



## Democracy at the Village Level: Exploring the Leadership Style of Village Heads in Decision-Making

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the inconsistency in leadership styles among village heads, focusing on the case of Keduanan Village, where leaders initially adopt a democratic approach but gradually shift toward authoritarian practices. Using Soerjono Soekanto's theory of leadership characteristics and a qualitative method through interviews, observations, and documentation, the study finds that although the Village Head claims to use a democratic leadership style, the practice lacks inclusivity and transparency. Key decisions are often made without involving relevant community groups or proper deliberation. The study concludes that there is a mismatch between the stated leadership style and its implementation, highlighting the need for improved democratic practices and more active community participation in village governance.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A village is the smallest autonomous region within the administrative structure of the Indonesian government. As an autonomous region, a village has the right to manage and meet the needs of its community based on local customs and social and cultural values. Villages play an important role in building the foundation of good governance in Indonesia. The main actors in running the government at the village level are the village government, which consists of the village head and village officials (Khumayah, 2020).

The Village Head is the leader of the Village Government, elected directly by the people through general elections, so the elected leader is expected to represent the aspirations of the community. The position of Village Head is a crucial role within the Village Government system. The Village Head is one of the key elements contributing to the success of village governance (Chitam et al., 2020). The Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages and the Cirebon Regent Regulation Number 152 of 2022 state that the Village Head plays an crucial role in the administration of government. This is in line with the view according to (Sunarso, 2023) an ability of a person to influence others to work together to achieve a vision and mission is called Leadership.

The village head has a leadership style that can support his efforts to achieve his goals. Leadership style is the way a leader behaves to influence others to achieve common goals (Sandy Trang, 2013). Leadership style can determine the effectiveness of an organization at the government and private levels. Leadership style plays a crucial role in the decision-making process, meaning that it can influence the quality of decisions made, as these decisions not only impact village government policies but also the overall well-being of the community.

Through direct and indirect observations, several phenomena were identified indicating that many village heads remain inconsistent. Many village heads initially exhibit a democratic leadership style by listening to aspirations and implementing participatory policies at the beginning of their term, but over time shift toward an authoritarian style that does not involve the community. Inconsistency in the use of leadership styles can lead to a loss of community trust, and village heads who are inconsistent in their leadership styles can pose a major challenge to village development.

Previous studies, in the research (Heryanto, 2021) and (Afrizal et al., 2020), have generally examined the role of village head leadership, such as leading and directing, developing the village, building relationships, setting goals, providing community services, and making decisions. However, no research has comprehensively explored the role of leadership as a decision-maker using the leadership style adopted. Therefore, this study will delve deeper into two aspects: identifying the leadership style adopted by village heads and determining whether that leadership style aligns with its characteristics in the decision-making process.

The research was conducted in the Keduanan Village Administration, located in Keduanan Village, Depok District, Cirebon Regency, West Java Province. Based on preliminary observations conducted by the author, it was

found that the Keduanan Village Administration lacks participation in decision-making, which will lead to several problems in the future. The results of this research can be used by the Keduanan Village Administration as material for improvement so that it can become better and create a prosperous village.

The main focus of this study is to identify the types of leadership styles adopted by village heads and analyze the level of suitability based on the characteristics of the leadership styles adopted. It is hoped that this research will provide benefits for both the Keduanan Village Administration and the community by strengthening leadership quality. Additionally, through this research, it is hoped that it will contribute to a better understanding of leadership styles at the village administration level, particularly regarding the role of the Village Head in decision-making.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Leadership style is a form of behavior or action that reflects a leader's leadership abilities. Leadership style is a way of influencing others to achieve predetermined goals (Salsabilla et al., 2022). There are several types, namely:

### ***Autocratic Leadership Style***

All decisions are made centrally by one individual and policy-making is carried out without involving others. The leader controls all aspects of activities and members only need to follow the leader's directions. According to (Reksohadiprodjo & Handoko, 1997), the characteristics of autocratic leadership are as follows: a leader tends to ignore the needs and desires of their members, establishes one-way communication, is subjective in giving praise or criticism for the performance of their members, and distances themselves from active participation.

### ***Democratic/Participatory Leadership Style***

This style is characterized by a structure that develops through a decision-making approach that involves cooperation with other parties. According to (Soekanto, 1987), its characteristics are as follows: every policy is the result of joint discussions, with the final decision being made based on the encouragement and support provided by the leader. All activities and steps toward the group's objectives are discussed with the leader, who will suggest several alternative options for selection. The leader grants freedom to collaborate with anyone, and task distribution is determined within the discussion group.

### ***Laissez-Faire Leadership Style (Free Control)***

Giving members complete freedom to make decisions and complete tasks. According to (Iswahyudi et al., 2023), the characteristics of this style are that leaders tend to give their members freedom to manage themselves, leaders set broad policies and goals, so that members have the freedom to make their own decisions that they deem appropriate to achieve the goals.

### ***Transformational Leadership Style***

Leaders who clearly communicate the vision and mission of the organization. According to (Armansyah, 2022), the characteristics are that leaders exert a strong influence on their members and motivate and encourage their creativity.

### ***Transactional Leadership Style***

This style focuses on the exchange between leaders and members. According to (Sagala, 2018), the characteristics of this leadership style are that leaders will give rewards or punishments based on member performance, leaders will focus on achieving goals, and leaders will conduct regular monitoring.

In line with this, based on the results of a literature review from previous research in the study (Heryanto, 2021), it was stated that the village head plays an important role in promoting effective governance, including community participation, social welfare, and public services. This study is a descriptive qualitative research conducted in Kedungdawa Village, utilizing primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained through direct interviews, while secondary data was sourced from journals, books, and existing studies. The findings reveal that the village head's performance in administrative functions is not yet optimal.

Research (Afrizal et al., 2020) suggests that village heads play an important role in government policy and fostering community welfare. The leadership functions of village heads can be categorized into four main areas: instructional, consultative, participatory, and delegative. This study used a quantitative approach by distributing questionnaires. The results concluded that the leadership functions of village heads can be considered sufficiently good.

Research (Heru Purwanto & Permana, 2022) suggests that one of the ways to achieve good governance is to provide opportunities for the community to be involved in development decision-making. This research uses a qualitative approach. This research shows that the implementation of the village development planning meeting (Musrenbangkel) in Sunyaragi Village is not yet effective and efficient.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative research type. According to (Sugiyono, 2014) Qualitative research is a type of research that uses a comprehensive perception of the phenomenon under study by examining the phenomenon in more detail. Where this research will describe and analyze the leadership style of the Village Head.

This research was conducted for one month and took place in Keduanan Village Government, Depok Sub-district, Cirebon Regency. This research involved eight informants, namely the Keduanan Village Head, members of the Village Consultative Body (BPD), Youth Organization, Family Welfare and Empowerment Organization, Neighborhood Unit (RT), and Community Unit (RW). This research is based on primary data obtained from interviews,

observations, and documentation, as well as secondary data obtained from books, journals, and related scientific works

This research data was obtained from several sources by conducting interviews with parties involved in the decision-making process in the Village Government. Sources were selected based on certain criteria, according to (Hafni Sahir, 2022) the technique used to select sources based on a specified criteria is called purposive sampling technique. Observations were made directly by observing the interactions that occurred in the second Village Government between the Village Head, BPD, and Village Community Institutions. Documentation by collecting several documents to strengthen the analysis of this research. Then the collected data is analyzed by explaining, managing, describing and interpreting the results of the study by concluding the type of leadership style taken by the village head and knowing the level of conformity based on the characteristics of the leadership style taken in the decision-making process in the Keduanan Village Government

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Leadership Style of Keduanan Village Head***

The author identifies through interviews and observations conducted at the Keduanan Village Government, showing that the Keduanan Village Head as a leader who has full authority over the administration in the Keduanan Village Government has included all activities related to Keduanan Village through a deliberation process. This deliberation involved several groups of people, meaning that the Village Head did not make decisions unilaterally. Thus, the leadership style taken by the Keduanan Village Head is a democratic leadership style, in line with what is stated by (Robbins & Coulter, 2005) which describes leaders who involve members in decision making, provide authority, and encourage active participation from members including in a democratic leadership style.

The Keduanan Village Government in carrying out its duties and roles also involves the community, one of which is in the decision-making process and problem solving. Related to the statement above, it means that the Keduanan Village Government can be said to be a good government, in line with the statement put forward (Djumat et al., 2019) In essence, a good government will be social and emphasize that there is power in the hands of the people, both in the administration of the state and government. One important aspect in realizing good governance is providing opportunities for the community to participate in decision making (Heru Purwanto & Permana, 2022).

### ***Analysis of Level of Conformity Based on the Leadership Style of the Keduanan Village Head***

To analyze the level of conformity based on the leadership style of the Keduanan Village Head, the author uses the theory according to (Soekanto, 1987) in the book (Dimiyati Hamdan, 2014) there are 3 indicators to measure the democratic level of the leadership style used in the decision-making process, namely:

***All Wisdom Occurs in Group Discussions and Decisions are Made With the Encouragement and Assistance of the Leader***

This indicator will discuss a decision-making process through open deliberation, meaning that all authorized parties participate in the deliberation process and the village head as the leader of the deliberation can provide encouragement or assistance for the continuity of the deliberation process.

The Keduanan Village Government has carried out deliberation activities, the implementation of which is led by the Village Head and the activity presents several participants, namely related parties such as village officials, members of the Village Consultative Body, representatives of Neighborhood Unit (RT) and Community Association (RW) in each block, Village Community Institutions, community leaders and others. However, these activities are still not running well and thoroughly because of the gap between the Village Government and one of the organizations within the scope of Keduanan Village. This gap occurs because the two parties often differ in opinions so that the organization is rarely involved in village deliberation activities or activities related to the Village Government. This means that the implementation of deliberations in the Keduanan Village Government has not covered all levels of society, because it shows an imbalance in participation in village deliberations, where there are organizations that do not have the same opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process.

The next aspect, in conducting deliberations led by the village head, the leader of the deliberations has an important role in the deliberations, namely, in addition to leading the deliberations, the leader must also play an active role in providing encouragement and assistance. The village deliberation meeting led by the Village Head has been conducted smoothly. In this process, the Village Head strives to create a safe and conducive environment so that decision-making during the village deliberation meeting can proceed smoothly. In addition to leading the deliberation, the Village Head is also active in motivating participants to express their opinions. Regarding decision-making, the Village Head only compiles opinions from one participant to another. Typically, the Village Head will suggest a vote or ballot if there is a disagreement on an agreement. This means that the Village Head has fulfilled one of the characteristics of democratic leadership, which is to provide encouragement and assistance during the decision-making process in the village meeting. This will certainly facilitate the meeting in achieving its desired goals and reaching the right decisions.

The first indicator, which covers participation in decision-making, has been implemented by holding deliberations with several related parties. Furthermore, the role of the village head as the leader of the deliberation can be said to be good, where the leader allows everyone to express their opinions and then compiles the ideas expressed by the members, which helps to find common ground among the various opinions. However, in practice, it is still not optimal due to a gap between the Keduanan Village Government and one of the organizations in Keduanan Village, causing the organization to feel that it is not sufficiently involved in the deliberation process in the village. If a group or faction is not involved, the decision may be considered not representative of all parties.

*Activities are Discussed, General Steps for Group Objectives are Established, and if Technical Guidance is Needed, the Leader Suggests Two or More Alternative Procedures to Choose From*

This indicator will discuss deliberation or consultation in decision-making. A democratic characteristic is that every activity needs to be discussed, with the discussion process involving structured stages. This also indicates that the village head, as the leader of the consultation, needs to provide space for discussion and offer several alternatives for consideration.

The primary objective of deliberative meetings is to reach a consensus on policies or issues affecting the village's interests. The village head must ensure that all activities are conducted through the deliberative process. In the Keduanan Village Administration, activities are carried out through deliberation, and deliberation activities are also conducted in a structured manner, accompanied by minutes and records. The activities deliberated on are also diverse, such as development, village administration work plans, village fund budgets, and the resolution of problems or conflicts. However, it was found that there are still decisions that are not deliberated beforehand; these decisions are made unilaterally by the Village Government without involving the community. This means that the deliberative decision-making process is not yet functioning optimally, as there are still some decisions made by the village head that do not go through the deliberative process. This contradicts one of the characteristics of democratic leadership, as it may lead to conflicts between various parties.

The next aspect is that the village head, as the leader of the deliberation, should not only facilitate the discussion but also provide guidance or alternative solutions that will facilitate the deliberation process in finding a final solution. The village head will always provide guidance if there are difficulties or deadlocks in the decision-making process. The Village Head will also suggest several options if the existing options are deemed insufficiently solution-oriented, by allowing all participants to express their opinions. If the opinions expressed are still insufficient, the Village Head will suggest alternative options. This means that the deliberation leader has actively played the role of a democratic leader in the deliberation process by providing guidance and alternative options during the deliberation process.

The second indicator, which covers the deliberation process, has been implemented, with the process involving structured stages and the Village Head acting as the deliberation leader who provides guidance or alternative options during deliberations. However, this is still suboptimal because some decisions or policies set by the Village Head of Keduanan are not made through the deliberation process. In accordance with the principle of democracy that the community is involved in determining decisions or policies, if there are decisions that do not involve the community, it can cause several problems, one of which is the community's distrust of the government, and that does not reflect the principles of democracy.

***Freedom of Members, Members are Free to Collaborate With Whomever They Choose, and the Division of Tasks is Determined by the Group***

This indicator will discuss the freedom given by the Village Head to cooperate with both internal and external parties. Cooperation with other parties is key to strengthening democracy at the village level, as well as determining the division of tasks among members as determined in discussion groups.

Collaboration between the village government, residents, and external parties is crucial in the context of democracy. The decision to grant permission for collaboration with external parties is one of the hallmarks of democratic leadership style. The Village Head still limits the freedom of members or organizations within Keduanan Village to collaborate with external parties. Although the Village Head verbally grants permission, in practice, the permission process remains challenging, with difficulties such as lengthy and complex procedures. This means that the Village Head still has shortcomings in his decision to grant permission regarding freedom of work, and if this difficult permit process continues and the Village Head makes no effort to improve it, then this does not reflect the characteristics of democratic leadership.

The next aspect, regarding the decision-making process on the division of tasks among members, one of which is the tasks of Neighborhood Unit and Community Unit, should involve all Neighborhood Unit and Community Unit through village deliberations, so that there is a deeper understanding of their tasks and functions and to ensure fairness for all parties. In the Keduanan Village Administration, the main duties of regional leaders such as Neighborhood Unit and Community Unit are socialized at the time of their inauguration at the beginning of their term of office, with the aim of clarifying their roles and responsibilities. However, outside of these main duties, there are incidental or specific tasks such as the distribution of aid funds to residents, and such assignments are given directly without going through a deliberation process. This inevitably leads to differences in how tasks are carried out in the field, as there are no agreed-upon standards or guidelines established through consultation. This means that the consultation process regarding the distribution of tasks among members is still not optimal, as some matters are not first discussed through consultation, resulting in differences in implementation across each block, which may lead to conflicts among residents or between Neighborhood Unit/Community Unit officials.

The third indicator, which covers member freedom, regarding decisions on cooperation, has been implemented but its application still has shortcomings because there are still complaints. Furthermore, in terms of the division of tasks among members, it is not determined in deliberation because members are directly given tasks and orders to carry them out. This means that without deliberation for the division of tasks, this indicator is less than optimal.

The analysis shows that the Keduanan Village Head is still not very democratic in the decision-making process, as shown by several indicators that have not been implemented optimally. This has led to the emergence of various issues in Keduanan Village, resulting in significant differences compared to other more democratic villages. These include high levels of internal conflict due to strained relations between the community and the Village Government, caused

by low levels of trust in the Village Government, poor quality of public services, and ineffective village development that is deemed inconsistent with community needs. Such conditions can hinder village progress and harm the community.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Research on leadership style analysis of the Keduanan Village Head can be concluded that this study identifies a gap between the Keduanan Village Head's statements regarding the chosen democratic leadership style and the implementation carried out by the Keduanan Village Head in decision-making, which is still considered undemocratic. This is evident from several indicators that have not been implemented properly. This situation could lead to several issues that may affect the effectiveness and sustainability of programs implemented by the Keduanan Village Government.

The author would like to offer some advice to several parties, namely the village head and the village government, to make improvements in decision-making in order to achieve more democratic governance. The community of Keduanan Village should become more active and critical citizens in order to create a more harmonious village.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

Further study is recommended to explore the factors contributing to the gap between the stated democratic leadership style and its actual implementation in Keduanan Village. Future research could investigate internal and external influences on leadership behavior, such as political dynamics, community engagement levels, and institutional constraints. Additionally, comparative studies with other villages that successfully implement democratic leadership could provide valuable insights and best practices to enhance governance effectiveness and accountability in village administrations.

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