

THE ROLE OF SUBDISTRICT HEAD (CAMAT) IN COORDINATING AND COLLABORATING EARTHQUAKE DISASTER MANAGEMENT: A Case Study in Garut Regency

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ABSTRACT

The September 18, 2024, earthquake in Garut Regency, West Java, Indonesia, highlighted the crucial role of subdistrict heads (Camat) in disaster management. This study explores their role in coordinating and collaborating with various stakeholders, identifying challenges, and evaluating their effectiveness. This research uses a qualitative approach, with a case study research strategy. A total of 11 informants, from the district, sub-district, village and community governments affected by the earthquake. The research emphasizes the Camat's leadership in mobilizing resources, facilitating inter-agency coordination, and engaging communities to ensure a swift and effective disaster response. Findings reveal significant barriers, including bureaucratic inefficiencies and limited resources, but also highlight successful strategies employed by Camat to overcome these challenges. The study concludes with actionable recommendations to enhance disaster management practices in Indonesia's decentralized governance framework

Keywords: disaster management; role of subdistrict head (Camat); coordination; collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its geographical location on the Pacific Ring of Fire and its high tectonic activity. The country frequently experiences earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters, all of which pose significant risks to communities, infrastructure, and economic stability. Garut Regency, located in West Java Province, is no exception to these risks. As an area situated in an active tectonic zone, Garut Regency faces constant threats from seismic activity, with several active fault lines capable of triggering significant earthquakes. This vulnerability is compounded by the area's population density and the presence of rural communities with limited access to infrastructure and disaster preparedness resources.

On April 27, 2024, a 6.2-magnitude earthquake struck Garut Regency, with its epicenter located 156 kilometers southwest of the region at a depth of 70 kilometers beneath the ocean. The earthquake, originating from an intraslab thrust fault, caused structural damage in 16 subdistricts across the regency. Although there were no reports of casualties,

the disaster resulted in significant material losses, including damage to homes, public facilities, and vital infrastructure. These impacts highlight the critical need for effective disaster management at the local level to mitigate risks and ensure rapid response and recovery.

In disaster-prone regions like Garut, the subdistrict head, or Camat, plays a pivotal role in coordinating disaster management efforts. As the head of the subdistrict and a representative of the regional government, the Camat is responsible for leading emergency responses, mobilizing resources, and ensuring that affected communities receive timely assistance. These responsibilities are explicitly outlined in Indonesian regulations, including Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government and Government Regulation No. 17 of 2018 on Subdistricts, which mandate that the Camat acts as a key figure in the implementation of public administration, disaster management, and service delivery at the subdistrict level.

However, the practical execution of these responsibilities often encounters numerous challenges. Limited resources, insufficient disaster preparedness, and bureaucratic hurdles can hinder the Camat's ability to effectively respond to emergencies. Additionally, inadequate coordination between government agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders frequently results in delays and inefficiencies in disaster response efforts. These challenges underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the Camat's role and the factors influencing their effectiveness in disaster management.

Before explaining more about the role of the Sub-district Head in disaster management, it is important to first understand the position and position of the Sub-district Head in the government structure in Indonesia. The sub-district head is the head of a sub-district which is the regional apparatus of the district or city, and is appointed by the regent or mayor. In accordance with the provisions of Government Regulation Number 17 of 2018 concerning Sub-districts and Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, the Sub-district has the function of executing part of the authority of the local government at the sub-district level. The sub-district head plays a role in the implementation of general government affairs, public services, community empowerment, and cross-sector coordination. In the context of disaster management, the sub-district head becomes a key actor at the local level who has the strategic authority to lead emergency coordination and quickly mobilize resources in the affected areas.

The role of local leaders, particularly Camat, in disaster management can be analyzed through the lens of multiple theoretical frameworks, including role theory, disaster management theory, and collaborative governance. Role theory emphasizes the social expectations and responsibilities that shape an individual's behavior within specific institutional roles (Biddle, 1986). In the context of disaster management, the Camat assumes a multifaceted role as an administrative leader, crisis manager, and community mobilizer. As highlighted by Merton (1957), clearly defined roles and responsibilities are critical for reducing role conflicts and enhancing organizational effectiveness. These insights are particularly relevant to the Camat's role in coordinating resources, resolving conflicts, and ensuring the efficient allocation of aid during emergencies. Moreover, Mead (Mead et al.

(2015) underscores the interactive nature of roles, suggesting that the Camat's success depends on their ability to engage with various stakeholders and adapt to dynamic disaster scenarios. This perspective aligns with Goffman (1959) notion that roles are performed differently depending on the context and audience, highlighting the importance of flexibility and situational awareness in disaster response.

Disaster management theory provides a complementary framework by emphasizing the significance of preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in mitigating disaster impacts (Alexander, 2002). Effective disaster management requires strong coordination and collaboration among government agencies, local communities, and other stakeholders (Comfort et al., 2010). This is consistent with Mintzberg's (1983) classification of coordination mechanisms, which include direct supervision, standardization, and mutual adjustment, all of which are critical for ensuring cohesive disaster response efforts. Moreover, Shaw and Izumi (2014) stress the importance of community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRR), where local leaders play a pivotal role in mobilizing community resources and fostering resilience. In the Indonesian context, Lassa et al. (2018) demonstrates that active community participation significantly enhances disaster preparedness and recovery efforts, underscoring the Camat's role as a mediator between local communities and governmental institutions. Additionally, collaborative governance theory, as discussed by Rhodes (1996), highlights the necessity of partnerships among public, private, and community actors to address complex issues like disaster management. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study provides a robust analytical framework for understanding the Camat's role and identifying strategies to enhance their effectiveness in disaster-prone regions like Garut Regency.

This study aims to explore the role of Camat in coordinating and collaborating with stakeholders during the 2024 earthquake response in Garut Regency. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) analyze the Camat's role in managing disaster response efforts; (2) identify the challenges faced in coordinating and collaborating with stakeholders; and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies employed by Camat in reducing disaster impacts. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the broader discourse on disaster management in Indonesia and provides actionable recommendations for strengthening local governance in disaster-prone regions.

In addition to offering practical insights, the study seeks to bridge gaps in the existing literature on the role of local leaders in disaster management. While previous studies have extensively discussed disaster preparedness and community-based disaster risk reduction, there remains limited exploration of the specific contributions and challenges faced by local administrative leaders like the Camat. By focusing on the context of Garut Regency, this research highlights the critical importance of local leadership in disaster-prone regions and provides a case study that may inform policies and practices in other regions with similar vulnerabilities.

Ultimately, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Camat's role in disaster management and its implications for policy and practice. The

findings are expected to inform the development of more effective disaster management frameworks, enhance the capacity of local leaders, and ensure better protection for communities at risk of natural disasters. By doing so, the study contributes to the broader goal of building resilience and reducing disaster risks in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design to deeply explore the role of Camat (sub-district head) in managing disaster response efforts following the 2024 earthquake in Garut Regency, Indonesia. The case study method was selected to provide a detailed examination of the Camat's coordination and collaboration roles with various stakeholders during and after the disaster. This approach allows the research to capture the nuanced and real-world dynamics between leaders, institutions, and communities involved in disaster management. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, direct observations, and document analysis to gain comprehensive insights into the Camat's role, the challenges they faced, and the contextual factors influencing disaster response.

Key informants in this study included the Camat of Pasirwangi (the most heavily affected sub-district), the Secretary of the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), the Head of the Housing and Settlement Areas Department, the Sub-coordinator for Disaster Management from the Social Services Office, the Chair of Tagana (Disaster Preparedness Team), and the Heads of Public Order Divisions from the sub-districts of Pasirwangi and Cilawu. Additionally, the study included perspectives from two residents of Padaawas Village, Pasirwangi Sub-district, who were directly impacted by the earthquake. These informants were selected based on their direct involvement in disaster response activities and their ability to provide relevant data on coordination and collaboration processes. Secondary data sources, including BPBD reports, meeting notes, local regulations, and related publications, were also analyzed to complement and validate findings from the primary data.

The research was conducted in Garut Regency from September to October 2024, focusing on sub-districts most affected by the earthquake. Observations were made to capture real-time insights into the Camat's leadership during disaster response efforts. Interviews provided rich, first-hand accounts of strategies and actions taken, while documentation analysis offered a broader perspective on governance frameworks and institutional responses. By integrating these diverse data sources, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the Camat's role in disaster management and offers practical recommendations for strengthening local governance in similar disaster-prone contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Identification of the Subdistrict Head's Role in Coordination and Collaboration for Disaster Management

The subdistrict head plays a pivotal role in managing disaster response and recovery efforts in Garut Regency, particularly during the 2024 earthquake. According to the findings, their responsibilities span from establishing emergency response posts to coordinating aid

distribution among various stakeholders. The Pasirwangi subdistrict, for instance, established a primary emergency post in its office yard that operated for 14 days (from September 18 to October 1, 2024). This post functioned as the central coordination hub, involving the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), the Social Affairs Department (Dinsos), security forces, and volunteers. The post ensured the effective delivery of emergency assistance to impacted communities, including essential supplies such as food, water, and temporary shelters.

Table 1. Data on Earthquake Damage in Garut Regency, September 18, 2024

Category	Impact in Subdistricts	Total Damage
Houses Damaged	209 houses	700 houses
Places of Worship	5	32
Educational Facilities	7	16
Healthcare Facilities	-	5
Offices/Buildings	-	2
Casualties	1 minor injury	58 minor injuries
	-	23 serious injuries
	-	450 people displaced

Source: BPBD of Garut Regency, 2024

Quantitative data supports these findings, highlighting the geographical spread and varying impacts across the region. Table 1 identifies that the earthquake caused extensive damage, including 700 houses, 32 places of worship, 16 educational facilities, 5 healthcare centers, and 2 office buildings. It also left 58 people with minor injuries, 23 with serious injuries, and displaced 450 individuals, highlighting the urgent need for effective disaster response and recovery. The subdistrict head's role was critical in prioritizing aid for the most severely affected areas, such as Desa Linggamukti in Sucinaraja, where five houses were damaged, and Desa Sukalaksana in Talegong, which reported significant structural impact.

In terms of intersectoral collaboration, the subdistrict head successfully mobilized support from both public and private sectors. For example, logistical aid from PLN Kamojang and Indonesia Power was instrumental in restoring basic services. Volunteers from institutions like Tagana, UNIGA and Rumah Yatim Piatu contributed to clearing debris and rebuilding affected homes. This collaboration exemplifies the theoretical perspective that effective disaster management requires a multifaceted approach, integrating local leadership, public-private partnerships, and community involvement (Comfort et al., 2010).

Figure 1. Kemensos shelter tent in Padaawas Village, Pasirwangi Subdistrict.

Source: Author's documentation, 2024

Furthermore, the subdistrict head facilitated the establishment of evacuation shelters, including 20 family tents, three field tents, and two emergency school tents. These shelters were crucial in ensuring immediate safety and stability for the displaced population. The rapid response aligns with Tierney's (2014) framework of disaster leadership, which emphasizes the necessity of swift, localized decision-making in minimizing the social and physical impacts of disasters.

Challenges Faced by the Subdistrict Head in Coordination and Collaboration for Disaster Management

Despite the proactive efforts, the subdistrict head faced significant challenges that hindered the effectiveness of disaster management. One of the primary challenges was the limited availability of local resources. As revealed in interviews, subdistrict budgets lack allocations specifically designated for disaster management, forcing the subdistrict head to rely entirely on external assistance from BPBD and Dinsos. This reliance often delayed aid distribution, particularly to remote areas, as damaged infrastructure such as roads and bridges impeded access to villages like Desa Pancasura in Singajaya and Desa Karangsari in Pakenjeng.

The dependency on external aid from private and government entities also posed challenges. For example, logistical aid provided by PLN Kamojang, though helpful, was insufficient to meet the needs of all affected communities. Delays in government aid distribution further compounded the difficulties, as indicated by reports of uneven delivery timelines to hard-to-reach areas. This situation underscores the importance of decentralized

resource allocation and strengthened local capacities, as highlighted in Kapucu & Garayev's (2011) studies on disaster resilience.

Another significant obstacle was inter-agency coordination. Differences in command structures and operational protocols between BPBD, Dinsos, and security forces led to confusion over task delegation, particularly in high-pressure situations. The subdistrict head spent considerable time addressing these misalignments, which detracted from the overall efficiency of emergency response efforts. Boin et al. (2017) argue that such fragmentation in leadership and command structures can significantly slow down disaster response and recovery processes.

Aid distribution challenges were also evident. While urban areas like Garut Kota received timely assistance, remote villages such as Desa Mekarsari in Cilawu often experienced delays due to logistical constraints. This uneven distribution highlights the need for more robust logistical planning and equitable resource allocation mechanisms to ensure no community is left behind.

The biggest challenge for the sub-district head in disaster management in Garut Regency is the limitation of authority and resources. As a liaison between the district and village governments, the sub-district does not have a special budget and relies heavily on assistance from BPBD or other agencies, which are often late. In addition, coordination between institutions that is not synchronized also makes it difficult for the Sub-district Head to make quick decisions in the field.

Effectiveness of the Subdistrict Head's Disaster Management

The subdistrict head's disaster management efforts proved effective in mitigating the earthquake's impacts on communities and infrastructure. The immediate establishment of emergency response posts, coupled with inter-agency coordination, ensured that essential resources were distributed promptly. For example, public kitchens set up in Pasirwangi served displaced families, while volunteers worked tirelessly to clear debris and rebuild homes.

Coordination between BPBD, Dinsos, and the subdistrict head was instrumental in achieving operational efficiency. The standardized procedures set by BPBD facilitated a structured approach to disaster response. Additionally, private sector contributions, such as logistical support from PLN Kamojang, enhanced resource availability for infrastructure recovery. Comfort et al. (2010) emphasize the critical role of multi-stakeholder collaboration in strengthening disaster response systems, which was evident in this case.

Infrastructure recovery was a key focus in the post-disaster phase. Damage assessments conducted by the subdistrict head, in collaboration with government agencies, ensured that financial aid and resources were allocated appropriately. For instance, homes in Desa Padaawas and Desa Pasirwangi received prioritized support for repairs. While budget limitations posed challenges, the coordinated efforts of government and private stakeholders demonstrated the potential for effective resource pooling in disaster recovery.

Budget support at the sub-district level for disaster management is still very limited due to the absence of a special post in the sub-district budget. This makes the Sub-district Head have to rely on assistance from BPBD, Social Services, and third parties. To overcome these limitations, the sub-district usually takes strategic steps by establishing emergency posts, establishing quick coordination with related Regional Apparatus, and collaborating with the private sector and local volunteers to mobilize resources collaboratively in emergency situations.

Community preparedness, facilitated by initiatives such as Disaster Preparedness Villages, also contributed to effective disaster management. Training programs conducted prior to the earthquake improved community responses during the disaster. Residents displayed greater composure compared to previous disasters, reflecting the success of these initiatives. Paton & Johnston (2001) underscore the importance of community preparedness in reducing disaster impacts, a finding corroborated by the experiences in Garut Regency.

In conclusion, the subdistrict head's leadership significantly mitigated the impacts of the 2024 earthquake in Garut Regency. Despite challenges such as resource limitations and coordination barriers, their efforts in mobilizing resources, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and enhancing community preparedness underscore the strategic importance of local leadership in disaster management. Future improvements should focus on decentralizing disaster management resources, enhancing logistical capabilities, and strengthening inter-agency coordination to further improve disaster resilience at the community level.

Theoretical Implication

This study highlights the strategic role of subdistrict heads (Camat) in coordinating earthquake disaster management in Garut Regency, aligning with key theories in disaster management, inter-organizational collaboration, and decentralization. The findings emphasize the importance of responsive local leadership during the emergency and recovery phases, as described by Haddow, Bullock, and Coppola (2017). Subdistrict heads played pivotal roles in setting up emergency posts, distributing logistics, and facilitating communication among stakeholders, such as the Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), Social Affairs Department (Dinsos), military, police, and volunteers. However, the study also reveals significant challenges, including limited human resources, logistical constraints, and budgetary inadequacies in recovery efforts, consistent with Tierney's (2014) insights on the resource limitations faced by local leaders during disaster recovery.

Additionally, the findings underscore the value of cross-sector collaboration in disaster response, supporting Kapucu & Garayev's (2011) theory on inter-organizational coordination. Effective partnerships with non-governmental actors, such as PLN Kamojang and university volunteers, were critical in enhancing emergency responses. However, issues like uneven aid distribution and access challenges in remote areas reflect Adger's (2006) observations on the logistical difficulties in disaster-stricken regions. The study also ties to decentralization theory, highlighting how devolved authority to local leaders enables context-

specific disaster responses (Rondinelli, 1981). Nevertheless, the lack of accompanying resource allocation limits the effectiveness of decentralized efforts, echoing Cheema & Rondinelli's (2007) argument on the need for resource support in successful decentralization. These findings reinforce the necessity for greater governmental support in training, logistics, and funding to enhance local leadership capacities for disaster management.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of subdistrict heads (Camat) in coordinating disaster management efforts during the 2024 earthquake in Garut Regency, emphasizing their critical functions in emergency response, resource mobilization, and cross-sector collaboration. The findings highlight that while Camat leadership was instrumental in mitigating disaster impacts through swift establishment of emergency posts, effective aid distribution, and community preparedness initiatives, significant challenges such as limited resources, logistical barriers, and uneven aid distribution hindered optimal outcomes. The study supports theoretical frameworks in disaster management, inter-organizational collaboration, and decentralization, revealing that responsive local leadership, enhanced coordination mechanisms, and strategic partnerships with non-governmental entities are key to improving disaster resilience. However, it also emphasizes the urgent need for greater resource allocation, logistical support, and decentralized capacity-building to empower local leaders and ensure more effective disaster management in disaster-prone regions like Garut Regency.

Based on the findings of this study, three key recommendations are proposed to enhance disaster management effectiveness at the subdistrict level. First, strengthening the role of subdistrict heads (Camat) in disaster coordination and collaboration is crucial. This requires capacity-building initiatives such as disaster management training and increased budget allocations to ensure that Camat have sufficient resources to establish emergency posts, distribute aid, and coordinate stakeholders efficiently. Second, improving inter-agency coordination and reducing barriers in cross-sector collaboration is essential. The establishment of an Incident Command System (ICS) at the subdistrict level could streamline command structures and facilitate integrated decision-making among agencies like BPBD, Social Affairs Department (Dinsos), military, and police. Finally, enhancing community preparedness and supporting mitigation programs through the expansion of Disaster Preparedness Villages is imperative. This includes providing regular training, simulations, and adequate emergency equipment at the village level, enabling communities to be more self-reliant and resilient in the face of disasters while accelerating recovery processes.

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