



Benerkulon Village Citizen Participation in Supporting Village Government Transparency and Accountability as Part of Public Sector Governance

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Article Info

Keywords:

Community Participation;
Transparency;
Accountability;
Village Government

DOI: [10.33830/jipa.v2i1.12883](https://doi.org/10.33830/jipa.v2i1.12883)

Abstract

The main focus of this study is to examine how community participation supports transparency and accountability in Benerkulon village governance. Through a qualitative approach using direct observation techniques, interviews with resource persons, and document review, it was found that community participation is dominant in the implementation stage of activities such as service work, but not yet optimal in planning and evaluating village policies. Public policy transparency is still symbolic due to the limitations of effective information delivery. In addition, accountability has not been fully realized due to the absence of formal complaint media that can be used by the community independently. Low public policy literacy is a priority obstacle in realizing participatory, transparent, and accountable village governance.

1. Introduction

Transparent and accountable public sector governance is not only an obligation of village governments, but also requires the active involvement of residents. Public participation is a process by which the concerns, needs and values of the community are incorporated into the government's decision-making process. Thomas Beierle and Jerry Cayford (2002) have conducted a study of 239 cases of public participation that occurred over the past 3 decades. In their analysis, they assessed the effectiveness of public participation based on 5 main objectives, namely: integrating public values into the decision-making process, improving the quality of decisions in substance, defusing conflicts between conflicting interests, strengthening trust in institutions, and providing education and information to the public (Noer, 2022, pp. 23-24).

In the Indonesian government system, the village government is the lowest unit of government which has a strategic role in conducting public services, development, community empowerment, and community development. Law No. 6/2014 on Villages states that village governments have broad authority to regulate and manage their own households, including the management of funds. Therefore, it is important for the village government and the community to ensure that in carrying out its duties, the village government is transparent, accountable, participatory, and responsive to the needs of the community.

In order to build an effective government with integrity (good governance), two important principles are required: transparency and accountability. When referring to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), accountability is interpreted as something that becomes a necessity to be responsible for processing resources and executing policies that have been entrusted to a reporting party, in order to realize predetermined targets within a certain period of time. According

to the Development Program Agency or UNDP, accountability is the process of assessing the implementation of activities or feedback for future organizational leaders (Yusri & Chairina, 2023). Meanwhile, transparency emphasizes information disclosure and public access to the decision-making process. Transparency is a principle that guarantees that every individual has the right or freedom to access information related to government administration, including the policies taken, the process of formulation, implementation, and the results achieved. However, these two principles cannot be applied optimally without the active participation of the community. Community contribution is an important factor in the policy-making process because the community is the party that will directly feel the impact of every decision and policy taken. Community participation in village governance not only reflects the spirit of democracy, but also serves as an appropriate means to improve the quality of village governance.

Laza & Kaja (2022) in a previous study mentioned that in conducting village meetings, the community tends to agree to the planning carried out by the Village Head rather than expressing their opinions, several obstacles to community participation such as lack of awareness and understanding of the importance of the role of participation. Olivia C et al (2023) through their research stated that community participation plays a significantly important role in the accountability of village budget processing, one of which is to avoid fraud initiated by the village government.

Benerkulon Village, as one of the many villages in Kabupaten Kebumen, shows interesting social and governance dynamics. In recent years, attention to transparency and accountability has increased, especially in line with the large amount of village funds disbursed by the central government. However, a large budget does not necessarily guarantee improved service quality or equitable development if it is not accompanied by supervision and active involvement from local residents. For this reason, it is important to examine the forms of community participation in Benerkulon Village in the management of village governance and the extent to which such participation promotes good governance. The role of the community in encouraging openness of the village government is not limited to their attendance at village deliberation forums, but also reflects the extent to which they can access public information, understand village financial reports, and have the courage to convey aspirations and constructive criticism. The formulation of the problem in this study is that researchers want to know how the form of community participation in Benerkulon Village in village governance and the extent to which the role of Benerkulon residents can influence the transparency and accountability of the Benerkulon village government. The researcher felt motivated to conduct this research in Benerkulon Village because Benerkulon Village is the place where the researcher was born and raised, and wanted to see the extent to which the village government can follow the values of accountability and transparency in running its government.

This study was conducted to identify how community participation in Benerkulon village and analyze its influence and contribution to the implementation of a transparent and accountable village government. This scientific work is expected to provide benefits in the scientific field as well as in field implementation. Theoretically, this research can enrich the study of community participation in public governance of village government. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference and recommendation for village governments in optimizing the quality of public services and strengthening the role of the community as an active partner in village development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good Governance

According to Basri, Arfendi, & Azlina (2021) in a study entitled *Financial Management, Organizational Commitment and Legislative Role on the Implementation of Good Governance at Village Governments* states that good governance is the implementation of a trusted, accountable, efficient and effective government while maintaining a harmonious and productive relationship

between the state, private and community sectors. "Accountable, transparent, legal, effective and efficient administration, as well as fair governance with a strategic vision are mandatory to realize good governance" (Arsik & Lawelai, 2020).

Based on the explanation by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cited by Dewi, Gunawan, and Sutisna (2023), there are a number of characteristics in the implementation of good governance, including: participation, compliance with the rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, justice, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, strategic vision, and openness between parties. Of these ten principles, the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia in the Village Fund Smart Book identifies several key principles that form the basis for the implementation of good governance, namely accountability, transparency and community participation.

Community Participation

According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), participation is involvement (in an activity or joint effort). Thus, participation refers to the active participation of a person or group of people in an activity, especially one that is collective or public in nature. Meanwhile, community participation can be defined as the active involvement of citizens in the development process and decision-making concerning public interests, both in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of policies or programs. According to Law No. 6/2014 on villages, community participation is a principle in village progress, where the community is actively involved from planning to development. According to Sanoff (2009: 2) cited by Andreas (2023) the objectives of participation are:

1. To include the community in the process of designing a decision
2. To give the community a role or opportunity to voice opinions in designing decisions to improve a plan
3. To encourage community involvement by uniting them as part of achieving goals.

The importance of community participation lies in the effort to increase their involvement beyond personal interests. Village governments need to encourage increased citizen participation, starting from the collection of aspirations through petitions to the formulation of programs that accommodate the interests of each individual in each activity carried out. However, in reality, not all people are aware of the importance of their participation in village government management. Therefore, Kodrianingsih, Rispawati, & Alqadri (2023) in their research stated that several village government strategies that can be carried out to increase community participation include coordination meetings to discuss various matters related to village development, before preparing a plan, a data collection process is needed as a reference or description of the real conditions in the field to determine the focal point of development that needs to be prioritized.

According to Noer (2022), an effective form of public participation has several characteristics such as:

1. Public participation is a means of making decisions for further action,
2. The process is well integrated into the decision-making process,
3. Public interest in every step of the decision-making,
4. Programs are targeted at all parties affected by the decision,
5. Each activity is tailored to different audiences.

Village-level Accountability and Transparency

Accountability can be interpreted as the village government having a commitment that must be fulfilled to account for every policy, action, and use of public resources to the community and supervisory institutions. Mardiasmo (2018) defines accountability as a form of responsibility for each activity carried out to related parties (stakeholders). Andriana (2024) in the book *Akuntabilitas Publik* states that the main components of accountability include transparency,

responsiveness, accountability, community participation, external supervision, complaint mechanisms, and performance evaluation. Forms of village-level accountability:

1. Accountability reports on the use of village funds to the community and the Badan Permusyawaratan Desa (BPD)
2. Evaluation of work programs by internal village parties and the community
3. Community involvement in the process of planning and monitoring village development
4. Financial audits and routine checks by the inspectorate or related institutions

According to Mulyaningsih (2019) transparency can be defined as an action that can make a problem clear and easily understood by the community, and foster confidence in its truth, so as not to trigger conflict. As villagers, the community has the right to know how village funds are used and the behavior of village officials. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 13, 2006 article 4 on Regional Financial Management Guidelines states that "Transparency is the principle of openness that allows the public to know and have access to as much information as possible about regional finances." This is important so that citizens can objectively assess and estimate the performance of village officials. Mayasari, et al (2024), states that the benefits of transparency include:

Table 1. Benefits of transparency

No	Benefits of Transparency
1	Reducing uncertainty, contributing to maintaining fiscal and macroeconomic stability, so that the need for future adjustments can be minimized.
2	Improved government accountability can be achieved if the legislature, the media, and the public have access to information about policies, implementation, and revenues and expenditures, so that they can carry out their oversight function of the government more effectively.
3	Building greater trust in government and strengthening social relations between government and society
4	Improving the investment climate can be achieved through a clear understanding of government policies and measures, which in turn will attract investors.

Source: Mayasari,et al (2024)

2. Research Method

The location of this research was in Benerkulon village, Ambal sub-district, Kebumen district. This research used qualitative methods with source triangulation. According to Moleong, a qualitative approach is a methodological approach used in the research process to produce data in descriptive form. This descriptive data is presented in detail through descriptions of words. The qualitative approach in research focuses on subjective assessments of individual attitudes, views, and behaviors.

The data used in this research comes from source triangulation, which combines primary and secondary data. Primary data is information obtained directly from related informants. Data collection methods were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Interviews were aimed at youth organizations, village cadres, RT heads, and the Benerkulon village community, because they are parties directly involved and parties who can be asked for information to find out how the role of the Benerkulon village community affects the transparency

and accountability of village government. While secondary data is the collection of information that refers to written and academic materials, namely various reading references such as books, documents, articles, magazines, newspapers, and other literature that is relevant and has a relationship with the topic of this research (Kaiwai, Mayor, Bisai, & Rumalutur, 2022). Documentation in the form of village deliberation activities, APBDes, and village information boards.

3. Results and Discussions

A. Table of Interview and Observation Results

Tabel 2. Transcript of interview results in Benerkulon Village

<p>Name : Yamno Position : Head of RT Duration : 25 minutes Place : Speaker's house</p>
<p>Researcher: Good afternoon sir, thank you for taking the time. Usually, what village activities involve the Benerkulon village community sir?</p> <p>Interviewee: Afternoon, yes village activities such as service work mrs</p> <p>Researcher: Usually, it is done every time sir, and if there are mutual cooperation activities, are all elements of society involved sir, or are only some dominant?</p> <p>Interviewee: For street cleaning, it is usually done once a month from the DAWIS (Dasa Wisma) women's group. For heavy community service, such as when a tree falls down blocking the road, it is usually done by a youth group, the time is uncertain.</p> <p>Researcher: Well sir, then regarding village funds, information to the community is usually done through what media sir?</p> <p>Interviewee: Through a community meeting of representatives of community leaders and elements of village institutions at the village hall, later the results will be written and presented on the village information board and RT office, so the community can see it there.</p> <p>Researcher: In your opinion, have the people of Benerkulon Village all paid attention to or sought out this information?</p> <p>Interviewee: Only certain people usually want to know, if for ordinary people most are ignorant, only when they want to receive assistance</p> <p>Researcher: Well, yes sir, from the village government itself, are there any efforts made to make the community more concerned and curious about village information such as village funds?</p> <p>Interviewee: Of course there is, usually through associations,</p> <p>Researcher: Yes sir, thank you for your time and information.</p>

<p>Name : Partimah Position : Kader Duration : 20 minutes Place : Interviewee's house</p>
<p>Researcher: Good afternoon ma'am, thank you for your time. Have you ever participated in a village meeting before?</p> <p>Interviewee: Afternoon mrs, often mrs</p> <p>Researcher: Well, was it discussed about the village fund, ma'am?</p> <p>Interviewee: Yes, definitely. It is discussed first, and after an agreement is reached, it is then conveyed to other communities.</p> <p>Researcher: Then, for village activities such as gotong royong, do all circles participate, ma'am?</p> <p>Interviewee: Yes, because usually pickets have been divided per RT, even per DAWIS</p> <p>Researcher: In your opinion, has the Benerkulon village government carried out its duties responsibly and honestly?</p> <p>Source: From my personal observation, they have</p> <p>Researcher: If there are suspicions or complaints, what media can the community submit them through, ma'am?</p> <p>Interviewee: Usually to the community service office</p> <p>Researcher: Is there already an online complaint media ma'am?</p> <p>Interviewee: So far there is no</p> <p>Researcher: Yes ma'am, thank you for your answer</p>

Name : Mazizatul Kholisna
 Position : Kader
 Duration : 20 minutes
 Place : Speaker's house

Researcher: Good afternoon ma'am, thank you for your time. Have you ever participated in a village meeting before?

Interviewee: I have

Researcher: What is often discussed in these deliberations, ma'am?

Interviewee: Mostly about the APBDes mrs

Researcher: In your opinion, was the information provided clear enough?

Interviewee: Yes, it is clear

Researcher: As for the participants of the deliberation itself, were they comprehensive, ma'am?

Interviewee: Mostly men

Researcher: Based on your experience in participating in deliberations, does the village government listen to every opinion expressed by the community?

Interviewee: Yes, every decision has been deliberated first, even though it has previously been designed by the village government.

Researcher: Then the results of the interview are conveyed to other communities through what media, ma'am?

Interviewee: Through the village information board, or can be accessed through the village website

Researcher: Yes ma'am, thank you for your answer

Name: Kasianto
 Position : Youth Organization
 Duration: 10 minutes
 Place: Speaker's house

Researcher: Good afternoon sir, thank you for your time. As a member of the youth organization, have you ever participated in village meetings?

Interviewee: Never mrs, but usually only when there is an event

Researcher: What kind of event sir?

Researcher: Like service work, religious events, and other village activities

Researcher: Does every member express their opinion in the meeting?

Interviewee: Yes, there are some who are active, but most of them only participate in enlivening it. Later when the new activity is done together

Researcher: Thank you for your answer, sir.

Name : Kasih
 Position : Resident
 Duration : 10 minutes
 Place : Interviewee's house

Researcher: Good afternoon ma'am, thank you for your time. Have you ever participated in village meetings?

Interviewee: I've never participated in village meetings, but only in community service or recitations.

Researcher: Do you know about information on the use of village funds?

Interviewee: No mrs, I only know if I want to get help

Researcher: Did you ever find out about the village funds?

Interviewee: No, I just trust the village head

Researcher: There is a village website that can be opened online, have you ever tried to open it?

Interviewee: I can't even use my cellphone, how can I see

Researcher: Yes ma'am, thank you for your answer

Name : Ngatijo
 Position : Resident
 Duration : 10 minutes
 Place : Speaker's house

Researcher: Good afternoon sir, thank you for your time. Have you ever participated in village meetings?

Interviewee: Never mrs, every day I go to the rice fields

Researcher: Do you know about information on the use of village funds?
Interviewee: Yes, I don't know,
Researcher: Have you ever looked for information about the village funds?
Interviewee: No,
Researcher: There is a village website, have you ever tried to open it?
Interviewee: I don't have a cellphone mrs
Researcher: Yes sir, thank you for your answer

Table 3. Interview and Observation Results

Aspects observed	Findings	Description
Attendance of residents during deliberations	Majority of men, few women and youth	Participation is not inclusive enough
APBDes information on notice boards	There is, but the socialization is uneven	Information transparency is still low
Citizen complaint mechanism	Only through the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and RT heads	There is no formal grievance system
Service work activities	Active in physical activities	Strong in implementation, weak in planning
Socialization of village policies	Conducted one-way by village officials	Two-way discussions are still lacking, and the community is still not active in expressing opinions

B. Forms of Community Participation in Village Governance

Referring to the results of the interviews described above, it can be identified that community participation in Benerkulon Village still varies depending on several variables.

Access and Ability to Access Information

Noer (2022. p 116) in his book Public Participation: Models, Approaches, and Praxis states that the internet is a great medium for public participation, this is in line with one of the functions of the internet as a way to broadcast information resulting from collective agreement to the general public on a large scale. According to development communication theory (Rogers, 1983), the success of citizen participation depends on the effectiveness of communication between the government and the community. Therefore, the media used must be appropriate to the target. In the case of Benerkulon Village, some people are unable to use technology such as mobile phones and others are constrained because they do not have the technology. The results of the information that has been presented can be accessed through the village information board but have not reached all levels of society. The lack of literacy in information through digital media hinders the dissemination of information to the community, including information on the use of village funds. This results in a lack of community participation in terms of monitoring the performance of the village government, especially regarding village funds.

Social Groups and Their Role in Village Activities

Based on observations made by the researcher and interviews conducted with RT heads, it was found that community participation seems to be influenced by membership in certain social groups. DAWIS is a forum for women's groups, teenagers are members of the youth organization, and the deliberation meetings are still dominated by men's groups. Meanwhile, farmers and elderly groups tend to be inactive due to limited access and time constraints that coincide with daily work. This shows that community participation is influenced by the social structure within it. Those who are organized or have greater access will tend to be more participatory.

Level of Awareness and Concern for Village Government

Through the interviews conducted, it was found that some villagers are only interested in the village fund if it is related to assistance. In addition, they only trust the village head, so there is no serious control over the village government. Some were not even interested in participating in village meetings and chose to go about their own business. Low awareness of development monitoring and planning leads to a lack of social control. This is a challenge to transparent village development. A Brazilian education expert, Paulo Freire, in his critical consciousness theory, states that the public must be sensitized dialogically in order to play an active role in social change. Based on the characteristics of effective public participation according to Noer (2022), the research conducted in Benerkulon village identified that public participation has not been effective, one of the reasons being the lack of public awareness and interest in village activities, especially in terms of planning.

Media and Mechanisms for Information Delivery

Information delivery is carried out through information boards, certain group meetings, village meetings, and the village website. Meanwhile, complaints about suspicions are still made through village officials and there is no online complaint. This shows that traditional means of communication are more dominant and more efficient.

Benerkulon Village community participation in village governance shows active involvement, especially in gotong royong activities and decision-making deliberations. However, the level of community involvement has not been fully equitable across all elements of the community.

The village deliberation is the highest decision-making forum at the village level that involves various elements of the community, including the village government, the Village Consultative Body (BPD), community leaders, and citizens in general. In relation to transparency and accountability, the village deliberation is a forum for social control over the use of village funds and the implementation of work programs. This is in line with Law No. 6/2014 on Villages, which emphasizes the importance of participation and openness in village governance.

C. Transparency of Public Information at the Village Level

Information transparency is one of the main indicators of good public sector governance. Observations showed that the village government has provided a notice board containing information on the Village Budget (APBDes). However, this information is not conveyed effectively, because the presentation is not easily understood by ordinary people and is not supported by direct socialization.

In interviews with residents, most people did not know exactly how much village funds were used and what they were allocated for. This shows that information disclosure is still symbolic and has not touched the real needs of the community for transparency. Nevertheless, the Benerkulon village government has provided information about the Village Budget (APBDes) through the official Benerkulon village website. . Unfortunately, this is also ineffective as some villagers, especially parents, cannot access the information due to technological constraints and a lack of curiosity about the village budget. Meanwhile, based on interviews conducted, the results of the deliberations that have been obtained are not fully conveyed to all levels of society, and only people who are curious can find out about the results of the deliberations, meaning that community representatives who take part in village deliberations do not immediately inform the rest of the community.

D. Accountability and Monitoring Mechanisms

“Accountability is very important in the process of preparing village authority and must be returned to its essence, namely building accountability that prioritizes community participation” (Ta'dung & Lusdani, 2020). In this study, accountability in Benerkulon Village has not been fully realized. Although the community was involved in program implementation activities, there was no formal mechanism in place to allow residents to monitor or provide feedback on the implementation of village programs.

Interviews with representatives of the youth organization showed that the group was only involved in technical aspects such as documentation or the implementation of the event, but not in evaluating or assessing the implementation of the program. In addition, the absence of formal complaint media such as suggestion boxes or independent monitoring systems is an obstacle in realizing village government accountability.

E. Obstacles to Participation and Oversight

Some of the obstacles to public participation include, first, low public policy literacy. This leads to a lack of understanding of the rights, obligations, and mechanisms available for participation. In addition, there is limited access to information, both due to the lack of transparency of the village government and the lack of information channels that reach all levels of society, as well as the absence of independent complaint and monitoring media. In addition, the “just show up” culture in the deliberation forum also causes passive participation, rather than critical and solution-based participation.

4. Conclusions

The results of the research show that community participation in village governance in Benerkulon Village has not been evenly distributed across all elements of the community. Active involvement is mostly involved in the implementation stage of activities, but is still minimal in the evaluation and planning process. Consultative forums are still dominated by men, while women and youth are still not optimally involved.

Transparency of public information has also not been fully effective. Although information on the APBDes has been provided on the announcement board and official village website, the delivery of this information has not been able to reach all levels of society, especially those with limited access to technology. In addition, accountability has not been fully realized due to the absence of formal mechanisms for community oversight or independent complaint media.

To enhance public engagement and accountability in village governance, it is essential to first improve public policy literacy through comprehensive socialization, training, and education about citizens' rights and obligations. Expanding access to public information is also crucial and can be achieved by simplifying the presentation of the Village Budget (APBDes) and disseminating it through accessible media such as leaflets, information boards in each neighborhood unit (RT), or through regular community meetings. Furthermore, fostering inclusive participation by actively involving women, youth, and vulnerable groups in decision-making forums will ensure that diverse perspectives are represented. Finally, establishing formal oversight mechanisms such as suggestion boxes, community forums, or community-based reporting systems will help increase accountability and strengthen public trust in village governance.

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