



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Good and Sustainable Village Governance: Unpacking the Responsibilities of the Village Head

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Good and sustainable village governance is a critical element in achieving the welfare of village communities. However, there is a pressing need for improvement in this area. Village heads are responsible for ensuring that governance runs by the principles of transparency, accountability, participation, and sustainability in social, economic, and environmental aspects. This study aims to analyze the role of the village head in realizing good and sustainable village governance and identify the challenges faced in the implementation. The method used in this research is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews and documentation studies. The data sources were primary data and secondary data. Primary data came from the village head, village officials, and village communities, which were the focus of the research. In contrast, secondary data came from legislation documents and related literature in the form of journal articles, research, books, and other related literature. The results show that although efforts to implement good and sustainable village governance have been made, there are still significant obstacles, such as low community participation, limited competence of village officials, and weak discipline enforcement.

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INTRODUCTION

The village head's role is not just important, it is pivotal in government administration at the village level (Prasetyo, 2022). The village head is the linchpin for government functions such as coordinating development, managing village finances, and overseeing public services (Shou, 2015). Based on Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, the village head has autonomy in running the government, managing village finances, and implementing local potential-based development. In carrying out their functions and duties, village heads must apply the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, community participation, efficiency, and the rule of law, to realize justice for the welfare of the village community (Handayani et al., 2023; Junaedi, 2023).

Since the implementation of Law No. 6 of 2014, which was last amended by Law No. 3 of 2024 concerning Villages, villages have been granted greater autonomy, including managing village finances and implementing local potential-based development (Putri, 2019). The village head, as the primary manager of the village government, has broader authority in designing and implementing village policies (Affila et al., 2020). It has the consequence of requiring the village head to have adequate capacity to implement good and sustainable village governance.

However, despite the law providing great opportunities for villages to develop, there are still significant challenges faced in its implementation. Some villages still face problems in transparent and accountable village financial management, low community participation, and the lack of capacity

of village heads in running an effective government (Ash-Shidiqqi & Wibisono, 2018; Kadir et al., 2021). It's crucial to emphasize the importance of community participation in these processes, as it directly impacts the success of village governance. In addition, the challenges in realizing sustainable development at the village level are also enormous, especially related to the wise management of natural resources and the environment (Permatasari et al., 2021). Therefore, the role of the village head in realizing good and sustainable village governance is not just important, it's an urgent issue to be discussed. By examining the role of the village head in depth, we can understand how good governance can be realized at the village level and how this impacts community welfare and environmental sustainability.

The urgency to realize good governance at the village level is strengthening, along with the increasing community demands for better, transparent, and accountable public services (Winarsi & Moechthar, 2020). As the smallest unit of government, villages are the spearhead of public services for most Indonesians, especially in rural areas that are far from the center of government. The village head has a central role in realizing a village government that not only serves the community well but can also encourage sustainable development as mandated by the United Nations (UN) through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize the importance of development that pays attention to the balance between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social welfare. At the village level, the role of the village head is vital in directing development policies that not only focus on economic aspects but also pay attention to social and environmental aspects. Villages located in agricultural, forest, or coastal areas are vital in maintaining the balance of local ecosystems. Therefore, good and sustainable village governance is an urgency that must be addressed in managing village governance.

The main objective of writing this article is to examine in depth the role of the village head in realizing good and sustainable governance at the village level, focusing on efforts to improve community welfare. As a local leader, the village head has a strategic position in carrying out various development programs that are by the needs of the local community while applying the principles of good governance, which include aspects of transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness in managing village governance (Wahyu & Hartono, 2020).

Within the framework of good governance, the village head not only acts as an administrator but also as the main driver in encouraging community participation in every stage of the development process, from planning to evaluation. By actively involving the community, the village head can ensure that every development policy and program is truly by the villagers' needs and aspirations for realizing the nation's welfare as mandated by the 1945 Constitution.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses an empirical juridical approach. The juridical approach examines laws and policies related to village governance and sustainable development. Meanwhile, the empirical approach is used to see the implementation of these policies in the field (Ladeck, 1977), especially in the context of the responsibilities of village heads in realizing good and sustainable village governance. This empirical juridical approach aims to analyze the suitability between the applicable legal rules and the actual practices carried out by the village head, as well as the impact on the welfare of the village community and the sustainability of development in the region. This research not only aims to describe the role of the village head in good governance but also to critically analyze the responsibilities of the village head in creating sustainable village governance, providing a deep understanding of the subject. This study used primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through interviews with the village head.

Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from relevant literature, such as laws and regulations, government policies, books, scientific journals, research reports, and official documents related to village governance and sustainable development (Noor, 2023). Data collection techniques in this research were conducted through interviews and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with the village head, while document studies were conducted by reviewing official documents such as laws and other regulations. Data analysis in this research uses qualitative methods, which aim to understand and interpret phenomena based on the data collected. Data analysis steps include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. With this research

method, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of the village head in good and sustainable village governance and how the village head can carry out his responsibilities effectively, thereby enhancing the knowledge of the audience.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Good governance and the pillars of sustainable development in villages

Good governance is the process and method of managing resources and decision-making by the government or public institutions using certain principles (Sary et al., 2024). In government administration, this concept must be implemented consistently to create a better government system, improve community welfare, and encourage sustainable development. Good governance concerns state arrangements that are co-created by the government, civil society, and the private sector, where the agreement includes the establishment of all mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and community groups express their interests, exercise legal rights, fulfill obligations and bridge differences between them, including in village governance.

Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law No. 6/2014, which was last amended by Law No. 3/2024 on Villages, states that a village is a legal community unit that has territorial boundaries with the authority to regulate and manage government affairs, the interests of the local community based on community initiatives, origin rights, and traditional rights that are recognized and respected within the system of government of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Based on this provision, villages have the authority to manage and regulate the interests of their communities by local conditions and socio-culture, so the position of villages that have original autonomy is very strategic that it requires balanced attention to the implementation of regional autonomy because with substantial village autonomy will significantly affect the realization of regional autonomy.

The principles of good governance are not just about autonomy in village governance, but about achieving our national goals (Pomeranz & Stedman, 2020). As Sedarmayanti explains, good governance embodies two key meanings: it's about upholding the wishes and will of the people, and it's about enhancing their ability to achieve these national goals, independence, sustainable development, and social justice. It's also about the functional aspects of an effective and efficient government in achieving these goals (Sedarmayanti, 2012). In essence, good governance is a commitment to our nation. It's about accountability, transparency, openness, and the rule of law (Sunarso, 2013). For instance, in the context of village governance, accountability could mean that the village head is responsible for the decisions and policies they make, and they are answerable to the villagers for their actions.

1. **Accountability:** The accountability of the management, organization, and governance carried out is further defined as an obligation for government officials to act as responsible and accountable for all actions and policies set (Thornhill, 2015).
2. **Transparency:** openness in carrying out the decision-making process and openness in disclosing relevant information. In this case, openness to convey activities carried out so that outsiders, including local or Indigenous communities who are directly affected by the decisions, business actors who may be impacted by the policies, and other government agencies who need to coordinate their actions, can monitor and pay attention to these activities.
3. **Openness:** In the context of good governance, openness refers to the open provision of information, open to free suggestion, and open to criticism, which is participation. This means that all stakeholders, including the public, local communities, and other government agencies, should have access to relevant information and be able to voice their opinions and concerns. Openness can cover the political, economic, and governmental fields (Ceprudin et al., 2023).
4. **Rule of law:** Decisions, government policies, organizations, and business entities based on the law guarantee legal certainty and a sense of public justice for every public policy taken (Noor et al., 2023). In public services, every citizen must be treated fairly and equally, and their rights as service recipients must be clearly understood. The principle of justice demands that public services be provided fairly without discriminating against ethnicity, religion, gender, or social status. This commitment to fairness and equality in public services should reassure every citizen of their rights and instill confidence in the system. All citizens are entitled to access information and convenience in public service (Noor, Arifin, et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), ten principles are a reference in implementing good governance. These principles include participation, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, all of which aim to improve the welfare of society (Maranjaya, 2022):

- a. **Public participation in decision-making and freedom of association:** Involving as many stakeholders as possible in policymaking. Diverse inputs from various parties in the policy-making process can help policymakers consider various issues, perspectives, and alternative options in solving a problem.
- b. **Rule of law:** Fair and equal treatment in fulfilling the rights of Stakeholders arising from agreements and applicable laws and regulations (Noor, Marzuki, et al., 2023). Laws must be fair, without distinction, observed, and obeyed, especially those related to human rights.
- c. Transparency is the freedom of information in various institutions so that the public can quickly identify it. It includes openness in decision-making processes and disclosing relevant information so that outsiders (including local/indigenous communities, businesses, and other government agencies) can monitor and pay attention to these activities.
- d. **Responsiveness:** The processes carried out by each institution must aim to provide support.
- e. **In line with Consensus:** As an intermediary of the efforts to be achieved.
- f. Equality is the provision of equal opportunities for men and women to improve the quality of life.
- g. **Efficiency and effectiveness:** All processes and institutions are focused on achieving what is needed and using available resources optimally and responsibly.
- h. **Accountability:** clarity of functions, structures, systems, and accountability of institutional apparatus so that institutional management is carried out effectively by policymakers with stakeholders. Decision-makers must be accountable to the public by agreed decisions.
- i. Strategic vision means that leaders and the community must make a broad and long-term effort to implement governance. To carry out governance and human development, understanding various aspects of human life.
- j. Interconnected, that is, strengthening policies and those related to them, and cannot be autonomous.

The above principles strongly support the implementation of good governance. Governance will be realized if all these principles are applied thoroughly so that government performance can be carried out properly; for example, the existence of activities in the form of reports, active participation from the community, professionalism, and Transparency in work are the primary keys in terms of service, to provide public satisfaction.

However, to improve the welfare of a sustainable society, the implementation of the principles of good governance is not enough (Massey, 2022). For this reason, the United Nations has established the Sustainable Development Goals agenda as a global development agreement. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to sustain people's economic welfare, maintain the continuity of social life, and protect environmental quality. In addition, the SDGs also emphasize the importance of justice and the implementation of good governance to ensure that the quality of life is maintained from one generation to the next, offering a hopeful and optimistic vision for the future.

To ensure sustainable development at the village level, the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration established the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration Regulation no. 21 of 2020 concerning General Guidelines for Village Development and Village Community Empowerment. This regulation is based on Presidential Regulation No. 59/2017 on the Implementation of Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), later replaced by Presidential Regulation No. 111/2022 on the Implementation of Achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs are structured around four pillars, namely (Pemerintah Republik Indonesia, 2022):

- 1) **Social development pillar:** Poverty Elimination, Hunger Elimination, Good Health and Wellbeing, Quality Education, and Gender Equality. The essence of this pillar is to ensure the fulfillment of fundamental human rights in an equitable and quality manner to improve the welfare of all people fairly and inclusively (El Haque et al., 2023).

- 2) **Economic development pillar:** This pillar includes several points, including Clean and Affordable Energy, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, Reduced Inequality, and Partnerships to Achieve Goals. The main objective is to promote quality economic growth by creating sustainable employment opportunities, innovation development, inclusive industries, adequate infrastructure, access to clean and affordable energy, and collaboration through partnerships (Herianto et al., 2024).
- 3) **Environmental development pillar:** This includes Clean Water and Sanitation, Decent Cities and Settlements, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Change Management, Marine Ecosystems, and Land Ecosystems. The essence of this pillar is to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and the environment to maintain the natural balance that supports all life.
- 4) **Law and governance pillar:** This pillar focuses on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. The goal is to realize the rule of law and practical, transparent, accountable, and participatory governance to create security stability and ensure law enforcement achieves a country based on the rule of law (Arifin et al., 2023).

These pillars should guide the village head in managing the village administration. Village development based on the four main pillars of the SDGs is expected to create villages free from poverty and hunger and healthy and prosperous villages with access to quality education. The application of the four pillars of the SDGs in village governance and sustainable development results in improved quality of life, social justice, inclusive economic growth, and environmental sustainability. Villages that have successfully adopted these pillars have built a solid foundation for sustainable, competitive, and equitable growth within the framework of a prosperous Republic of Indonesia.

The role of the village head in realizing good and sustainable village governance

The village head is the leader of the village government, one of the most minor units in the Indonesian government structure and plays a vital role in the community's welfare at the grassroots level. The village head holds his/her position for six years and can be extended for one more term. Article 26 of the Village Law states that the duties of the village head are to organize the village administration, implement village development, develop the village community, and empower the village community. In carrying out his/her duties, the village head has certain authorities as stated in Article 26, paragraph 2 of the Village Law. These authorities include, among others, leading the administration of the village government, appointing and dismissing village officials, holding power to manage village finances and assets, stipulating village regulations, and determining the village budget, which is the financial plan for the village's development and maintenance. In addition to this authority, the village head is also authorized to foster the life of the village community, foster peace and order in the village community, develop the socio-cultural life of the village community, and carry out other authorities by the provisions of laws and regulations.

The village head must be able to provide a good example and role model in service to the community, so the village apparatus as subordinates not only provide services but respect and follow what the village head says and does so that conditions like this will lead to better services provided to the community. The village head must lead the entire community without favoring groups, families, descendants, religions, and tribes. A community leader's duty is to be close to the community, to protect, nurture, and serve them. The ideal village head can bring the community and village to prosperity, is always ready to serve the community for twenty-four hours and prioritizes active participation from the community. The success of the village head in providing services and protection to the community will ultimately lead to success at the government level.

To implement this task, the village head must implement good village governance (Susan, Novri, Budirahayu, 2017). In general, governance is a systematic effort to achieve organizational goals through management principles, including planning, implementation, control, and evaluation functions (Brous et al., 2016). Governance aims to implement benefits, reduce risks, and optimize resources. Governance will be well implemented if it has a conducive organizational culture, establishes management functions properly, and is carried out continuously with each other,

resulting in positive cooperation partners between the government, the private sector, and the community as service users.

As the person responsible for implementing the village government, the village head must implement good village governance. Some of the primary responsibilities of the village head in this regard include:

1. **Formulating development policies by village needs:** As a leader, the village head must be able to formulate policies based on the community's conditions and needs. Every policy taken must consider the interests of the wider community, and the village head is responsible for communicating these policies to residents transparently.
2. **Managing village funds transparently and accountably:** The village head is responsible for managing village funds effectively, efficiently, and transparently. In this regard, the village head must involve the community in planning and monitoring the use of village funds. With transparency and accountability, the village head can minimize the risk of corruption and misuse of village funds.
3. **Involving the community in the development process:** Community participation is one of the critical principles of good governance (Mamokhere, 2022). The village head should encourage community involvement in the development planning process, from problem identification to evaluation of program results. By involving the community, the village head can ensure that the development truly benefits the community.
4. **Improving the capacity of village officials:** The village head is also responsible for increasing the capacity of village officials to carry out government tasks. It is essential so that the implementation of village policies and programs can run well. The village head should provide relevant training and education for village officials and ensure that each member of the village apparatus understands the principles of good governance.

However, implementing good governance has obstacles and challenges. Agus Iswahyudi, Head of Selokromo Village, Leksono Subdistrict, Wonosobo Regency, stated that three things hinder the implementation of good governance in village government, which are related to community participation, human resources, and discipline (Iswahyudi, 2024).

- 1) **Low community participation.** The village government has opened up space for community involvement in the process of village governance, but not all communities have participated in the process of village governance. This is due to the activities of people in the village who are also busy carrying out their respective duties, either as farmers, artisans, or employees (both private and public employees). It's crucial for the village government to understand and adapt to these busy schedules, as it limits the diversity of perspectives and ideas that could contribute to better decision-making and resource allocation.
- 2) **Human resources.** Educational background determines the competence of the officials, but in reality, not all village officials have a bachelor's degree. The placement of officials has yet to be based on the competence and expertise possessed by the village apparatus. Therefore, to maximize the implementation of village government tasks, the competence of the apparatus needs to be improved. This improvement can lead to more effective decision-making, better resource allocation, and ultimately, improved village development and public services.
- 3) **Discipline.** The discipline of village officials in providing services to the community has yet to be maximized. Village officials still enter the office after the predetermined hours; this certainly disrupts the process of providing services to the community.

Based on these conditions, there are several suggestions for improvements that the village head can make in carrying out his duties and responsibilities to realize good governance in the village. To improve low community participation, the village government needs to actively socialize the importance of community participation in governance through extension programs or community activities; the community can understand how their involvement can affect village development and the quality of public services. Community participation can also be done flexibly. Amid people's busy schedules, village governments can provide free time to hold deliberations or meetings in the evenings or on weekends, when people are more likely to have free time. To increase the participation of people who may not be physically present, village governments can also utilize

information technology to listen to people's voices, such as online surveys or discussion groups on social media or even live streaming of meetings for those who cannot attend in person.

Enhancing the competence of village officials is crucial to addressing the human resource challenge. The village government can play a pivotal role in this by organizing regular training programs. These programs, tailored to the specific tasks of village administration, can cover a range of areas including government management, public services, and technical skills relevant to the village's needs. It's also important to ensure that the placement of village officials is based on their individual skills and competencies. Recruitment and promotion processes should take into account the educational background and relevant skills for each position.

Improving the discipline of village officials is a key responsibility of the village head, who is the primary authority in village administration. One effective measure the village head can adopt is an electronic attendance system that monitors officials' attendance in real time. This system can enhance monitoring and accountability. The village head should also regularly supervise and monitor officials to ensure they adhere to work hours and perform their duties effectively. Periodic evaluations are also necessary to gauge the discipline and performance of officials.

The village head plays a central role in fostering good and sustainable village governance. By adhering to the principles of good governance and promoting sustainable development, the village head can create an environment that enhances the welfare of the village's residents. Effective and sustainable village governance, underpinned by strong leadership, can yield long-term benefits for the entire village community.

CONCLUSION

Good and sustainable governance at the village level is highly dependent on the role of the village head in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. As local government officials, village heads, and community leaders, you play a crucial role in this process. The village head acts as a leader who must apply the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, participation, and fairness, in every aspect of village governance. In addition, sustainability in village development must be realized through policies oriented towards social welfare, inclusive economic growth, and environmental conservation. However, many challenges still need to be overcome, such as low community participation, limited competence of village officials, and discipline problems in public services. To realize good and sustainable village governance, it is necessary to increase human resources capacity, community participation, and policies that support transparency and accountability in village governance. Your active involvement and leadership in these areas can help achieve good village governance, positively impact community welfare, and ensure the sustainability of development for future generations.

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