

Strengthening Legal Awareness and Community Participation in Talaka Village Governance

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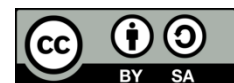
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ABSTRACT

This community service activity aims to strengthen the governance of Talaka Village through the application of good governance principles by increasing legal awareness and community participation. The problem faced is the incompatibility between the ideal norm of public participation as stipulated in laws and regulations and the reality in the field which is still formalistic and has minimal community involvement. To overcome these problems, the method used in this service is qualitative legal research with a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach. The results of the service show that the practice of community participation in village governance is still administrative and symbolic, influenced by limited access to public information and weak communication mechanisms between apparatus and residents. Through PRA-based legal socialization, there is an increase in participant involvement in discussions, the growth of community legal awareness, and the opening of a more equal dialogue space between village officials and the community. Thus, this service contributes to strengthening the capacity of the apparatus and encouraging the creation of more participatory, transparent, and sustainable governance at the local level.

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1. Introduction

Good governance (good governance) is the main prerequisite in realizing the implementation of a transparent, accountable, and public-interest-oriented government (Laku et al., 2025). At the village and sub-district levels, the application of the principle of good governance is increasingly important because this area is the closest government unit to the community, as well as the main arena of interaction between the state and residents (Sumiyati & Darsono,

2023). Therefore, the quality of local governance greatly determines the success of development, the distribution of public resources, and public trust in the government.

The issue of village and sub-district governance needs to be studied in depth because although the regulatory framework in Indonesia has provided ample space for public participation, its implementation still faces various obstacles. Normatively, Indonesia's legal framework has provided space for public participation through Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, Permendagri Number 110 of 2016 concerning BPD, and Government Regulation Number 43 of 2014. However, the existence of norms is not always directly proportional to the quality of implementation (Yusuf Wangka Ihe, 2023). In many regions, village or sub-district deliberative forums that are supposed to be deliberative spaces are only treated as administrative formalities. Community participation is often not substantive because it is influenced by internal factors such as low awareness and education level, as well as external factors such as financial incentives, types of jobs, community income, and lack of government socialization. The findings confirm the existence of a gap between Legal Framework and Field Participation Practices (Amanah et al., 2023).

This condition is also seen in Talaka Village, Ma'rang District, a lowland area with socio-economic characteristics of the community who mostly work as civil servants and pond farmers (Danial et al., 2017). In this village, the main problems that hinder good governance are the weak capacity of the apparatus and the low understanding of the community about their rights and obligations in the administration of government. The lack of training, budget limitations, and lack of local government initiatives cause the apparatus to lack adequate technical and conceptual capabilities. On the other hand, the community does not have enough legal literacy to participate critically and constructively. As a result, deliberative forums, which are supposed to be a joint decision-making mechanism, often run procedurally, without an inclusive deliberation process. Decisions are often prepared in advance, so that the community is only present as a listener, not as an actor who helps shape the development agenda. This pattern goes against the principle Good Governance and hinder the formation of responsive local government.

A number of studies have shown that the principle of community participation is often only implemented formally and procedurally, without providing substantial space for citizens to be involved in the decision-making process. This condition has the potential to weaken accountability and hinder the realization of responsive local government. Previous studies have generally examined certain aspects of village or sub-district governance. Several studies emphasize normative analysis, one of which is the study of Mudhofar (2022) Regarding the conformity of village government practices with the principles of good governance, especially in financial management and development planning. In addition, Firanti and Biduri, (2024) found that low public participation was caused by internal factors, such as the level of education and legal awareness, as well as external factors, such as the lack of policy socialization and the dominance of government apparatus in the deliberation process. On the other hand, Sons (2023) Most of the research still focuses on policy evaluation or problem diagnosis, and has not touched much on direct intervention efforts through community service activities involving the community as the main actor.

Furthermore, existing studies also show that strengthening governance tends to be focused on increasing the capacity of the apparatus, while the role of the community, especially the younger generation group, is still relatively neglected. In fact, the involvement of the younger generation has strategic potential in building a culture of participation, increasing legal literacy, and strengthening social control over the implementation of local government. So, based on these conditions, the purpose of this service activity is to strengthen village governance through a participatory approach that involves village officials, the community, and the younger generation as active partners in the policy planning and supervision process. In particular, this service aims to increase public understanding of rights and obligations in the administration of government, as well as encourage the creation of a more substantive and inclusive participation mechanism.

The implementation of this service has strategic value because it not only contributes to the resolution of practical problems at the village level, but also provides an academic justification that strengthening governance cannot be separated from direct community empowerment. Thus, this activity is expected to bridge the gap between legal norms and government practices, as well as enrich the treasure of good governance studies and practices at the local government level, especially at the level of poverty.

2. Research Methodology

This community service activity was carried out on October 23, 2025 and took place in Talaka Village, Marang District, Pangkajene Regency and the Islands. The selection of the service location is based on the need to improve the quality of village governance, especially related to low community participation and limited understanding of apparatus and residents regarding the principles of good governance. This activity involved 44 participants consisting of village officials, local communities, and high school students in the Talaka Village area.

This service uses Qualitative Legal Research Methods, which describes community participation in village governance (Solikin, 2021). This approach in service uses the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as the main participatory framework, which places the community as an active subject and the main source of knowledge in identifying problems, needs, and solutions related to village governance (Misrah et al., 2024).

The PRA approach was chosen because it is relevant to the purpose of service, which is to encourage meaningful community participation (meaningful participation) and bridging the gap between legal norms and practices of government administration at the local level. Through this approach, the service process is not carried out top-down, but based on egalitarian dialogue and real community experiences. (Widaningsih et al., 2022)

The data in this service activity consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through participatory observation, unstructured interviews, group discussions, and direct interaction with participants during the activity. Secondary data was obtained from secondary legal materials in the form of laws and regulations, books, and scientific journal articles relevant to local government law and the concept of good governance. All data were

used to examine the suitability between the legal normative framework and the practice of village governance.

The implementation of service is carried out through three main stages, namely the pre-implementation stage, the implementation stage, and the evaluation stage, all of which are designed based on PRA principles.

a. Pre-Implementation Stage

The pre-implementation stage is the initial diagnosis stage to identify the structure of governance problems in Talaka Village. This stage includes:

1. Participatory Observation, which is direct observation of the sub-district public service system, information disclosure, as well as documentation and deliberation practices in sub-districts to verify the level of transparency and accountability of the government.
2. Social Mapping, namely the identification of key actors, the pattern of relations between the apparatus and the community, as well as structural and cultural barriers that affect the low participation of citizens in the decision-making process.
3. Preparation of Legal Education Instruments, namely the preparation of socialization materials that are converted from the language of laws and regulations into the form of legally digestible materials. This material includes visualization of the flow of village development planning, deliberation mechanisms, and the community's right to access public information.

b. Implementation Stage

The implementation stage is the core of service activities carried out through a two-way communication strategy with a participatory approach. This stage consists of two main sessions:

1. Presentation of the Legal Framework for Good Governance, which focuses on the principles of good governance and its regulation in Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. The delivery of material was carried out with a case study approach, where participants were invited to discuss the legal implications of the lack of public participation in the implementation of village government.
2. The Egalitarian Citizen Dialogue Forum, which is a critical discussion based on the real experience of the community. In this forum, the conventional question and answer method was transformed into a participatory dialogue that encouraged participants to articulate bureaucratic obstacles, limited access to information, and the dynamics of the relationship between residents and village officials. The service team acts as a facilitator who bridges communication and ensures that each participant has an equal space to express their opinions.

c. Evaluation Stage

The evaluation stage was carried out through qualitative observation of changes in attitudes and the level of involvement of participants during the activity. The evaluation focused on increasing the intensity of participation in discussions, the courage to express

opinions, and the emergence of collective awareness of the importance of transparency, accountability, and participation in village governance.

3. Result and Discussion

A. Analysis of the Initial Conditions of Community Governance and Participation in Talaka Village

In the initial conditions in Talaka Village, community participation in governance was still ceremonial and there was minimal active involvement. Village deliberations that are a forum for citizen participation are only carried out as an administrative formality without a substantive deliberative process. The aspirations and needs of citizens are difficult to absorb systematically because the forum is more directed to fulfill administrative obligations than to capture public aspirations in depth. This is exacerbated by the limitations of the presentation of public information that is less open, such as transparency regarding work plans, activity reports, and the use of the village budget. As a result, the public does not have a strong assessment basis to supervise and provide input related to the policies being implemented. In fact, transparency is the key in building good governance. For example, through digitalization with faster and more accessible information dissemination, it should be able to open communication channels between the government, the community, and the private sector in Talaka Village. In this context, the government is not only responsible for providing data, but also opens up space for the active participation of the private sector and society in the decision-making process (Tri Utami, 2025).

In the Indonesian context, especially in Talaka Village, community participation is still relatively minimal and often a formality. Residents come to the deliberation forum only to fulfill the invitation without really having deliberative space to express their opinions. This is not because residents do not have an interest in participating, but rather internal and external factors that are interrelated. Internal factors that we often encounter are low knowledge, education, and legal literacy in the community. Many of the people then do not understand their role in the village or sub-district government process, so they feel that they do not have the capacity to provide input. In addition, the busyness of work is also a special concern, residents who work as day laborers or informal sector workers are also an obstacle to participating in the deliberative forum which is sometimes carried out during working hours. However, internal factors are also not the main cause. There is a more fundamental problem, namely the provision of proper and optimal public information. This information can be in the form of program plans, budgets, or evaluations of activities that have been implemented.

Based on the results of observations during the continuous service activities, the main finding that can be obtained in Talaka Village is that the provision of optimal public information through digitalization has not been found. So that the lack of access to information causes residents to not have a strong foundation in providing social control or data-based input. Without adequate information, participation can only occur in a symbolic form. So that these ideas are visionary and applicative, their realization is still hampered by

the absence of a formal participatory mechanism to bridge the gap between community ideas and policy implementation.(Citra Larasati et al., 2024).

In addition, village officials also face capacity constraints, both legally and technically. The lack of training and education makes the village apparatus not able to carry out governance optimally, efficiently, and accountably according to the principles of good governance. From the perspective of citizens, low legal literacy narrows the courage to express criticism or social control over the running of the village government. This phenomenon creates a gap between the legal norms of public participation mandated in regulations, such as Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and its derivative regulations, and the reality of practices in the field that are still far from ideal. Therefore, the initial conditions of community governance and participation in Talaka Village indicate the need for serious intervention through strengthening the capacity of the apparatus and increasing the community's legal awareness as the basis for the development of substantive participation.

B. Patterns and Levels of Community Participation

Community participation in village government can only grow with a democratic, transparent, and inclusive system. One of the most fundamental obstacles is the institutional structure of the relevant government that has not been designed to accommodate meaningful participation. Participation by the community in the administration of government is not only determined by the willingness of the community to be involved, but also influenced by the institutional structure of the government and the capacity of local apparatus (Sociopolitico et al., 2024). In the context of Talaka Village, the low community participation is not influenced by the passive factor of the residents, but also by the government system that does not facilitate substantive public participation. The low community participation in Talaka Village cannot be interpreted as a problem of citizen behavior alone, but is also a direct consequence of the government structure that is not inclusive.

In addition, the results of discussions with residents show that the participation of the people of Talaka Village in governance or government administration is still symbolic. The community should be involved in the process of implementing the government when viewed from the aspect of good governance principles, but this is not seen in the talaka village. In the group discussion, residents said that these limitations had an impact on the low courage of the community to express their aspirations critically in the village deliberation forum.

This condition can then be exacerbated by the dominance of the village government in all stages of planning. The Top-down pattern is still the main approach in the formulation of decisions or policies (Susanto et al., 2025). So that there is no room to correct, question, or convey alternative policies, making residents feel that their voices have no influence on the results of deliberations. This can then create inequality between the village government and the community which ultimately reduces the motivation of residents to get involved. Another structural obstacle also lies in the capacity of the village apparatus which is still low in facilitating participatory governance. The apparatus has not been equipped with adequate knowledge about the principles of good governance, especially in terms of information disclosure, participatory governance, and democratic deliberation facilitation techniques.

This condition causes permissive forums to run monotonous, without quality discussion dynamics.

These obstacles emphasized that the low participation of the community, especially in Talaka Village, is not necessarily the result of the passive community or not because of their low education or awareness. The main problem lies precisely in the government environment that does not allow participation to develop. Closed structures, inadequate apparatus capacity, and lack of public information disclosure create conditions where the community is positioned as an object, not a subject in the village development process. In such a framework, the participation that occurs is only administrative, not substantive participation.

C. Legal Socialization Intervention as a Strategy to Strengthen Participation

Community service in the form of legal counseling is a strategy in providing the community with an understanding of the importance of the role of the community in ensuring that the village government implements the principles of Good Governance in carrying out the functions of the village government. This service emphasizes that community concern is the key in ensuring that the village government implements the principles of Good Governance in carrying out government functions. The legal service or socialization carried out in Talaka Village does not only focus on providing material to the community but this legal service or socialization prioritizes the interaction that occurs between the presenter and the community such as exchanging ideas. This is also an exercise or space for the community to grow confidence to express opinions in front of many people (Adam et al., 2021).

Based on observations during the discussion and socialization forum, there are early indications that public understanding of the principles of good governance contributes to improving the quality of participation. Residents explicitly stated that information disclosure and accountability of the apparatus are key factors that can encourage their involvement in a sustainable manner. This shows that community participation is highly dependent on the extent to which the village government is able to build trust through transparent and responsive governance practices.

After the presentation of the material Good Governance In Talaka Village, it is hoped that the community can know that the community is an important instrument in determining a policy. This means that in a democratic country, policy is a representation of the people's voice because policies are formed from the people, by the people, for the people. In this service, the community is not only told that they are a representation in determining a policy, but they must know the rights and obligations, the rights of the community include, legal rights, political rights, social rights, and participatory rights in addition to getting rights, the community needs to fulfill their obligations as a society, namely respecting the rights of others and maintaining obligations to others or to the state (Rahmandani & Samsuri, 2019).

The people hope that the government can organize Good Governance That is the implementation of an effective, transparent, efficient, and responsible government. Principle Good Governance This opens up space for the public to provide input for the government in determining regulations in accordance with the needs of the community. And not only that,

everyone can know the performance of the government so that the community can provide improvements to the performance of services presented by the government (Maryam, 2017)

Community participation is a determining factor in the implementation of good governance, and good governance is a determinant in the creation of clean government administration. So that the entire development process carried out by the village government can provide its main benefits to improving community welfare. The government must ensure that in carrying out its functions they apply the three basic elements of good governance, namely, participation, transparency, and accountability. A good government must open the door so that the public can actively participate, and the government must be transparent in making a policy and in all policies taken by the government can be held accountable (Fadjar Trisakti et al., 2022).

Although this service has not quantitatively measured the long-term impact, qualitative findings show that the application of good governance principles has the potential to substantively strengthen community participation. These indications include increasing legal awareness, growing citizens' confidence to express their opinions, and opening a more inclusive public dialogue space in Talaka Village.

4. Conclusion

Community service activities carried out in Talaka Village show that village governance is still facing fundamental problems in the form of low community participation, limited access to public information, and the capacity of the apparatus that is not optimal in facilitating substantive participation. The community participation that occurs tends to be administrative and symbolic, so it has not been able to encourage inclusive and responsive decision-making to the needs of citizens. Through service interventions based on legal socialization, it is shown that there is a positive initial change in the dynamics of relations between village officials and the community. This service succeeded in increasing public legal awareness, strengthening understanding of citizens' rights and obligations in the administration of government, and opening a more equal and participatory dialogue space.

In addition, the results of this service emphasized that strengthening village governance cannot only rely on regulatory aspects or increasing the capacity of the apparatus alone, but must be accompanied by community empowerment as the main subject in the government process. Legal awareness, information disclosure, and inclusive participation mechanisms are important prerequisites for the realization of the principles of good governance at the local level. Thus, the sustainability of similar programs needs to be directed at strengthening the capacity of the apparatus, developing a transparent public information system, and consistently involving the community and the younger generation in the process of planning, implementing, and supervising village policies.

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