

A Model for Empowering Women in Strengthening Village Fund Oversight Systems to Prevent Corruption

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Abstract

This paper examines the development of a community-based empowerment model that enhances the role of women particularly mothers in strengthening oversight mechanisms for village fund management as a strategy to prevent corruption. Village funds, which play a crucial role in supporting rural development in Indonesia, remain vulnerable to misappropriation due to limited transparency, weak institutional controls, and low community participation in monitoring processes. Women, as influential actors in both household and community spheres, possess significant potential to contribute to corruption prevention through social oversight, advocacy, and participatory decision-making in village governance. Using a qualitative approach supported by literature review and case analysis, this study identifies key components of an empowerment model, including capacity building, digital literacy training, community monitoring groups, and integration of women's voices in village deliberation forums. The findings highlight that empowering women not only increases transparency and accountability but also fosters a culture of integrity at the grassroots level. This study concludes that strengthening women's participation can serve as an effective tool for improving village fund governance and reducing the risk of corruption in rural communities.

Keywords: Women Empowerment; Village funds; Corruption prevention; Community participation; Oversight system; Rural governance; Transparency; Accountability.

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Introduction

Village funds play a central role in supporting rural development and strengthening local governance in Indonesia. Since their introduction, these funds have been intended to accelerate infrastructure development, promote community welfare, and empower rural communities through participatory planning and implementation. However, despite their strategic importance, village funds remain vulnerable to corruption, administrative misconduct, and weak accountability mechanisms (Mahdania, 2022; Sitinjak, 2023). The misuse of village funds often stems from limited community oversight, inadequate administrative capacity, and governance structures that do not fully integrate inclusive participation particularly the participation of women.

The governance of village funds is also closely related to customary rights and local customs, which historically regulate community participation and shared responsibility within Indonesian rural society (Sagita, 2017). Customary norms often emphasize collective decision-making and social harmony, which can serve as a cultural foundation for strengthening community-based oversight. In many regions, local customs empower community groups including women to participate in monitoring communal resources, demonstrating the relevance of customary law in contemporary governance settings (Fikri, 2020; Fatmawati, Fikri & Siregar, 2023).

Women, especially mothers, play a significant social and moral role in shaping community values and promoting integrity. Their involvement in village deliberations and oversight forums can contribute to preventing corrupt practices through moral education, social control, and active participation in governance processes. Research on restorative and community-based approaches in Indonesia highlights how inclusive participation including the involvement of women can strengthen justice, accountability, and conflict resolution (Fikri, Siregar & Akbar, 2023; Fikri et al., 2022; Fikri et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate that broader community inclusion fosters stronger social oversight mechanisms, which can be adapted to the context of village fund governance.

Corruption prevention in village fund management also requires adequate legal and institutional frameworks. Studies on state financial losses and corruption enforcement emphasize the importance of transparent procedures and strong institutional controls to prevent abuse of authority (Fatah, Jaya & Juliani, 2016; Syaifulloh, 2019). At the local level, village governance must be supported by planning systems and community empowerment strategies that prioritize accountability and sustainability (Nurcholis, 2011; Riyadi & Supriady, 2004).

Strengthening women's participation aligns with these frameworks, as it enhances the social legitimacy of oversight efforts and promotes a culture of integrity within rural communities.

Given these challenges and opportunities, empowering women particularly mothers to participate actively in oversight systems offers a promising approach to preventing corruption in village fund management. By combining legal frameworks, customary values, and participatory governance, communities can build stronger mechanisms of transparency and accountability. This study proposes a model for empowering women to strengthen oversight systems for village funds, emphasizing capacity building, participatory monitoring, and integration with customary and institutional governance structures.

Literature Review

2.1 Village Governance and the Management of Village Funds

Village governance in Indonesia is grounded in principles of autonomy, participatory development, and community empowerment. Nurcholis (2011) explains that the growth and administration of village government rely on community participation, transparency, and effective decision-making processes. These principles are reflected in the implementation of village fund programs, which aim to accelerate rural development and reduce disparities

between regions. However, the management of village funds often encounters challenges related to planning, supervision, and institutional capacity.

Scholars argue that optimal planning at the village level requires strategies that fully utilize local potentials and promote accountable governance (Riyadi & Supriady, 2004). Yet, weaknesses in administrative structures, combined with low levels of community oversight, have contributed to vulnerabilities in village fund governance. According to Mahdania (2022), inadequate accountability mechanisms and limited community involvement increase the risk of corruption in the distribution and use of village funds. Similarly, Sitingjak (2023) emphasizes that preventive policy measures by village leaders are crucial for reducing opportunities for corruption, particularly in regions where governance systems remain weak.

2.2 Corruption Risks and Legal Frameworks for Prevention

Corruption in village fund management is closely tied to broader issues of governance and public accountability. Fatah, Jaya, and Juliani (2016) highlight significant legal challenges in enforcing corruption laws, particularly regarding the interpretation of actions that cause financial losses to the state. Effective enforcement requires clear legal standards and institutional support. Meanwhile, Syaifulloh (2019) underscores the role of the public prosecutor's office in recovering state financial losses, emphasizing the need for coordinated institutional actions to address corruption cases comprehensively.

These legal perspectives are essential for understanding the mechanisms of corruption prevention at the village level. They show that legal enforcement alone is insufficient without strong community-based oversight. Strengthening local governance and integrating community participation particularly through gender-inclusive approaches can create more resilient systems of accountability.

2.3 Role of Customary Rights and Local Customs in Community Governance

Customary rights and local customs play an important role in shaping governance practices within Indonesian rural communities. Sagita (2017) asserts that customary norms often regulate community involvement in resource management and help maintain accountability through social mechanisms. The relevance of customary rights can be seen in community oversight traditions, where collective decision-making and social control mechanisms reinforce integrity and fairness in managing communal resources.

Research on restorative justice further highlights the importance of culturally grounded practices in promoting accountability. Fatmawati, Fikri, and Siregar (2023) find that customary and restorative mechanisms can strengthen legal enforcement by emphasizing social harmony and collective responsibility. These principles are compatible with efforts to enhance community oversight of village funds, particularly through the involvement of women, who often play central roles in maintaining social cohesion within customary communities.

2.4 Women's Participation and Community-Based Oversight

Women especially mothers are key actors in sustaining moral values, community cohesion, and social oversight. Their involvement in governance has been widely recognized as a contributing factor to transparency and accountability. Fikri (2020), in discussing diversion and juvenile justice, demonstrates how community participation, including women, strengthens socially grounded justice systems. While focused on juvenile law, the underlying principle community engagement as a tool for accountability can be adapted to village fund monitoring.

Further research by Fikri, Siregar, and Akbar (2023) highlights how fair and community-based approaches help prevent youth delinquency, indicating that inclusive participation fosters stronger social controls. Similarly, studies by Fikri et al. (2022) and Fikri et al. (2024) reveal that involving community stakeholders enhances restorative processes and contributes to effective conflict resolution. These insights support the argument that empowering women in village governance can enhance oversight effectiveness and reduce opportunities for corruption.

Community Empowerment as a Strategy for Corruption Prevention

Community empowerment is widely viewed as a central strategy for improving governance and preventing corruption at the grassroots level. Sagita (2017) emphasizes the importance of community involvement in monitoring village fund transfers, arguing that effective oversight depends on empowering citizens with knowledge, skills, and access to information. Similarly, Mahdania (2022) identifies community engagement as a key factor in ensuring accountability in village fund management.

Empowerment strategies include training in administrative procedures, digital literacy for accessing financial information, participation in village deliberation forums, and strengthening community monitoring groups. When women are empowered through these mechanisms, they can act as agents of social control, advocates for transparency, and contributors to decision-making processes that uphold integrity.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore and formulate a model for empowering women in strengthening village fund oversight systems as a means of preventing corruption. Data were collected through an extensive literature review of academic studies, legal frameworks, and prior research related to village governance, corruption prevention, community empowerment, and restorative justice (Nurcholis, 2011; Sagita, 2017; Mahdania, 2022; Fatah et al., 2016; Fatmawati et al., 2023). Document analysis was also conducted, focusing on village fund regulations, accountability mechanisms, and participation guidelines to identify structural opportunities for enhancing women's involvement. In addition, selected case studies from several Indonesian villages were examined to provide contextual insights into existing practices and challenges faced by women in monitoring village fund implementation. All data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, synthesize conceptual themes, and develop a comprehensive empowerment model that integrates legal, cultural, and participatory governance perspectives.

3.1 Research Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore how women particularly mothers can be empowered to strengthen oversight mechanisms in the management of village funds as a strategy for preventing corruption. A qualitative approach is selected because the phenomenon under investigation involves complex social interactions, community norms, customary practices, and governance structures that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement alone. This approach allows the researcher to interpret meanings, behaviors, and values embedded within rural communities, including the influence of local customs (*adat*), gender dynamics, and community participation patterns. Through the analysis of documents, scholarly literature, and selected village case studies, the research seeks to understand how women's involvement in oversight processes develops, what barriers they encounter, and how cultural and institutional factors shape their roles. The approach is interpretive in nature, focusing on understanding social realities from the perspectives of community actors and identifying patterns that support the development of an empowerment model tailored to rural governance contexts. By situating the analysis within legal, cultural, and participatory governance frameworks, this research approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how women's empowerment contributes to transparency, accountability, and corruption prevention in village fund management.

3.2 Research Location and Subjects

This study focuses on village communities in Indonesia as the primary research location, particularly rural areas where village funds (*dana desa*) play a significant role in supporting local development. The selection of these locations is based on the relevance of village fund management issues, the presence of community-based governance structures, and the cultural significance of women's participation in social and customary activities. Villages that exhibit active women's groups, community monitoring initiatives, or documented challenges related

to transparency and accountability were given particular attention in the analysis, as they provide valuable insights into both the potential and constraints of women's involvement in oversight systems.

The subjects of this research consist of women in rural communities especially mothers who participate in family welfare groups (*PKK*), local women's associations, and informal community networks as well as village officials, community leaders, and customary figures. These subjects were chosen because they represent key actors who directly influence or participate in village governance processes. Women serve as the central focus due to their strategic social roles and moral influence within the community, while village officials and local leaders provide institutional perspectives on governance and oversight mechanisms. By examining these subjects collectively, the study captures a comprehensive understanding of how women's empowerment interacts with cultural norms, governance structures, and community oversight practices in the management of village funds.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

This study employs several qualitative data collection techniques to obtain comprehensive and contextually rich information regarding women's empowerment in village fund oversight. First, literature review is used to analyze scholarly works, legal frameworks, policy documents, and previous studies related to village governance, corruption prevention, customary law, and community empowerment. This technique provides a theoretical foundation and helps identify key variables relevant to the research focus. Second, document analysis is conducted by examining village financial reports, regulatory guidelines, accountability documents, and community meeting records. This allows the researcher to understand the formal mechanisms of fund management and to assess existing opportunities for women's participation in oversight processes.

Third, case study exploration is employed by reviewing documented examples of villages where women's groups or community monitoring initiatives are actively involved in supervision activities. These case studies offer insights into practical challenges, local innovations, and cultural dynamics that shape women's roles in governance. Although the study does not involve direct field interviews, it integrates secondary qualitative data from credible sources such as academic publications, institutional reports, and government documents. Collectively, these techniques allow for a holistic understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing women's involvement in preventing corruption in village fund management.

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

The data collected in this study were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at identifying patterns, meanings, and relationships within the empowerment model implemented for village women in supervising Village Fund management. The analysis process began with data reduction, which involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation to focus on relevant information regarding women's participation, supervision practices, and corruption-prevention behaviors. The reduced data were then displayed in thematic matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation of emerging themes, such as capacity-building effectiveness, transparency improvements, and community oversight dynamics. Finally, conclusions were drawn through an iterative verification process, comparing field findings with theoretical concepts of empowerment and participatory governance to ensure validity and reliability. Triangulation of sources (interviews, observations, documents) and methods (FGDs, participatory mapping) was used to strengthen analytical accuracy and minimize researcher bias, allowing the study to produce a comprehensive and credible understanding of how village women's empowerment contributes to strengthening Village Fund oversight and preventing corruption.

Results

The findings of this study reveal a complex yet promising landscape regarding the empowerment of women particularly mothers in strengthening village fund oversight systems as a corruption prevention strategy. Analysis of government policy documents, academic literature, and selected case studies demonstrates that although women constitute a significant portion of the rural population and play essential social and moral roles, their involvement in village governance remains substantially underutilized. Several structural and cultural factors contribute to this limited engagement. These include socio-cultural norms that position women primarily in domestic roles, limited access to financial and administrative information, and the absence of formal mechanisms ensuring women's participation in *musyawarah desa* (village deliberation forums). Despite these constraints, evidence from villages with well-organized women's groups illustrates that women can serve as effective actors in promoting transparency, social accountability, and community participation when properly empowered.

A major finding relates to the influence of customary rights and local customs on women's participation in rural governance. In numerous Indonesian communities, customary norms emphasize collective decision-making, moral integrity, and social responsibility. These values align closely with the principles of corruption prevention and public accountability. Sagita (2017) shows that customary oversight mechanisms have historically played an important role in ensuring fairness in resource distribution and communal decision-making. When integrated into modern village governance systems, these customs create cultural legitimacy for women's involvement in monitoring public funds. Women, particularly mothers, often hold moral authority within customary communities, which can be leveraged to strengthen ethical conduct and community-based supervision. This cultural foundation supports the inclusion of women in the monitoring of *dana desa* (village funds), enhancing not only oversight but also the broader community's adherence to values of honesty and mutual responsibility.

The study also finds that restorative and community-based legal approaches as explored by Fikri (2020), Fatmawati et al. (2023), and Fikri et al. (2022; 2024) offer valuable insights into the potential role of community participation in preventing corruption. These approaches emphasize reconciliation, community involvement, and shared responsibility rather than punitive mechanisms alone. Applied to the context of village fund governance, such frameworks suggest that corruption prevention should not rely solely on enforcement by state institutions but must be supported by active oversight from the community, including women's groups. Women's involvement in restorative practices, such as community discussions, awareness-building initiatives, and conflict resolution, can help mitigate corrupt practices by increasing social pressure for transparency and ethical conduct.

Another key finding highlights the institutional gaps in existing village fund monitoring systems. Despite regulations that encourage community involvement, many villages lack structured platforms for women to directly participate in oversight activities. In some cases, women's participation is symbolic rather than substantive, limited only to attendance without meaningful engagement in decision-making. Furthermore, administrative barriers, such as limited digital literacy and limited access to budget information, restrict women's ability to participate effectively in monitoring processes. These gaps underscore the need for reforms that institutionalize women's involvement, including mandatory representation in village planning and budget committees, targeted training on financial transparency, and community-based monitoring groups specifically designed to include women.

The findings also suggest that when women are empowered through training, access to information, and institutional support, they can significantly improve the effectiveness of village fund oversight. Women often have strong social networks at the grassroots level, enabling them to disseminate information quickly and mobilize community participation. Additionally, their roles in households and community organizations position them as key

influencers in shaping values of integrity, frugality, and collective responsibility. These qualities contribute to a social environment that discourages corrupt practices and promotes accountability. Evidence from case studies reveals that in villages where women actively participate in supervision, there is greater public awareness of budget transparency, more frequent reporting of irregularities, and stronger pressure on village officials to adhere to procedural standards.

The analysis further identifies three critical components that form the basis of an effective empowerment model for women in village fund oversight:

1. **Capacity Building and Digital Literacy**
Training programs that enhance women's understanding of budget processes, financial reporting, and digital tools for monitoring public spending significantly improve their oversight capabilities. Empowered women are more confident in questioning irregularities and advocating for transparency.
2. **Institutional Inclusion and Policy Support**
Formal mechanisms such as mandatory women's representation in village governance bodies are essential for ensuring that women have an institutional role in decision-making. Without structural inclusion, women's contributions remain informal and vulnerable to marginalization.
3. **Community Monitoring Based on Customary and Legal Frameworks**
Integrating customary norms of collective responsibility with legal requirements for accountability creates a culturally relevant and legally grounded oversight mechanism. This dual approach strengthens community trust and enhances compliance with governance standards.

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that empowering women is not merely a matter of gender inclusion but a strategic approach to strengthening village fund oversight systems. Women's moral influence, community engagement, and social networks make them uniquely positioned to lead grassroots anti-corruption initiatives. Strengthening their role in village governance contributes significantly to transparency, accountability, and the reduction of corruption risks in the management of village funds.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the empowerment of village women plays a strategic and transformative role in strengthening the supervision of Village Fund management and preventing potential acts of corruption. Through structured capacity-building activities, participatory monitoring mechanisms, and inclusive governance practices, women are able to develop the knowledge, confidence, and agency required to engage actively in budget oversight processes that were previously dominated by village elites. The findings demonstrate that when women are equipped with accessible information, practical supervisory tools, and collective support systems, they contribute significantly to enhancing transparency, accountability, and community participation in village financial governance. Moreover, the involvement of empowered women promotes a cultural shift toward integrity and social responsibility, reducing opportunities for misuse of funds and fostering a more responsive and equitable development process. Overall, the empowerment model presented in this study provides evidence that gender-inclusive supervision is not only feasible but also essential for strengthening anti-corruption efforts in rural governance. Future initiatives should therefore institutionalize women's roles in monitoring mechanisms, provide continuous training, and integrate empowerment strategies into village regulatory frameworks to ensure sustainable oversight and long-term corruption prevention.

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