



Leadership, corruption, and inequality: Village development in a non-democratic context

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the dynamics of non-democratic political leadership and its implications for development management in Mawu Village, Ambalawi Sub-district, Bima Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. In many developing countries, including Indonesia, authoritarian leadership is still a common practice in village governance, although its impact on village development has yet to be studied in depth. This study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing how centralized leadership impacts resource allocation, transparency, and corruption at the local level. Applying a case study approach, the authors collected the data through in-depth interviews and observations. The results show that the concentration of power in a handful of village elites results in unfair and non-transparent resource management, exacerbating socio-economic inequality in the community. Systematic corrupt practices further hamper sustainable development, erode public trust in village governance, and strengthen oppressive power structures. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for more inclusive and accountable policy formulation in the context of village development, particularly in areas with non-democratic governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the prevailing political system, political leadership is critical in steering a society's development trajectory. In non-democratic settings, where power is often concentrated in the hands of a few, leadership and development dynamics have unique characteristics. This research, therefore, seeks to explore the intricacies of political leadership in a non-democratic context, with a particular focus on its impact on rural development. Through a case study in Mawu Village, the authors uncover the nuances of political leadership and its implications for village development.

Mawu village presents an interesting case study due to its location within an undemocratic governance framework. By examining leadership structures, decision-making processes, and development outcomes in Mawu village, this study aims to explain the relationship between political leadership and village development in a non-democratic context. The village has experienced a corruption case, where Abidin Afandir, as the village head for the 2014-2020 period, was proven to have embezzled IDR 600 million from the 2017 village budget through the misappropriation of some funds for physical and non-physical projects such as the construction of a multipurpose building, Posyandu office, village alley rebates, neighbourhood security posts, and maintenance of a soccer field. These manipulative actions clearly reflect the challenges posed by undemocratic

political leadership in rural development management. Corruption undermines effective resource allocation, erodes public trust in government institutions, and impedes socio-economic progress.

The case of Mawu Village reflects a general picture of non-democratic leadership theory and its influence on village development management. The phenomenon in this village is not an isolated case but rather a reflection of a general pattern often found in many developing countries where the government structure tends to be centralized and has minimal public accountability mechanisms. The dynamics observed in Mawu Village show the typical characteristics of a non-democratic political system, namely the concentration of power in a handful of actors and minimal community participation, ultimately leading to resource manipulation and strengthening social inequality. By linking this specific case to the general discourse on village development under non-democratic leadership, this study aims to reveal how the configuration of power, decision-making, and patron-client relations affect development outcomes and the socio-economic conditions of rural communities. In many non-democratic political systems, leadership is often centralized and hierarchical, with vested authority in one person or an oligarchy. Such arrangements can significantly shape the direction and prioritization of development initiatives within village communities. The centralization of power in non-democratic regimes often results in development policies prioritizing elite interests over local communities' needs. Understanding how political leaders exercise influence and make decisions in such contexts is crucial to unravelling the dynamics of local development processes. Non-democratic political leadership is still a common feature of village development management in the context of developing countries. In many cases, a single leader or small group has robust control over the development process at the village level. It often takes the form of authoritarian leadership, where decisions are made centrally and without much participation from the community. It creates an environment where villagers become passive, with no opportunity to express their views or participate meaningfully in decision-making. Leaders who hold absolute control tend to ignore transparency and accountability, leading to resources often being channelled according to their own political or economic interests. In this context, patron-client relationships are often formed, where village leaders secure the political support of specific community segments in exchange for limited access to village resources, thus reinforcing dependency and structural inequality (Huntington, 2017; Ignazi, 2014; Uberti, 2016).

The dynamics of relations between non-democratic leaders, village communities, bureaucracy, and other actors are central to studies of village political leadership. Interactions between leaders and communities are often based on asymmetrical relationships, where leaders have far more power in decision-making. Meanwhile, the community only plays the policy object that must accept these decisions. However, despite the strong dominance of leaders, there is room for resistance, especially from marginalized groups. This resistance can be open protests or more subtle forms, such as sabotage or ignoring the leader's instructions. Even in non-democratic contexts, people are not always passive; they often find ways to voice their dissatisfaction through formal or informal mechanisms (LedyaeV & Chirikova, 2020). In addition, the local bureaucracy is often essential in maintaining the leader's power, with loyal bureaucratic officials often involved in policy implementation without considering the community's actual needs.

Community participation in decision-making and management of village development is undeniably crucial. However, a significant challenge often arises in ensuring such participation is genuine rather than merely symbolic. In practice, community participation is often limited to a symbolic role without any real influence on the final decision. Non-democratic leaders use community participation as a legitimizing tool to strengthen their position while strategic decisions are already made. As a result, participation does not reflect the fundamental aspirations and needs of the community but instead becomes an administrative formality (Pandeya, 2015). Other barriers include a need for access to information and knowledge about decision-making processes. Political intimidation further exacerbates these barriers, limiting people's ability to express their opinions freely. In such a repressive environment, genuine participation is difficult to realize, and people tend to be reluctant to engage for fear of political consequences. The impact of non-democratic political leadership on village development is multifaceted. On the one hand, physical development, such as infrastructure and services, may occur. However, experience has shown that resource management's lack of accountability and transparency often undermines sustainable and inclusive

development. Without an effective system of checks and balances, development decisions are often driven by vested interests or elite groups rather than the wider community's needs. This results in projects that must be more relevant to local conditions or community needs and create an unequal distribution of benefits. Development is often short-term, without regard to sustainability or long-term impacts on village communities. The inability to balance development priorities with community needs only exacerbates social inequality, with groups with greater access to power benefiting more (Antlöv, 2003; Helms, 2020; Kabir & Alam, 2021; Zilla, 2022).

Local and global contexts also play an essential role in research on this issue. Pressure from international institutions and global civil society for more democratic governance can influence how non-democratic leaders operate and provide space for reform. Global interventions, such as aid programs or development initiatives driven by international donors, can create impetus for increased transparency and accountability at the local level. However, challenges arise when such global dynamics collide with local interests. For example, non-democratic leaders may strengthen their grip on power through control over resources provided by foreign investors or through patronage relationships with global entities (Ansell et al., 2022; Croese et al., 2021; Lall, 2023; Schilling et al., 2018). In addition, global economic growth can add to the complexity, with villages becoming strategic locations for investment and resource exploitation, often without involving local communities in the decision-making process. Overall, research on non-democratic political leadership and the dynamics of actor relations in village development management highlights the complexity of development processes at the local level. These complexities include the challenges of distributing resources equitably and the social, political, and cultural aspects that influence the interaction between leaders and communities. For example, the tension between local traditions and modernization pressures is often vital in determining how development is carried out. In many cases, non-democratic leaders use traditional narratives to maintain power while ignoring reforms that could increase community participation. By understanding these factors, we can design more effective strategies to support inclusive and sustainable village development, focusing on physical development and social and economic empowerment.

The urgency of the research lies in its potential to illuminate the complexities and challenges relevant to undemocratic political leadership in rural development. Understanding how political leaders exercise power and make decisions within such frameworks is critical to addressing systemic problems such as corruption, inefficient resource allocation, and limited accountability. By focusing on the case of Mawu Village, this study provides a micro picture that can be used to gain greater insight into the dynamics of political leadership and its impact on development. This research has an exigence beyond mere theoretical understanding, as its findings can be directly applied in similar contexts. The results can be transformed into concrete tools and frameworks for identifying and addressing non-democratic practices in village governance. These include diagnostic instruments to assess leadership patterns, guidelines for implementing transparent resource allocation systems, and strategies for building community participation mechanisms. Given the methodological approach, this research can serve as a reference for similar case studies and provide a solid basis for developing appropriate intervention and reform programs. In addition, the findings can serve as a guide for capacity-building programs for village leaders and community members to promote more democratic and inclusive governance practices. These practical applications make this research highly relevant for policymakers, development practitioners, and village leaders seeking to promote democratic governance at the local level. By shedding light on these dynamics, the research seeks to inform policy discourse and development interventions to promote more transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance practices in rural areas. The findings generated from this research have the potential to catalyze meaningful change by guiding policymakers, practitioners, and community stakeholders in devising strategies to address the root causes of governance challenges and promote sustainable development in rural areas. The two problem formulations in this study are: (1) How does non-democratic political leadership affect the management and allocation of resources for village development in Mawu Village? (2) What are the implications of corruption for governance, accountability, and socio-economic development in Mawu Village?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article investigates the dynamics of non-democratic political leadership in village development management, focusing on Mawu Village. The qualitative research approach applied in the study allows in-depth exploration of the behaviour, policies, and impacts of non-democratic leaders' decisions on village communities. A qualitative approach was chosen because it can capture complex social realities by highlighting aspects often hidden in quantitative studies, such as the cultural context, power relations, and socio-political factors that shape decision-making in development (Creswell, 2013). As such, this research focuses on the result of physical development, the decision-making process and underlying power relations.

The case study approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the interactions between non-democratic leaders, villagers, bureaucracy, and other actors in a specific context (Priya, 2021; Rashid et al., 2019). Mawu village was chosen as the central unit of analysis to explore the dynamics and unique characteristics of political leadership in the community. This choice was based on the village's reputation as a clear example of how non-democratic systems operate locally, particularly in the context of development and resource distribution. The village has long been recognized as an area with traditional solid leadership patterns, where power structures are determined by lineage and established patron-client relationships. This methodological framework enables a profound analysis of the interaction between non-democratic political leadership and rural development in the context of the 2014-2020 leadership of village head Abidin Afandir. Abidin, as an authoritarian village leader, has become a powerful symbol of local authority, and this research seeks to uncover how he maintains power and how his decisions impact local communities. In-depth interviews were conducted with various actors, from village leaders and local bureaucratic officials to villagers affected by development policies. This approach provides a more holistic perspective, as it captures the different views of those who hold power and those who are marginalized in the decision-making process.

Through intensive field research, including interviews and observations, the authors combined qualitative data from multiple sources to understand the complexity of interactions in this non-democratic context. Interviews were conducted with a semi-structured guide, which allowed flexibility in exploring topics that emerged during the research process. Participatory observation methods were also used to capture the nuances of everyday interactions between leaders and villagers, especially in situations that are not always visible in formal interviews. In this way, the research sought to create a comprehensive understanding of the power dynamics in Mawu Village, which is characterized by the dominance of local elites and limited community participation.

Qualitative data was then processed through thematic analysis. The technique helps systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes in the data (Naeem et al., 2023; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The data was coded initially to capture significant details and insights. These codes were organized into broader themes that reflect crucial issues and patterns relevant to our research questions. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in uncovering deep insights, especially in exploring complex social phenomena in village governance.

By delving deeply into the single case, the research aims to generate rich insights and nuanced understandings that can inform broader discussions about governance, accountability, and development in undemocratic environments. This single case study provides a detailed picture of one community. It provides a framework for conceptual generalizations regarding the impact of non-democratic leadership on development in rural areas more broadly.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research explores the impact of non-democratic political leadership on managing and allocating village development resources in Mawu Village. It examines the implications of corruption on governance, accountability, and socio-economic development. According to the research questions, the main findings of the research are divided into two major parts.

The Influence of Non-Democratic Political Leadership on Village Development Resource Management and Allocation

In Mawu Village, non-democratic political leadership plays a central role in determining the direction of village development. The village head, who wields considerable and concentrated power, makes almost all strategic decisions without involving the community. It has several negative consequences for managing and allocating village resources.

One of the main characteristics of this leadership is that decision-making tends to be closed and centralized. Important development-related decisions, such as budget allocations for infrastructure projects, are often made without consultation with villagers. Abdullah Abubakar, a villager, expressed his dissatisfaction, "We were never consulted about what development is needed in this village. Suddenly there is a project, and we can only accept it without knowing whether it is what we need or not" (Interview on August 1, 2024). The lack of community participation in the decision-making process raised resource allocations that must be targeted and reflect the community's needs.

In addition, budget allocation priorities often favour projects that are perceived to benefit local elites with close ties to the village head. Infrastructure projects, such as the construction of roads and other public facilities, are primarily intended to strengthen the socio-political position of the village head and his inner circle rather than to fulfill the community's urgent needs. Imran Nasrullah, a community leader, stated, "Development here is only for those close to power. Just look, many projects do not touch the interests of the small people" (Interview on August 3, 2024).

The research also revealed significant inequalities in the distribution of development benefits. Groups closer to the centre of power, both politically and personally, gain greater access to village resources. It creates social inequality in the village, with some communities benefiting more while others get nothing. Ahmad Muzakir, a villager, complained, "Those who have a good relationship with the village head get more, while we who are mediocre obtain the leftovers" (Interview August 3, 2024). This situation creates a sense of injustice among villagers and exacerbates socio-economic disparities in Mawu Village. Those with greater access to resources can improve their socio-economic conditions, while others are left further behind. Another resident, Maulana Ibrahim, noted, "We who have no connections can only watch from afar. Development is there, but not for us" (Interview on August 1, 2024).

Non-democratic political leadership in Mawu Village has created non-transparent and unfair resource management and allocation. Strategic decisions are made centrally without involving the community, leading to resource allocation favouring local elites close to power while neglecting the community's actual needs. As a result, there is inequality in the distribution of development benefits, where fewer residents with connections to the village head benefit more. At the same time, the majority of the community is marginalized. This injustice exacerbates socio-economic disparities in the village. In the context of non-democratic leadership in Mawu Village, several structural barriers prevent active community participation in decision-making processes. These barriers include intimidation, limited access to information, and non-transparent bureaucratic processes, all of which reduce villager engagement. Firstly, intimidation is a significant barrier, where some community members feel afraid to express their opinions or criticize village policies. This situation is often due to pressure from those in power or village elites close to the village head. In an environment that does not provide a sense of security for its citizens to speak freely, it is difficult for the community to actively participate in determining the direction of village development.

Secondly, limited access to information also limits community participation. Many village policies and decisions related to resource allocation are kept from the community. It creates ignorance that results in a low understanding of what is happening in their villages, so they cannot provide input or monitor the use of village budgets. This limited information marginalizes the community from the decision-making process and makes them mere spectators, while resources tend to be managed by a few powerful parties. Third, non-transparent bureaucratic processes are also an obstacle to village governance. Many important decisions are made through closed processes without adequate accountability, so the community cannot monitor or assess whether these decisions are in the common interest. These opaque bureaucratic procedures are often used to perpetuate the power of village elites, which in turn creates discriminatory patterns of resource

management that only benefit certain parties. These structural barriers highlight the need for more inclusive and transparent governance reforms to enable communities to participate freely and effectively in village development. Without improvements to these barriers, villages will continue to experience inequalities in the distribution of development benefits, exacerbating socio-economic disparities at the local level.

The Implications of Corruption for Governance, Accountability, and Socio-Economic Development

The corruption case in Mawu Village, where the village head embezzled 600 million rupiah from the 2017 Village Budget, is a clear example of the negative impacts of non-democratic leadership. This corrupt practice undermines effective resource allocation, worsens governance, and reduces public trust in their leaders. Akhdiansyah Budiman, a hamlet head, admitted that corruption had become a systemic problem in village governance, "This corruption case shows how weak the monitoring system is at the village level. Funds that should be for the community are instead used for personal interests" (Interview on August 7, 2024). Such practices often involve a more comprehensive patronage network, including several local community leaders and members of the local bureaucracy, who manage village funds for personal interests.

The corruption that occurred has eroded public trust in the village government. Many residents feel that the village government is no longer working in their interests but only for the benefit of a handful of people. A villager, Zainal Abidin, expressed disappointment, "We no longer trust the village government. The money that is supposed to be for village development is often unclear where it goes" (Interview on August 7, 2024). This distrust is reinforced by the lack of transparency in managing the village budget, where the community is often not informed about how village funds are being used. In the long term, this corrupt practice also harms socio-economic development in Mawu Village. Development projects that improve the community's quality of life must run better because the available funds are misused. For example, social assistance programs designed to help people experiencing poverty must reach those who are entitled to them, or the amount is so tiny that it does not significantly impact them. A community leader, Furqan Maliki, noted, "There are many projects that are needed by the community, but the available funds are not used properly. This certainly hinders the village's progress" (Interview on August 10, 2024).

The inability of the village government to manage resources transparently and accountably has resulted in various development programs needing to be faster and more effective. The community is increasingly frustrated with the conditions because they can feel no significant change daily. "We are always promised change, but until now, nothing has changed. Everything remains the same, maybe even worse," said Farhan Jaya, a resident (Interview on August 10, 2024). Non-democratic political leadership in Mawu Village has created an environment that could be more conducive to inclusive and sustainable development. Abuse of power and corrupt practices are the main obstacles in efforts to improve the welfare of village communities. The findings underscore the importance of reform in village governance to create a more transparent, accountable, and participatory environment. Reform is needed to encourage more equitable development and restore community trust in the village government.

In addition to direct impacts such as the embezzlement of funds that reduced the budget for development, non-democratic leadership also caused a range of broader indirect impacts that were detrimental to the people of Mawu Village. One significant indirect impact is reduced community participation in village activities. When people witness inequities in managing village funds and resources, they lose motivation to participate actively in social and development activities. Low trust in the village apparatus makes people feel that their contributions will not make a significant difference, so interest in participating in collective activities decreases dramatically. It leads to alienation from the development process, which should be participatory and inclusive.

Low public trust in village leadership also affects outside investors' interest in the village. When villages are known to have non-transparent, unfair governance and seem to be controlled by the interests of a handful of elites, potential investors, both from the public and private sectors, will think twice about investing their capital. This loss of investment potential limits the opportunity for villages to improve the local economy through programs financed by external sources of funds. In fact, with external investment, villages can access better facilities, economic empowerment

programs, and new jobs for the community. These indirect impacts show that unfair and non-transparent village management is detrimental to current development and hinders long-term village progress. To develop sustainably and improve the welfare of all their citizens in the village, more transparent, accountable, and inclusive governance is needed, which can restore community trust and attract investment to strengthen the local economy.

Overall, this study contributes significantly to understanding the dynamics of non-democratic political leadership and its impact on village development. These findings are expected to guide policymakers, development practitioners, and academics in designing more effective strategies to improve governance and village development, especially non-democratic governance.

Discussion

This study provides in-depth insights into how non-democratic political leadership in Mawu Village affects the management and allocation of resources for village development, as well as the implications of corruption for governance and socio-economic development. The main findings of this study confirm that non-democratic leadership not only exacerbates social inequality but also undermines the foundation of sustainable development at the village level. In other words, corruption and authoritarianism at the local level harm the process of equitable and inclusive village development (Liu & Yang, 2019; Springer et al., 2020).

Centralistic leadership, which is centred on one person or a small group, results in decision-making that needs to be more inclusive and participatory (Hidayat et al., 2019; Hidayat & Sauki, 2023; Taufiq & Hidayat, 2022). The village head has absolute authority in determining the direction of development without involving the community in decision-making. This results in the inability of the village government to respond to the needs and aspirations of the community effectively. Community participation is necessary for efficient resource allocation and deepens the distrust between residents and the village government. This condition creates what can be called a democracy deficit, where villagers feel alienated from the development process that should involve them (Loureiro & Horta, 2024; Venter, 2024).

The authoritarian leadership pattern in Mawu Village has worsened the quality of governance and has negative implications for village development. Leadership that is not responsive to community needs tends to create policies that are not relevant to the socio-economic conditions of the community and, ultimately, worsens the conditions of inequality and poverty in the village (Zhang, 2006). Corruption has become an integral part of the Mawu Village governance system under the constraints of the Village Head for the 2014-2020 Period. Corrupt practices, such as the embezzlement of APBDesa funds by the village head, reflect the weakness of the monitoring and accountability system at the local level. This corruption harms the community directly through the loss of funds that should be used for development and indirectly through the erosion of public trust in the government. Trust is a critical element of successful governance, and the government must gain public support in implementing development programs (Fung, 2015; Grimmelikhuisen et al., 2013; Hidayat, 2019). These findings show that under non-democratic leadership, the village government in Mawu Village failed to build public trust, which worsened government performance regarding public services and infrastructure development.

Injustice in resource allocation has deepened socio-economic inequality in Mawu Village. Groups with close ties to the village head or local elites gain greater access to resources, while marginalized groups are increasingly marginalized (Bernard et al., 2008; Vedeld, 2000). This inequality creates a detrimental social dynamic, where most people do not feel the benefits of development that they should enjoy. In addition, this inequality also worsens social conflict in the village because injustice in the distribution of development benefits often triggers tensions between richer and poorer groups (Mukunto, 2024). This study makes several significant contributions to political leadership and village development studies, particularly in non-democratic governance. This study broadens the boundaries of scientific discourse on non-democratic leadership by highlighting how this leadership pattern impacts resource management and village development. A case study in Mawu Village shows that non-democratic leadership hinders community participation, creates social inequality, and worsens governance performance (Rehman et al., 2024). These findings provide a richer understanding of power dynamics at the local level, which have yet to receive much attention in the political leadership literature.

This study also contributes to providing empirical evidence on how corruption at the village level can hinder development and undermine public trust in government. The study confirms that corruption at the local level has a damaging impact not only in terms of resource loss but also in terms of eroding the legitimacy and accountability of village governments (Ajie & Wokekoro, 2012; Otusanya, 2011; Rifai et al., 2024; Seligson, 2002). Thus, the study adds to the literature on corruption at the local level and provides insights into how corruption can be addressed in the context of non-democratic governance.

The findings also have several important implications that can be used to drive changes in village governance and development, especially in the context of non-democratic governance. One of the main implications of this study is the need for village governance reforms to improve transparency, accountability, and community participation. These reforms are essential to create a more inclusive and democratic environment at the local level, which can improve the quality of village development. The central and local governments must develop more effective oversight mechanisms to prevent corruption and ensure that village funds are used transparently and responsibly. This study also highlights the significance of increasing the capacity of village leaders, especially in resource management and participatory decision-making. Training for village leaders can help them understand the importance of community participation and transparency in governance. It can create more responsive and accountable leaders, ultimately improving the village's quality of development. The authors underline the importance of community participation in the decision-making process and management of village development. Community participation is essential to ensure that development reflects the community's needs and aspirations and to build trust between residents and the village government. Therefore, policymakers must develop strategies that encourage more active community participation in the development process, such as village forums or village deliberations.

The findings have implications for village development policies at the national level. The central government needs to be aware that non-democratic leadership patterns at the village level can hamper efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. Therefore, village development policies at the national level need to be designed by considering power dynamics at the local level and integrating the principles of democracy, transparency, and accountability into village development programs. Non-democratic leadership and corruption at the village level can have long-term detrimental impacts on sustainable development. The inability of village governments to manage resources effectively and fairly can hamper efforts to sustainably improve the quality of life of village communities. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that development programs at the village level are designed and implemented by considering the principles of sustainability, both in terms of economy, society, and environment.

The results show several findings that are in line with previous studies on non-democratic leadership and its impact on resource governance at the local level. For example, research by Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) shows that centralized and non-transparent leadership at the local level often creates a pattern of clientelism, where public resources are allocated to strengthen relationships between village elites and specific constituencies, resulting in the majority of the community being marginalized in the development process. This finding is in line with the study's results in Mawu Village, where resource management and budget allocations are dominated by individuals close to the village head and other local elites. In addition, von Luebke's (2009) research highlighted how local elites often use the non-transparent village bureaucracy to strengthen their position, which ultimately inhibits community participation. This finding reinforces the study's results in Mawu Village, which showed low community involvement in village activities due to distrust of perceived decision-making processes as exclusive and closed.

However, this study reveals some new findings that have not been widely discussed in previous research, especially in the context of long-term impacts on public trust and attraction of outside investment. While other studies have generally focused on immediate impacts such as embezzlement or unfair resource allocation, this study highlights that poor village governance can also undermine the potential to attract outside investment, which can help boost the local economy. In this regard, the results of this study enrich existing insights, as Lewis (2015) proposed, which highlight the importance of inclusive governance reforms to strengthen public trust and the

economic potential of villages. As such, this study confirms relevant findings from previous research and expands the understanding of the long-term consequences of non-democratic leadership at the village level, including socio-economic aspects and long-term community engagement.

4. CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes the significance of governance reforms to address the non-democratic leadership in Mawu Village that has created socio-economic inequality and undermined public trust. The authors recommend several concrete steps that can be taken to address the identified problems. First, there needs to be a more vigorous implementation of transparency mechanisms in village budget management by involving diverse community representatives in decision-making so that resource allocation is fairer and more balanced. Secondly, village governments should implement participatory policies that allow communities to participate more actively in the planning and implementing village development. Training programs to strengthen the capacity of villagers, particularly in monitoring and overseeing government processes, are also essential to improve village government accountability. As a future research direction, this study could be extended to other village contexts that face similar governance issues. It would provide a deeper understanding of variations in local leadership patterns and their impact on development. Further research could also explore the relationship between political power dynamics at the village level and socio-cultural factors, such as patronage patterns and inter-group relations. By exploring these variables, future research could contribute to developing more inclusive and sustainable governance models at the village level, improving local communities' quality of life and strengthening democracy at the grassroots level.

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