

The Village Secretary's Strategy for Coordinating Village Officials in Conducting Village Deliberations

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Abstract

The core issue of this study concerns the role of the Village Secretary – a village official whose duties include coordinating all village officials during the village deliberation process. The research question addresses the strategies employed by the Village Secretary to coordinate village officials in organizing village deliberations in Umbulan Village, Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency, while also examining the influencing factors. To address this research question, a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach was selected. Data collection involved structured interviews and participatory observation to obtain primary data, alongside documentation techniques for secondary data. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically the "key person" technique. The study concludes that the factors influencing coordination among village officials during village deliberations are: (a) the superior's leadership style, (b) personal relationships among officials, (c) a sense of togetherness among officials, (d) the officials' understanding of their duties, (e) the theme, agenda, or issues being discussed, and (f) the accumulation of work tasks. Meanwhile, the strategies implemented include: (a) enhancing effective communication with subordinates and colleagues, (b) providing rewards to subordinates, (c) discussing work matters democratically, and (d) fostering a sense of kinship and togetherness among the village officials.

Keywords: Village Secretary, Village Officials, Coordination, Village Deliberation

Introduction

Village democracy essentially stems from social values deeply rooted in rural life. Community homogeneity, a spirit of communal solidarity, close kinship ties, the simplicity of agrarian culture, and social order form the foundation supporting collective decision-making processes (As & Kurnia, 2022). These values encourage the community to prioritize the common good over individual interests, ensuring that village issues are resolved through dialogue and deliberation. In this context, village democracy is understood not merely as a political mechanism but as a cultural manifestation embedded in the community's daily life (Irawan, 2020).

The history of village governance reveals that the tradition of deliberation has been an integral part of Indonesian social systems long before the introduction of modern democratic systems. When the British colonial administration under Raffles introduced a mechanism for electing village heads via a majority vote, the system did not erode the strong social bonds of rural communities (Hanafi, 2013). Instead, this electoral mechanism operated alongside local values that emphasized harmony,

mutual cooperation, and a sense of kinship. Thus, village democracy evolved through a blend of formal electoral mechanisms and the deeply rooted culture of deliberation (Hakim, 2018).

This situation is reflected in the scarcity of historical records regarding social conflicts triggered by village head elections—whether during the British or Dutch colonial periods or the Old Order and New Order eras (Yuningsih & Subekti, 2016). Unlike national-level politics, which are often marked by fierce rivalry, democratic processes at the village level have generally maintained social stability, underpinned by strong community social controls. This demonstrates that the kinship systems and values of togetherness flourishing in villages play a crucial role in preserving social harmony while serving as social capital for the continuity of peaceful democracy (Ummah et al., 2023).

As we enter the era of modern democracy, the challenges facing village governance have become increasingly complex. Political competition, rising group interests, and a growing individualistic orientation within society threaten to displace the values of *musyawarah* (deliberation) that have long characterized village democracy (Azhari et al., 2022). Consequently, efforts are needed to realign village democratic practices with the fundamental values of Pancasila specifically the fourth principle, which establishes deliberation for consensus as the primary basis for decision-making. Applying this value is expected to curb the dominance of personal or group interests that could otherwise trigger conflict in village governance (Festianto & Suni, 2022).

Strengthening deliberation-based village democracy is not solely the responsibility of the village government; it requires the involvement of all segments of society. The village government, alongside the Village Consultative Body (BPD), religious and community leaders, traditional leaders, youth representatives, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, plays a strategic role in overseeing the village deliberation process (Hidayatulloh & Yani, 2022). Collaboration among these elements is crucial to ensuring that resulting decisions genuinely reflect the community's aspirations and prioritize the common good. In this way, village deliberation transcends mere administrative procedure, becoming an instrument of participatory democracy that reinforces the legitimacy of village policies (Khoerul, 2020).

Within the village government structure, the Village Secretary holds a highly strategic position in facilitating effective deliberation processes. As the official responsible for coordinating the entire village staff, the Village Secretary acts as both an administrator and a coordinator, ensuring synergy across all stages of governance from planning and implementation to evaluation (Tarigan et al., 2017). The Village Secretary's communication, coordination, leadership, and managerial skills are crucial to the success of village deliberations, particularly in reconciling the diverse interests emerging within both the government and the community. Consequently, the coordination strategies employed by the Village Secretary are a key factor in establishing village governance that is democratic, participatory, and public-service oriented (Heryanto, 2021).

Based on this context, it is evident that the successful implementation of village democracy depends not merely on the existence of formal regulations, but also on the village officials' ability to put the values of deliberation and consensus-building into practice through effective coordination. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the

strategies employed by the Village Secretary to coordinate village government officials, specifically regarding the organization of various village deliberation forums as part of the decision-making process. The study is situated in Umbulan Village, Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency; this location was selected due to its relevance for examining the Village Secretary's strategic role in fostering official coordination to achieve democratic and effective village governance.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical approach to analyze and explain the phenomenon under investigation in depth, based on conditions observed in the field. According to Bogdan and Taylor (as cited in Moleong, 2006), qualitative research is a method that yields descriptive data comprising written or spoken words from informants as well as observed behaviors. The descriptive-analytical approach involves describing the facts obtained, followed by an analysis process to reveal the underlying meanings. Consistent with this, Sugiyono (2009) states that the descriptive approach in qualitative research enables the researcher to obtain in-depth data, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Research informants were selected purposively using a "key person" approach identifying individuals deemed to possess the knowledge, experience, and deep understanding of the research focus necessary to provide relevant and accurate information aligned with the study's objectives (Ruslan, 2004).

Data analysis in this study follows an interactive model comprising four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data collection stage was carried out through fieldwork; subsequently, the collected data were selected, simplified, and categorized according to the research focus during the data reduction stage. Next, the data were presented in narrative descriptions and matrices to allow for a systematic understanding of the relationships between findings. The final stage drawing conclusions involved interpreting patterns emerging from the data, followed by iterative verification to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings, ultimately resulting in scientifically sound conclusions.

Result and Discussion

The village deliberation meeting (*musyawarah desa*) serves as a cornerstone of local democracy, acting as a forum for strategic decision-making. The success of this forum relies heavily on effective coordination among village officials, who drive the administrative machinery in Umbulan Village, Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency. Research indicates that this coordination process does not occur in a vacuum but is shaped by various internal and external organizational factors. Variables such as working relationship dynamics, individual capacity, and workload play a critical role in determining the strength of the coordination established.

The first crucial factor influencing coordination among village officials in Umbulan Village is the superior's leadership style. Drawing on Hersey and Blanchard's (1997) Situational Leadership Theory, a leader's effectiveness depends on their ability to align their leadership style with the maturity level of their subordinates. The Umbulan Village Head functions not merely as an administrative manager but as the leader steering the organization and determining communication flows. A leadership style that tends to be rigid and authoritarian creates psychological distance,

thereby reducing the frequency of bottom-up, initiative-driven coordination. Conversely, a leader who adopts an open and supportive approach encourages village officials to actively exchange information, contributing to the success of the village deliberation meeting.

Beyond leadership, social aspects specifically the personal closeness among village officials in Umbulan Village—also serve as a significant determinant. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, organizational interpersonal relationships are grounded in principles of reciprocity and mutual trust. Strong informal relationships formed outside official working hours in Cikeusik District often help alleviate the rigidity of formal bureaucracy. When village officials share a personal rapport, processes such as data verification, task allocation, and the alignment of perspectives prior to the village deliberation meeting can be executed more swiftly and without convoluted bureaucratic hurdles. This closeness fosters mutual trust, thereby strengthening the foundation of teamwork.

A third factor reinforcing this coordination is the sense of togetherness among the village officials. Theoretically, this aligns with the concept of "Group Cohesiveness" within organizational behavior theory, which emphasizes the strength of the bonds attracting members to the group and keeping them within it. This sense of togetherness at the Umbulan Village Office fosters a collective awareness that the success of village deliberations is a shared responsibility, rather than a personal achievement or the sole domain of a specific section. A work environment characterized by a family-like atmosphere tends to experience minimal internal conflict, as members strive to complement one another's shortcomings. This group solidarity serves as invaluable social capital in maintaining a harmonious workflow.

In addition to sociological and relational factors, cognitive aspects such as the officials' understanding of their duties play an equally crucial role. Drawing on Role Theory, the performance effectiveness of an organizational system relies heavily on the clarity of role expectations understood by each individual within it. Every official in Umbulan Village must have a detailed understanding of their respective *tupoksi* (main duties and functions) to prevent overlapping authority or the shifting of responsibility. A comprehensive understanding of duties ensures effective coordination, as everyone knows when to act independently and when to collaborate with other divisions to prepare the necessary documents or materials for village deliberations.

The fifth factor influencing coordination dynamics in Umbulan Village relates to the characteristics of the themes, agendas, or issues being discussed during village deliberations. These characteristics are closely linked to Task Contingency Theory, which posits that organizational structure and coordination must adapt to the level of task uncertainty and complexity. Complex issues raised during deliberations such as village budget planning or the resolution of spatial planning conflicts within Pandeglang Regency demand a much more intensive level of coordination. The more sensitive and crucial the agenda, the higher the frequency of coordination meetings required. Conversely, routine agendas of a ceremonial nature typically require only standard coordination, as the established patterns are already well understood by all village officials.

The final factor that often hinders coordination at the village office is the accumulation of tasks within a specific functional area. This phenomenon can be explained through Workload Theory, which suggests that excessive workloads

whether quantitative or qualitative diminish an individual's capacity for information processing and communication. Limited human resources within the Umbulan Village administration often force officials to handle multiple responsibilities simultaneously (an informal overlapping of roles). When workloads pile up and deadlines coincide, the officials' focus becomes fragmented. Consequently, the time and energy available for cross-sectoral coordination become severely limited, potentially impeding preparations for village deliberations.

Given the complexity of these factors affecting coordination, the Umbulan Village government is compelled to implement tactical strategies to maintain optimal organizational performance. The first strategy involves enhancing effective communication with subordinates and colleagues. This approach draws upon Organizational Communication Theory specifically Goldhaber's concepts of inbound and outbound communication which emphasizes the importance of smooth information flow across all directions: top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal. Effective communication is fostered by opening two-way dialogue channels, utilizing both formal meetings and informal, relaxed, yet solution-oriented conversations within the Cikeusik District area. The use of information technology, such as instant messaging groups, is also optimized to ensure that the dissemination of instructions and the clarification of issues occur in real-time.

A second strategy implemented to maintain the work motivation of village officials in Umbulan Village involves providing rewards to subordinates. This strategic move aligns closely with the Two-Factor Theory of motivation, which categorizes job satisfaction determinants into hygiene factors and motivator factors (such as recognition and rewards). These rewards need not always be substantial material or financial incentives; they can take the form of verbal praise in a public forum, the awarding of certificates, or recognition of their dedication. This psychological intervention expressing appreciation has proven effective in fostering a sense of self-worth among the village officials. When their contributions are acknowledged by superiors, their enthusiasm for coordination and active participation in village deliberations increases correspondingly.

A third, equally crucial strategy is fostering a culture of discussing work matters democratically. This approach embodies Democratic Management Theory, which prioritizes the active participation of all members in the decision-making process. Decisions regarding preparations for Umbulan Village deliberations are made through collaborative forums involving all village officials, regardless of their rank or position. This democratic approach allows subordinates to freely express ideas, criticisms, and suggestions. The process not only yields more well-considered decisions but also cultivates a strong sense of ownership regarding the decisions reached collectively.

The fourth strategy crucial for long-term harmony is fostering a sense of family and togetherness among village officials. This perspective is rooted in Organizational Culture Theory, which posits that shared values and underlying assumptions held by organizational members shape their work behavior. Non-official activities such as gatherings, communal meals, and routine collaborative work sessions are intentionally initiated in Umbulan Village to break down the barriers imposed by professional formalities. Through this humanistic approach, tensions arising from "sectoral ego" often triggered by work pressure can be mitigated. This close-knit,

family-like atmosphere naturally carries over into the office environment, making official coordination processes feel less burdensome and more enjoyable.

Theoretically, the link between a leader's style and effective communication demonstrates that leadership serves as the primary driver of organizational communication. By positioning himself as a facilitator, the Head of Umbulan Village makes it easier to adopt the two-way communication strategy envisioned in the concept of transformational leadership. When communication channels are wide open, psychological barriers such as subordinates' reluctance or fear—can be eliminated. This has a direct impact on the quality of data and information prepared for village deliberations, as any errors in documents or draft proposals from the Pandeglang Regency community can be detected and rectified early through intensive discussion.

Personal closeness and a sense of togetherness, combined with strategies to foster a family-like atmosphere, create a conducive work environment in Umbulan Village. In the study of organizational sociology, positive emotional bonds among members reduce work-related stress and prevent destructive conflict. When disagreements arise regarding the subject matter of village deliberations, resolutions are not sought through confrontation but rather through level-headed dialogue grounded in mutual respect among the residents of Cikeusik District. This strong solidarity acts as an organizational bulwark against external pressures stemming from the various community group interests that emerge during deliberations. On the other hand, a solid understanding of duties combined with democratic discussion regarding work fosters bureaucratic efficiency at the village level. Grounded in Public Administration theory, a clear operational structure specifically the division of labor balanced with democratic space prevents the stifling of local bureaucrats' creativity. Umbulan Village officials who fully grasp their roles will not hesitate to take initiative within their authority while respecting their colleagues' democratic rights. Democratic discussion also serves as a platform for peer learning, allowing officials with less understanding to be guided by their peers. This mitigates the risk of coordination failure caused by misinterpretations of work instructions or new village regulations.

Challenges arising from demanding deliberation agendas and a backlog of tasks require a high degree of organizational flexibility in Umbulan Village. This highlights the importance of implementing reward strategies and adaptive communication management. When workloads intensify due to complex deliberation agendas such as the drafting of the Village Government Work Plan (RKP Desa) leaders must be capable of redistributing tasks equitably. Providing recognition during these critical moments serves as a morale booster for village officials in Pandeglang Regency, encouraging them to dedicate time to coordination despite the pressures of their heavy routine administrative duties.

This study also demonstrates that successful coordination in organizing village deliberations cannot be achieved merely by relying on formal, paper-based rules. The lean organizational structure of Umbulan Village necessitates a dynamic and relational governance approach, consistent with Relational Coordination Theory. Hindering factors, such as the accumulation of tasks, require managerial strategies that prioritize the mental well-being of staff. A combination of democratic leadership and a family-oriented work culture has proven to be the optimal formula for driving village governance in Cikeusik District.

A deeper analysis reveals that effective communication and the fostering of familial bonds serve as bridges to overcoming structural issues like task backlogs. Open communication allows Umbulan Village officials to understand their colleagues' workloads and voluntarily offer assistance (cross-functioning). Such role flexibility is only possible when a sense of togetherness is deeply ingrained in every official, ensuring that targets for preparing village deliberation documents are met on time without compromising quality.

Overall, the findings from Umbulan Village confirm that human factors and leadership methods exert a significant influence on the village governance coordination system. Technical aspects such as the availability of office facilities or operational budgets in Pandeglang Regency cannot function optimally if leadership styles and interpersonal relationships among officials are marred by tension. Therefore, investing in leadership capacity building, improving internal communication patterns, and nurturing emotional bonds among village officials must be top priorities for the village administration's management.

Consistently implementing these strategies has proven capable of transforming coordination patterns in Umbulan Village from a reactive-instructive model to a proactive-participatory one. Village officials no longer act solely in response to orders from the village head; instead, they take initiative driven by an awareness of their duties and a sense of responsibility toward their team. This transformation in work culture has positively impacted the quality of village deliberations in Cikeusik District, enabling the forums to proceed in a more structured manner with minimal technical conflict, while yielding development decisions that genuinely reflect the aspirations of the local community.

In conclusion, synthesizing various organizational theories reveals that the effectiveness of coordination among village officials during deliberations in Umbulan Village stems from the interplay of democratic leadership, role clarity, and strong social ties. Obstacles such as unbalanced workloads and complex issues can be effectively mitigated through fluid communication strategies, sincere appreciation, and the fostering of a culture based on familial values. The study's practical recommendations highlight the importance of maintaining workplace harmony to establish solid, transparent, and accountable village governance in Pandeglang Regency.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of coordination among village officials during village deliberations in Umbulan Village, Cikeusik District, Pandeglang Regency, is influenced by six intertwined internal and external factors. These factors include the leadership style of superiors in setting direction; personal closeness and a sense of togetherness that break down bureaucratic barriers; an understanding of duties regarding role clarity; the complexity of the deliberation's theme or agenda; and obstacles arising from a backlog of tasks due to limited human resources. The interaction among these factors demonstrates that coordination at the local government level does not rely solely on formal rules on paper but depends heavily on the sociological and cognitive dynamics, as well as the workloads, of those executing the tasks.

To overcome obstacles and optimize these supporting factors, the Umbulan Village Government has tactically implemented four managerial strategies rooted in

a humanistic and participatory approach. These strategies are realized through enhancing effective two-way communication channels, providing rewards to boost work motivation, fostering a habit of democratic work discussions to cultivate a sense of ownership, and building an atmosphere of kinship and togetherness outside of official working hours. The integration of these determining factors and adaptive strategies has proven capable of transforming bureaucratic coordination patterns in Umbulan Village into a more proactive model, thereby ensuring that village deliberations proceed in a solid, transparent, and accountable manner while yielding development decisions that truly reflect the aspirations of the people of Pandeglang Regency.

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