autonomy are very important to be developed in the nation-state of Indonesia (Cahyadi & Kurniawan, 2021).

Normatively, the specificity of Papuan autonomy lies in the special treatment (affirmation) of OAP, one of which is alignment in empowerment in the political field (political affirmation), which with this alignment, is a political decision taken by the government in order to maintain national integration to answer the aspirations of the people in Papua by providing special autonomy policies according to OAP aspirations (Pasalli, 2023).

Papua Province is granted Special Autonomy by the Republic of Indonesia in the Special Autonomy Law for Papua Province. The law regulates the authority of the Papua Province to regulate and manage its own region by looking at the aspirations, customs and basic rights of the community for the benefit of the welfare of the Papuan people. From a political perspective, the Law has regulated how to grant political rights to the Papuan people, especially Indigenous Papuans (OAP) as regulated in "Article 1 letter t of the Special Autonomy Law for Papua Province". Indigenous Papuans are given priority rights to "do politics", meaning that in the Papua region, those who are prioritized for politics in terms of voting and voting are those who are Papuans rather than immigrants or those outside the Papuan tribe. The indigenous Papuans are those who belong to the Melanesian race. So that if in the Papua region there are various tribes and cultures, then in political activities-Governors, Deputy Governors, Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Regents, Regional Representatives, etc., those who are Melanesian racial groups are preferred (Ayunda, 2021).

Law Number 21 of 2001 which was later amended to Law Number 2 of 2021 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 21 of 2001 concerning Special Autonomy for Papua Province still has dynamics in various aspects of life for the Papuan people, especially for Indigenous Papuans (OAP). The right to special autonomy which actually provides flexibility and independence for the Papua Province to aspire and channel their interests which in fact have not been fully accommodated by the state (Effendy, 2023).

Discrimination and political inequality against the careers of indigenous Papuan officials outside the Papua region is a phenomenon that highlights the inequality in access and opportunities for Papuans to pursue careers in the government sector outside their homeland. Despite regional autonomy, discriminatory practices can still occur in the selection and placement of officials. This can occur due to stereotypes or prejudices against Papuans, both in terms of ethnicity and culture. Inequality of access can also be caused by ignorance or unawareness of their rights, as well as political dynamics that affect the selection and placement of officials.

The relationship between discrimination, inequality and the political careers of native Papuans is complex and multidimensional. Discrimination and inequality can create structural barriers that prevent OAPs from full political participation. Conversely, the success of individual OAPs in political careers can serve as a positive role model, helping to reduce stigma, as well as potentially changing existing power structures. This research seeks to provide comprehensive insights into how such socio-political dynamics affect native Papuans in the context of national and regional politics in Indonesia, with attention to how power structures and individual agency interact and shape the political realities of native Papuans.



Bureaucracy and governance practices in West Papua have a significant impact on the political participation and careers of Indigenous Papuans (OAP). Existing bureaucratic structures can create barriers for native Papuans to enter and advance in the political arena. Factors such as lack of equal access to education, limited political networks, and bias and stereotyping in political decision-making processes can prevent native Papuans from gaining significant positions in the government bureaucracy. In addition, practices of nepotism and corruption can also hinder their career advancement.

While there have been efforts to encourage the political inclusion and participation of OAPs through regional autonomy policies, there are still gaps in the understanding of how bureaucratic structures concretely interact with the political agency of OAPs. This creates challenges in understanding the dynamics of the relationship between the bureaucracy and the political agency of OAP and its impact on their political representation at a broader level. To address this gap, more in-depth research is needed on the internal dynamics of the bureaucracy, the interactions between the bureaucracy and political groups, and their influence on the political careers and representation of OAPs at local and national levels. This could involve surveys, in-depth interviews, and policy analysis to gain a more holistic understanding of the factors that influence the political participation and careers of native Papuans in West Papua.

Discrimination is a form of distinction that has a detrimental impact, therefore discrimination cannot be separated from pejorative connotations. However, distinctions are still possible on the basis of justifiable interests, such as distinctions aimed at creating true equality (affirmation) (Ashri & Syahwal, 2023). Discrimination is also defined as the act of treating individuals or groups differently based on features or characteristics such as origin, race, national origin, religion, political or religious beliefs, social habits, gender, sexual orientation, language, age and others. Basically, discrimination is differential treatment. The differentiation of treatment can be due to skin color, social classes and can also be due to economic status and ethnicity or social caste (Yulinar et al., 2021).

As for several theories that analyze the careers of indigenous Papuan officials outside the Papua region, a more complete picture can be formed. Such as structuration theory highlights the importance of understanding the complex interactions between individuals and political structures in a social context. In this case, the theory allows us to see how Indigenous Papuans (OAP) interact with Indonesian political structures, including the constraints they face and how they act within those constraints.

The theory of political representation helps us to examine the extent to which OAPs are represented in Indonesia's political structures. An important question that arises is whether the political representation of OAPs at the national level effectively articulates and responds to their needs and aspirations. This theory also allows us to understand the dynamics of power and political inclusion in the context of Indonesian democracy and its impact on the relationship between OAPs and the state.

The theory of social and political inequality helps us to understand disparities in the distribution of wealth, resources, power and opportunities among different groups in society. By considering this theory, we can explore how social and political inequality affects the position and agency of native Papuans in the context of national politics, including its influence on the political participation and careers of native Papuan officials outside Papua.

Finally, political economy theory provides insights into how economic and political factors are intertwined and influence the social and political conditions of native Papuans. It helps us to understand how economic policies and governance practices affect the distribution of resources

and economic opportunities for native Papuans, as well as how economic factors affect their political participation. By combining all of these theories, we can unravel the tangled threads of discrimination and political inequality that affect the careers of indigenous Papuan officials outside of the Papua region, providing a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the political participation and representation of OAPs.

Discrimination and political inequality against the careers of indigenous Papuan officials outside the Papua region is a complex issue and is often linked to a number of factors. One major factor is limited access to education for Papuans, which can hamper their ability to compete equally in a competitive political environment outside their home region. In addition, stereotypes and prejudices against Papuans can also affect the selection and placement process for officials, creating barriers to their career advancement. An organizational culture that is not yet fully inclusive may also reinforce inequalities in access and opportunities for Papuan officials outside Papua.

An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon is important to address the political inequalities that occur. Measures needed include raising awareness of Papuans' rights, implementing policies that support fair representation in government structures, and strengthening oversight and accountability mechanisms. In addition, concrete steps need to be taken to overhaul inclusive organizational cultures and eliminate discriminatory practices and harmful stereotypes. With a holistic and inclusive approach, it is hoped that political inequalities in the careers of indigenous Papuan officials outside the Papua region can be addressed, and equal opportunities can be realized for all Indonesian citizens.

## **Conclusion**

The research results show that there are several factors that cause political discrimination and inequality in the careers of native Papuan officials outside the Papua region. First, negative stigma and stereotypes towards Papuans are the main obstacles in their career advancement. This negative view often influences perceptions and assessments of the abilities and competencies of native Papuan officials. Apart from that, lack of networks and political connections are also important factors that limit their access to better career opportunities. Discrimination in the selection and promotion process also frequently occurs, where native Papuan officials are often overlooked or ignored in decision making regarding promotions. Finally, cultural and language barriers can also become obstacles in interacting and communicating in a work environment dominated by a different culture and language. Action is needed to overcome stigma, expand political networks and connections, ensure fair selection and promotion processes, and increase cross-cultural and multilingual understanding in the work environment.