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Strengthening Good Village Governance Strategy:

Transparency, Accountability, and Inclusive Rural Development

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Abstract: This study examined the transformative role of village governance in advancing rural welfare in Indonesia, particularly following the enactment of the Village Law. This pivotal legislation grants villages autonomy to independently manage their resources and budgets, targeting enhanced rural prosperity through substantial financial allocations. The Village Law aims to empower local communities and strengthen their socio-economic foundations by addressing the persistent gaps in rural development since Indonesia's independence. The study adopted a normative-juridical method integrated with a qualitative approach to scrutinize the legal norms and frameworks governing village governance and the Village Fund. A historical approach was used to trace the evolution of village governance structures, while a conceptual framework was employed to explore key principles of governance, accountability, and transparency. This multidimensional analysis underscores the necessity of implementing robust checks and balances, such as the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and public information systems, as fundamental pillars for ensuring transparency, accountability, and effective governance. Furthermore, the study highlights critical strategies for strengthening village governance, including capacity-building programs for village officials and fostering active community participation, particularly among marginalized groups. These initiatives aim to prevent the misuse of power, enhance public oversight, and support inclusive rural development. By embedding these mechanisms, villages can achieve sustainable governance that drives economic growth, improves community welfare, and bridges historical inequalities in rural development. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on good governance by emphasizing the interplay between legal frameworks, institutional capacity, and participatory practices in achieving equitable and effective rural governance.

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Aji Baskoro is a Master's student in Law at Universitas Gadjah Mada with academic interests in Human Rights, Constitutional Law, Socio-legal Studies, Environmental and Islamic Law. Actively engaged in academic and non-academic initiatives, including founding Binar Scholars and contributing to several research centers (Center for Legal Studies and Consultation, PUKAT UGM, PANDEKHA, and Paham Hukum), he frequently collaborates with academics and has published extensively in national and international journals. His recent research, in partnership with BRIN, focuses on the Marapu community in Sumba..

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I. Introduction

Following the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which aims to enhance rural prosperity by granting Indonesian villages greater autonomy in managing resources and budgets (Nurjaman & Prasetyo, 2018), a significant shift has occurred in village development, addressing historical gaps in rural progress (Soleh, 2017). However, challenges persist in village governance, notably the misuse of Village Funds, stemming from weak capacity-building for village governments and insufficient community participation (Hendrianto, 2019). These issues are further exacerbated by ineffective implementation, lack of accountability, and minimal community involvement in fund management (Madyana et al., 2020), alongside the limited capacities of village officials, which hinder effective financial oversight, thus underscoring the urgent need for stronger institutional frameworks and robust transparency and accountability measures (Rahardjo et al., 2021).

Centuries before Indonesian independence, villages existed as self-governing entities, with village governance during the Dutch colonial era recognized through regulations like the Regeeringsreglement, encompassing over 250 Zelfbesturende landscappen and Volksgemeenschappen such as those in Java and Bali, Nagari in Minangkabau, and Dusun and Marga in Palembang (Simamora et al., 2019). This historical diversity shaped the unitary structure of Indonesia as established in the 1945 Constitution (Anwar, 2015), and a series of post-independence legislation governing village administration, including Law No. 1 of 1945, Law No. 5 of 1979, Government Regulation No. 76 of 2001, and Government Regulation No. 72 of 2005 (Simarmata & Magdalena, 2018). These developments culminated in the current legal framework under Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, as recently amended by Law No. 6 of 2023 (incorporating Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 2 of 2022) and further by Law No. 3 of 2024, the Second Amendment to Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages (hereinafter referred to as the Village Law).

The implementation of the Village Law marked a significant shift in Indonesia's rural development landscape, granting greater

autonomy to villages in managing their governance and financial matters (Susilo, 2016). The law aims to provide more extensive autonomy to villages, enabling them to become self-reliant in managing resources and improving the welfare of their communities (Winarsi & Kristianti, 2018). Essentially, the Village Law grants villages the authority to manage local matters based on their origins, customs, and community needs.

However, several challenges have emerged during the implementation of the Village Law, particularly in managing the Village Fund. Some villages face issues such as disproportionate and ineffective fund management (Syarfi et al., 2021), weak governance, minimal community participation in decision-making (Warsono & Ruksamin, 2014), a lack of transparency in financial reporting, and low accountability standards. These issues have become common in many villages, with some failing to meet the minimum standards for financial management (Savitri et al., 2019). Corruption remains a prevalent issue, with instances where village funds have been allocated for personal gain, such as financing village head election campaigns or other activities detrimental to the community (Medcom.id, 2024).

According to the Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), there were 187 cases of village-level corruption in 2023, in addition to 108 cases in government sectors, 103 cases in utilities, and 65 cases in banking (kompas.com, 2024). These numbers far exceed those of other sectors, highlighting a significant problem in village governance. The ICW report also revealed that the state suffered losses of approximately IDR 162.2 billion in 2023 (kompas.com, 2024). ICW attributes the rise in village-level corruption following the implementation of the Village Law (kompas.com, 2024).

Table 1. The table below outlines village corruption cases and the potential state losses from 2016 to 2022.

Year	Number of Corruption (Cases)	Potential State Losses (IDR)
2016	17	40.1 billion
2017	48	10.4 billion
2018	83	19.4 billion
2019	96	36.5 billion
2020	129	50.1 billion

2021	154	233 billion
2022	155	381 billion

Source: (katadata.co.id, 2024)

Mismanagement of the Village Fund manifests in various forms of abuse, including the diversion of funds by village officials for personal or consumptive activities such as entertainment expenses (Putra, 2024), and irregularities in the procurement of goods, such as ambulances, which undermine efforts to improve community welfare (Putra, 2024). This is compounded by limited oversight and public participation in planning and monitoring, as decision-making often concentrates among village elites with minimal involvement from village councils (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa, or BPD) (Syukri, 2024), and village meetings are frequently perfunctory due to limited villager participation.

Community participation is crucial in strengthening village governance, particularly enhancing transparency, accountability, and oversight in development programs (Sofyani, Pratolo, et al., 2022). Participation can be in two forms: direct and indirect. Direct participation entails community members actively monitoring the implementation of development programs, enabling the identification and correction of inefficiencies or irregularities at the grassroots level (Dana et al., 2021). Indirect participation is exercised through the Village Representative Body or BPD, which serves as a vital forum for conveying community aspirations and establishing a system of checks and balances. Through the BPD, villagers contribute to creating an environment where power is distributed and monitored effectively.

However, current governance practices often fall short of fostering meaningful community involvement. Decision-making remains heavily centralized within the village elite, with minimal input from broader community members during village meetings (Syukri, 2024). This lack of engagement diminishes the effectiveness of the BPD as an oversight body, leaving significant gaps in the checks and balances mechanism. Furthermore, the limited educational background and inadequate access to information among many villagers exacerbate their inability to engage constructively in governance processes (Kosec & Wantchekon, 2020). Consequently,

this disconnect undermines the principle of participatory governance, which is essential for sustainable rural development.

In governance, the principle of checks and balances is crucial to ensuring that no single party holds absolute power (Jacobs, 2019; Sweet & Mathews, 2019). This system emphasizes mutual oversight between village institutions, such as the BPD, the village head, and the community (Katiman, 2021). Strengthening internal oversight bodies and encouraging active participation from the community are essential to mitigating the risk of fund misappropriation (Kohler & Bowra, 2020). Moreover, low levels of education and access to information among villagers often hinder the application of participatory governance (Kosec & Wantchekon, 2020). Therefore, strategies that emphasize transparency and accountability in village governance are vital.

This study contributes to the academic discourse on village governance and Village Fund management by critically examining existing literature that highlights key obstacles such as weak institutional structures, lack of transparency, and corruption. Susilowati et al., (2018), as well as the transformative potential of the Village Fund in fostering community-led development. Sumarto & Dwiantara, (2019) building on this foundation, the paper proposes a systematic and comprehensive conceptual framework to strengthen checks and balances in village governance through institutional mechanisms, such as the Village Consultative Body (BPD), financial oversight bodies, and transparent public information systems. This framework is empirically grounded in measurable indicators, including the accessibility of budget information, the extent of community participation, and the presence of effective feedback or complaint mechanisms. By addressing challenges including limited institutional capacity, legal illiteracy, political clientelism, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups, this study offers strategic and normative insights for improving village governance and evaluating the implementation of the Village Law and Village Fund in advancing the principles of good governance—namely transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and public participation.

II. Methods

This study adopted a normative-juridical research method, analyzing legal norms, regulations, and doctrines related to village governance and the Village Fund in Indonesia (Wiratraman, 2019) and was further supported by a qualitative approach that facilitated an in-depth exploration of the legal frameworks and the socio-legal contexts influencing governance at the village level (Darlington & Scott, 2020). The integration of normative and qualitative methods provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the legislative intent of the Village Law and its practical implications in rural governance. Additionally, the study employed a historical approach to trace the development of village governance from the colonial era to the present (Reimann & Zimmermann, 2019), situating current legal structures within their broader historical trajectories.

The study is further enriched by a conceptual approach incorporating key theoretical frameworks, governance, transparency, accountability, and decentralization (Hildreth et al., 2021). It examined how principles of good governance—such as participation, the rule of law, and institutional oversight—are embedded within the legal framework of village administration and how they are operationalized through the implementation of Law No. 6 of 2014. In particular, the study utilized the concept of checks and balances to explore the interplay between various governance actors at the village level (Li et al., 2022). The study assessed the role of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), financial oversight mechanisms, and community participation in addressing power centralization, corruption, and mismanagement in Village Fund.

Primary data for this study included legal documents such as statutes, government regulations, and judicial decisions related to village governance (Mingjiao et al., 2019), particularly Law No. 6 of 2014 and its derivative regulations. Secondary data comprised scholarly articles, policy reports, and findings from civil society organizations, such as the Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW), which document recurring governance challenges in rural areas. These sources were analyzed using a qualitative literature review method,

enabling a systematic assessment of historical and contemporary governance practices. The analysis sought to identify structural weaknesses in village governance and propose strategic improvements, particularly in strengthening institutional checks and balances, to ensure more transparent, accountable, and participatory village administration (Golebie et al., 2022).

III. Results and Discussions

A. Reframing the Village Law and Village Fund: Legal Implications for Good Governance

The recognition of village territories is normatively enshrined in the 1945 Constitution of Indonesia, even before its amendments (Anggoro & Negara, 2021). Article 18B, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution explicitly acknowledges the existence of special regions with autonomy to conduct their local governance (Mendy, 2024). The existence of villages was further strengthened by Law No. 18 of 1965 on the Basic Principles of Regional Governance. The general provisions of this law explicitly state that a “Village” or a region equivalent to a village is a territorial entity with a population and authority to manage and govern its affairs (Smith, 2023). This provision was based on the recognition and respect for the regions as stated in Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution before the amendment (Berman, 2019).

The preamble of the Village Governance Law emphasizes the crucial role of village governance, which is closely tied to the community and is regarded as capable of mobilizing the population. It further asserts that, given its importance, it is essential to strengthen village governance by issuing regulations governing the structure and organization of village government. Article 1 of the Village Governance Law defines a “Village” as a territorial unit with a population as a community unit with its own government and the right to manage its affairs. However, this law was later repealed by Law No. 22 of 1999 on Regional Governance. The repeal was driven by the aim to enhance the recognition and respect for villages, shifting focus from standardizing villages in terms of name, structure, and position to emphasizing the recognition and respect for the origin rights of special regions. This shift was reflected in Law

No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Governance and Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages.

The numerous regulations on villages reveal two key aspects. First, there is an awareness of the central role that villages play in the lives and interests of the community, alongside the recognition of village autonomy to manage their territories and populations according to their unique characteristics and local wisdom (Tirtamulia, 2019). Second, the extensive creation of village regulations indicates the presence of dynamic legal politics shaped by the ruling regime at any given time (Utama & Sasmita, 2020). This is evidenced by data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), which records that as of 2022, there are 83,794 villages or sub-districts across Indonesia (Sadya, 2023).

Therefore, the formation of laws and regulations in Indonesia must be based on Pancasila as the national ideology and the 1945 Constitution as the foundational framework of governance (Najicha et al., 2019). Referring to the explanation of Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution before amendment, villages that receive recognition and respect are those with original structures, and their regulation through legislation must take into account the origin rights of these regions (Nurcholis et al., 2020). Existing regulations governing villages consistently define a village as a community unit with territorial boundaries and a government granted authority to manage local governance and community interests, receiving recognition and respect within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia.

The authority to manage governance and community interests inevitably necessitates the existence of village regulations as instruments for the implementation of governance and community management (Hariyanto, 2022). Provisions regarding the existence of village regulations are outlined in Article 29 (paragraphs 1 and 2) and Article 31 (paragraph 1) of Law No. 19 of 1965 on Desapraja. The recognition and existence of village regulations are further affirmed in Article 3, paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Village Law (Rido, 2020). Additionally, they are reflected in Articles 104, 105 (paragraphs 3 and 4), 106, and 107 (paragraph 3) of Law No. 22 of 1999 on Village Governance. The existence of village regulations is also recognized in Article 209 of Law No. 32 of

2004 on Regional Governance and Article 1, 26 (paragraphs 2 and 3), 69, 73, 79, 110, and 115 of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages.

The Village Law provides juridical recognition to the existence of villages as the smallest unit of government in a unitary state system. The provisions in the law provide space for villages to exercise autonomy in regulating and managing the local community's interests. However, village autonomy is implemented within the framework of a unitary state so that it remains subject to higher-level laws and regulations.

B. Challenges in the Implementation of Checks and Balances at the Village Level

The concept of autonomous rights denotes a legal community unit with territorial boundaries that is authorized to manage and govern local governmental affairs and community interests according to its initiative, based on community aspirations within the framework of the Republic of Indonesia (Sunarno, 2006). This idea aligns with Mohammad Hatta's assertion that true democracy is rooted in villages, where governance is directly connected to the community and characterized by features of village democracy, such as village meetings as forums for discussion between village governments and their communities. Villagers have the right to express their views publicly and foster mutual aid in their daily lives (Sukriono, 2010).

The majority of rural communities form social entities shaped by deeply rooted local values, norms, and traditions that have been passed down through generations. These local wisdoms are autonomous and have developed independently of dominant cultural influences (Musthafa, 2017). The formation of such social groups is driven by the fundamental human instinct for survival, which compels individuals to form social relations as a basis for interacting with their environment and fellow group members. These social bonds, often founded on kinship ties or geographical proximity, create a sense of belonging and shared identity among group members (Musthafa, 2017).

As the smallest unit of government, villages hold historical significance and serve as a foundational element in nation-building. Rural communities are unique social entities shaped by a long process of adaptation and evolution. They

have developed distinctive social, cultural, and governmental systems while maintaining their collective identity. This entrenched concept of village governance reflects the principle of regional autonomy, warranting special recognition within the unitary system of the Republic of Indonesia. As the smallest unit of government, villages hold historical significance and serve as a foundational element in nation-building (Musthafa, 2017).

Thus, the Village Law grants villages broader authority in the context of local autonomy, especially in planning development, managing natural resources, and empowering communities. Villages have the right to formulate short-, medium-, and long-term development plans through the Village Consultation mechanism (Neta et al., 2024). This reflects the principle of decentralization, where villages have the flexibility to direct development according to local needs and potential (Neta et al., 2024).

The Village Law has granted villages expanded authority in local autonomy, particularly in development planning, natural resource management, and community empowerment (Pakaya, 2016). Villages are granted the authority to formulate short-term, medium-term, and long-term development plans through the Village Consultation mechanism (Nurcholis, 2011). This reflects the principle of decentralization, which grants villages the flexibility to shape development based on local needs and potential. Villages are authorized to manage the natural resources within their administrative boundaries, including the management of village assets and resources. This authority is intended to ensure that the benefits from resource management directly enhance village welfare. The Village Law also encourages villages to implement empowerment programs aimed at improving the community's capacity in various aspects, including economic, social, and cultural development. This empowerment is crucial for reducing village dependence on external assistance and fostering greater self-reliance within the village.

Achieving effective and authoritative village governance relies significantly on careful planning. Ongoing efforts are required to comprehensively strengthen village institutions to optimize governance, particularly in terms of funding. The primary source of funding for village

governance is the Village Budget (APBDes), which serves as the foundation for implementing a range of government programs and activities at the village level (Musthafa, 2017). Accordingly, it is logical that villages are granted the authority to formulate their development plans.

Article 79, paragraph (2), letter (a) of Law No. 06 of 2014 on Villages regulates the Village Development Plan (RPJMDes). The RPJMDes is a six-year planning document outlining village development policies, financial policies, general policies, programs for village institutions, and priority regional programs, accompanied by work plans. This RPJMDes will serve as the sole planning document in the village and is established through Village Regulations (PerDes). Additionally, the law also outlines the Village's Annual Development Plan, known as the Village Government Work Plan (RKPDDes). The RKPDDes is a one-year planning document that translates the RPJMDes into action. It outlines the village's economic framework, updated funding schemes, priority development programs, and work plans, whether directly implemented by the village government or through community participation, aligning with the district or city government work plans and the RPJMDes.

Village financial management, particularly on the use of Village Funds, is a crucial aspect of the Village Law's implementation (Arifin et al., 2020). The allocation of Village Funds from the national budget annually provides villages with significant financial capacity to improve community welfare, but also presents challenges in terms of oversight and accountability (Muthomi & Thurmaier, 2021). However, the management of Village Funds frequently faces challenges related to transparency and accountability (Hapsari et al., 2021). Some villages still struggle to meet reporting standards set by central and regional governments. Cases of corruption at the village level highlight the lack of accountability in managing Village Funds. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening internal and external oversight systems, as well as improving the capacity of village officials to manage finances responsibly. Overall, the Village Law presents significant opportunities for villages in Indonesia to advance through enhanced autonomy and increased community participation. However, the existing challenges, particularly regarding

transparency, accountability, and participation, require greater attention to achieve the law's primary objective.

C. Strategic Framework for Strengthening Good Village Governance through Checks and Balances

Good governance, encompassing effective management, transparency, and accountability, is crucial for fostering economic growth and entrepreneurial activities (Urbano et al., 2019; P. Das & Giri, 2024), creating a conducive environment for investment and development, and is therefore imperative for villages to adopt in their administration to achieve self-sufficiency and prosperity (Wong et al., 2021); advocated by the OECD through improvements in public management, budgeting, and strategic planning focused on efficient resource allocation and resilience aligned with democratic principles, and emphasized by the UNDP for enhancing public service effectiveness and accountability (Kohler & Bowra, 2020), these principles, including accountability, transparency, openness, and legal certainty (Jelenic, 2019), serve as a framework to promote transparency, participation, and legal integrity in government processes, consequently necessitating the strengthening of checks and balances to achieve good village governance and prevent abuse of power through enhanced oversight, transparency, accountability, and active community participation.

A system of checks and balances is an essential tool for achieving the broader objective of good governance. The concept originates from Montesquieu's theory of the separation of powers (Levy, 2020). In the context of a democratic legal state, the application of checks and balances is essential for preventing the concentration of power in a single authority—a characteristic feature of an authoritarian system (Yunus & Faraby, 2014). One form of separation and distribution of functions based on the principle of checks and balances is the budgetary function (Yunus & Faraby, 2014)

In Indonesia, the system of checks and balances in financial management is governed by several regulations. Law Number 17 of 2003 on State Finances stipulates that the President, as head of the government, holds the authority

to manage state finances (Rumbia & Junanto, 2015). Moreover, Article 20A of the Second Amendment to the 1945 Constitution mandates that both central and regional governments must obtain approval and ratification from the House of Representatives (DPR) and Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) for the State Budget (APBN) and Regional Budget (APBD), which serve as guidelines for implementing national and regional development (Rumbia & Junanto, 2015). This framework of financial oversight is also applicable to village governance.

Strategic efforts that can be made at the village level can be seen in the figure below:



Figure 1. Strategies for Strengthening Checks and Balances in Good Village Governance.

First, **Strengthening the Role of the Village Consultative Body (BPD)**. BPD serves as a supervisory body and a counterbalance to the authority of the Village Head. It plays a central role in maintaining the checks and balances in village governance. In accordance with the Village Law, BPD acts as a representative body of the village community, providing input on village policies and overseeing the implementation of programs by the village government (Anwar, 2015). As the community representative, the BPD must effectively carry out its role to balance the power of the village head and ensure that the policies align with the community's aspirations.

One of the primary challenges confronting the BPD is its limited capacity and independence. Many BPD members do not possess adequate educational backgrounds or experience in governance (Rasaili & Arifin, 2022). Therefore, capacity building and education for BPD members should be a priority (Rasaili & Arifin, 2022). Another solution is improving the recruitment process to enhance its representativeness and accountability. This effort should be complemented by stronger collaboration with external oversight institutions such as the Regional Inspectorate.

Second, The Establishment of Village Public Information Systems. Accountability and transparency in village governance can be enhanced by implementing an open and accessible village public information system. Accountability refers to the government's responsibility to report and present its activities to the public. Accountability is essential for ensuring transparency and adherence to commitments established during implementation (Miftahuddin, 2018). This includes providing information on village planning, implementation, and development outcomes. The village public information system should not only cover financial reports but also include information related to the use of Village Funds, project implementation, and natural resource management. As a result, the community can more effectively monitor the performance of the village government directly. An exemplary model in this regard is Panggungharjo. The Panggungharjo village government, located in the Sewon District of Bantul Regency, actively supports the principles of Good Governance, particularly accountability and transparency (Miftahuddin, 2018). The Panggungharjo village government promotes transparency by utilizing digital information platforms and disseminating information through the heads of neighborhood (RT), village heads, and public information boards at the village office.

A key initiative in enhancing accountability is creating an open financial reporting mechanism readily accessible to the public. Transparency is enhanced by regularly publishing these financial reports through village notice boards, social media, and official websites. Additionally, these reports should be presented in a clear and comprehensive manner to enable the public

to evaluate the use of Village Funds and their alignment with development programs.

Third, Enhancing the Capacity of Village Apparatus. The capacity of the village heads and officials is key to managing effective village governance. Ongoing and relevant training, particularly on financial management, administration, and village development planning, is crucial (Syarfi et al., 2021). With improved competencies, village heads and officials are better positioned to perform their duties efficiently and in alignment with the principles of good governance. Villages with limited capacity, particularly in remote areas, require more intensive technical assistance from the central government, local governments, or non-governmental organizations. The primary objective of this assistance is to enhance village capabilities to manage finances, plan development, and improve public services. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should also be strengthened to ensure that the assistance positively impacts the village governance.

Ardana et al. (2022) highlight the importance of enhancing the capacity of village government officials, as evidenced by the challenges faced in Kutajaya Village, where administrative inefficiencies and incomplete population data hinder effective governance (Ardana et al., 2022). Through public education programs and socialization seminars conducted in collaboration with academic professionals, village officials gained valuable insights into administration and community empowerment governance (Ardana et al., 2022). This capacity-building effort underscores the significance of improving human resources to optimize the performance of village apparatus and to harness the potential of rural community governance (Ardana et al., 2022). The study emphasizes the need for technical training, computer skills development, guidance on regulations, and facilitation programs to improve the management of village funds. These capacity-building measures are essential to ensure village officials are equipped to meet the demands of evolving governance paradigms and deliver effective public services (Darmi & Mujtahid, 2021, pp. 2018–2019). Together, these studies highlight the critical role of enhancing village apparatus capacity in fostering accountable and efficient village governance, as well as in aligning with

principles of good governance and sustainable development.

Fourth, Encouraging Active Community Participation. Community participation in village governance will be optimal if the public understands their rights in village governance management. Raising awareness and providing education about the community's rights to participate in village deliberations, monitor budget use, and engage in collective decision-making are essential (Zakariya, 2020). Village governments can involve the public through open meetings that discuss policies, projects, and budgets to be implemented by the village government (Zakariya, 2020).

Community participation plays a central role in fostering inclusive and sustainable village governance. Nurvianti and Hastuti (2021) highlight the significance of active engagement in the development of Taman Sari Tourism Village, showing that collaboration among communities, government, stakeholders, and other parties is crucial for sustaining tourism programs (Nurvianti & Hastuti, 2021). Their findings reveal that high levels of participation in decision-making (51%), implementation (52%), benefits realization (81%), and evaluation (76%) are instrumental in driving successful village initiatives (Nurvianti & Hastuti, 2021). This finding underscores the necessity of empowering communities through targeted strategies to enhance their involvement in governance and development processes.

To build on these findings, Zakariya (2020) stresses that optimal community participation in village governance requires an understanding of the public's rights, such as participating in deliberations, monitoring budget use, and engaging in collective decision-making (Zakariya, 2020). Disseminating information events and education programs can be pivotal in raising awareness and empowering the public to engage actively in governance processes (Zakariya, 2020). Furthermore, inclusive governance necessitates deliberate efforts to involve marginalized groups, such as women, people with disabilities, and indigenous communities, through various mechanisms, such as open meetings, targeted

forums, and special deliberations designed to amplify their voices (Zakariya, 2020).

IV. Conclusion

This study has reaffirmed that good village governance—grounded in transparency, accountability, and participation—is fundamental to achieving inclusive and sustainable rural development in Indonesia. In line with the decentralization and fiscal autonomy objectives of the Village Law, the study has emphasized that checks and balances should not be seen as end goals but as strategic tools for ensuring power is not overly concentrated and that governance reflects community needs. By analyzing the roles of institutions such as the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and the integration of public information systems, the study has demonstrated the importance of effective oversight, transparent fund allocation, and inclusive participation in all stages of development planning and implementation.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the discourse on decentralization by showing how local accountability can be fostered through participatory structures. Conceptually, it underscores the significance of a multi-actor approach—linking legal frameworks, institutional capacity-building, and civic engagement—in creating resilient and democratic village governance. Normatively, it advocates for governance models that are both constitutionally grounded and responsive to local socio-political contexts, especially in addressing elite capture and the marginalization of vulnerable groups. As a forward-looking agenda, this study calls for further exploration into how checks and balances mechanisms function across diverse village contexts and adapt to evolving legal-political environments, reinforcing their critical role in actualizing the transformative potential of the Village Law.

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