

Strategies for Strengthening Integrity and Anti-Corruption among Village Government Apparatus

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ABSTRACT

The increase in village authority and budget through the Village Fund (DD) and Village Fund Allocation (ADD) has not been fully accompanied by the strengthening of integrity and adequate anti-corruption systems. This study aims to identify strategies to strengthen the integrity of village officials and prevent corruption by taking a case in Lapandewa Jaya Village, South Buton Regency. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), then analysed thematically. The results showed that the weak integrity of the village apparatus was caused by the dominance of decision-making, lack of transparency, and low community participation. The strategies for strengthening integrity found include: integrity value education, increasing transparency through information digitisation, community-based participatory supervision, and sanctions and rewards based on local social values. This research concludes that an integrative approach-combining regulative, cultural, and participatory-is a strategic step in building village governance with integrity and free from corruption.

Keywords: Integrity, Anticorruption, Case Study, Participatory, Village Governance

1. Introduction

Village government represents the frontline of public service delivery and development at the lowest level of the governmental structure in Indonesia. In the era of regional autonomy, villages have been granted greater authority to manage budgets and development programs through the Village Fund (Dana Desa/DD) and Village Fund Allocation (Alokasi Dana Desa/ADD) policies. However, the increase in authority and financial resources has not always been accompanied by corresponding improvements in integrity and adequate anti-corruption systems. One of the main challenges in village governance is the persistence of corrupt practices, which threaten public trust and undermine the effectiveness of services.

Corruption has become a serious problem that hampers development and public service delivery at the village level. Its impact is not only financial but also moral, as it erodes community trust in government institutions. Amid the dynamics of public administration reform, efforts to strengthen integrity and combat corruption in villages have become a crucial agenda. A holistic and sustainable strategy is needed to encourage behavioral change, build institutional capacity, and enhance systems of oversight and accountability in order to manage public resources fairly and transparently.

The phenomenon of power abuse by village officials has become a serious concern in various regions. Reports from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) indicate that throughout 2022, the village sector was one of the largest contributors to corruption cases in Indonesia, with more than 180 cases involving village heads and other village officials. The most common issues included embezzlement of village funds, manipulation of accountability reports, and collusion in the

procurement of goods and services. The case in Lapandewa Jaya Village, Sampolawa District, South Buton Regency, serves as a concrete reflection of this condition. In 2021, the Village Consultative Body (BPD) received numerous reports from the community regarding alleged misappropriation of Village Funds by certain village officials. These allegations included an unfinished farm road construction project, direct cash assistance (BLT) that was not distributed evenly, and indications of inflated prices in procurement activities. Although not all of these findings have been legally proven, the case has already caused public unrest and reduced community participation in village deliberations.

Based on the above discussion, it can be identified that the main challenges faced by village officials lie not only in the technical aspects of program implementation but also in the weakness of integrity and underdeveloped anti-corruption systems. Therefore, the focus of this article is directed toward strategies for strengthening integrity and anti-corruption among village government officials, with a case study in Lapandewa Jaya Village. This study aims to address the central question: What strategies are effective in building the integrity of village officials and preventing corrupt practices in village governance? In this context, the approach adopted does not rely solely on formal interventions (such as regulations and audits), but also emphasizes cultural and participatory approaches that actively involve the community.

Several key pieces of literature provide the foundation for the development of this article. Transparency International Indonesia (2020) highlights that corruption prevention must be rooted in a system of integrity values instilled from the recruitment stage and strengthened through transparent accountability mechanisms. Meanwhile, Klitgaard (1998) argues that corruption emerges from the combination of monopolistic power, discretionary authority, and the absence of accountability. Research by Rohman and Zaki (2020) found that ethics training for village officials, strengthening internal oversight functions (by the Village Consultative Body/BPD), and improving the legal literacy of village communities have proven effective in reducing corruption risks. However, most of these strategies remain top-down in nature and have not fully addressed local cultural aspects or the complex social structures of villages.

Integrity is a fundamental pillar in realizing clean, transparent, and accountable village governance. Nevertheless, the reality in many villages shows that corrupt practices and administrative deviations still occur frequently. Administrative irregularities in village governance, particularly in financial management, have given rise to recurring patterns of corruption. Therefore, this study seeks to formulate a problem-solving framework based on an integrative approach: combining regulatory, cultural, and participatory perspectives to build sustainable integrity and anti-corruption systems. This strategy emphasizes the cultivation of integrity values and culture in village governance through community engagement, digital transparency, and the strengthening of local institutions.

Most previous studies on village-level corruption have been macro in scope, quantitative in nature, and primarily focused on national policies or cross-regional comparisons. This study offers novelty by adopting a micro-level perspective and conducting an in-depth qualitative case study in a single village. By specifically examining practices, perceptions, and corruption-prevention strategies in Lapandewa Jaya Village, this article seeks to provide contextual recommendations that are both applicable and relevant for other villages with similar characteristics. This study is focused on a single case study, namely Lapandewa Jaya Village. Its scope includes analysis of the planning, implementation, and monitoring of village

programs, as well as the identification of integrity values and potential corrupt practices within them. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing strategic models that can be replicated in other villages in Indonesia, particularly those facing similar challenges in building clean and integrity-based governance.

2. Methods

This research employs a descriptive qualitative design with a case study approach. This method is used to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of weak integrity and the emergence of potential corrupt practices in village governance, as well as the efforts that can be undertaken to strengthen an integrity-based culture in a contextual manner at the village level. The study was conducted in Lapandewa Jaya Village, which is administratively located in Sampolawa District, South Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. The selection of this site was based on community reports and preliminary findings regarding issues of integrity and accountability within the village administration. The research was carried out over a period of three months, from [Month] to [Month] 2025.

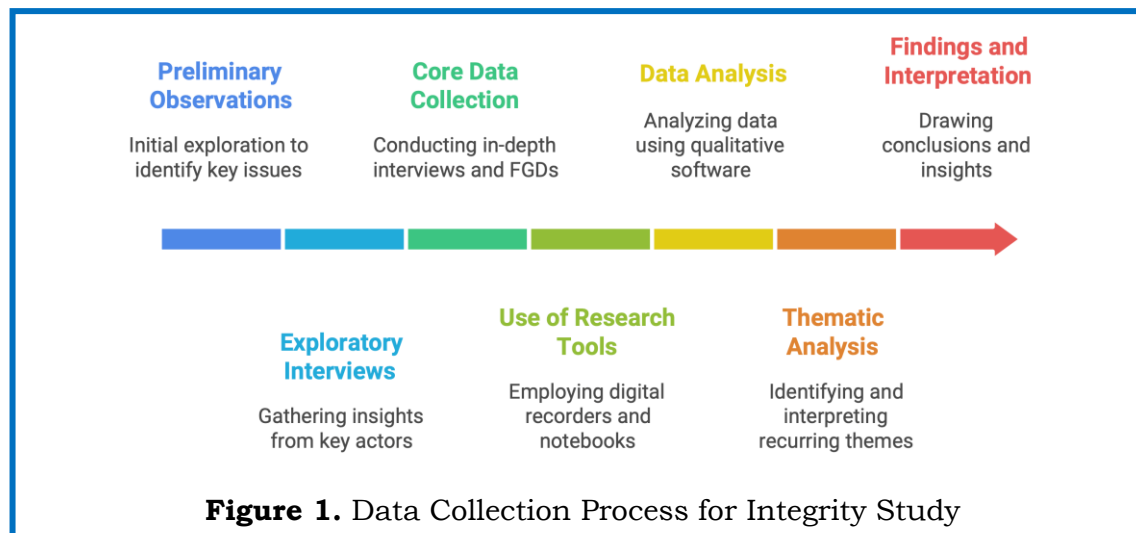


Figure 1. Data Collection Process for Integrity Study

The data collection process in this study was carried out in several carefully structured stages to ensure the accuracy, depth, and reliability of the findings. The process began with preliminary observations and exploratory interviews aimed at identifying key issues, actors, and dynamics related to integrity challenges and potential corrupt practices in village governance. After this initial stage, the research moved to the core data collection phase, which involved the use of primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with village officials, community leaders, and local residents, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) designed to capture collective perceptions and experiences. To support this process, several research tools and materials were utilized, including a digital voice recorder for capturing spoken data with high accuracy, detailed field notebooks for recording non-verbal cues and contextual information, structured interview and FGD guides to maintain consistency in the data collection process, and a laptop equipped with qualitative data analysis software to facilitate systematic coding and categorization of the data. All information gathered was then subjected to thematic analysis, which allowed the researcher to identify, classify, and interpret recurring patterns, themes, and categories related to the strengthening of integrity and anti-corruption practices at the village level, thereby ensuring that the analysis was both rigorous and contextually grounded.

The stages of analysis in this study were carried out systematically and comprehensively to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. The first stage involved transcribing the results of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) in detail so that all spoken information could be documented accurately and used as a reliable reference for subsequent analysis. Once the transcripts were prepared, an initial coding process was conducted to identify patterns of meaning, recurring statements, and critical information that emerged from the data, which later served as the foundation for building thematic categories. These categories were organized into several major themes, such as forms of non-integrity practices in village governance, underlying causal factors, preventive efforts implemented at the local level, and the roles of various local actors in strengthening integrity and anti-corruption culture. The next stage was data interpretation, which aimed to explain the deeper meaning behind the identified themes and connect them with relevant theories and literature, thereby providing a solid analytical framework and enriching the discussion of results. Throughout the entire research process, ethical principles were strictly maintained, including confidentiality of information, informed consent from participants, and non-discrimination in data collection. Every informant was given the freedom to refuse to answer questions considered sensitive, and their identities were fully protected to ensure that no personal information would appear in any form of scientific publication. This approach was intended not only to safeguard the rights of participants but also to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

3. Findings and Discussions

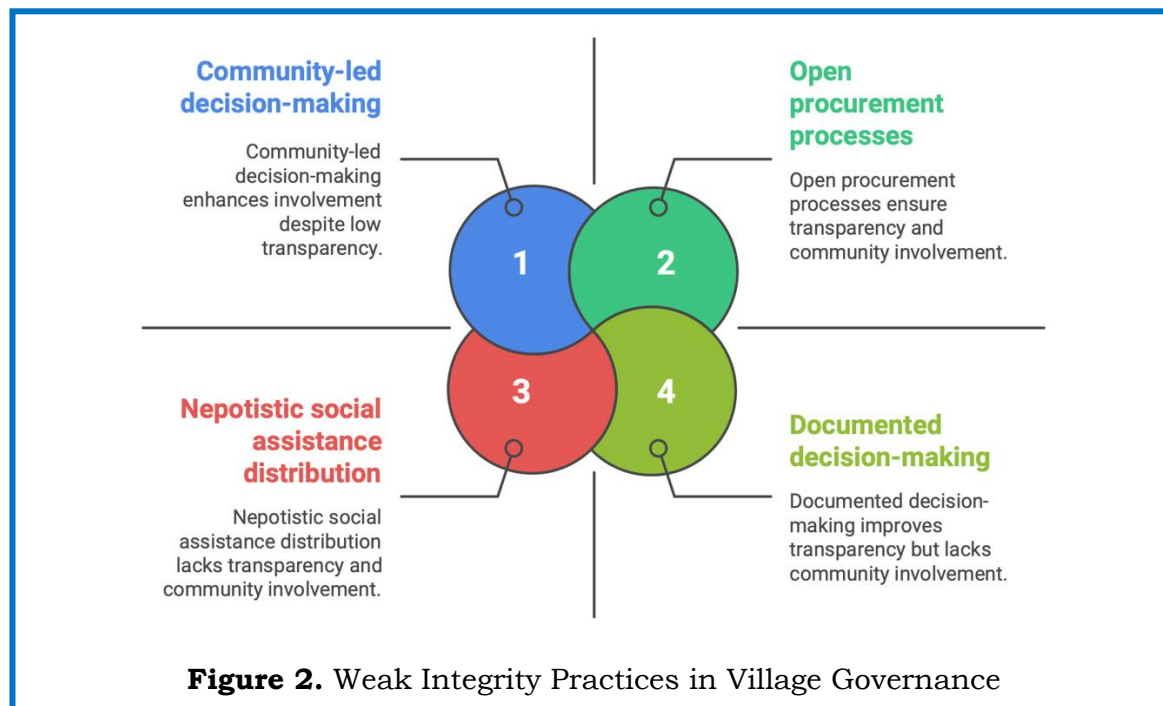
3.1 Findings

Lapandewa Jaya Village is one of the villages located in the southern part of South Buton Regency, with a population of approximately 1,200 people. The majority of its residents earn their livelihoods as farmers and fishermen, making the local economy heavily dependent on agriculture and fisheries. The village receives an allocation of around IDR 1.2 billion annually from the Village Fund (Dana Desa/DD), which is intended to support various development and community welfare programs. Based on initial observations and interviews, it was found that the planning and implementation of village programs have generally been carried out; however, significant challenges remain in the areas of transparency, community participation, and oversight. Over the past two years, several issues have emerged as major concerns among the local community, including a farm road project that did not meet technical specifications, direct cash assistance (BLT) suspected of being misallocated or not reaching the intended beneficiaries, delays in the submission of financial accountability reports, and a lack of adequate publication of financial information to the general public. These issues highlight not only administrative weaknesses but also the urgent need for strengthening systems of integrity, accountability, and community engagement in village governance.

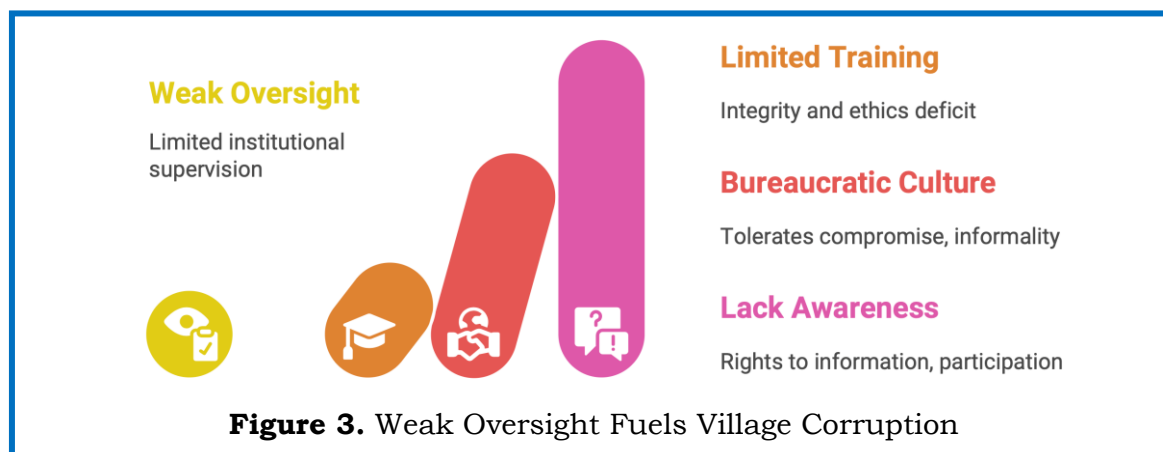
Key Findings: Forms and Sources of Non-Integrity Practices

Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed several integrity challenges in village governance. Decision-making is largely dominated by the village head, with minimal involvement of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and community leaders. Procurement processes lack transparency, with partner selection often closed and poorly documented. The distribution of social assistance is marked by excessive discretion, creating opportunities for nepotism, while many officials show limited understanding of regulations and good governance principles.

These conditions collectively weaken accountability and public trust in village administration.



Based on the results of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), several practices were identified that reflect weak integrity at the village government level, namely: 1) The dominance of decision-making by the village head, with minimal involvement of the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and community leaders; 2) Lack of transparency in the procurement of goods and services, with partner selection processes that are largely closed and poorly documented; 3) High discretionary power in the distribution of social assistance, creating opportunities for nepotistic practices; 4) Limited understanding among village officials of regulations and the principles of good village governance.



The findings indicate that the persistence of weak integrity practices in village governance is strongly influenced by structural and institutional factors. Weak oversight from supra-village institutions, such as sub-district offices and inspectorates, allows village officials to operate with excessive discretion and minimal accountability. At the same time, the limited availability of training in ethics and public integrity reduces the capacity of village officials to implement transparent and responsible governance. Without adequate supervision and skill-

building, governance practices remain vulnerable to irregularities, favoritism, and the misuse of authority. Cultural and societal factors also contribute to the problem. Local bureaucratic culture often tolerates compromise and informality in decision-making, where kinship ties and personal networks influence outcomes more than regulations or procedures. This environment normalizes practices that deviate from the principles of good governance. Moreover, the lack of community awareness regarding their rights to information and participation weakens external control over village administrations. When citizens do not exercise their rights, accountability gaps widen, creating fertile ground for corruption. Strengthening community engagement and fostering a culture of transparency are therefore essential for addressing these integrity challenges

Table 1. Forms of Non-Integrity Practices

Forms of Non-Integrity Practices	Sources of Practices
Dominance of decision-making by the village head	Weak oversight from supra-village institutions
Lack of transparency in the procurement of goods and services	Limited training on integrity and public ethics
High discretionary power in the distribution of social assistance	Local bureaucratic culture that tolerates compromise
Limited understanding of village governance regulations	Lack of community awareness of rights to information and participation

Source: Processed research data, 2025

The table illustrates the relationship between specific forms of non-integrity practices and their underlying sources within village governance. It shows that the dominance of decision-making by the village head is strongly linked to weak oversight from supra-village institutions, which reduces checks and balances in administration. Similarly, the lack of transparency in the procurement of goods and services can be traced to limited training on integrity and public ethics, leaving officials without the necessary capacity to implement fair and accountable procedures. Excessive discretion in the distribution of social assistance is further reinforced by a local bureaucratic culture that tolerates compromise and informal arrangements, thereby opening space for nepotism and favoritism. Finally, the limited understanding of regulations and governance principles among village officials is compounded by low community awareness of their rights to information and participation, weakening external accountability. Collectively, these linkages highlight how structural, cultural, and societal factors converge to sustain practices that undermine transparency, accountability, and integrity in village governance.

Strategies for Strengthening Integrity and Preventing Corruption

Based on the synthesis of data and field reflections, several key strategies have been formulated to strengthen integrity and prevent corrupt practices in the governance of Lapandewa Jaya Village. Together, these approaches highlight the importance of building ethical capacity among village officials, ensuring openness in decision-making and financial management, involving citizens in monitoring governance processes, and creating balanced incentives and deterrents to encourage clean and responsible practices. This comprehensive model reflects the need for both structural reforms and cultural change to establish sustainable integrity and prevent corruption at the village level.



The figure illustrates four thematic strategies designed to strengthen integrity in village governance. The first strategy focuses on education and internalization of integrity values, which seeks to build an ethical foundation among village officials through training, codes of ethics, and community-based education. The second emphasizes enhancing transparency and accountability, with measures such as digitalizing public information, publishing financial and program reports regularly, and reinforcing the supervisory role of the Village Consultative Body (BPD). Both of these approaches address the structural weaknesses that often enable non-integrity practices and aim to create a more transparent and responsible governance culture. The figure also highlights strategies centered on strengthening participatory oversight mechanisms and developing a reward and sanction system. The former involves empowering citizens to play an active role in monitoring governance through community forums, engagement of religious and traditional leaders, and independent local oversight groups. The latter introduces both incentives and deterrents, including recognition for exemplary officials, social sanctions for those who abuse authority, and the establishment of integrity pacts. Together, these strategies combine educational, structural, cultural, and participatory approaches to create a holistic model for reducing corruption risks and fostering sustainable integrity in village administration.

The strategies above indicate that strengthening integrity at the village level cannot rely solely on top-down structural approaches. A contextual approach that takes into account the local socio-cultural characteristics is required to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. The following section presents the flow of strategies for strengthening integrity:



Based on this flow, it can be understood that the most fundamental element in strengthening integrity and preventing corruption is the education and internalization of integrity values among village government officials, followed by the continuous enhancement of transparency and accountability. After these steps, it is crucial to reinforce participatory oversight mechanisms by the community and to develop a system of rewards and sanctions for village officials. In the context of Lapandewa Jaya, traditional and religious leaders hold significant influence over community norms and behaviors. Therefore, their involvement in fostering an anti-corruption culture is highly relevant. This was emphasized during interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with community leaders, village government officials, and youth representatives in Lapandewa Jaya. Moreover, the relatively strong level of digital literacy among village youth creates opportunities to use social media as a tool for transparency and public education. This supports the idea that anti-corruption strategies in villages must be inclusive, adaptive, and rooted in local strengths.

These findings reinforce the study by Rohman and Zaki (2020), which highlighted the importance of combining institutional strengthening with socio-cultural approaches in preventing village-level corruption. However, the present study contributes an additional perspective by integrating strategies based on digital technology and participatory literacy, which have not been widely addressed in previous research.

3.2 Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that strengthening integrity and preventing corruption in village governance requires a systematic and cyclical strategy. At the core of this strategy is the education and internalization of integrity values among village officials, which serves as the foundation for building ethical awareness and responsible behavior. Training programs, codes of ethics, and community-based integrity education were identified as essential entry points for fostering sustainable change. Once this ethical foundation is established, transparency and accountability must be continuously enhanced through routine disclosure of financial reports, the digitalization of public information, and stronger supervisory roles for the Village Consultative Body (BPD).

The study further highlights the importance of participatory oversight mechanisms, which empower citizens to play an active role in monitoring governance practices. Community forums, anonymous reporting systems, and the involvement of traditional and religious leaders were seen as effective tools to ensure that village officials remain accountable to their constituents. In Lapandewa Jaya, the influence of adat and religious leaders on community norms provides a culturally grounded means of promoting anti-corruption values. This shows that contextualizing integrity strategies to align with local socio-cultural characteristics is crucial for their effectiveness and legitimacy.

Another important aspect emerging from the research is the role of digital literacy, particularly among village youth. The increasing use of social media platforms opens opportunities for transparency, public education, and wider dissemination of village financial and program information. By leveraging digital tools, the community can enhance access to information, reduce opportunities for irregularities, and foster participatory monitoring. This finding underscores the need for integrity strategies that are not only structural and cultural but also adaptive, inclusive, and technology-driven. Finally, the results of this study are consistent with the arguments of Rohman and Zaki (2020), who emphasized the importance of combining institutional strengthening with socio-cultural

approaches in tackling village-level corruption. However, this research expands on previous studies by integrating digital technology and participatory literacy as key elements in the anti-corruption framework. These additional dimensions reflect the evolving dynamics of village governance, where community engagement, cultural legitimacy, and technological innovation must work together to build a sustainable culture of integrity and accountability.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the weakness of integrity and the emergence of indications of corrupt practices in village governance, as observed in Lapandewa Jaya Village, are driven by a combination of institutional, socio-cultural, and individual capacity factors among village officials. Practices such as the dominance of the village head in decision-making, the lack of transparency, and the limited participation of the community serve as clear indicators of an ongoing integrity crisis. Nevertheless, the study also identifies a set of contextual strategies that can effectively strengthen integrity and prevent corruption at the village level, namely: 1) Internalizing anti-corruption values through education and training; 2) Enhancing transparency and openness of information through digital media and community forums; 3) Developing participatory oversight mechanisms that involve community leaders and local social institutions; 4) Promoting reward and sanction systems based on the social values embedded in the community. These strategies are not only locally relevant but also hold potential for replication, with appropriate adjustments, in other villages facing similar challenges.

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