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## **POLITICAL STABILITY VERSUS LOCAL OLIGARCHY: The Impact of Long Tenure in Village Governance in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

*This research aims to analyze the impact of the extended tenure of village heads, as regulated by Law No. 3 of 2024, on village governance, particularly in terms of accountability, leadership stability, and public participation. Using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research synthesizes findings from various academic sources focusing on good governance practices in local government. The results reveal that longer tenure offers opportunities for sustainable development by providing continuity in leadership and reducing political disruptions. However, it also introduces significant risks, including the potential misuse of power and a decline in public participation in supervision. The findings emphasize the need for robust monitoring mechanisms and increased community involvement to balance the benefits and risks associated with extended leadership terms. This study concludes with recommendations for strengthening transparency and accountability to improve village governance and prevent corruption in the long run.*

*Keywords: Village Head Tenure, Village Governance, Accountability*

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### **Abstract**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dampak perpanjangan masa jabatan kepala desa yang diatur dalam Undang-Undang No. 3 Tahun 2024 terhadap tata kelola desa, terutama dalam hal akuntabilitas, stabilitas kepemimpinan, dan partisipasi publik. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR), penelitian ini mensintesis temuan dari berbagai sumber akademik yang berfokus pada praktik tata kelola pemerintahan yang baik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masa jabatan yang lebih panjang memberikan peluang bagi pembangunan berkelanjutan dengan menyediakan kontinuitas kepemimpinan dan mengurangi gangguan politik. Namun, kebijakan ini juga memperkenalkan risiko signifikan, seperti potensi penyalahgunaan kekuasaan dan menurunnya partisipasi masyarakat dalam pengawasan. Temuan ini menekankan pentingnya mekanisme pengawasan yang kuat

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dan peningkatan keterlibatan masyarakat untuk menyeimbangkan manfaat dan risiko dari masa jabatan yang diperpanjang. Studi ini menyimpulkan dengan rekomendasi untuk memperkuat transparansi dan akuntabilitas demi meningkatkan tata kelola desa dan mencegah korupsi di masa mendatang.

**Kata Kunci:** Masa Jabatan Kepala Desa, Tata Kelola Desa, Akuntabilitas

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## INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Indonesia's President signed Law No. 3 Year 2024, the second amendment to Law No. 6 Year 2014 on Villages, on April 25, 2024. A number of changes are made in this version, such as allowing village chiefs to serve for up to eight years, with a two-term restriction. Significant challenges with development, corruption, and poverty continue at the village level, despite the fact that these changes are anticipated to bring stability and encourage sustainable development (Herdiana, 2019).

Through the state budget, the government has been allocating a significant portion of village funding since 2015. These money have now been distributed in excess of 600 trillion rupiah. This policy's main goals were to boost growth and enhance village residents' quality of life. However, a number of reports indicate that rather than fostering affluence, some village monies are embezzled and misappropriated, perpetuating poverty, with the rural poverty rate rising to 12.6%<sup>2</sup>.

In order to provide leadership stability to assist the implementation of long-term development initiatives, Law No. 3 Year 2024 regulates the extension of village chiefs' terms of office to eight years. The goal

of this policy is to ensure that strategic projects are carried out consistently without being impeded by frequent changes in leadership (Arsad, 2024).

Before Law No. 3 Year 2024 extended the village head's term of office, Law No. 6 Year 2014 set a six-year maximum by which the village head might serve. The village head's term of office has been extended in accordance with regulations in a number of countries, including Thailand and the Philippines, which also do so in order to preserve continuity in development and stability in local governance. Extended periods for village chiefs have been shown to improve the effectiveness of long-term project implementation in Thailand (Chambers, 2021). But it also brings up concerns about the concentration of authority that impacts local democracy and accountability, as demonstrated by the situation of village chiefs some areas of the Philippines who are caught up in the practice of nepotism (Mendoza, 2022).

But one of the biggest worries is the possibility of power buildup. If not well regulated, village leaders with longer tenure may use their position to increase their own political clout, creating avenues for nepotism and corruption. Thus, to preserve

accountability and openness, robust oversight procedures from organizations like the Village Consultative Body and community involvement are required.

Apart from corruption, another issue is community involvement in decision-making (Sofyan, 2019). Because village head elections only take place every eight years, communities might be less inclined to participate in and supervise politics, which would reduce accountability and openness at the village level.

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to pinpoint trends and issues in village government, particularly those pertaining to the extension of the village head's tenure. By combining results from multiple earlier studies, SLR enables researchers to provide a thorough grasp of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach (Taylor et al., 2022).

In contrast to previous studies that solely focused on the effects of prolonging village leaders' terms on corruption and development, this study offers a unique viewpoint. This study focuses on the longer-term effects on community engagement and accountability. The major emphasis is on spotting trends of power abuse risk and spotting chances to enhance village government through better oversight systems and citizen participation.

This study examines the dynamics of

accountability in Indonesian village governance using the SLR framework. This study is divided into several sections, including the Introduction, which provides background information and outlines the research objectives; the Literature, which presents the theoretical framework related to accountability and good governance; the Methodology, which describes the SLR research approach used; and the Results and Discussion, which summarizes the key findings regarding community participation, leadership stability, and corruption risk. The research's conclusions and suggestions are provided at the conclusion.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework of Accountability**

According to accountability theory, village chiefs and other public authorities must answer to the communities they represent for their decisions and deeds (Wawan Mulyawan, 2024). In addition to being transparent when releasing reports to the public, accountability also necessitates a system for transparently assessing performance and guaranteeing accountability (Gunawan, 2016).

Vertical accountability and horizontal accountability are the two primary components of accountability (Putri, 2022). Accountability to society through elections and citizen participation is known as vertical accountability. The term "horizontal

accountability" describes oversight by organizations like the local government and the Village Consultative Body. For government to be effective, both kinds must be present.

Given that a longer tenure may reduce responsibility, the expansion of the village head's term of office is pertinent to this idea. Village leaders may act beyond their authority and misuse public resources for their own benefit if oversight procedures are insufficient. As a result, an effective accountability system need to be able to stop abuse of power.

Strong accountability can stop corruption and raise the standard of public services (Sipayung & Wahyudi, 2022). The primary issue in many villages, though, is the lack of community involvement in oversight, which reduces transparency and leaves village management open to anomalies.

Strengthening the role of communities and oversight organizations in all facets of governance, from planning to policy review, is essential to putting this principle into practice. Long tenure may be a barrier to raising the standard of village governance in the absence of robust accountability.

The hazards that may result from the consolidation of power by village chiefs who hold office for prolonged periods of time can also be examined using oligarchy and patronage theories in addition to accountability theory. According to Michels'

(1968) oligarchy theory, a growing organization that is initially democratic would eventually see a concentration of power in a small number of people or organizations. With a longer tenure, the village chief uses his power to create networks of patronage that strengthen his own political clout and prevent leadership from being renewed.

The notion of clientelism also describes how village leaders might abuse their authority to allocate village resources to organizations or people who back them, fostering unwholesome allegiances and dependencies that may jeopardize regional democratic processes (Gingerich, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework of *Good Governance***

The concepts that guarantee effective, efficient, and responsive governance to societal demands are referred to as good governance. Transparency, accountability, involvement, responsiveness, and the rule of law are the cornerstones of good governance (Robial et al., 2023). To guarantee that the use of village funds and policies is in line with the interests of the populace, these ideas must be put into practice.

In order to be transparent, the village government must communicate openly with the public, particularly when it comes to the strategic policies and the use of village funds. In order to give residents the chance to participate in the development and oversight

of village programs, community engagement is also essential (Singgalen & Kudubun, 2017).

By giving enough time to execute sustainable development initiatives, a long tenure of the village chief may help to advance the responsiveness principle (Syukri et al., 2018). However, the values of accountability and openness could be overlooked in the absence of strict oversight. When the village chief has complete authority without community involvement or efficient oversight from the Village Consultative Body, the likelihood of anomalies rises.

The ability of village governments to involve citizens in the decision-making process is essential to the successful implementation of good governance. According to Selni and Kaunang (2019), villages that effectively apply the concepts of good governance typically have better welfare levels and less corruption concerns.

Therefore, villages should give excellent governance principles top priority in order to optimize the benefits of term extension. The community and the government must work together to ensure that all policies and village fund distribution are open, responsible, and in line with community needs.

Local democratic governance necessitates systems that promote public

policy oversight and citizen involvement in decision-making. According to Prabowo et al. (2023), prolonging the term of village leaders can make people feel powerless over less frequent village head elections, which can reduce their participation in politics. If accountability in this system is not adequately maintained, it may gradually erode and eventually cause the public's trust in village governance to decline.

In order to avoid a deterioration in the standard of democratic administration, it is crucial to take into account the need to reinforce accountability mechanisms through active community engagement and oversight by impartial organizations like the Village Consultative Body.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, which is a methodical approach to finding, assessing, and synthesizing scientific literature pertinent to the extension of village heads' terms of office and its effects on accountability and the possibility of power abuse, was employed in this study (Walker & Andrews, 2015). Because it offers a systematic framework for comprehending the numerous studies that have been carried out on village governance and accountability dynamics at the local level, this approach was selected.

A number of crucial steps in the book selection process are also included in the

SLR technique. Initially, a search was done using pertinent terms like "risk of misuse of power," "extension of village head tenure," and "village governance accountability." The sources chosen were from national and international journals that were listed in ProQuest, JSTOR, and Google Scholar.

Scholarly publications, including research articles, policy reports, and academic journals, that concentrated on village governance, corruption, accountability, and transparency were the primary focus of this study (Taylor et al., 2022). Several viewpoints from earlier research, conducted in Indonesia and other nations with comparable village administration structures, were integrated into this study to better understand the problem.

A variety of scholarly resources, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, and DOAJ, were searched in order to gather data (Fan, 2024). This study developed inclusion and exclusion criteria to guarantee the literature's applicability. Articles that focused on village governance or local government accountability and were published over the last five to ten years met the inclusion criteria. In the meantime, the study did not include any studies that were not pertinent or that did not concentrate on urban settings.

Using particular keywords like "tenure extension," "village-level corruption," and

"local government accountability," a literature search was conducted to start the data collecting process. The abstract and full content of pertinent papers were then examined to make sure they were pertinent to the study's main topic (Porumbescu, 2015). Using reference management software, such as Mendeley or Zotero, which makes note-taking and citation easier, a selection of papers were arranged and handled.

Following the collection of the material, patterns and important themes were found using thematic analysis approaches. Data from pertinent publications was coded at this stage and grouped into distinct topics, including citizen participation, accountability, transparency, and power abuse (Ceschel et al., 2022). The results from many articles will be combined in this process to give a more complete picture.

Comparing papers to find pertinent research gaps is another benefit of this literature analysis. The analysis will concentrate on how governance and accountability are impacted by the extension of village head tenure, as well as how oversight procedures might be strengthened to stop corruption and abuse of authority at the local level (Halachmi & Greiling, 2013).

This study used triangulation techniques and a variety of sources to support its conclusions. It is anticipated that this research will provide thorough and impartial

insights by examining articles from various viewpoints and academic backgrounds (Özerol et al., 2018).

It is anticipated that this research, using the SLR approach, would significantly advance our understanding of responsibility in village governance, particularly in light of the village head's term extension. Policymakers and other stakeholders will find the study's conclusions and suggestions useful in bolstering village governance going forward.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Governance Stability and Sustainable Development**

Longer periods enable village heads to concentrate on carrying out development initiatives and offer continuity in leadership (Lane et al., 2022). Village leaders' focus is frequently diverted by brief election cycles to local political dynamics that revolve around reelection campaigns. Longer terms give village leaders the chance to better organize and carry out projects without having to worry about campaign resource allocation or political strategy all the time (Ewert & Abel, 2022). This relates to studies on leadership stability in local government, where consistent budget allocation and decision-making are frequently necessary for long-term projects to provide the best results (Małyjurek, 2022) (Ricciardelli, 2023).

Long tenure, nevertheless, also necessitates careful oversight to avoid power abuse and stagnation. Long tenure without accountability can impede leadership regeneration, strengthen patronage power, and produce untrustworthy power (Bank, 2020). Transparency International studies highlight the need to strike a balance between democratic dynamism and stability in order to support village development without lowering public political engagement (Transparency International, 2021). Therefore, openness and accountability in government, along with stable leadership, produce advantages.

At the municipal level, sustainable leadership greatly improves the standard of public services. Effective policy implementation is made easier by consistent leadership, which enables villages to modify their plans in response to shifting circumstances and community needs (Caspar et al., 2017). The success of initiatives like public health care and irrigation systems depends on policy continuity and continued backing from local authorities (Beer et al., 2005). A longer tenure makes it easier to maintain continuity, which improves the efficiency of reaching goals.

However, village leaders' ability to innovate and adjust to change is crucial to the efficacy of sustainable leadership (Wilkins et al., 2016). Long-term initiatives like clean water services and vocational training can

significantly improve the well-being of the local population when village leaders are able to uphold their dedication to serving the community over an extended period of time. According to Rais et al. (2024), villages with dependable and dedicated leaders typically have superior public services and better-maintained infrastructure. To prevent long-term leadership from becoming sole control, it is crucial for villages to have oversight systems and community engagement in place.

Table 1 Impact of Government Stability on Development

<i>ASPECT</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>	<i>IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLE</i>
<b><i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i></b>	<i>Long-term projects can run uninterrupted</i>	<i>Village road and public facility construction</i>
<b><i>PUBLIC SERVICES</i></b>	<i>Health and Education services improve</i>	<i>Integrated Service Post and Early Childhood Education operate more effectively</i>
<b><i>LOCAL ECONOMY</i></b>	<i>Small businesses and Micro, Small Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) receive more consistent support</i>	<i>Strengthening of village cooperatives</i>

Source: Author

### **Risk of Corruption and Misuse of Authority**

Village leaders have greater chances to consolidate power when their terms are prolonged, which can increase their control

over public policies and budgetary allocations. According to principal-agent theory, unmonitored local leaders frequently put their own or their group's interests first (Read, 2014). The insufficient supervision capacity at the local level frequently makes this worse. Longer tenured leaders run the risk of creating power dynamics that are hard to break, stifling healthy competition, and limiting chances for leadership renewal (Taylor et al., 2022).

Over time, this power concentration might make it harder for village leaders to answer to their constituents, which would decrease accountability and transparency. Research by Su et al. (2023) reflects this condition, finding that the longer an individual holds a position of authority without a change in leadership, the greater the likelihood that they will engage in discriminatory activities or misuse public funds (Moreno-Albarracín et al., 2020). A robust system of checks and balances, including the Village Consultative Body's participation and frequent audits, is therefore required to guarantee that authority is not exercised arbitrarily.

Particularly in areas with insufficient oversight, the extended term of village chiefs opens the door for nepotism and corruption (Suharto et al., 2017). Because public officials, particularly those in village administrations, are not adequately supervised, corruption is more common



(Sofyanoor, 2022). Inconsistencies in village budget allocations are made possible by the patronage relationships that long-serving leaders often build with local actors. Personal ties between the village leader and members of the Village Consultative Body frequently undermine internal oversight systems like the Village Consultative Body (Punu, 2016).

Table 2 Risk of Misuse Power and Its Impact

<i>ASPECT</i>	<i>RISK</i>	<i>REAL IMPACT</i>
<b><i>CORRUPTION</i></b>	<i>The use of village funds for personal gain</i>	<i>Budget leaks</i>
<b><i>NEPOTISM</i></b>	<i>Position is given to family or relative</i>	<i>Unprofessional village officials</i>
<b><i>CONFLICT OF INTEREST</i></b>	<i>Policy favors a certain group</i>	<i>Inequities in program allocation</i>

Source: Author

### **Decreased Community Participation and Monitoring**

A key component of achieving good governance is community involvement in village government oversight (Leonardi et al., 2001). However, the community's desire to participate in the decision-making process declines as the village head's term lengthens. Involving citizens is generally necessary for effective administration, but when election cycles are too long, people believe they have fewer opportunities to take part in continuous social monitoring and control (Mitofsky, 1995). People become less interested in local democratic procedures as a result, which might lower accountability and transparency.

The efficiency of checks and balances in village governance may be hampered by

community involvement. According to Fung (2015), corruption and abuse of power are more likely to occur when citizens participate less. Accordingly, public participation is essential for managing the distribution of village revenues, enforcing public laws, and participating in political processes (Hoa & Garcia-Zamor, 2017). Throughout the village head's term, the government might think about using information technology, such digital platforms for public monitoring, to boost citizen engagement.

One possible effect of prolonged tenure is a weaker relationship between the village head and the Village Consultative Body. Long-tenured village chiefs may decrease monitoring duties by consolidating their influence and cultivating patronage relationships with members of the Village Consultative Body. Unrestrained power accumulation fosters a climate that is susceptible to rent-seeking behavior, where supervisory institutions are more likely to act as political vehicles than as control mechanisms, according to North (1990).

Furthermore, a number of studies indicate that the autonomy and independence of this organization are necessary for the Village Consultative Body to be involved effectively (Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006; Andrews & Shah, 2003; Haque, 1997). The effectiveness of control may be weakened by the village head's prolonged tenure if they develop an unduly intimate relationship with

members of the Village Consultative Body. Therefore, to guarantee that the Village Consultative Body can operate autonomously and effectively oversee the performance of the village head, particularly in the use of the village budget and the implementation of policies, local institutional reforms are required.

Table 3 Impact of Decreased Community Participation in Supervision

<i>ASPEK</i>	<i>DAMPAK</i>	<i>IMPLIKASI</i>
	<i>PENURUNAN</i>	<i>PADA TATA</i>
	<i>PARTISIPASI</i>	<i>KELOLA</i>
<i>POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</i>	<i>Citizens feel powerless to supervise</i>	<i>Policies do not reflect the needs of citizens</i>
<i>TRANSPARENCY</i>	<i>Less open public information</i>	<i>Low public trust</i>
<i>ROLE OF VILLAGE CONSULTATIVE BODY</i>	<i>Supervision diminished as a result of closeness to the village head</i>	<i>Decreased accountability</i>

Source: Author

It is advised to expand the Village Consultative Body's involvement in monitoring and carry out frequent audits of the usage of village funds in order to improve oversight of village heads with longer tenure. Furthermore, the creation of technology-based public monitoring tools that enable citizens to report abuse or irregularities may be a helpful innovation in boosting transparency and community involvement.

The quality of village governance may deteriorate in the future if the village head's tenure is extended without appropriate oversight. As a result, tangible initiatives like bolstering local democracy and empowering

the community in supervision are crucial. The stability and durability of village development can be enhanced by longer tenure laws, but only if they are accompanied by strong monitoring measures that prevent power abuse and corruption.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers a thorough grasp of how village government and accountability are affected when village leaders serve longer terms. There are two opposing sides to term extension, according to the literature review. On the one hand, a long-term plan facilitates the execution of sustainable development initiatives and promotes governmental stability. On the other hand, the likelihood of corruption and power abuse rises in the absence of sufficient oversight measures. Furthermore, public involvement in the supervisory process tends to decline over time, which has a detrimental effect on accountability and openness.

The government and interested parties must improve oversight mechanisms and promote active community involvement in order to optimize the advantages of term extension. Increasing public participation in decision-making and strengthening the Village Consultative Body are also essential. It is anticipated that these suggestions will enhance accountable and transparent village governance while averting possible abuses of authority.

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