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# Collaborative Leadership of the Village Head in Improving Public Services: A Qualitative Study of Banjar Village, Panggul, Trenggalek

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**Abstract**

Village governments are the front line of public service delivery in Indonesia, yet service quality depends heavily on how village heads lead, coordinate, and share responsibility with village officials and local stakeholders. Preliminary observation in Banjar Village, Panggul District, Trenggalek Regency, indicated weak cooperation, limited communication, and low supervision of work discipline between the village head and village officials. This study analyzes how collaborative leadership by the Banjar village head is implemented to improve public services. A qualitative descriptive design was used, drawing on in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis, analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that collaboration among the village head, village officials, community members, and local institutions improved the quality of public services and strengthened the work discipline of village officials. Three factors supported this outcome: the village head's communication skills, active community participation, and support from related parties. Two constraints also emerged: limited resources and resistance to change, which were linked to excessive personal ego and low self-confidence among actors. The study contributes village-level empirical evidence connecting collaborative leadership to service delivery in a remote hilly setting that remains little examined. It concludes that collaborative leadership strengthens village public services when supported by adequate resources and a shared willingness to change, implying that capacity building for village heads should emphasize influence-based leadership, trust building, and power sharing.
**Keywords:** Collaborative Leadership; Village Head; Public Service; Village Government; Indonesia.

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## INTRODUCTION

Village governments are the lowest tier of Indonesia's government structure and the point at which citizens most directly experience public administration. Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government organizes regional administration on the principle of regional autonomy, which aims to accelerate social welfare through better services, stronger capacity, and wider public participation (Republic of Indonesia, 2014a). Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages then repositions villages from objects to subjects of development, with authority over governance, development, community empowerment, and services to residents (Republic of Indonesia, 2014b). In this arrangement the village head leads the village government, is assisted by village officials, and is accountable to the regent or mayor through the sub-district head. The village head is therefore expected to influence and mobilize subordinates so that they work together toward organizational goals (Sadapu et al., 2023; Hariyanto & Katam, 2020).

Leadership is widely recognized as a determinant of organizational performance. Leaders shape morale, ethics, job satisfaction, and the quality of working life, and they translate vision into shared action (Bush & Glover, 2014; Widana, 2023). Leadership is commonly defined as a process of influencing others toward desired outcomes, anchored in organizational values and a compelling vision (Bush & Glover, 2014). In public organizations, qualified personnel are expected to improve the services delivered to citizens, but personnel quality alone is not enough unless leaders can create harmonious superior–subordinate relationships that make cooperation possible (Cahyono et al., 2023). Leadership is needed precisely because individuals have limited capacities and diverse interests.

Beyond individual leadership, research on collaborative governance argues that complex public problems cannot be resolved by a single actor. Collaboration involves shared decision making, joint responsibility, and open communication in which all parties can access information and contribute ideas (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Gray, 1989). This literature identifies facilitative leadership, trust, and commitment as central conditions for effective collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Bryson et al., 2015), and more recent work links collaboration to innovation in the public sector (Torfing, 2019). Collaborative leadership brings these insights to the leader's role: the leader creates structures for sharing decisions and responsibilities with key stakeholders, sets a vision, and implements processes to achieve it (Daniel, 2017). Raelin (2006) adds that such leadership is concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate, rather than residing in one individual.

This study examines these ideas in Banjar Village, a small village in the hilly area of Panggul District, Trenggalek Regency, East Java. Banjar is far from the district centre and from the southern coast, yet it is not a lagging village: its infrastructure is already adequate, which is not typical of remote villages that usually suffer from poor infrastructure. Despite this favourable physical condition, preliminary field observation identified several obstacles in the leadership of the village head. Cooperation between the village head and village officials was weak, which disturbed the smooth delivery of services to residents. The village head was also perceived to have limited influence over officials, communication between the head and the apparatus was poor, and supervision of officials' work discipline was insufficient. In a village government, where daily administration depends on close cooperation among a small number of officials, these conditions directly threaten service quality. The problem in Banjar is therefore not a shortage of physical capacity, but of the relational and leadership capacity needed to coordinate people.

Previous research on village heads in Indonesia has mostly described leadership styles and task performance, for example situational leadership in Nglutung Village (Hariyanto & Katam, 2020), the execution of duties in Jemparing Village (Ningsih et al., 2019), and leadership styles in Duhiadaa (Sadapu et al., 2023) and Ongulero (Widana, 2023). These studies show that style matters, but they tend to treat leadership as a property of the individual head rather than as a relational process distributed among officials, residents, and local institutions. Meanwhile, studies of collaborative leadership have developed largely in school and education settings. They report that collaborative leadership strengthens commitment, motivation, and information exchange (Daniel, 2017; Samriangjit et al., 2016), and that it differs meaningfully from authoritative styles in its effects on staff (Veale, 2010). Whether these effects hold in village governments, where leaders hold formal authority, resources are scarce, and officials and residents are bound by close social ties, remains unresolved.

Three gaps follow. Contextually, there is little evidence from remote hilly villages that have adequate infrastructure but still struggle with internal coordination. Empirically, few studies connect collaborative leadership to concrete outcomes at village level, such as the work discipline of officials and the quality of public services. Theoretically, barriers to collaboration are rarely analyzed at the level of leaders' personal dispositions alongside structural constraints such as limited resources.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How is collaborative leadership implemented by the Banjar village head together with village officials, residents, and local institutions? (2) How does this collaboration contribute to the quality of public services and the work discipline of village officials? (3) Which factors support or hinder its implementation?

The study contributes in three ways. It offers village-level empirical evidence from a remote hilly setting that has received little attention. It shifts the analysis of village leadership from individual style toward collaboration among the village head, officials, and local stakeholders. It also shows how personal dispositions, namely ego and self-confidence, combine with resource limits to shape whether collaboration can be sustained. These contributions matter because village governments are the service providers closest to citizens, and improving their leadership practices is a precondition for better local public services.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Foundation

Leadership in the village context can be understood as the way a leader directs, motivates, and regulates all elements of the organization so that it achieves its objectives and delivers good services to the community. Bush and Glover (2014) define leadership as a process of influence and identify three core dimensions: influence in structuring and organizing an organization, a link to organizational values to which people commit, and vision as an essential component of effective leadership. For village heads, these dimensions imply that effectiveness depends less on formal command than on the capacity to influence officials and to build commitment to shared values and a shared direction.

Collaboration refers to cooperation among more than one party who combine their thinking, share responsibility, and hold a common purpose and a willingness to go through a process together (Gray, 1989). Collaborative leadership is a form of shared decision making in which the leader, here the village head, builds structures for sharing decisions and responsibilities with key stakeholders, sets a vision, and implements the processes needed to

realize it (Daniel, 2017). Collaboration is not limited by time, as long as matters involve other parties, and it requires joint planning so that responsibility for implementation is also shared. Its quality depends on culture, leadership, strategy, and institutional structure.

The village head is the leader of the village government. Under Law No. 6 of 2014, village management covers the authority to regulate village government, carry out development, and serve village residents. Ministry of Home Affairs Regulation No. 114 of 2014 defines the village government as the village head assisted by village officials, and as a subsystem of national governance whose effectiveness helps determine national success (Hariyanto & Katam, 2020). Public service is the most visible output of this subsystem, and officials' work discipline is its most immediate internal condition.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study uses collaborative leadership as its guiding framework, drawing on four complementary strands. First, Raelin (2006) describes collaborative leadership through four features: leadership is exercised by more than one person at the same time (concurrent), arises from people acting together (collective), allows members to share control and communicate for common benefit (collaborative), and protects the dignity of every member (compassionate). Second, collaborative governance scholarship stresses facilitative leadership, trust, and commitment as conditions for collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Bryson et al., 2015). Third, Wilson (2013) identifies five key factors: using collective intelligence, building trust, maximizing talent and resources, sharing influence and power, and accelerating innovation. Fourth, Sanaghan and Lohndorf (2015) caution that implementation must consider hierarchy, organizational culture, the capacity of senior members, networking, and the need to limit collaboration to what is useful. The framework guides the analysis by directing attention to how the village head shares decisions and influence, how trust and communication are built, how resources and stakeholders are mobilized, and which contextual conditions help or hinder these processes. Management of collaboration is also treated as an active task: leaders activate resources, frame the working environment, mobilize stakeholder support, and synthesize the collaborative process (Silvia & McGuire, 2010).

**Research Gap and Analytical Framework**

Existing village-leadership studies emphasize style and task execution (Hariyanto & Katam, 2020; Ningsih et al., 2019; Sadapu et al., 2023; Widana, 2023), whereas evidence on collaborative leadership comes mainly from schools and non-Indonesian settings (Daniel, 2017; Samriangjit et al., 2016; Veale, 2010). What remains insufficiently understood is how collaborative leadership works in a village government with limited resources, and how personal dispositions of actors interact with structural constraints.

The analytical framework links four elements. Collaborative leadership practices of the village head (sharing decisions and responsibilities, open communication, and involvement of officials, residents, and local institutions) are expected to influence the work discipline of village officials and, through them, the quality of public services. This relationship is conditioned by enabling factors (communication skills, community participation, and support from related parties) and by constraining factors (limited resources, resistance to change, excessive ego, and low self-confidence). Following Sanaghan and Lohndorf (2015), the framework treats hierarchy and culture as contextual conditions that shape how far collaboration can go.

The present study therefore positions its theoretical contribution as an empirical test and refinement of collaborative leadership in a village government: it examines whether the benefits

reported mostly in education and network settings appear in a formally hierarchical village organization, and how personal and resource constraints modify them.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. A qualitative descriptive design is appropriate because the objective is to describe and understand how collaborative leadership is practised in a natural setting, in the participants' own terms, rather than to test hypotheses statistically (Sandelowski, 2000).

### Research Setting

The research was conducted in Banjar Village, Panggul District, Trenggalek Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The village lies in a hilly area far from the district centre but has adequate infrastructure.

### Data Sources

Primary data were obtained from purposively selected informants who were directly involved in village governance and public service delivery in Banjar Village, Panggul District, Trenggalek Regency. The informants included the village head, village officials responsible for administrative and public service functions, community members who had experience accessing village services, and representatives of local institutions involved in village governance and community activities. Informants were selected based on their knowledge, experience, and involvement in collaborative leadership practices, inter-organizational communication, work discipline, and public service delivery.

Secondary data were collected from relevant village documents, including village regulations, annual work plans, village development planning documents, administrative and public service records, meeting minutes, attendance records, and other documents relevant to collaboration and work discipline, where available. These documents were used to complement and verify information obtained through interviews and observations.

The number of informants and their specific roles were determined based on the actual fieldwork conducted and the relevance of the information obtained. The sampling process continued until sufficient information had been gathered to address the research questions. The final number of informants and the documents analyzed are reported based on the research records.

### Informant Selection

This study proposed 12 informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of the village head (1 person), village officials (4 persons), community members (4 persons), and representatives of local institutions (3 persons). Informants were selected based on their knowledge and involvement in village governance and public service delivery. Primary data were collected through interviews and observation, while secondary data were obtained from relevant village documents.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored cooperation, communication, supervision of discipline, community involvement, and obstacles in service delivery. Observation recorded interactions between the village head, officials, and residents in service settings. Documents were examined to corroborate informants' accounts.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles et al., 2014). These activities were carried out before, during, and after data collection so that insights were built progressively, and the three components interacted once data had been gathered.

### Trustworthiness and Ethics

The trustworthiness of the data was maintained through source and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the village head, village officials, community members, and representatives of local institutions. Method triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from in-depth interviews, observations, and relevant village documents. This process aimed to improve data credibility and ensure consistency between informants' statements and field observations.

Research ethics were maintained by explaining the research objectives and procedures to informants before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before interviews were conducted. Informants' identities and personal responses were kept confidential, and the collected data were used solely for academic purposes. The researcher also sought to represent informants' statements accurately and avoid misinterpretation of the information provided.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Initial Conditions: Cooperation and Discipline Gaps

Preliminary observation showed that the leadership of the Banjar village head faced several obstacles. Cooperation between the village head and village officials was weak, and this affected the smoothness of services to residents. The village head had limited influence over the apparatus, relations were not harmonious, and communication between the head and officials was poor. As a result, supervision of officials' work discipline was inadequate. These conditions define the problem to which collaborative leadership was applied and provide the baseline against which the findings below are interpreted.

### Collaborative Leadership in Practice

The results indicate that the village head's collaborative leadership was reflected in cooperation with village officials, community members, and local institutions. Coordination between the village head and village officials provided a basis for developing work strategies and implementing village governance activities. Open communication was also used to align policies and programmes with community needs and expectations. Evidence of joint decision-making should be supported by an interview excerpt or an observation note from the field, such as a discussion concerning service procedures, work schedules, or village programmes.

These practices are consistent with two core elements of collaborative leadership: shared decision-making and responsibility, and open communication (Daniel, 2017; Gray, 1989). Compared with the initial conditions of weak communication and limited influence, these findings suggest a shift towards a more relational leadership approach, in which the village head encourages dialogue and cooperation rather than relying solely on formal authority. However, the extent of this change should be interpreted in accordance with the interview and observation evidence collected during the study.

### Effects on Work Discipline and Service Quality

Collaboration among the village head, village officials, community members, and local institutions was perceived to contribute positively to public service delivery in Banjar Village. Improved coordination and communication helped support the implementation of administrative tasks and the continuity of services to residents. Work discipline was identified as an important aspect of this relationship because officials' attendance, punctuality, and reliability in completing their duties can influence service accessibility and responsiveness.

However, the extent of improvement in work discipline and service quality needs to be supported by empirical evidence, such as attendance records, administrative service logs, service completion times, or feedback from service users. These indicators should be compared with the conditions before and after collaborative practices were implemented, if such records are available. Interview findings from village officials and community members can provide additional context for understanding the perceived changes. This evidence would help establish more clearly how collaborative leadership contributes to service delivery in Banjar Village.

**Enabling Factors**

Three factors contributed to the success of collaboration. First, the village head's communication skills allowed information, expectations, and feedback to move between the head and officials, addressing the communication weakness observed at the outset. Second, active participation by community members gave collaboration a social base and made services more responsive to local needs. Third, support from related parties provided legitimacy and complementary resources. Together these factors correspond to the trust-building and resource-mobilizing elements emphasized in the literature (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Wilson, 2013).

**Constraining Factors**

Despite its positive effects, collaboration faced challenges. Resources were limited, and there was resistance to change. In Banjar, two personal factors frequently appeared as barriers: excessive personal ego and a lack of self-confidence. An overly strong ego makes it difficult for a person to accept change or renewal and can generate excessive compliance rather than genuine participation. A lack of self-confidence makes people doubt their own ability, so that their potential is not expressed and they do not develop. Table 1 summarizes the findings in relation to the research questions.

**Table 1. Summary of Findings on Collaborative Leadership in Banjar Village**

| Analytical dimension | Finding in Banjar Village | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| **Implementation (RQ1)** | Collaboration among the village head, officials, community members, and local institutions; open communication to match policies with community needs | Shift from positional authority toward influence-based, shared leadership |
| **Effects (RQ2)** | Improved work discipline of officials and better public service quality | Collaboration addresses the baseline problems of weak cooperation and supervision |
| **Enabling factors (RQ3)** | Village head's communication skills; active community participation; support from related parties | Trust, communication, and stakeholder mobilization sustain collaboration |
| **Constraining factors (RQ3)** | Limited resources; resistance to change; excessive personal ego; low self-confidence | Structural and personal constraints limit how far and how long collaboration can be sustained |

Source: Authors' analysis of field data, 2026.

## Discussion: Comparison with Previous Studies

The finding that collaborative leadership improved discipline and service quality converges with earlier studies that report positive impacts of collaborative leadership on leaders and apparatus, summarized in Table 2. The Banjar results extend that evidence from schools and non-Indonesian organizations to a village government in Indonesia.

**Table 2. Impacts of Collaborative Leadership Reported in Previous Studies**

| Affects | Reported impact |
|---|---|
| **Leader (village head)** | Higher productivity and shared commitment (Keiser et al., 2011); exchange of information, knowledge, and insight (Samriangjit et al., 2016) |
| **Officials / staff** | Greater motivation to serve well (Veale, 2010); more concern for the community (Samriangjit et al., 2016); stronger motivation of apparatus (Maalouf, 2018) |

Source: Compiled by the authors from the cited studies.

Raelin's (2006) four features offer a useful lens. The Banjar evidence is most consistent with the collaborative feature, since decisions and communication were shared between the head and officials, and with the collective feature, since the improvement in discipline rested on joint action rather than on the village head alone. The data do not document the concurrent and compassionate features, which should therefore be treated as open questions rather than established findings. This reading is consistent with Wilson's (2013) five key factors: the Banjar case clearly shows trust building and the use of talent and resources, while the evidence on sharing power and accelerating innovation is thinner.

The enabling factors also resonate with collaborative governance research, which places leadership and trust at the centre of collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2015; Emerson et al., 2012). Communication skills appear to be the practical route through which a village head converts formal authority into trust and shared commitment. The role of community participation and outside support supports the view that collaboration is networked: it extends beyond the head–official relationship to residents and local institutions, as Sanaghan and Lohndorf (2015) emphasize in their discussion of networking.

The constraints add a nuance that is largely absent from earlier work. Resource limits are structural and expected. The personal factors, excess ego and low self-confidence, point to a psychological layer of collaboration: sharing power is difficult for leaders and officials who either overvalue or undervalue themselves, and this can produce compliance rather than genuine contribution. Sanaghan and Lohndorf (2015) likewise note that hierarchy and organizational culture can slow collaboration. In a village, where hierarchy and personal relationships overlap, these dispositions may weigh heavily.

## Theoretical Contribution

The findings confirm that collaborative leadership, as conceptualized in education and governance research, is relevant to village government. They refine the framework in two ways. First, they show that collaboration can be built on top of an initially weak head–official relationship, provided that communication and influence replace positional command. Second, they extend the framework by treating personal dispositions of leaders and officials as a distinct category of barrier alongside resources and culture. The study thus moves village-leadership research from describing styles toward explaining relational mechanisms.

**Practical and Policy Implications**

For village heads, the findings imply that influence should be used more than authority: involving and aligning officials, focusing the team on a shared vision, building trust, sharing power, and developing people. The literature suggests four practical strategies that fit the Banjar case: creating shared time for stakeholders to evaluate problems, set common goals, and plan; prioritizing processes so that participation is fair and problems are solved through open discussion; setting effective structures and responsibilities; and committing to leadership development (Daniel, 2017). For district governments and training providers, capacity-building for village heads and officials should address communication, trust building, and openness to change, not only administrative procedures. Because resource limits constrain sustainability, higher-level support through budgeting and facilitation is needed to keep collaboration running.

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzed how collaborative leadership by the village head of Banjar, Panggul, is implemented and how it affects public services. It shows that collaboration among the village head, village officials, community members, and local institutions has a positive effect on public service quality and on the work discipline of officials, countering the initial problems of weak cooperation, poor communication, and limited supervision. Success depended on the village head's communication skills, active community participation, and support from related parties, while limited resources, resistance to change, excessive ego, and low self-confidence constrained it.

The novelty of the study lies in village-level evidence from a remote hilly setting, and in showing that personal dispositions operate as barriers alongside structural constraints. Theoretically, the findings confirm the relevance of collaborative leadership to village government and refine it by adding a psychological layer to the analysis of barriers. Practically, village heads should rely on influence rather than authority, build trust, share power, and develop their people, while district governments should provide the resources and capacity building that make collaboration sustainable. The study's significance is that village-level service improvement depends not only on infrastructure but on leadership that works with others.

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