

THE THREE PILLARS OF COMMUNICATION IN LOCAL CULTURE: DRIVING FORCE ON COMBATING VILLAGE FUND CORRUPTION

Koesworo Setiawan^{1*}

¹Program Studi Sains Komunikasi, FISIP, Universitas Djuanda

*Korespondensi: koesworo.setiawan@unida.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Corruption in villages continues to rise, along with the increased value of government budget assistance. Statistics on budget misuse in villages show no improvement despite ongoing law enforcement action. This article aims to identify and explain the strengths of local culture that can help overcome irregularities in village fund management. This research uses a qualitative-argumentative approach, with a literature study. Data were obtained from scientific articles and other documents relevant to the research objectives using Publish or Perish software. Data was reduced, categorized, and interpreted based on three operational concepts of the communication model in local culture: communicator (traditional figure), message (ancestral teachings), and medium (traditional institutions). Data validity was tested using two techniques: source triangulation (comparing data across relevant articles) and assuming the data in each article were valid because they had been reviewed before publication. The results show that, first, traditional figures serve as moral and ethical references. Second, teachings as messages instill values of goodness and harmony among humans, and between humans and their environment. Third, the sanction mechanism for norm violators serves as a deterrent and maintains harmony. Result reveal that, the combination of these three cultural pillars can strengthen efforts to address corruption in villages.

Keywords: Against corruption; Customary community; Local wisdom; Village funds.

ABSTRAK

Korupsi di desa terus meningkat seiring dengan penambahan nilai bantuan anggaran pemerintah. Statistik penyalahgunaan anggaran di desa tidak menunjukkan perbaikan meskipun tindakan penegakan hukum terus berjalan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menjelaskan kekuatan budaya lokal yang dapat membantu mengatasi penyimpangan dalam pengelolaan anggaran di desa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-argumentatif, dengan studi literatur. Data diperoleh dari artikel ilmiah dan dokumen lain yang relevan dengan tujuan penelitian dari perangkat lunak Publish or Perish. Data direduksi, dikategorikan, dan diinterpretasikan berdasarkan tiga konsep operasional model komunikasi dalam budaya lokal: komunikator (tokoh tradisional), pesan (ajaran leluhur), dan media (lembaga tradisional). Validitas data diuji menggunakan dua teknik: triangulasi sumber (membandingkan data di berbagai artikel yang relevan) dan mengasumsikan data dalam setiap artikel valid karena telah ditinjau sebelum dipublikasikan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, *pertama*, tokoh tradisional berfungsi sebagai referensi moral dan etika. *Kedua*, ajaran sebagai pesan menanamkan nilai-nilai kebaikan dan harmoni antar manusia, dan antara manusia dan lingkungannya. *Ketiga*, mekanisme sanksi bagi pelanggar norma berfungsi sebagai pencegah dan menjaga harmoni.

Studi ini mengungkapkan, kombinasi dari tiga pilar budaya ini dapat memperkuat upaya mengatasi penyalahgunaan anggaran di desa.

Keywords: Anti korupsi; Dana desa; Kearifan lokal; Masyarakat.

Koesworo Setiawan, 2026. The Three Pillars of Communication in Local Culture: Driving Force on Combating Village Fund Corruption.

BACKGROUND

The term village is close to images of backwardness, poverty, and remoteness. Poverty in Indonesia remains concentrated in rural areas. Data shows that rural poverty is 11.03 percent, almost twice the urban poverty rate of 6.73 percent (BPS, 2022). Statistics show that as of October 2024, there were 17,203 independent villages (26.5 percent), 23,063 developed villages (35.6 percent), and 24,532 developing villages (37.8 percent) (Tribrata, 2024). Independent villages have social, economic, and ecological resilience and are prosperous; developed villages are rich in potential but optimally managed for the community's welfare; and developing villages have all three potentials, but the population is still at the poverty line. There are 73.4 percent of non-independent villages.

President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka promised to create economic justice, one of which is by making villages the center of growth. Through village funds, the government has improved the village economy with infrastructure development, access to public services, and economic opportunities. The government will improve the quality of human resources in villages with a free nutritious meal program that is believed to encourage money circulation of up to IDR 8 billion/village (Yanwardhana, 2024). The development strategy from the periphery is expected to create economic equality (Alvaro & Christianingrum, 2020; A. Setiawan, 2019).

Policies related to village funds are regulated by around 10 regulations, with their parent in Law No. 6/2014 on Villages,

which is regulated in Article 72. The allocation of village funds is set at a minimum of 10 percent of the balancing funds received by the regency or city in the regional revenue and expenditure budget after deducting special allocation funds. According to Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 20/2018 concerning Village Financial Management, there are three kinds of village funds: origin village income; transfer, and another village income.

The policy has increased the size of the village treasury. Previously, the government had allocated a village fund budget, which continued to increase yearly in addition to village revenues from other sources. The circulation of money in the village is not always accompanied by transparent and accountable budget governance. Of the top 10 sectors with the highest corruption, villages occupy second (ICW, 2024b, 2024a).

From a Weberian perspective, human behavior - including manipulative actions such as corruption, is not solely constructed by external factors. Sociologist Max Weber identified four types of social action: instrumental-rational action, value-rational action, effectual action, and traditional action (Minner, 2020; Rust, 2021; Weber, 2019). Instrumental-rational action (*zweckrational*) assumes that individuals have full awareness and sufficient information and make careful calculations about profit and loss when taking action. In this type, with the power of ratios, individuals use available means to achieve their goals effectively and efficiently. In the value rational action type, a person's actions are more driven by subjective values, norms, cultural backgrounds, and ethical and morality

standards (which can differ from one another). The effectual action type means that individuals are influenced by psychological, emotional, or feeling factors (Minner, 2020). This type includes the psychological distance from the charismatic figure to the masses or followers. Charismatic figures become leaders because they are seen as getting a “gift” so that they have “supernatural, superhuman, or at least extraordinary powers” that “ordinary people cannot have” (Weber, 2019). In the traditional action type, individual actions are driven by customs, habits, and social norms that have been accepted, obeyed, and practiced for generations (established order) (Minner, 2020; Rust, 2021). Traditional action-type individuals submit to the established order without questioning its validity or seeking its rational justification. Weber's four types should not be seen as independent for each social group, but it should be understood that two or more types of action can be recognized in one social group.

Corrupt behavior is influenced by and related to various factors that interact in a complex manner, be it politics, bureaucracy, regulation, socio-economic, and other factors (Alim, 2022; Kuntadi et al., 2022; Syafitri et al., 2024). The government and law enforcement emphasize procedural and legalistic approaches with socialization, education, supervision, and enforcement to reduce budget fraud. The legalistic approach is rigid, national, and generalized, lacking or not affirming the diverse characteristics at the grassroots level. Instead of gaining support and compliance, conventional law as an “outside” product invites resistance and non-compliance, ultimately weakening its effectiveness. In fact, in responding to the challenges of globalization and social change (Bolan, 2024; Zaylalov, 2022), people are already governed by their own “constitution,” namely local culture that has been a living reference for generations.

Local wisdom (folk wisdom or indigenous knowledge) is a form of culture

in the set of knowledge and practices accepted, recognized, and practiced for years by an area's community or indigenous people. Local culture and spirituality have the functions of maintenance, education, and coercion (deterrent effect) comes from regulations, including customary law (Jainah et al., 2024; Jayantiari et al., 2024). Culture and spirituality are also sources of moral values, norms, and social responsibilities that play a role in determining actions, including decision-making (Ysmailova et al., 2020). Culture and spiritual practices maintain social order by instilling wisdom such as compassion, honesty, integrity, caring, service, and altruistic behavior for the community's welfare (FR et al., 2024).

Local culture operates on the principles of communication, through three perspectives: traditional leaders as communicators and authoritative figures, teachings as noble narratives (messages), and traditional institutions as channels or mediums through which messages are mediated. In the local cultural system, the central figure is the traditional leader. Traditional leaders are symbols of morality (Mofuoa, 2021), holders of traditional authority, and sit at the apex of the traditional community structure. Traditional leaders are considered sources of knowledge about customary law (Ferdiansyah & Hasan, 2025). They represent morality and models of ethical leadership rooted in tradition and play a role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural identity (Treuer, 2011). In their decision-making processes, they integrate moral and spiritual values (Mofuoa, 2021; Shalihin, 2025).

Narratives within the local cultural system consist of values, norms, and virtuous practices that have developed, been accepted, and practiced over centuries. Cultural norms regulate behavior by creating unwritten guidelines for what is expected and acceptable (Zeng et al., 2019). Norms contain standards for how to behave well towards other people and between

humans and their environment (Adair et al., 2024). Standards are established to maintain dignity, harmony (order and cohesion), and survival (Enekwe, 2024). To uphold noble values, cultural norms require members to conform to established standards, even when those standards conflict with personal desires (Ferwerda & Bauer, 2022). Violations of norms face unofficial sanctions (Douglas et al., 2024) which can include compensation, ridicule, ostracism, or loss of respect.

Channels or media refer to the institutionalization of narratives (norms) into frameworks, structures, mechanisms, and organizations. Customary institutions, in the form of a customary council, with a bale (a special place for customary activities), are the most easily recognized medium. Cultural norms as a medium exist within the realm of narrative implementation and constitute perceptible hardware. Customary institutions play a role in various ceremonial activities, increasing community participation, maintaining harmony with stakeholders, socializing and educating about values and norms, enforcing customary law, and managing conflict (Andriyani et al., 2025; Douglas et al., 2024; Regar et al., 2024).

Culture promotes and instills virtues to the next generation as a knowledge tool through learning (enculturation). Through modeling and internalization, people systematically gain knowledge, experience, and noble values, either formally or non-formally for cultural preservation (Raharjo et al., 2021). Cognitive learning is done through reading and writing, structured interaction, and narrative transmission of experience and knowledge (Agatha et al., 2022; Fabry, 2018). Customary law is a regulatory and coercive framework to ensure social order, conflict, and dispute resolution, create harmony, and preserve virtues (Jainah et al., 2024).

Previous research has been partial and casuistic (Y. Saputra et al., 2024), which is limited to explaining and describing the value of wisdom in local culture (Prabowo &

Sudrajat, 2021; Wulangsih et al., 2022), describing local wisdom values associated with village bureaucratic governance (K. A. K. Saputra et al., 2018; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024), or with the management of village funds at specific research locations (Nugrahesthy & Hapsari, 2020). The previous researchers focus on the thematic aspects of local culture with a choice of analysis based on a specific disciplinary approach (partially). They explained the positive relationship between local wisdom and village fund governance (explaining "what") in a case-by-case and partial manner. In other words, these articles focus on thematic aspects of local culture with a choice of analysis based on specific disciplinary approaches.

The novelty of this article is that, *first*, its more general, integrative, and holistic scope (broad perspective). *Second*, this article seeks various facts and builds arguments about the extent to which cultural values can be an anti-corruption force (answering the "why" and "how"). Specifically, this study aims to answer three research questions: how do communication mechanisms in local culture strengthen anti-corruption values? How can local culture serve as an instrument to control deviant acts in the management of village funds? How do communication mechanisms in local culture provide a deterrent effect against violators of norms and rules?

METHOD

The research used a qualitative-argumentative approach with a literature study method. Data was obtained from scientific articles and other documents relevant to the research objectives. Articles, as reference data, were obtained by reviewing the contents of the first 50 articles and searching using the Publish or Perish application on Google. scholar by entering the keywords "local wisdom" and "village funds." Of the 50 articles, 17 were irrelevant to the research objectives (unrelated to village fund management), 13 (related to village bureaucratic

governance), and 20 were related to the research topic. There were three groups of 20 articles: village fund irregularities, village fund irregularities, and local wisdom, and sanction mechanisms based on local wisdom in village fund irregularities. Data were reduced, categorized, and interpreted based on three operational concepts of communication models in local culture: communicators (traditional figures), messages (ancestral teachings), and media (traditional institutions).

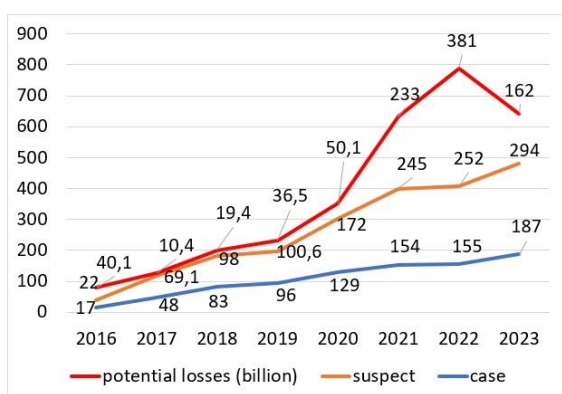
Communicators are traditional leaders who have authority, cultural legitimacy, and are recognized as interpreters of ancestral teachings. Messages are ancestral teachings, both textual and sub textual, verbal and non-verbal. Channels or media refer to the institutionalization of narratives (norms) into frameworks, structures, mechanisms, and organizations. Data validity was tested with two-stage source triangulation by comparing data from various articles, and each article was considered valid because it had gone through a review stage before publication. This article uses the term "local culture" interchangeably with the term "local wisdom" and "local indigenous".

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Village Fund Governance

Since its launch in 2015, the amount of village funds has experienced an increasing trend (see Table 1).

Table 1. Village Fund Ceiling from 2015 to 2025

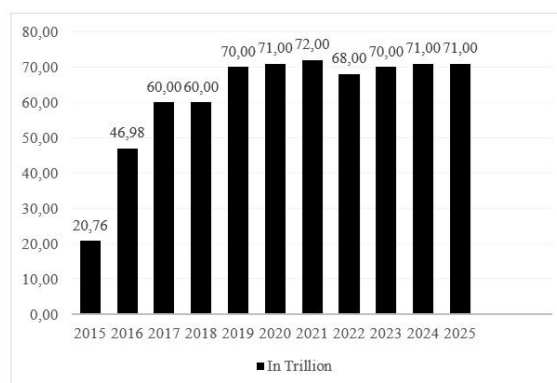


Source: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas, 2024 (processed)

However, in its implementation in the field, the management of village funds cannot be separated from various facts about budget misuse by village officials. Some of them were forced to receive legal sanctions because they were proven to have committed irregularities in managing and using the budget. Only two years since its launch (2017), over 900 village officials in almost all districts/cities in Indonesia have been caught in legal cases, with village heads being the third most likely to face criminal sanctions (ICW, 2024b). The villages almost always rank in the top five from the category of sectors with the most corruption cases, with 187 cases in 2023 (ICW, 2024a).

Table 1 shows the trend of increasing the village fund budget every year. Even during the COVID-19 period, the government did not reduce the budget allocation (2019-2020). During the new administration, the government maintained the budget allocation of IDR71 trillion for village funds. However, the high nominal value of village funds is accompanied by an increasing trend of corruption in the villages and the amount of state losses (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of cases, suspects and estimated state losses



Source: (ICW, 2024b, 2024a)

Table 2 (above) shows an increasing trend in both cases, suspects and potential state losses. Compared to 2016, there was a 110 percent increase in cases seven years later (2023). The upward trend of the graph indicates that there is no deterrent effect on

perpetrators of budget misuse. In a simple calculation based on the data in table 2, state losses during this period were estimated at Rp650 billion. Compared to the 7,575 villages throughout Indonesia, this figure may seem minor. However, it must be remembered that this figure could be an iceberg phenomenon; there are still many cases with more significant potential state losses that are not reported. Although the absorption of village funds reached 100% at the beginning of the program launch, village funds did not contribute to poverty reduction in the villages (Alvaro & Christianingrum, 2020).

There are five areas of corruption in village funds: 1. budget planning, 2. budget use/spending on goods and services, and 3. accountability and monitoring evaluation (Pusat Edukasi Anti Korupsi, 2023). At the planning stage, the decision-making process is centralized in the village head and closely related village elites. The elitist decision-making process to smoothen the village head's plan ensures benefits from project implementation. The discussion of the Village Budget Plan (RAPBDes) should have been conducted inclusively through village meetings (Pusat Edukasi Anti Korupsi, 2023; Zakariya, 2020).

Using the budget, perpetrators collude with partners by increasing the price of goods or reducing the quality in the field. The perpetrators at this stage are generally the village head, village treasurer, village secretary, and the activity implementation team (Pusat Edukasi Anti Korupsi, 2023; Zakariya, 2020). At the village level, procurement of goods and services should refer to LKPPN Regulation No. 13/2013 on Guidelines for Procurement of Goods or Services in Villages. At the reporting stage, the perpetrators manipulated the reports in various ways. These include changing the quantity and quality of goods or making fictitious expenditures. Thus, the reports do not match the conditions for implementing the activities and the Budget Plan (RAB) (Pusat Edukasi Anti Korupsi, 2023).

Village dynamics cannot be separated from the central figure of the village head. In addition to bureaucrats and administrators, he is required to be able to manage problems and provide solutions to the everyday problems of residents. On the other hand, his victory in the village election cannot be separated from the support of various parties, community leaders, community and youth organizations, business groups, etc., and aligning these two interests is not easy.

Village officials with an instrumental-rational action type will use their position to "return favors" to their supporters with the resources they control, including village funds (Jamilatuzzahro & Zefanya, 2024). The role and authority of the village head was strengthened by the passing of the revision of Law No. 6/2014 on Villages. In Article 39, the term of office of the village head has been extended from six to eight years and can be elected for up to two terms. The village head has more flexibility in controlling village resources, including financial assistance - to support the interests of village elites through patron-client relations (Jamilatuzzahro & Zefanya, 2024).

The village fund had experienced a ceiling reduction from IDR 72 trillion in 2021 to IDR 68 trillion in 2022, in line with the government's focus on dealing with the post-COVID-19 pandemic impact (Y. Saputra et al., 2024). The State Budget Law No. 19 of 2024 mandates a Transfer to Regions (TKD) of IDR 857.6 trillion with a village fund TKD of IDR 71 trillion (Article 2 paragraph (2) letter (f)). The total budget of IDR 71 trillion was distributed to 75,265 villages, or on average each village would receive around IDR 943.7 million (Kemenco-PMK, 2024; Kementerian Keuangan, 2024). The Village Fund is focused on handling extreme poverty (25 percent), food security (20 percent), reducing stunting, strengthening Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) and developing village (Kemendes PDT, 2024;

Kemenko-PMK, 2024; Kementerian Keuangan, 2024).

According to table 2, there is a noticeable trend of increase in the number of cases of village fund misuse that do not comply with regulations, the number of suspects, and the potential state losses. Even since 2020, there has been a surge in potential state losses due to the misuse of village funds. The increase in potential state losses has been very drastic, from Rp50.1 billion in 2020 to Rp381 billion in 2022 – an increase of more than 700 percent in just two years. This phenomenon shows that the increase in village fund budgets is not accompanied by accountable budget management. The increasing number of cases shows that law enforcement agencies are already working, but at the same time, it does not deter the perpetrators.

At least three factors contribute to the rampant corruption at the village level (Primayogha, 2018). *First*, budget governance is elitist and has low community participation. The involvement of citizens is not entirely absent. However, their level of participation in the planning and implementation processes of development is still limited (Zakariya, 2020). Not many residents possess the minimal skills to understand budget management, their rights and obligations as villagers, etc. *Second*, there is a weak oversight function during the decision-making process (Nugrahesthy & Hapsari, 2020). There is a Village Consultative Body (BPD) in the village, but unfortunately, in many cases, its supervisory function has not been optimally implemented. The BPD is an official institution that ideally plays a role in preventing corruption or mobilize citizen participation to enhance oversight.

Furthermore, the community does not have enough information due to limited access. Village residents are hindered from fully understanding village policies, particularly regarding budget management. Questions such as the budget amount, allocation details, and usage are not presented easily and periodically. Budget

management is the domain of the village elite and not of the public. Realized or not, it makes the public apathetic – and results in minimal oversight (check and balances) (Alvaro & Christianingrum, 2020). *At last*, limited capacity and lack of understanding of regulations could trigger budget misuse of significant amounts, aside from intentional misconduct.

Various issues that arise along with managing village funds are inseparable from the legal procedural method, becoming the backbone of the policy. That is not entirely incorrect because village funds are born from the political process of forming legal products. According to the findings of this research, it is time to provide further space for local culture to play a role in preventing, supervising, and creating a deterrent effect for the perpetrators. The role of local culture, which is generally oriented towards virtue, maintaining social order, and balancing the transcendent and immanent dimensions in human life, has been proven over generations.

B. Virtues in Local Culture

The values of local wisdom in several communities have similarities in their main ideas and spirit. For example, the Kasepuhan Ciptagelar indigenous community in Sukabumi Regency, West Java, is known to uphold the balance of nature by upholding the principles of ecological wisdom. They inherited the ancestral teachings of: "*mipit kudu amit ngala kudu menta*" (ask permission first when taking natural products). The following ancestral advice that they uphold is: "*ngereut jeung neunden keur jaganing isuk*" (contemplate to maintain the continuity of the next life) (Wulangsih et al., 2022). This community maintains the preservation and sustainability of nature (forest) with strong norms and traditions. Forest management follows the three-zone rule (trusted, covered, and cultivated forest) (Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021; Wulangsih et al., 2022). Respect for rice is

firm, with strict rules starting from the planting, harvesting, cooking, and storage stages of the 10 percent in *leuit* (rice ban) harvest (Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021; Priangani et al., 2023).

The Maluku community (extending to Papua) recognizes "*sasi*" as a norm that regulates when it is permissible and not permissible to utilize natural resources in waters (sea and freshwater) and on land or similar provisions for other objects. Water "*sasi*" prohibits catching and consuming certain types of fish at certain times (Muin & Rakuasa, 2023). Land "*sasi*" is introduced to pick fruit or take wood or plant parts at certain times and is permitted (open "*sasi*") at predetermined times (Persada et al., 2018). "*Sasi*" aims to protect resources, even natural, human, and noble values of indigenous peoples. Sea and land "*sasi*" are intended to ensure that land and marine biota remain sustainable.

"*Sasi*" also includes provisions prohibiting women or men from having relationships with other types if they have found a partner and when the prohibition is lifted (open "*sasi*") (Sairiltiata, 2023). Human "*sasi*" is to maintain the morality and nobility of community members. When the case is closed and opened, it is carried out collegially, involving the traditional council (senior), community leaders, formal leaders (village heads), and the community member.

Local wisdom law regulates daily life, including marriage, land ownership, conflict resolution (maintaining harmony), and cultural heritage (Praditha, 2023). Customary law violations are resolved through customary institutions, customary councils, or respected community leaders. Perpetrators receive various types of sanctions depending on the type of violation: restorative (compensation or peace) or punitive (exile, etc.) (Syafitri et al., 2024). The Gayo community in Aceh Province is bound by the sanctions governing offenses and those stipulated in the decisions of the traditional leaders (*sarak opat*). *Sarak opat* is a customary

institution consisting of *reje* (headman), *imem* (cleric), *petue* (senior citizen) and *sudere* (ordinary people). Each element is strictly regulated and has clear roles and responsibilities. The *reje* is subject to the value of "*musuket sipet*": an attitude oriented towards justice, truth and compassion. *Sarak opat* embodies the teachings of the ancestors of the Gayo people, which include: "*murib i kanung edet mate i kanung bumi murib benar mate suci*" (live based on *adat* die based on natural law, live right die holy).

In the community of Danau Kedap Village, Maro Sebo District, Jambi City, customary law applies, especially for those who commit adultery. This customary law is based on the ancestors' teachings as expressed in the customary saying: "*luko di pampas, mati dibangun*." (there are sanctions for those who violate the rules). Customary law recognizes the term: "*kayu sepang*" (for small fish). This means customary law for minor offenses. The next term is: "*kayu selaras*" (for large fish), such as in the case of adultery (Saputri, 2022). Adulterers can be punished by being beaten with a rattan cane, married off if the perpetrator is still single, or banished from the village, as well as livestock star according to the agreement of the deliberation (Aziz et al., 2020).

The philosophy of Minangkabau customs is very popularly known by the saying: "*adat basandi syara', syara' basandi kitabullah*" (customs based on *syara'* (Islam), *syara'* (Islam) based on the Qur'an). "*Syara' mangato adat mamakai*" (Islam determines the implementation of customs). In the early days before the arrival of Islam in society, the teaching was known: "Custom is based on mutual agreement and consensus, mutual agreement and consensus is based on truth, truth stands on its own." So, custom is determined by rules and propriety or morals which are based only on truth.

C. Pillars of Communication

Communicator

Figures and institutions serve as communicators by upholding inclusive, participatory, and collegial principles, which form the basis for strengthening oversight mechanisms. In the "sasi" tradition in Maluku, decisions about when to close and open a sasi are based on collective authority: representatives of customary law (culture), religious leaders, community leaders, elders, and village heads (political authority).

These figures represent the sociological and political groupings of the local community. These figures are relatively equal because each has legitimacy from its roots. In Gayo, Aceh Province, the collegial customary system is embodied in the "*sarak opat*". This institution manages the preservation of cultural sustainability in Gayo, Aceh Province. "*Sarak opat*" is supported by the main pillars of the Gayo cultural community, reflecting the distribution and synergy of power with their respective duties. *Reje* (head of government) is mandated to exercise executive power in accordance with justice for his people (*edet mu nukum*, characterized by the exercise of judgment with clear evidence). The religious scholars (*imem*) are responsible for guiding and ensuring that Islamic thought (obligatory and recommended) serves as a guideline in all aspects of community life (*ukum mu nukum bersifet kalam*).

The elders (*petue*) are responsible for observing and evaluating community conditions (*musidik sasat*). The people who delegate authority are involved in the decision-making process. The "*sarak opat*" (or "people") are effective communicators, as evidenced by the harmonious relationship between the three pillars of culture.

Such patterns of power synergy are also found in other cultural communities. Village governance is managed with a

collegial collective principle in the indigenous community of Ledu Ledu Village, Wasuponda District, East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The Village Consultative Body, community leaders, institutions, and traditional leaders have authority over decision-making, including the management of village funds (Jeliastiva, 2022).

Message

The values of virtue in local culture are narratives (message) that build awareness of the meaning of life and the role of humans in vertical (transcendent) and horizontal (with humans and nature) relationships. From the Weberian perspective, human attitudes and behaviors do not stand alone they are shaped by a set of knowledge internalized in our minds and consciousness. Consciousness in the ego becomes the central controller of a person's daily activities, such as thinking, feeling, remembering and understanding, working, and so on.

The process of teaching or past experiences can shape consciousness (K. Setiawan et al., 2023). The teachings of the ancestors of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar: "*mipit kudu amit ngala kudu menta*" and "*ngereut jeung neunden keur jaganing isuk*" are passed down to the next generation through oral learning and modeling, namely by witnessing the elders performing these teachings in daily life or certain traditional ceremonies. During the learning process, the formation of awareness occurs gradually.

The application of these thought can be seen, for example, in how the people of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar honor rice. Whether in planting, harvesting, processing, or storing phases, all are carried out based on long-standing traditions. Customary norms require that 10 percent of the rice be stored in the '*leuit*' (Priangani et al., 2023). Therefore, the '*leuit*' symbolizes prosperity, welfare, and social status (Prabowo & Sudrajat, 2021). Rice is also only for personal consumption, it cannot be sold.

That tradition shows that the indigenous people refrain from greedy, gluttonous, and exploitative behavior. They take only what they need to ensure the sustainability of natural resources, which also means the sustainability of their own lives. As a result, the indigenous people of Kasepuhan Ciptagelar enjoy generational food security, while political leaders still treat it as a discourse.

The “*sasi*” tradition among the indigenous people of Maluku also teaches and instills awareness about the need to control greed and avarice. The prohibition on harvesting resources from the sea (certain types of fish) or land is intended to maintain the environmental carrying capacity for the survival of humans not only in the present but also for future generations. Learning from the local culture mentioned above, indigenous people have maintained and practiced an anti-corruption lifestyle from generation to generation. Corruptors are the type of value rational action in Weber's category. He acts based on his values, norms, and standards of ethics and morality, which are greedy and avaricious. Corrupt individuals seize public resources to enrich themselves or their groups by violating rules and norms. Corruption leads to destruction, while the virtues of local culture ensure resilience, sustainability, and the glorification of nature.

The Ledu-Ledu Village Government understands the importance of local cultural values such as *adele* (justice), *lempu* (honesty), and sincerity, and these values serve as the foundation for village governance. In Bali, to achieve the welfare and happiness (*jagadhita*) of its citizens (*krama*), the traditional village is supported by four pillars (Bontot, 2023): the *brahmana varna* (*sulinggih*: intellectuals, clergy or priests), the *ksatriya varna* (*prajuru*/traditional village administrator), *pecalang* (village security guards), the *wesya varna* (business people), and the *sudra varna* (workers/executors). The indigenous community of Ciptagelar is led by an *abah* (senior elder) and assisted by

advisors of *sara*, *nagara*, and *baris kolot* (elder citizens). With this explanation, the mechanism of checks and balances has been embedded in the local culture for centuries which is absent in village fund management and poses a serious weakness leading to fraud. It is clear that local cultural values carry a message of virtue for collective life.

Channel/Medium

Decision-making regarding customary sanctions is one medium that can be observed, as well as a way explaining how to manage compliance and harmony in customary communities. Customary sanctions are a reaction to the violation or non-implementation of customary norms, not to inflict punishment or suffering but to restore balance (restoration), leave a deterrent effect, and uphold the norms (Jeddawi & Rahman, 2020). Sanctions show that the indigenous community is serious about maintaining the agreed-upon norms and values of customary law. Sanctions or punishments are usually intended to educate, restore social balance, and teach a lesson to lawbreakers (Praditha, 2023). Here lies the fundamental difference between the application of customary sanctions and criminal or civil sanctions in the general judiciary.

The main criticism of the general judiciary is that its decisions are considered to not yet fulfill the sense of justice. Distrust in the judiciary forms a strong image that the winning party is identical to cheating and the losing party feels cheated. The litigation path creates a win-lose dualism. The losing party will pursue legal efforts if there is still a chance. As a result, the formal legal process is synonymous with being long and expensive. Disputes through litigation also have negative impacts because they can cause psychological wounds and strain the relationships between the parties involved.

There are too many variables to answer how strong the deterrent effect of customary sanctions is. However, customary sanctions are highly respected because they are crafted from a process

determined by moral symbol figures and "representatives from heaven." They are also relatively accepted because they are emancipatory, interpersonal, and restorative. As a sanction, the perpetrator performs a customary ritual with certain conditions (Wulangsih et al., 2022). In Minangkabau customs, the imposition of sanctions is entrusted to the traditional leader, *ninik mamak*. For serious offenses such as adultery, the perpetrator can be subjected to sanctions ranging from being married off, being beaten with a rattan stick, or being expelled if they refuse to comply with the sanctions (Syafitri et al., 2024).

In Maluku, the resolution of violations is carried out through a trial by the customary law council (seniri council). This institution is composed of the head of *soa* (village head), *orang kei* (village chief), and *raja* (head of the customary region) (Muin & Rakuasa, 2023; Persada et al., 2018). The council will determine the violators' sanctions according to the offense's severity. The act of taking someone's life can be sentenced to being sunk alive into the sea. Before executing the punishment, the community is offered the opportunity to have a resident redeem the offender.

The presence of traditional leaders and customary figures exerts a unique psychological pressure on the offenders. In the context of effectual action (Minner, 2020), living in the belief of Indigenous communities that traditional leaders, especially the village chief, are representations of the "power of the heavens" – not ordinary humans. Meanwhile, customary laws are a sacred constitution – because they are "endorsed" by a "figure from the heavens" (traditional action type) (Minner, 2020; Rust, 2021; Weber, 2019).

This article reinforces the findings of other research that places local culture (local wisdom) as a driving factor for improving bureaucratic governance in villages (K. A. K. Saputra et al., 2018; Subhaktiyasa et al., 2024) and specifically in

minimizing budget management deviations (Jeliastiva, 2022; Nugrahesthy & Hapsari, 2020). However, unlike those two research groups, this article identifies and explains the important elements of local culture and provides arguments for why these cultural elements can drive anti-corruption actions. This article does not intend to make culture the sole force in addressing village budget deviations. On the contrary, by identifying culture's strengths, this article aims for the authorities to position cultural virtues as a strong partner to formal legal procedures and approaches in the management of village funds.

CONCLUSION

Traditional leaders, ancestral teachings as messages, and traditional institutions are the three pillars of communication that work to strengthen the handling of village fund corruption. These three pillars work hand in hand and mutually reinforce each other. Traditional leaders play a crucial role as communicators. They are respected figures who represent values, norms, and even ethics. Traditional leaders serve as references and examples, not only in what they say (verbally) but also in the behavior they display in public (non-verbally).

In general, ancestral teachings in traditional communities instill virtue (local wisdom). As teachings of virtue, traditional values advocate a harmonious and balanced life, both in relationships with others and with nature. Virtuous values in local culture, as texts, are not only found in ancient manuscripts or proverbs passed down from generation to generation. Messages/narratives (traditional norms and rules) are communicated in various forms, including verbal, non-verbal, textual, and sub-textual. Traditional leaders are sources of information and interpreters of the meanings of ancestral teachings as they are understood and implemented.

Through sanctions mechanism, traditional leaders convey a message that sanctions are not intended to inflict suffering but rather to restore the violators'

attitudes and mental state. The customary system implements sanctions through dialogue and deliberation to avoid confrontation and foster an emancipatory, interpersonal, and restorative spirit. Sanctions are living rules of the game, accepted and adhered to—some even considered sacred—from generation to generation. In strengthening the anti-corruption agenda, communicators and their messages serve to educate and persuade, encouraging good behavior. Sanction mechanisms serve as a deterrent for those who violate norms.

Further research can inquire the general assumptions of this study with deductive thinking techniques to complement this general research.

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