

Exploring the roots of local government corruption practices in rural Java: An anthropological analysis

Menjelajahi akar praktik korupsi pemerintah daerah di pedesaan Jawa: Sebuah analisis antropologis

Setiadi^{1,2*}, Henny Ekawati², & Fadlan Habib²

¹Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada

²Center for Population and Policy Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Address: ¹Jalan Sosio Humaniora, Bulaksumur, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55281

²Jalan Tevesia Bulaksumur, Sagan, Caturtunggal, Depok, Sleman, Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia 55281

E-mail: setiadi_antro@ugm.ac.id

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Abstract

Corruption is a crucial issue in Indonesia, including in the administration of village government. This article aims to explain the roots of corruption seen from an anthropological analysis of corruption. This article describes the factors causing corruption practices in rural Java, i.e., local values in village governance practices. The research was conducted in several villages in Bojonegoro Regency-East Java. The data were collected through a series of participatory observations, in-depth interviews, and searching archives. The informants were divided into three groups, i.e., the village officials, the elite groups who were against the village head, and the neutral group. The findings of this study indicate that the root of corruption in the village is caused by strong local values such as loyalty to the village head from his followers, solid harmony, and the ability for the village head to manifest himself as an ideal leadership. Such values make relational models that are full of pleasantries for the sake of themselves and their groups to perpetuate power. This study concludes that non-values factors that further complicate the financial administration system in the form of supralocal interventions had a wider impact on the worsening of the deviation in budget usage.

Keywords: case study; civil society; governance; human resources; roots of corruption

Abstrak

Korupsi merupakan isu krusial di Indonesia, termasuk dalam penyelenggaraan pemerintahan desa. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan akar korupsi dilihat dari analisis antropologis korupsi. Artikel ini memaparkan faktor penyebab terjadinya praktik korupsi di daerah pedesaan di Pulau Jawa, yaitu nilai-nilai lokal dalam praktik pemerintahan desa. Penelitian ini dilakukan di beberapa desa di Kabupaten Bojonegoro, Jawa Timur. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui serangkaian observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, dan penelusuran arsip. Informan dibagi menjadi tiga kelompok, yaitu perangkat desa, kelompok elit yang menentang kepala desa, dan kelompok netral. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa akar korupsi di desa disebabkan oleh nilai-nilai lokal yang kuat seperti loyalitas dari pengikut kepala desa, kerukunan yang kuat, dan kemampuan kepala desa untuk mewujudkan dirinya sebagai pemimpin yang ideal. Nilai-nilai tersebut menjadikan model relasional yang penuh basa-basi demi kepentingan diri dan kelompoknya untuk melanggengkan kekuasaan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa faktor non-nilai yang semakin memperumit sistem administrasi keuangan berupa intervensi supralokal berdampak lebih luas pada memburuknya penyimpangan penggunaan anggaran.

Kata kunci: studi kasus; masyarakat sipil; pemerintahan; sumber daya manusia; akar korupsi

Introduction

There is one paradox in the practice of governance in rural Java after the enactment of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6/2014 concerning Village Autonomy, that is the existence of a

combination of concepts and practices of good governance. At the local level, the concept of village autonomy is unclear on what the autonomy means (Phahlevy 2016). The law emphasizes the increase in budget allocations to improve governance arrangements (Antlöv et al. 2016), additional authority and local-scaled decision making (Mulyono 2014), making it an independent, strong, and empowered village (Puspasari 2016). This approach answers the need to build a strong village government in a post-reform era (Antlöv 2003), and to overcome the critical conditions of post-reform government (Prasetyo 2005). There is much optimism about the presence of this law, for instance, the possibility of strengthening the Nagari local government in West Sumatra (Vel & Bedner 2015), customary villages (Tyson 2011, Wahyudi et al. 2020), the presence of participation in the use of allocation of village funds (Kurrohman 2015), the increase in participatory planning and empowerment models (Ito 2006, Agustina 2019), and community active participation in governance (Suacana et al. 2016). Ideally, there will be an increase in the quality of village autonomy community aspirations are accommodated, both at the planning stage and in the implementation process (Phahlevy & Multazam 2018).

Nevertheless, such condition has not yet been fully implemented in the practice of village administration to date. A study showed that there are many corruptions at the local government level (Suacana et al. 2016) such as village fund and land abuses (Bebbington et al. 2006), the village head is more submissive to the government at higher level than the people who have voted him/her and it is identified as the cause of corruption in the village level (Woodhouse 2005), fund corruption undertaken by some elites for personal interest (Ulfah et al. 2019), on the grounds of the lack of welfare (Henderson & Kuncoro 2004, Prabowo & Cooper 2016). Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) reported that there were 676 suspects in corruption cases committed by village officials with state losses reaching 111 billion during 2015-2020 (Guritno 2021).

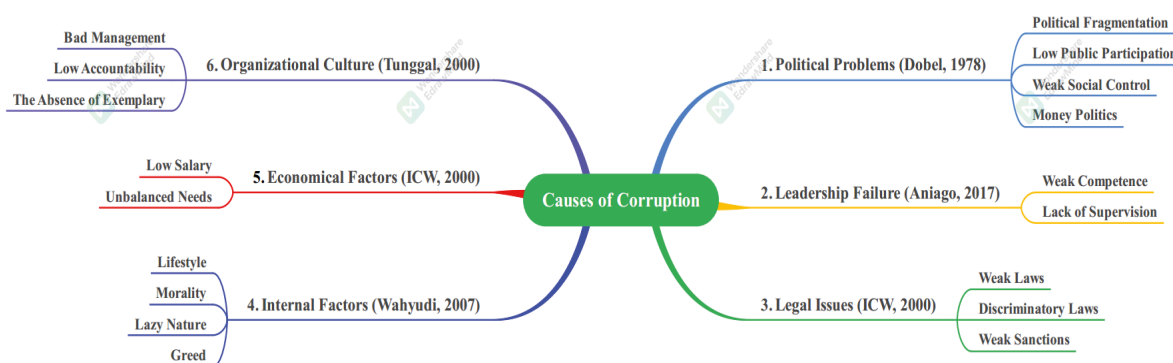


Figure 1.

Several factors causing corruption practices

Source: Aniago (2017), Dobel (1978) ICW (2000), Tunggal & Tunggal (2000), Wahyudi (2007)

There are many different focuses on corruption studies. In India, corruption occurs and grows out of local power relations among government officials using the power to impose a sanction for the violations done by residents of 10 or even 100 times the official rate (Corbridge & Kumar 2002). Another study that focused on the issue of citizen perceptions revealed that perceptions of the presence of corruption affect voter behavior (Školník 2020), as well as triggering anti-corruption groups to be more active in conducting activities more enthusiastically, effectively, and accountably (Slijepčević et al. 2020). However, it is also possible that the corruption process will be able to create reduced obstacles from the bureaucracy (Peluso 2018), mutual trust among the actors and it will then result in the sustainability of corruption, as well as they will increase the performance reputation (Rose-Ackerman 1999), because the meaning of corruption changes tied to a changing political and economic context (Pertiwi & Ainsworth 2020). Patrimonial or paternalistic culture is also marked to be one of the factors in the presence of corruption (Chasanah 2014) since corruption is increasingly networked (Wang 2020). Therefore, it is appropriate to try examining the grassroots or causes of corruption (Emara 2020). There are three aspects

causing corrupt practices in local (village) government; the dominance of old bureaucratic culture, the lack of quantity and quality of village bureaucracies that understand the problems of good governance and the dominance of supralocal apparatus (Sembiring et al. 2017). Supralocal intervention plays a very important role in the internal dynamics of the village and the relationship among the elites (Lucas 2016). Rural communities have basically the potential to increase bargaining power and prevent corruption, although there is also the potential for friction with other elites (Rinaldi et al. 2007) and it is shown in Figure 1.

Some of these studies show that corruption has been widely practiced, but the input from an anthropological perspective still lacks. Conceptually, corruption means the abuse of public office for private interest (Slijepčević et al. 2020). In anthropological approach, this well-accepted definition is particularly problematic because it is based in part on a strong private-public dichotomy. This article aims to explain the roots of corruption seen from an anthropological analysis of corruption. Anthropological studies have raised a lot of evidence to the point where public-private opposition depends on the context (Torsello 2016). Furthermore, Torsello explained that in anthropological epistemology, the truth of social reality can be found, especially when scientists voice what is observed. Therefore, through the everyday reality of their functions, institutions are not abstract entities as they are made up of people, and through their agents, narratives, ideas and ideologies. Anthropology, therefore, cannot agree on a definition that states a clear distinction between private and public roles, duties, and goals. Anthropologists working on corruption emphasize the different ways in which various actors understand, oppose, and operate it. Anthropologically, it is thus important to examine why corruption behavior in the management of village development funds still strongly occurs. This study is very significant, considering that if the causes of corruption can be identified, then village community welfare programs can be right on target and not reduce the welfare (Olken 2006).

Research Method

The method used in this study is qualitative with a case study approach in 12 villages in Bojonegoro. The informants were determined using purposive techniques. They were then divided into 3 (three) groups, i.e., village apparatus group consisting of the village head, village secretary, village treasurer, and village employees. The opposing group against the village head consisted of members of Board of Village Consultative (known as BPD), the political opponents of the village head at the time of election. The neutral group consisted of community leaders, youth leaders, and women leaders (including sub-district officials). The data were collected by conducting in-depth interviews, direct observations, and archive searches.

Several aspects that had been observed in this study are related to the quality pattern of the implementation of village autonomy in terms of planning and use of budget, understanding the quality of human resources and village institutions, community participation in the planning process and supralocal roles in the transformation towards better village governance. The data analysis used case study analysis in which the collected data were categorized under the meaning, performing direct interpretation, determining the pattern of relationship among the meanings, and drawing a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

The roots of corruption: Blind loyalty, pseudo harmony, and reluctance

Social exchange theory sees the corruption that still occurs as a phenomenon related to the sphere of social interaction. Based on this perspective, the moral economy of corruption at the local level lies in its acceptance and is bound by certain conditions of political institutions and market development, as a common form of social exchange (Graycar & Jancsics 2017). It highlights that corruption is a collective action. By using this approach, collective action theory is any form of the organized social or political act carried out by a group of people to address their needs or achieve something that they

cannot achieve individually (Danso & Asmorowati 2020). This study showed that the loyalty between leaders and followers are a strong basis of the formation of socio-economic and political relations. This loyalty is important to maintain to get a perpetuates power. In building the loyalty, it needs a material strength basis. This may happen, considering that the achievement of village government power also uses a material basis called money. The victory in the village head elections is not the end of local socio-economic and political relations. At the time they won the election, the village head still expected the loyalty from the voters. The loyalty is a capital to secure power and guarantee electability in the next election period. Efforts to maintain loyalty are carried out by providing access to village development budgets for support groups and voters. The transactional model between voters and elected village heads occurs continuously in the long term. Through this model of economic-political relations, the cultural costs that must be paid by followers and members of society are quite high. They are forced to maintain a harmonious relationship (well known as *ewuh pakewuh* in Javanese) with the village head. *Ewuh pakewuh* is a concept of Javanese cultural attitude that shows politeness expressed with a sense of reluctance and upholds respect for superiors or elders (Dwiyanto 2006, Soeharjono 2011). The response to deviations made by the village head was in the form of “grumbling”. The *ewuh pakewuh* ultimately limits a person to convey opinions and truths. It then evokes an ambiguity.

The contestation of village head election as a means of democratization often leaves sharp social conflicts. The depth and intensity of the conflicts are beyond those in the regional head election and the presidential election (PSKK UGM 2016). The grassroots of the problem are the emotional and social closeness of the candidates who contest with their voters because of the kinship networks that make village politics very segmented (Anggariani 2013), so the impact will be long lasting. This political dynamic will be meant in the context of winning and losing. For those who lose, they will become the second group in the village and for the winners, they will get easier access and services in the village.

Such political dynamics have an impact on decision-making processes that tend to please certain groups. Public participation will be reduced as part of this political contestation, and this is what makes the village head always maintain the *status quo* by keeping sympathizers loyal to him (Dobel 1978). The segmented distribution of power will certainly give rise to segmenting opposition groups as well. The result is that the village government system will be polarized so that it cannot be neutral. Its governance finally dissolves in the political dynamics of reciprocation.

This condition becomes a serious challenge in the distribution of authority era after the enactment of the Village Law. The amount of authority possessed by the village government will not run optimally if the village political system does not change. The massive development in the village with the presence of the Village Budget has left a serious problem regarding who will get the most from the funds. Several cases indicate that village head loyalists will get positions as the actors of developmental projects in the village. These positions have been discussed since the village head election campaign period to get societies' support. “They are the supporters and have been offered to manage the Village-owned Enterprises (known as BUMDes)” (ROF, an employee at village government office).

Such system will certainly disrupt the establishment of good village governance because placing confidants in important positions in the village do not look at one's capacity yet political affiliation. The placement of confidants to become the Implementation Team (known as TPK/Timlak) for infrastructure development was also found in this study. The impact is that the control over the work they did cannot be maximally performed due to the element of reciprocation. The relationships built between the village head and the confidants were patron-client relationships, in which the patron with the resources they have is able to monopolize their power in a real way to take advantages of the power they have. The village head's confidants as clients will get protection and convenience in executing their work as the TPK officials, so their supervisory function will be weakened. The village government did not have the ability to control the TPK, so it was other people who did not involve in the spending process who had provided all receipts as the evidence of the spending. What happened is that the final financial report was the same as the Budget Plan that had been made. The village head seemed to have turned a blind

eye to this condition. Meanwhile, as the Executive Team officials (known as TPK), they also received honoraria, which should not have become their own profit-seeking behavior.

"The TPK has given up on our report because they don't want to be bothered with the receipts of spending. We already know that they are also looking for the benefit. It's important that the volume matches the design." (JIT, Village Treasurer)

The village community's behavior that emphasizes more on harmony manifested by the Javanese term *ewuh pakewuh* to have such corrected policy had made the corruption offenders forgivable. It is this kind of behavior that makes someone in power lose control over his actions since people with lower social status will feel pressured when they have to say something that is contrary to their elite (Nordholt 1987). The intense *ewuh pakewuh* is caused by several factors, such as individual who only pays attention to himself (individualism), a hierarchical social system (power distance), the emergence of uncertainty avoidance, and the intense masculinity values (Hofstede 1980). They also wanted to make the justification even though it was undertaken by talking behind someone's back. The accumulated residents' disappointment created a distrustful behavior which they would then manifest by attracting support for the leadership of the village head for those who initially supported it. For those who did not support the village head from the start, the feeling of disappointment would be increasingly crystallized. Such village government system does not meet with the principles of good governance as shown in Figure 2.

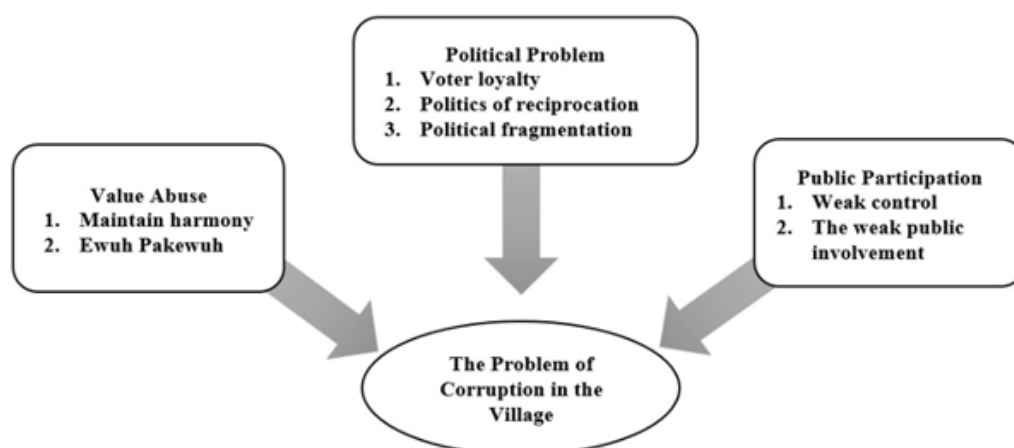


Figure 2.
The root of problems in corruption in the village
Source: Primary data

The idea of an ideal leader, descendant, and patron-client relations

The village head is a figure who must be light-hearted, sociable, generous, and loyal to the community members (Latief 2000). The strong dominance of the village head cannot be separated from the context of unbalanced power relations (Chalik 2017). The background of the village head, who is the village elite in general, is a role model figure in the village. They have a high degree, are respected, and are also the rulers of economic assets in the village (Ainillah 2016, Latief 2000, Wirasandi 2018). Moreover, the power has a historical line of power that has been passed down from generation to generation, especially in villages that have a homogeneous social and cultural (Haryanto 2017).

Of the 12 villages selected for the research locations, there were 4 villages that had a historical line of power in the village. This is what made the village head stronger in his position in the community. The figure of parents and ancestors is always attached to him as if the behavior of the current village head is a representation of the family background or the offspring. This was different from that of other villages, in which the village head had to fight for getting the community's support to get his/her power,

even though the background as village elites was good in economic, social and religion, yet they were capitalized to gain the community's support.

This imbalance in power relations made the power of the village head very dominant. Even so, there was a balancing power in the existing provisions, i.e., Board of Village Consultative. The duty of the Board of Village Consultative is to control the running of the village administration. However, the duty is often not optimally executed due to unbalanced power relations. The lack of maximum performance of the Board of Village Consultative can be meant in three ways. First, the gap in social status where the Board of Village Consultative is considered to have lower social status than that of the village head (Nuraini 2010). Second, the village head has the financial management authority so that the village head feels entitled to manage village finances (Cahyono 2015). Third, the weak capacity of the Board of Village Consultative (Romli & Nurlia 2017).

The gap in power relations in social status is caused by the cultural values that develop in the community which then affect the mindset and behavior of individuals. The higher the gap in power relations, the weaker public control over elite behavior becomes. This kind of mentality makes them resigned and tends to accept the behavior of the village elites, in this case is the village head. This, power relations will be maintained by the village head in various ways, one of them is the caring attitude of the village head of the community. What emerged then was that the quality of the village head could not be seen from his performance, but rather on how much the village head was generous when the community needed assistance as shown in Figure 3.

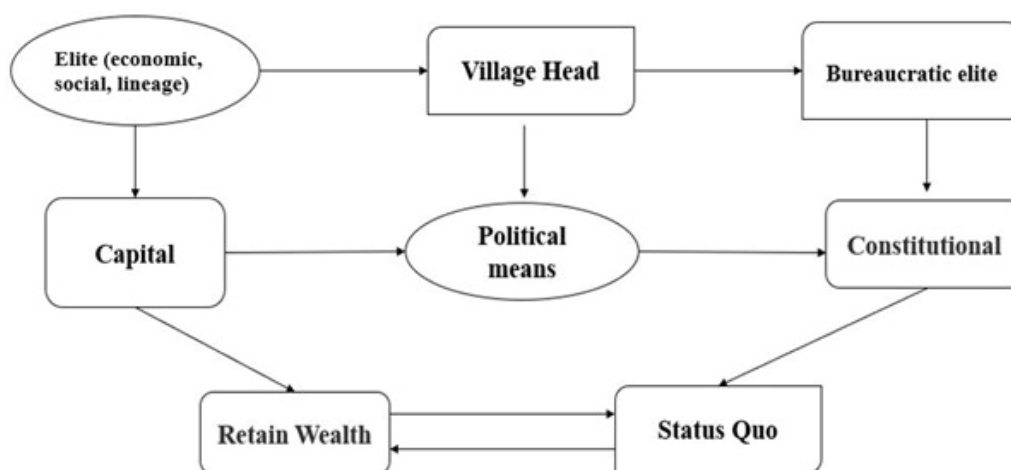


Figure 3.
The village head's efforts to maintain the *status quo*
Source: Primary data

This attitude makes the social costs of becoming a village head very high. It can be imagined that every time the community has celebrations, they will invite the village head. If there are residents are sick, they will visit him, and so on. The present given by the village head is considered better, even higher than the residents. The social relations built on the basis of this generosity return to the village head in the form of support and legitimacy for the village head's leadership. As stated by one of the following informants.

“The social cost of being the village head is very high here. Every time a celebration is hold; we (the residents) are always invited. You can see that the traditional cuisine stored in rinjing (a container to store agricultural products) contains pressed cigarettes, sugars, noodles, rice, and, money. Imagine if we (the village head and his employees) come to the celebration, but we don't give more money than that of the residents, we'll end up being told behind our back that the village funds were misused.” (WIN, the Village Head)

Another informant also conveyed his opinion as follows:

"Although his (the village head) behavior is bad, he rarely goes to work to the village office, often wakes up late because he likes going to karaoke and drinks alcohol, many people like him because he often makes donations to the mosque and asked people to manage it." (MIT, the village government official)

The relations that exist through the generosity of the village head is basically building a symbolic image aiming at expanding the influence of the hegemonic power that is being built by the elite (Granovetter & Swedberg 2018). Generosity will always be seen from the perspective of modality (profit and loss) where investments, in the form of generosity, can be converted into symbolic capital held in public spaces to gain sympathy (Bourdieu & Nice 1977). For this reason, the distribution of capital is deliberately built to reproduce domination to perpetuate power.

The act of surrendering and leaving the power to supralocal administrators

Village financial management is a series of activities that begin with the planning, implementation, administration, reporting, and financial accountability processes of the village. The shift in modern village financial management with the principles of budgetary systematically is not yet fully understood by the village government officials. The financial management system seems to be complex, even President Jokowi has mentioned this complexity (Saputri 2018).

The complexity in the budget management system causes dependency and lack of confidence in the village officials. This leads the village financial management process to be assisted by the subdistrict government officials or, in the locals call it *jahitke* (executed by others). Ironically, the actors who have been asked to do the work are the employees of the subdistrict government office. Of the 12 research locations, not all villages practiced the *jahitke*. They tried to compile and make accountability reports for the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget by themselves. Not all of them were indeed able to do that, but there were an initiation and a willingness to do it themselves. With a high budget that was carried out by the treasurer, the financial reporting system became very difficult. However, the treasurer felt that he was being used by sub-district officials when the reports were compiled and made with *jahitke* because the village government was charged by the actors in the *jahitke* process. The village treasurer felt that this can endanger the village by wasting the budget. Funds that should be used for other activities were even given to certain persons to make financial reports.

The *jahitke* system is not included in the budget plan prepared by the village government as consultant expenses. Every time a financial report was made, the rate could reach 500 thousand to 1 million rupiah. This could be a high amount of money if they had to ask for the help of the subdistrict officials everytime they make the reports. The expenditures were taken from the activities being conducted. Some villages took an action for these expenses by inflating several expenditure items. These fraudulent practices are then finally like a declaration because these people will then guarantee that the evidence will be administratively safe since they are the ones who make it.

Bad habits in budget management are that the village head being unfavored of rigorous recording of the in-out-funds. He wanted to spend the village budget to himself, even the TPK asked for money to conduct activities directly to the village head, not to the treasurer, because it was the village head who keep the village budget. The village head felt hard to be transparent. Regarding the budget issues, one of the informants said:

"The village funds, village budget allocation, etc., are just like my own money. So, if I want to take it, for instance, I just take one hundred thousand rupiah. When I need one hundred fifty thousand rupiah, just take it without making the report." (KAM, The Village Treasurer)

The presence of the *jahitke* system can be caused by four things. First, the coaching system does not work well, the role of coaching which should be the domain of the government at higher level is used by the actors in it to seek personal gain. Second, the capacity of financial managers is inadequate because they are at an old age so that the village head has to replace the budget managers with other village officials who are more qualified (Widagdo et al. 2016). Third, the gap in the weak capacity of the village treasurers is the impression that the village head himself is used for profit, because the weaker the financial managers, the easier the village head to intervene. Fourth, the community and the control of Board of Village Consultative are still very poor (Hidayat & Maros 2019).

Such condition cannot be separated from the supralocal's perspective during the New Order era which saw the village as an object of intervention, instruction, and co-optation which weakened the village administration (Antlöv 2003). The strong pull of top-down bureaucratization has made village officials lose the initiative to manage their financial reports independently. This skepticism and the feeling of incapable creates a sense of resignation to the supralocal because, for the village officials, such action does not cause any problems.

The emergence of elite capture and culture of co-optation

The Village Law and its derivative regulations have basically provided regulations on the obligation of the village government to carry out participatory governance and development processes, but this participation model has the potential to produce a learning elite (Roth & Wilson 1980). This elite will position itself as a bridge between the interests of the community and the government, which is then known as a development broker (Platteau & Gaspart 2003). The participatory approach will bring elite capture in the implementation of development programs. The principle of participation is placing the community as both the subject and the object of the development processes. Community participation must be given as widely as possible in the entire planning processes, their implementation of activities, and their accountability. Therefore, the development processes will be sustainable within the framework of development from, for, and by the community.

Community involvement in entire activities will create responsive, accountable, and transparent village governance. Such condition will be created when the village government provides a large space through village deliberation forums as the highest democratization mechanism in the village. Nevertheless, not all villages can do this. This depiction can be seen in the research area which showed that community involvement in village meetings does not yet reflect the involvement of the community in a whole.

The involvement of women, marginalized groups, and other sectoral elements of society is less visible in the Village Development Planning Deliberation Forum (*Musrenbangdes*) in all research locations. The women's group was considered as the only representatives of Family Welfare Guidance Program (known as PKK) elements, even though those who attended were the wife of the village head with no more than two members. Representatives of vulnerable groups were invisible. The depiction of the Village Development Planning Deliberation (known as *Musrenbangdes*) process is solely a formality. The absence of vulnerable groups involved in the planning process makes their problems not become a priority. The planning system that tends to be elite capture is very beneficial for their group. In the deliberation process, what happened at the forum was to discuss who would later be involved in the infrastructure construction process they would do. Therefore, the impression that might appear is like the distribution of village "projects". Tiered deliberations were also not performed in all the research locations. These activities, from neighborhood association to hamlet meetings, were not held. Based on the results of interviews with the village secretary, suggestions from the community would later be submitted by the hamlets and the neighborhood associations since they were the representatives of the residents in their area. There was no guarantee whether what was conveyed by regional stakeholders is the voice of the community or not. Such process is certainly not an ideal condition.

In one of the villages, the community's aspiration seemed to be politicized. The community involved in the program seemed to only support a program that only a few people offered. The village elites fought for group interests only. The village head was very enthusiastic to propose the PKK with a high budget of around 60 million rupiah. He also requested that the Early Childhood Education building, which had previously been designed and located near the field, must be relocated near the SDN Bandongan (pseudo name) in Bojonegoro. Although the funding for the Early Childhood Education building came from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the village head's wife wanted to relocate it. It proves the political domination of the wife of the village head who also regulates the village programs.

The dominance of the village head and village elites is very tough in the planning process. The proposal of the village head regarding the location of the construction and the value of the budget is like a proposal that must be done. The village head repeatedly said that the vision and mission during his administration is to solve infrastructure problems. Therefore, community empowerment programs are very minimal. "I will focus on road paving and earth-retaining (known as *talut*) during this government period and other programs will be run later on." (WIN, The Village Head).

The incessant development of infrastructure in the village cannot be separated from the context of political interests. The amount of funds of the village is not only a blessing for the village community, but also a blessing for the village head in political pragmatism. The pattern found in the 12 research locations places incessant infrastructure development as part of their work performance. Massive infrastructure development can be meant in three ways. First, it is easy in the budget reporting process. Second, there is a mandate of the existing regulations, especially in relation to priority use of the village funds. Third, it plays as part of showing the work performance of the village head.

The financial management system is also a serious problem. The village government always withdraws the money from the funds going to the village treasury account according to the amount of money transferred. This causes the vulnerability of fund manipulation because the money is already in hand. This may happen because the control function of both the Board of Village Consultative and the community is lacking, meaning that the village head does not have a sense of obligation to provide village financial reports to the Board of Village Consultative or the community. The village head only told that the funds have been used for program A, B, C, etc. The existing accountability is an administrative accountability only, which has not met the accountability substantially. The point is that there should be evidence for all important expenditures and supporting documents, but whether or not the evidence has not been manipulated is a big question that may come up. "Every time the village budget goes down, the head always asks me to withdraw all the money from the village treasury account, whereas it's better if it's used to meet to the needs." (KAM, The Village Treasurer).

The big role of the village government can only be carried out when the community has regained trust in the apparatus that manages the village government. It is undeniable that the community has begun to decrease their trust, or maybe it can even be said that they have almost no more trust in the government apparatus at various levels due to government officials' behaviors, including village government officials. The trust of community is very crucial so that the people who have more resources than that managed by the village government can heartfully be managed and directed by the village government to become better. The presence of trust from community in the village government will be able to generate the will and participation of the community in sharing roles to perform the village authority given by the constitution, especially in the building, serving and organizing the village government. Having provided by such division of roles, the government's working network with stakeholders in the community can be built so that the village resources and potentials can be optimized to achieve the common goal of making the village independent and the community prosper.

This study confirmed the previous study, which states that village governments are basically not ready to manage their funds. Public financial management systems are not adequately equipped to handle high increases in funds as well as the mechanisms to monitor and control village expenditures that are

underdeveloped. These difficulties will severely hinder the achievement of government objectives and create further challenges for reformers in their efforts to reduce corruption at the subnational level (Lewis 2015). This study also strengthened what previous researchers conveyed that a strong and democratic village institution is needed to carry out integrated and participatory development planning, implement and supervise and become guardians of community priorities (Antlöv et al. 2016). In the context of research on corruption, this study indicated that the problem of corruption in Indonesia happens to be a recurring political problem rather than an economic one. Corruption reduces the support for government among elites at the provincial and district levels, a concern over the problem of corruption that runs deeper than it appears on the surface (Smith 1971). However, corruption simultaneously serves as a catalyst and a damper for conflict among governmental elites. The findings highlighted that the social norms of solidarity and reciprocity are interlinked to the practice of favoritism and bribery (Baez-Camargo et al. 2020).

The case of this study indicated that the corruption may be justified by the actors when they are bound by a sense of duty and responsibility towards constituents, blurring the distinction between “legal” and “illegal”. Corruption, therefore, “does not mean the same thing to all societies and all people”. Practices that are ostensibly corrupt may become justifiable to the actors involved when they are bound by a sense of duty and obligation, blurring the distinction between “legal” and “illegal” (To et al. 2014). There is a relationship between culture and corruption, in which corruption is related to the complex processes of social and economic life (Gabriel 2008). This study also supports the conclusion that global anti-corruption initiatives must be sensitive to local categories, practices, and moral codes (how something is done and how it is perceived by prominent actors) (Urinboyev & Svensson 2013). Corruption operates not against the official rules, but in the spaces opened by them (Closser 2020). What happens at the grassroots is mediated in complex ways by linkages, such as development projects, media representation, and so on. However, such investigative efforts are arguably where anthropological engagement with corruption needs to be further undertaken (Harrison 2006).

Conclusion

Based on this anthropological study, the failure of the village government to get out from corrupt practices is caused by blind loyalty, pseudo harmony and *ewuh pakewuh*. The idea of ideal leadership has trapped society in a complicated situation. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that the village head election turns out to produce leaders who easily give in, surrender, and submit to the power of supralocal administrators. This has further strengthened the increasing public acceptance of elite capture and a culture of co-optation. Six years after the implementation of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6/2014 concerning village autonomy. The governance condition at the village level has turned out to be increasingly complex and very dynamic. The village is currently an arena for a fight for interests, not only between the local elites, but also those at the sub-district and district levels. This study confirmed that the corrupt behavior is a means of integration and a strong tie among elites to achieve their respective interests. Besides, this study revealed the strong old-bureaucratic culture that places the village head as a strong person whose will and desire must be followed, which coincidentally can be practiced for many things in many villages without any control from other village elites due to the lack of quantity and quality of village bureaucracies that understand the problem of good governance.

The strong dominance of supra-village government further complicates the creation of accountability in the village. Their role is to become a financial consultant so that what is done at the village level can be justified according to the applicable rules. The village accountability is only limited to procedural accountability, not substantive. This is what makes the practice of financial irregularities difficult to detect. For this reason, the strengthening of public participation in the overall implementation of village governance must be extensively performed. Community participation must be seen in terms of the suitability of needs, determining the quality of development, and evaluating the activities. Community participation must be interpreted as the power of villagers in determining the direction of village development, and thus, their participation cannot be simplified to elite capture.

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