



STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE THROUGH POST-HARVEST SPORTS ACTIVITIES: EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENTS IN FACILITATING VILLAGE POLICY DISCUSSIONS IN MACCOPE VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

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This community service program aimed to strengthen community participation in village policy formulation through the integration of traditional post-harvest sports activities (*Malanca*) and participatory discussions facilitated by Public Administration students participating in the Community Service Program (KKN) in Maccope Village. The program employed a participatory and collaborative approach involving local residents, village authorities, students, and other stakeholders in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Data were collected through observation, participatory discussions, interviews, and documentation. The findings revealed that the establishment of the *Maccope Mandiri Group* significantly enhanced citizens' involvement in village planning and budgeting processes. Capacity-building activities improved residents' understanding of APBDes mechanisms and strengthened their ability to formulate and advocate policy proposals. Traditional *Malanca* sports functioned not only as cultural and recreational activities but also as informal arenas for policy deliberation and civic education. Multi-stakeholder collaboration fostered communication between villagers and local authorities, resulting in increased transparency and accountability. Although infrastructural limitations and unequal access to information remained challenges, the program demonstrated that integrating local culture with participatory governance can promote community empowerment and democratic practices. The experience of Maccope Village provides an alternative model for strengthening policy literacy, preserving cultural heritage, and encouraging sustainable community participation in rural development.



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INTRODUCTION

Harvest festivals represent an important cultural tradition in rural communities and function not only as expressions of gratitude for agricultural productivity but also as mechanisms for strengthening social cohesion and preserving local identity. In Maccope Village, South Sulawesi, the annual harvest celebration has long been associated with the traditional sport known as *Malanca*, a local physical game that embodies the values of solidarity, cooperation, healthy competition, and intergenerational interaction. Traditional sports have been recognized as important components of intangible cultural heritage because they contribute to community integration, social capital formation, and the preservation of

indigenous knowledge systems (UNESCO, 2022). Through communal participation, harvest festivals and traditional sporting activities provide opportunities for villagers to strengthen social networks and reinforce collective identities, thereby contributing to sustainable rural development (Putnam, 2015; Coalter, 2017).

The increasing complexity of village governance and the demands of decentralization have elevated the importance of community participation in planning and budgeting village activities. According to the principles of good governance, public programs should be supported by transparency, accountability, and meaningful citizen participation to ensure that development priorities correspond to community needs (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). In Maccope Village, however, participation in planning harvest festivals and *Malanca* competitions remains uneven. Limited human resource capacity, restricted access to information, and insufficient experience in articulating public aspirations have resulted in planning processes that are often dominated by village elites and government officials. Residents living in remote hamlets frequently encounter difficulties in accessing information regarding activity schedules and budget allocations, thereby reducing their opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Such inequalities in participation have been identified as major obstacles to inclusive governance and democratic local development (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; OECD, 2019).

Within this context, students of the Public Administration Study Program participating in the Community Service Program (*Kuliah Kerja Nyata* – KKN) play an important role in facilitating communication between citizens and village authorities. University-community engagement is increasingly recognized as a strategy for promoting social empowerment and strengthening participatory governance (Bringle & Hatcher, 2016). Through mentoring and educational activities, KKN students help villagers understand village planning mechanisms, formulate proposals related to *Malanca* activities, and participate in the evaluation of public programs. Acting as facilitators and mediators, students contribute to the transfer of knowledge concerning village policies and budgeting procedures while encouraging citizens to engage actively in decision-making processes. Such approaches are consistent with participatory governance theories emphasizing collaboration among government institutions, civil society, and educational institutions in addressing public issues (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015).

The traditional *Malanca* sport also provides a unique medium for policy dialogue and civic engagement. Beyond its recreational and cultural functions, sport has been increasingly viewed as a social platform capable of fostering community interaction, social inclusion, and participatory development (Coalter, 2017; Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016). Informal discussions conducted after sporting events allow villagers to express their concerns regarding sports facilities, harvest festival management, and resource allocation. In this sense, sports become not merely physical activities but instruments for social learning and public deliberation. Community-based sporting activities have been shown to promote social trust and collective efficacy, thereby strengthening democratic participation at the local level (Putnam, 2015).

Nevertheless, several structural challenges continue to hinder effective participation. Unequal infrastructure development, inadequate roads, limited public lighting, and weak telecommunication networks restrict access to information and reduce the ability of residents in remote areas to engage in village activities. These barriers indicate that participation is influenced not only by awareness and social capital but also by physical and digital accessibility (OECD, 2019). Consequently, strengthening community capacity through continuous training and assistance becomes essential to ensure that citizens are capable of advocating for their interests and participating effectively in village governance. Capacity-building initiatives have been identified as crucial mechanisms for enhancing citizen competence and democratic engagement (Innes & Booher, 2018).

From a public policy perspective, village governments bear the responsibility of ensuring that harvest festivals and traditional sporting activities are planned transparently, funded adequately, and evaluated objectively. The involvement of KKN students as intermediaries between citizens and local authorities represents an innovative approach to reducing information asymmetry and improving policy literacy among villagers. Such collaboration reflects the principles of collaborative governance, which emphasize shared responsibility and collective problem-solving among multiple actors (Ansell & Torfing, 2016). Therefore, the integration of cultural traditions, community participation, and academic engagement offers a promising model for community empowerment.

Overall, the combination of harvest festivals, traditional *Malanca* sports, and the facilitation provided by Public Administration students creates a distinctive mechanism for promoting participatory governance in Maccope Village. Rather than functioning solely as annual cultural celebrations, these activities have evolved into spaces for civic education, policy deliberation, and social empowerment. Through this process, villagers learn to articulate aspirations, understand budget allocations, and monitor village programs collectively. Consequently, the integration of local traditions with participatory governance represents an innovative strategy for preserving cultural heritage while strengthening democratic practices and sustainable rural development.

METHOD

This community service program in Maccope Village employed a participatory and collaborative approach, emphasizing the active involvement of local residents, Public Administration students participating in the Community Service Program (KKN), village officials, and community organizations throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Participatory approaches are widely recognized as effective strategies for strengthening civic engagement and promoting sustainable community development (Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015; Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015). Preliminary activities consisted of field observations and social mapping conducted by KKN students to identify community conditions, including sports facilities, road accessibility, public lighting, and telecommunication networks. Such participatory assessments are essential for understanding local realities and ensuring that interventions correspond to community needs (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015; Innes & Booher, 2018). Following this stage, students facilitated public discussions and provided assistance to villagers in formulating proposals related to post-harvest *Malanca* sports activities and village policies. Through group meetings, household visits, and community forums, residents were introduced to village planning mechanisms, APBDes allocation procedures, and advocacy techniques to strengthen their participation in village deliberations. Capacity-building activities focusing on policy literacy, communication skills, and digital literacy were also implemented to enhance citizens' ability to access information and engage effectively in decision-making processes (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; OECD, 2019).

The implementation of the program further emphasized multi-stakeholder collaboration involving village authorities, community groups, local NGOs, academics, and KKN students, reflecting the principles of collaborative governance and community empowerment (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015). Students served as facilitators and mediators to encourage inclusive participation and strengthen communication among stakeholders. Periodic consultation meetings and coordination forums were organized to ensure that community aspirations were incorporated into policy discussions concerning harvest festival activities and traditional sports development. Monitoring and evaluation were conducted through attendance records, documentation of community discussions, satisfaction surveys, focus group discussions, and participatory assessments of the impacts of community involvement. Participatory evaluation methods are considered essential for

measuring program effectiveness and generating recommendations for future improvements (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this participatory, collaborative, and facilitative framework, the community service program sought not only to preserve the cultural heritage embodied in *Malanca* traditional sports but also to strengthen policy awareness, civic engagement, and democratic governance in Maccope Village. In this process, Public Administration students played strategic roles as knowledge brokers and catalysts for promoting transparency, accountability, and participatory village governance (Bringle & Hatcher, 2016; UNESCO, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The community service program conducted in Maccope Village demonstrated that integrating the traditional post-harvest sport *Malanca* with participatory policy discussions created a more inclusive mechanism for strengthening community engagement in village governance. One of the most significant outcomes was the establishment of the *Maccope Mandiri Group*, a community-based organization consisting of farmers, entrepreneurs, teachers, youth representatives, university students, and local leaders. This group functioned as a platform for dialogue and collective learning, enabling residents to actively participate in planning, budgeting, and evaluating village programs related to post-harvest cultural activities. The emergence of this group reflects the importance of community-based organizations in fostering social capital and strengthening participatory governance (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015). The findings indicate that community participation became more organized and collaborative, reducing the dominance of village elites in decision-making processes and creating opportunities for broader citizen representation.

Capacity-building activities facilitated by Public Administration students participating in the Community Service Program (KKN) significantly improved villagers' understanding of village planning and budgeting mechanisms. Through workshops and training sessions, community members learned how to formulate proposals, understand APBDes priorities, and advocate for their interests during village deliberation meetings. As a result, several proposals concerning sports facilities and support for *Malanca* activities were successfully incorporated into village development priorities. These included the provision of temporary sports fields, traditional game equipment, and logistical support for participants. Such outcomes illustrate that citizen empowerment through education and participatory learning contributes to more responsive and accountable local governance (Ansell & Torfing, 2016; OECD, 2019). In this context, knowledge transfer provided by KKN students played a crucial role in reducing information asymmetry between citizens and village authorities.

An interesting finding of this program is that *Malanca* functioned not merely as a recreational activity but also as an informal arena for policy advocacy and civic education. Following each sporting event, facilitated discussions allowed residents to express their concerns regarding infrastructure development, budget allocation, and village priorities. This informal approach proved more effective than conventional formal meetings because citizens felt more comfortable communicating their ideas within a familiar cultural setting. The findings support previous studies suggesting that cultural activities can serve as effective instruments for promoting deliberative democracy and community engagement (Innes & Booher, 2018; UNESCO, 2022). Consequently, participation shifted from symbolic attendance to substantive involvement, where residents actively influenced policy discussions rather than simply receiving information.

Another important result concerns the role of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Village officials, community groups, local NGOs, academics, and KKN students collaborated throughout the planning and implementation processes. KKN students acted as mediators between villagers and local authorities by assisting residents in preparing proposals and

facilitating communication during deliberation forums. This intermediary role increased citizens' confidence and encouraged previously passive individuals to voice their opinions. Such collaborative arrangements are consistent with the principles of collaborative governance, which emphasize shared responsibility, consensus-building, and joint problem-solving among stakeholders (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2015). The findings suggest that universities can function as strategic partners in strengthening local governance and community empowerment.

Monitoring and evaluation activities revealed noticeable improvements in participation patterns among villagers. Residents who had previously remained passive became more actively involved in village meetings and public discussions. Participation increased particularly among youth groups and women, who had historically been underrepresented in policy-making processes. Survey results and observational data indicated higher levels of satisfaction and stronger feelings of ownership toward village programs. These findings reinforce the argument that meaningful participation contributes to social inclusion and democratic legitimacy (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2015). Moreover, increased participation strengthened social cohesion and collective responsibility within the community.

Despite these achievements, several structural challenges were identified. Poor road conditions, limited public lighting, and inadequate cellular network coverage constrained the participation of residents living in remote hamlets. These infrastructural limitations restricted access to information and reduced attendance at community meetings and sports events. Therefore, effective public participation depends not only on human resource capacity and facilitation mechanisms but also on the availability of physical and digital infrastructure (United Nations, 2020; OECD, 2019). Without addressing these structural barriers, participatory initiatives may continue to exclude vulnerable groups and reinforce inequalities within rural communities.

The program also revealed diverse motivations among participants. Three major orientations emerged from observations and interviews. First, some residents viewed participation as a means of learning and empowerment, seeking to enhance their knowledge and capacities. Second, others were motivated by economic interests and expected tangible benefits from their involvement. Third, a smaller group demonstrated a critical orientation, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and monitoring of public policies. Rather than creating conflict, these differing motivations enriched community discussions and contributed to more inclusive decision-making processes. This finding supports theories suggesting that diversity of interests can strengthen deliberative democracy by introducing multiple perspectives into public debates (Fung, 2015; Nabatchi & Leighninger, 2015).

Overall, the results demonstrate that the integration of traditional *Malanca* sports, community participation, and KKN student facilitation can significantly enhance citizens' involvement in village policy processes. Beyond preserving cultural traditions, this model promotes policy literacy, strengthens democratic practices, and increases transparency and accountability in village governance. The experience of Maccope Village illustrates that local culture can serve as an effective entry point for community empowerment and participatory governance. Consequently, this model offers valuable lessons for other rural communities with similar characteristics, where cultural traditions may be utilized as instruments for promoting civic engagement, public education, and sustainable local development (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015; UNESCO, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The community service program in Maccope Village demonstrates that integrating traditional *Malanca* sports with participatory policy discussions constitutes an effective strategy for strengthening community involvement in village governance. The establishment

of the *Maccopé Mandiri Group* and the facilitation provided by Public Administration KKN students contributed significantly to improving citizens' understanding of village planning and budgeting mechanisms, while also increasing their confidence to express aspirations and monitor public policies. Traditional sports activities proved to be valuable instruments for civic education, informal policy advocacy, and the preservation of local cultural heritage. Furthermore, collaboration among village authorities, community organizations, students, and other stakeholders enhanced transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in decision-making processes. Despite challenges related to infrastructure and unequal access to information, the program succeeded in fostering a more participatory culture within the community. Therefore, the Maccopé Village experience highlights the importance of combining cultural traditions, community empowerment, and academic engagement to support democratic governance and sustainable rural development.

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