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ARTICLE

Strategies for Strengthening Democracy

A Case Study of Supervision-Aware Villages and Anti-Money Politics in Wajo Regency

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Abstract: The practice of money politics is eroding the integrity of local democracy in Indonesia, which ranks third worldwide in this phenomenon. This study analyzes the implementation of the “Supervision-Aware Villages and Anti-Money Politics” program in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, as a response to the failure of formal institutions to address electoral violations. This study used qualitative methods, collecting data through in-depth interviews with 17 informants from five villages, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzing them thematically. The findings indicate that the program succeeded in building critical awareness and selective community participation, primarily through the utilization of local norms of *siri' na pacce* and the informal leadership of village heads. The synergy between the General Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), village governments, and communities creates a collaborative oversight space, despite facing structural barriers such as a culture of silence, budget constraints, and the absence of legal protection for whistleblowers. This study extends participatory governance theory by demonstrating that the effectiveness of collaborative governance in regions depends on local cultural norms' ability to mediate citizen engagement in electoral oversight—a dynamic that clarifies the limits of the theory in contexts with weak formal institutions. Policy implications emphasize the need to institutionalize the program into village governance, integrate it with economic empowerment, and provide adequate whistleblower protection mechanisms to ensure sustainability.

Keywords: Money Politics; Participatory Governance; Supervision-Aware Villages; Local Democracy; General Elections Supervisory Body.

1. Introduction

The practice of money politics remains a global challenge that undermines the integrity of democracy, particularly in developing countries. Indonesia ranks third in the world for this practice, with an estimated 25–33% of voters exposed to money politics in the 2014 elections oversight mechanisms have reduced electoral violations by 30–40% (Muhamad & Hermawan, 2023). This data underscores the urgency to strengthen oversight systems that directly involve the public to maintain the quality of the democratic process.

The urgency of the problem of money politics lies not only in the damage to election integrity but also in its systemic impact on governance and development. Money politics produces incompetent and unaccountable leaders, thereby weakening political representation and public aspirations (Puansah, 2024). At the village level, this practice hinders sustainable development and strengthens local oligarchies. In the context of decentralization, villages are not merely administrative entities, but rather the primary space for substantive democracy, which should serve as the foundation for citizen accountability and participation (Aminah, 2020). However, when money politics infiltrates the village level, this function is distorted into an arena for oligarchic reproduction, rather than a laboratory for local democracy, as policies are often no longer oriented toward the public interest (Chandra & Ghafur, 2020). The long-term impact is the erosion of the foundations of local democracy and the hampering of village progress.

A study by Utami et al. (2020) shows that, despite legal regulations (Law No. 7/2017), the practice of money politics remains rampant because the “buyers and sellers” of votes need each other in the five-year political agenda. This finding reflects the failure of the formal oversight system to reach the social reality of the electoral process, where economic incentives trump the principle of democratic accountability.

This research is situated within the theoretical framework of Collaborative Governance and Deliberative Democracy, but with a particular emphasis on the dynamics between formal and informal institutions. As explained by Ansell and Gash (2008) in the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, collaboration between actors in participatory governance is not a universal solution; its success depends heavily on contextual conditions, such as a history of conflict or cooperation, the balance of power, and facilitative leadership. Their study highlights that collaboration will fail if there is deep mistrust or significant resource imbalances, unless there is a high level of interdependence that forces the parties to cooperate. This phenomenon is relevant to the Indonesian context, where formal institutions such as the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) often fail to enforce the law due to a culture of silence, a lack of protection for whistleblowers, and even the involvement of political actors in corrupt practices (Hamudy & Rais, 2014).

This is where the role of informal institutions, such as local cultural norms (for example, the value of *siri' na pacce* in South Sulawesi), the leadership of traditional figures, and the exemplary behavior of village heads, becomes important. Research such as this study by Utami et al. (2020) study on the Legislative Elections in Pringsewu, shows that despite the existence of legal regulations (Law No. 7/2017), the practice of vote buying remains rampant because vote buyers and sellers need each other to meet the five-year political agenda. This study highlights that the effectiveness of formal law is often trumped by market logic and clientelist relationships. Similarly, Hamudy and Rais (2014) illustrate how the “budget mafia” and “political brokers” in parliament can exploit loopholes in the legal system (the

MD3 Law and the State Finance Law) to manipulate the system, reflecting the failure of formal institutions to control corrupt behavior. Thus, this study proposes a crucial dichotomy: when formal institutions fail, can informal institutions and participatory approaches be an effective substitute?

This research integrates five elements of the theoretical framework. First, the Grand Theory of Deliberative Democracy (Habermas, 1997) positions money politics as a threat to public rationality. Second, the Middle-Range Theory of participatory governance, especially collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008) and accountable autonomy (Fung, 2006) explains how collaboration between actors creates shared oversight through facilitative leadership, interdependence, and trust. Third, the theory of co-production (Ostrom, 1990) adapted to electoral oversight, positioning citizens as active partners in producing “democratic security,” as embodied in the Village Awareness of Oversight Program through reporting, anti-money politics socialization, and strengthening local norms such as *siri’ na pacce*. Fourth, a state-of-the-art review shows that participatory governance studies dominate in Java and Sumatra. At the same time, the context of Eastern Indonesia, with its primordial structures, patron-client relations, and customary social capital, remains under-explored despite the identification of oligarchies and cukong democracy (Teka, 2020). Fifth, this study provides theoretical novelty by testing the resilience of participatory governance amidst the weaknesses of formal institutions, as well as empirical contribution by demonstrating the role of local cultural norms in mediating citizen participation—a dimension that has been inadequate in the Indonesian public administration literature.

Central accountability can address bureaucratic weaknesses. However, Fung also acknowledged that the success of this model depends heavily on local capacity, which is often low in underdeveloped regions. In the context of money politics, this means that collaboration among Bawaslu (the formal authority), village governments, and civil society (the informal actors) will succeed only if there are systematic efforts to build capacity, foster trust, and create shared incentives for transparency. Without this, collaboration can become a mere ritual without substance or even be exploited by local elites to strengthen their dominance (Fung, 2006). This kind of collaborative approach is in line with the findings from Andayana et al. (2024) which demonstrates that the post-election conflict-resolution mechanism in Lamaksenulu was successful precisely because it combined formal authority with customary authority through deliberation grounded in local values. This demonstrates that effective participatory governance in Eastern Indonesia cannot be built solely on bureaucratic structures but must be rooted in social capital and informal leadership.

A literature review shows that public participation in election supervision increases the transparency and integrity of election results (Muhamad & Hermawan, 2023). In Indonesia, villages are recognized as the leading units in strengthening democratic accountability, especially in the decentralization system (Antlöv, 2003; Irawan, 2022). However, as stated by Aminah (2020), stated, the synergy between regional autonomy and regional head elections is weak due to the dominance of administrative rather than political perspectives, so that villages often become arenas for policy implementation rather than spaces for democratic deliberation. Initiatives such as “Anti-Money Politics Villages” are being developed, but their effectiveness is often hampered by weak oversight capacity and suboptimal community participation (Purwaningsih et al., 2023; Wahyuni et al., 2022). These studies highlight that the success of participatory programs cannot be measured solely by the existence of rules or structures but must be seen from the extent to

which these practices can change behavior and build new social norms that reject money politics.

However, several research gaps remain identified in existing literature. First, research focuses predominantly on Java and Sumatra, leaving the dynamics of Eastern Indonesia, such as Sulawesi, underexplored (Noak, 2024; Sitorus et al., 2023). The absence of studies in this region is regrettable, given that local political dynamics in Eastern Indonesia are often influenced by primordial social structures and deep patron-client relations, as documented by Teka (2020). In his study of the Ata-Maramba culture in Sumba, Beetham systematically eroded the principles of political equality and public control, two pillars of democracy. A similar phenomenon is also seen in the practice of cukong democracy involving local elites and financiers, as revealed by Khairi (2020). Second, studies on institutional synergy between the General Elections Supervisory Body, village governments, and communities within the framework of participatory governance are still very limited (Asmorojati & Harianja, 2024; Yusuf & Hidayat, 2025). Third, empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of innovation programs such as “Supervision-Aware Villages” are still minimal and tend to be descriptive. More importantly, almost no studies explicitly examine the limits of Participatory Governance when confronted with the structural weaknesses of formal institutions, such as those experienced by the General Elections Supervisory Agency.

This research is highly relevant to current conditions, considering that the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) continue to encourage innovation in participatory oversight at the grassroots level. The “Village Awareness of Supervision” program initiated by the Wajo Regency Bawaslu is a concrete example of a systematic effort to combat money politics through a collaborative approach. The context of Wajo Regency, with its typical socio-cultural characteristics of Eastern Indonesia and complex local political dynamics, makes it an interesting and strategic locus for study. This research aims to: (1) Analyze the effectiveness of the “Village Awareness of Supervision and Anti-Money Politics” model in Wajo Regency; (2) Identify forms of synergy between Bawaslu, village governments, and communities in participatory governance; and (3) Formulate policy recommendations for model replication. The research contributions include a theoretical aspect in enriching the literature on local democracy and participatory governance in Eastern Indonesia, particularly by testing the effectiveness and limits of collaboration amidst the weaknesses of formal institutions; an empirical aspect through an in-depth case study; and a policy aspect by providing input for stakeholders in designing a sustainable money politics prevention program.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to understand the implementation of the “Village Awareness of Supervision and Anti-Money Politics” Program in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the collaborative dynamics between the Election Supervisory Agency, village governments, and communities within a unique local context, including the role of the cultural value of *siri' na pacce*, adaptation strategies, and structural barriers.

Data collection was conducted over four months, from June to September 2025, in five pilot villages: Lampulung, Kalola, Tonralipue, Tosora, and Assorajang. During this time, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 key informants,

consisting of three representatives from each village: (1) village/sub-district heads, (2) village supervisors, and (3) residents from diverse social backgrounds (farmers, housewives, traders). In addition, researchers interviewed Wajo Regency Bawaslu officials and an academic involved in program outreach to provide complementary external perspectives.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on direct involvement in the program, representation within the supervisory structure, and ability to provide reflective information. The number of informants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, which occurs when additional interviews no longer yield new themes or insights.

In addition to interviews, researchers also collected data through documentation, including field notes, outreach materials (billboards, posters, leaflets), and official activity reports. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis model (Braun & Clarke, 2006), starting from interview transcription, open coding, to grouping into core themes such as “non-formal approaches in socialization”, “culture of silence as an obstacle to reporting”, and “legitimacy of messages through traditional figures”.

To maintain validity and credibility, the researchers employed four strategies: (1) source triangulation by comparing narratives across actors; (2) an audit trail through comprehensive documentation of the data collection and analysis process; (3) reflexivity, namely recording initial assumptions and maintaining analytical distance during interviews; and (4) implicit member checking, by providing space for informants to clarify or deepen their statements during the interview sessions. Thus, this research not only describes “what happened” but also captures “why and how” participatory governance developed in the social reality of Wajo.

Five villages served as research sites: Lampulung, Tosora, Kalola, Tonralipue, and Assorajang urban village.

Table 1. Village Names

No.	Village	Sub-District	Position of informant
1	Lampulung	Pammana	1. Village Head 2. Village Community 3. Village Supervisor
2.	Tonralipue	Tanasitolo	1. Village Head 2. Village Community 3. Village Supervisor
3.	Tosora	Majauleng	1. Village Head 2. Village Community 3. Village Supervisor
4.	Kalola	Maniangpajo	1. Village Head 2. Village Community 3. Village Supervisor
5.	Assorajang Urban Village	Sajoangging	1. Village Head 2. Village Community 3. Village Supervisor

3. Results and Discussion

The research findings reveal the complex dynamics in the implementation of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics Program in Wajo Regency, which cannot be understood solely through the lens of formal policy or technical participation. Instead, the effectiveness of this program, although partial, is determined by the dialectical interaction between strong political commitment as an institutional foundation, community involvement overshadowed by a culture of silence, and the internalization of local democratic values that are still fragile but full of potential for transformation. These three dimensions do not stand alone, but

rather mutually reinforce and simultaneously hinder each other within the context of the participatory governance idealized by [Fung \(2006\)](#).

In the following analysis, the empirical findings are organized thematically into three critical narratives: (1) Mechanisms of Success, which highlights how political commitment and cultural adaptation create space for collaborative oversight; (2) The Paradox of Participation, which reveals the tension between increasing normative awareness and the absence of formal reporting resulting from a socially rationalized culture of silence; and (3) Structural Barriers, which identifies budget constraints, weak institutionalization, and the absence of whistleblower protections as systemic barriers to program sustainability. Through this structure, the discussion goes beyond simply describing “what happened,” but explicitly tests the limits of participatory governance theory in the context of weak formal institutions and a society torn between values and material needs.

3.1. High Political Commitment: A Strong Formal Basis

3.1.1. Public Involvement in Election Monitoring: Between Awareness and a Culture of Silence

Before the Village Awareness Program for Supervision and Anti-Money Politics, public participation in election monitoring in Wajo Regency was virtually nonexistent. Residents tended to be apathetic, passive, and chose to remain silent when witnessing violations, particularly money politics. This culture of silence was not neutral; rather, it was a deep-rooted social fear of being hated by neighbors, ostracized, or labeled a “traitor” for reporting it. In the context of a tightly knit, kinship-based village community, reporting was considered disruptive to social harmony.

However, since the program’s launch in five pilot villages: Lampulung, Kalola, Tonralipue, Tosora, and Assorajang, a subtle shift in community participation patterns has occurred. Although not evenly distributed and still selective, some residents have begun to demonstrate the courage to refuse money, question the boundaries between social assistance and money politics, and even report suspicious practices discreetly. These changes did not emerge instantly, but rather resulted from a continuous, adaptive, and locally wisdom-based educational approach. Field findings indicate that community involvement in election monitoring can be mapped into three main dimensions: (1) participation in monitoring, (2) willingness to report, and (3) rejection of money politics. These three are interrelated, but the level of acceptance and implementation varies from village to village, depending on local leadership, outreach intensity, and the community’s socio-cultural characteristics.

First, in monitoring participation, communities are beginning to realize that they are not only objects of the election, but also subjects of monitoring. In Kalola village, for example, residents no longer wait for officials to arrive; instead, they actively observe their surroundings. One young man there refused an envelope from the campaign team, arguing: “I have my own money and my own choices.” In Lampulung village, residents even dared to reprimand a neighbor who brought a cell phone into the voting booth, a technical violation previously considered trivial. However, in Assorajang and Tonralipue villages, participation remains limited to certain groups, such as religious leaders, women from the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), and youth. The majority of residents remain passive, especially those who are busy working in the fields or fishing.

Second, willingness to report remains a major weakness. No formal reports were submitted to Bawaslu from targeted villages during the last election period. This is not because there were no violations, but rather due to a deep-rooted culture of silence and a lack of guaranteed legal protection for whistleblowers. Many residents admitted they knew about vote-buying practices but chose not to report them for fear their identities would be revealed. A woman in Tonralipue village said: “I’m afraid I’ll feel sorry for them... If I report them, it will ruin our relationship.” In the village of Tosora, although the village head openly stated that he would complicate the administrative process for residents who engage in vote buying, this actually reinforced the culture of silence among residents who are afraid to report for fear of being accused of “snitching” for personal gain.

Third, resistance to money politics is growing, though still fragile. In Kalola and Lampulung villages, some residents openly refuse money or necessities for moral and religious reasons. They use narratives such as “illegal money won’t bring blessings” or “my vote can’t be bought.” However, many residents still accept aid for economic reasons: “If I don’t give it, it’s a loss,” said a woman in Assorajang sub-district. For them, money politics is not a violation, but rather a legitimate seasonal blessing.

The primary driving force behind this change was the informal, context-based approach used by village heads and supervisors. Outreach was not conducted through formal, rigid forums, but rather through social occasions: religious studies, celebrations, patrol posts, coffee shops, and even during breaks in the rice fields. In Kalola village, Village Head Suparman conveyed an anti-money politics message using an agricultural analogy: “If we accept money, fertilizer won’t flow smoothly, and grain won’t sell.” In Lampulung village, Village Head Ambo Tahang offered free services to residents who voted based on their conscience—an effective form of non-material incentive.

Strong political commitment at the local level, particularly from the Wajo Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the regional government, provides a formal foundation for participatory initiatives such as the Village Supervision Awareness and Anti-Money Politics Programs. Empirically, this commitment is manifested through explicit policy instruments, initial resource allocation, and the active involvement of state actors in designing the architecture of collaboration with village communities. However, as emphasized by Participatory Governance Theory (Fung, 2006), having a formal framework in place does not automatically lead to effective deliberative democracy or co-production. What is critical is the quality of the integration between formal structures and the informal social dynamics present at the grassroots level.

3.1.2. Success Mechanism: High Political Commitment as a Formal Foundation for Participatory Governance

In the Wajo context, strong political commitment serves as an enabling, not a sufficient, condition for participatory governance. The Regency Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) not only issues technical policies but also actively facilitates collaborative forums involving village governments, religious leaders, and residents. This aligns with the collaborative governance model (Ansell & Gash, 2008), which emphasizes that successful collaboration depends on inclusive institutional design, facilitative leadership, and initiative by public actors. In Wajo, Bawaslu played the role of honest broker, enabling the formation of a deliberative space where the public

could engage not merely as objects of oversight, but as active subjects in the production of democratic security.

However, a deeper analysis shows that top-down and projective political commitments, particularly those intensified only in the run-up to elections, actually create structural tensions in participatory governance. As noted by [Fung \(2006\)](#), meaningful participation requires accountable autonomy; communities are given real authority, but also supported by accountability mechanisms from the center. In Wajo, although Bawaslu provides a formal framework, participatory oversight authority is not permanently institutionalized within the village government structure (for example, through Village Regulations or integration into Village Development Planning Deliberations). As a result, citizen participation remains episodic and vulnerable to changes in bureaucratic leadership.

These findings confirm a critical proposition in the participatory governance literature: high political commitment without strong institutionalization can lead to symbolic participation. As noted by [Ansell and Gash \(2008\)](#), effective collaboration requires a clear institutional design, including rules for participation, transparency of processes, and sustainability of resources. In Wajo, despite strong initial political commitment, the absence of whistleblower protection mechanisms and inconsistent post-election funding indicate that this formal foundation is insufficient to sustain long-term oversight co-production.

Thus, the strong political commitment in Wajo Regency served as an initial catalyst for participatory governance, but it has not yet transformed into a resilient local democratic architecture. To achieve this, political commitment must transcend rhetoric and temporary allocations and be institutionalized into permanent village governance, so that community participation no longer depends on elite generosity but becomes a collective right and responsibility guaranteed by the system.

However, structural barriers remain. Budget constraints make the program unsustainable after the election, and participatory monitoring activities have virtually ceased. A lack of human resources for village supervisors limits the scope of oversight. And most crucially, the lack of a whistleblower protection mechanism at the district level discourages citizens from reporting officially.

Thus, although collective awareness is growing, community involvement in election monitoring in Wajo Regency remains fragmented and has not yet become a fully fledged social movement. Participation remains dominated by idealistic youth groups, religious leaders, and citizens who have experienced political disillusionment, while the majority of pragmatic and apathetic citizens remain trapped in short-term economic logic. The Awareness Village Program has opened the door, but to make it a mainstream path, it requires ongoing commitment, real legal protection, and the integration of democratic values into the daily lives of village communities.

3.2. Implementation of the Village Awareness Program for Supervision and Anti-Money Politics

The implementation of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics Program in Wajo Regency is a concrete manifestation of efforts to build participatory and integrated local democratic governance. This program aims not only to suppress the practice of money politics, which has become entrenched in political culture, but also to change the public's perspective on the right to vote as a trust, not a commodity to be traded. The initial idea for this program emerged from the

Indonesian Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). It was implemented by the Wajo Regency Bawaslu with a highly contextual approach, given that money politics in Wajo villages often occurs covertly, hidden behind social assistance, basic food packages, or even aspirational projects in the lead-up to the election.

In the planning stage, the Wajo Regency Bawaslu did not work alone. They involved various stakeholders from the outset, including local government officials, community leaders, and village heads. The process of determining target villages was carried out through collective deliberation, taking into account the level of vulnerability to money politics, the readiness of village officials, and community enthusiasm. Five villages were selected as pilot projects: Lampulung, Kalola, Tonralipue, Tosora, and Assorajang. This selection was not random, but rather the result of identification based on previous election experiences and the village's potential to become agents of change.

Program implementation was carried out in a hierarchical yet collaborative manner. The Regency Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) acted as the policy initiator and facilitator, while village/sub-district supervisors served as direct liaisons with the community. However, the most strategic actors in implementation were the village government and local leaders. Village heads not only provided space and facilities but also served as moral role models. In Lampulung Village, for example, Village Head Ambo Tahang consistently rejected money politics during his first two terms and offered free administrative services to residents who voted based on their conscience. In Kalola Village, Village Head Suparman used a religious approach and the parable of a farmer to explain the long-term impact of money politics on village development.

Village supervisors served as the spearhead, bridging formal regulations with social realities. Ahmad Fadil in Kalola, for example, did not directly act as a supervisor but instead mingled through night patrols, community gatherings, and community social gatherings. He delivered his anti-money politics message not through stiff lectures, but through everyday analogies: "If we vote because of money, it's like selling the harvest before it's weighed." Haerunnisa took a similar approach in Tosora, using a discussion among women to convey the value of rejecting money politics.

Cross-actor collaboration is also evident in the utilization of local values. The concept of *siri' na pacce* (shame and empathy) serves as a moral foundation in conveying the message that accepting money from candidates is not only illegal but also damages the dignity of the village. In the Tosora village, known as the cradle of Wajo democracy, this historical value is used to strengthen the program's legitimacy. Meanwhile, in Assorajang sub-district, Village Head Siti Ruhama regularly visits the panrung-panrung (gazebo) to encourage residents to reject money politics, using relaxed, friendly language.

However, program implementation is not without challenges. Budget constraints mean that activities are only intensively conducted in the lead-up to the election, without ongoing post-election support. The limited number of village supervisors also makes it difficult to achieve broad oversight coverage. However, this limitation is overcome by involving informal figures such as neighborhood associations (RT/RW), mosque imams, youth groups (Karuna Taruna), and women's groups (PKK) as extensions of participatory oversight.

Overall, the implementation of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics Program in Wajo Regency demonstrates that the success of election oversight depends not only on formal institutions but also on the synergy between

Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency), village governments, and the community itself. An approach that respects local wisdom, is flexible in its methods, and is rooted in social trust is key to building a democracy free from transactional practices. As emphasized by the Village Head of Kalola, “This program is not just about rules, but about how we remind each other as a community to maintain our shared dignity.”

3.2.1. Success Mechanisms: Cross-Actor Synergy and Adaptation of Local Wisdom in Program Implementation

The implementation of the Village Awareness Program for Supervision and Anti-Money Politics in Wajo Regency represents an empirical effort to realize participatory governance that relies not only on formal structures but also builds co-production of oversight between the state and the community. As emphasized by [Fung \(2006\)](#), effective participatory governance requires reciprocal accountability not only from the bottom up but also from the top down, as well as strengthened local autonomy supported by institutional backing. In the Wajo context, program implementation demonstrates how these principles are operationalized through institutional synergy and contextual cultural adaptation.

The Wajo Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) does not act as a sole actor, but rather as a collaborative facilitator that initiates a cross-actor deliberative forum. The program planning process involves the local government, the PMD Agency, village heads, and community leaders through a collective deliberation mechanism, which aligns with the principles of collaborative governance ([Ansell & Gash, 2008](#)) successful collaboration requires inclusive institutional design, facilitative leadership, and initiative by public actors. The selection of the five pilot villages—Lampung Lampulung, Desa Kalola, Desa Tonralipue, Desa Tosora, and Kelurahan Assorajang—was based on considerations of vulnerability to money politics, the readiness of village officials, and the potential for social transformation, rather than on mere technocratic criteria. This reflects a problem-solving approach that is responsive to the local context, rather than the imposition of uniform policies from above.

In its implementation, this program avoids the trap of formal bureaucracy by positioning village governments and local figures as key actors. Village heads not only implement policies but also serve as moral role models who internalize anti-money politics values through concrete actions. In Lampulung Village, Village Head Ambo Tahang offers free administrative services to residents who vote based on conscience, a non-material incentive that strengthens horizontal accountability between leaders and residents. In Kalola Village, Village Head Suparman uses agricultural analogies and religious values to explain the long-term impacts of money politics, avoiding rigid legal rhetoric. This approach aligns with the concept of deliberative problem-solving ([Fung, 2006](#)), where local policies are formulated through dialogue that values local knowledge and everyday experiences.

Role of village supervisors also shows how street-level bureaucrats [Lipsky \(1980\)](#) can transform from rule enforcers to facilitators of participation. Ahmad Fadil in Kalola and Haerunnisa in Tosora do not act as external authorities, but rather blend into the social life of residents through night patrols and social gatherings (*arisan*), conveying anti-money politics messages through culturally relevant narratives. This strategy minimizes resistance and builds learned trust, which, according to [Fung \(2006\)](#) is the foundation for a sustainable oversight partnership.

More importantly, the program explicitly draws on local wisdom, particularly the concept of *siri’ na pacce* (shame and solidarity) as a moral foundation. In the village

of Tosora, the historical value of the village as the “root of Wajo democracy” is used to strengthen the program’s legitimacy, so that rejection of money politics is no longer seen as mere legal compliance but rather as a defense of collective dignity. This approach demonstrates how participatory governance can be rooted in local identity, rather than simply a transplantation of universal democratic values alienated from the social context.

However, while this cross-actor synergy successfully created situational oversight co-production, program implementation still faces structural challenges. Budget constraints resulted in intensive activities only in the lead-up to elections, with no post-election support. The limited number of village supervisors also hampered oversight coverage. However, these limitations were overcome through the mobilization of informal actors, the Neighborhood/Hamlet, mosque imams, and the Family Empowerment and Welfare Group, as extensions of participatory oversight. This strategy reflects the principle of civic engagement in participatory governance: expanding oversight capacity through existing social networks, rather than creating new bureaucratic structures.

Overall, the program implementation in Wajo demonstrates that the success of participatory governance is not determined solely by the existence of formal institutions, but by the ability to integrate formal structures with informal socio-economic dynamics. The synergy between Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency), village governments, and communities, facilitated by local leadership and rooted in cultural wisdom, is a key mechanism for realizing participatory and integrated local democracy. However, without strong institutionalization and sustainable funding, this co-production of oversight risks remaining episodic, dependent on the generosity of local elites rather than on a system that ensures sustainability.

3.3. Internalization of Local Democratic Values: To What Extent Are Anti-Money Politics Values Adopted as Social Norms, Not Just Administrative Compliance?

Internalizing local democratic values is the spearhead of the long-term success of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics Program in Wajo Regency. This program not only aims to stop transactional practices during the election period, but also seeks to shift the public’s perspective on the right to vote from something that can be bought and sold to a priceless moral trust. However, this process of change is not instantaneous. It moves slowly, confronting cultural roots that have viewed money politics as *dalle* (seasonal fortune), while simultaneously offering a new narrative based on self-respect, justice, and collective responsibility.

At the beginning of its implementation, many residents still viewed giving money, necessities, or items like sarongs and tumblers as a normal form of social support. This practice has been ingrained for decades, particularly in legislative elections, where people view “voting season” as an opportunity to earn extra income. As one woman in Tosora Village admitted, “If I don’t give it, it’s a loss.” This view reflects short-term economic logic that trumps long-term democratic considerations.

However, since the launch of the Aware Village program, a subtle shift has occurred in the conceptualization of money politics. In pilot villages like Kalola, Lampulung, and Tosora, local values such as *siri’ na pacce* (shame and solidarity) are used as a moral foundation for rejecting transactional practices. The head of Kalola Village, Suparman, for example, not only prohibits it but also links it to dignity: “Accepting money from a candidate is like selling the village’s pride.” A similar

approach is taken in Friday sermons in mosques, where religious figures emphasize that bribery in elections is a sin that deprives one of blessings.

This change is becoming evident in community responses. In Lampulung Village, some residents openly refused money, arguing, “I have my own money and my own choices.” In Kalola, a young man refused an envelope from a campaign team and reminded his neighbors: “We’re protecting this village, not selling votes.” While not yet a dominant norm, such actions signal the emergence of a critical consciousness that was previously absent.

However, the internalization of these values still faces structural challenges. Many residents understand that money politics is wrong, but still accept it due to economic pressures. As Mrs. Jumi from Tosora put it: “I take it for food and kitchen needs.” Here, the conflict between democratic ideals and the reality of poverty is a major obstacle. Without ongoing economic assistance or empowerment, political education alone is insufficient to change behavior.

Furthermore, the “social deterrent” approach implemented in some villages, such as making administrative procedures difficult for residents caught accepting money politics, actually reinforces a culture of silence. Residents are afraid to report it, not because they are unaware, but because they fear social or bureaucratic retribution. This shows that the internalization of values cannot be forced through sanctions, but must grow from collective beliefs built through dialogue, trust, and real examples.

A key strengthening factor in the internalization process is consistent local leadership. Village heads elected without money politics, such as in Lampulung and Kalola villages, serve as living examples that clean democracy is possible. They don’t just talk about it, but demonstrate by providing free services to citizens who vote based on their conscience. They demonstrate that the integrity of leaders has a real impact on community well-being.

3.3.1. The Paradox of Participation: Increased Awareness Versus Lack of Formal Reporting

The internalization of local democratic values, namely the adoption of anti-money politics norms as a collective moral principle, rather than simply adherence to formal rules, is a critical indicator of the sustainability of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics program in Wajo Regency. Field findings indicate a paradox of participation: on the one hand, the community demonstrates increased critical awareness of transactional practices; on the other hand, a culture of silence continues to hinder formal reporting, so that democratic values have not been fully internalized as binding social norms.

Empirically, this program successfully shifted the meaning of money politics from *dalle* (seasonal fortune) to a moral violation. In Kalola and Lampulung villages, residents began rejecting money, using narratives such as “my vote can’t be bought” or “selling your vote is the same as selling your village’s dignity.” This approach aligns with Participatory Governance Theory (Fung, 2006) which emphasizes that meaningful local democracy requires value transformation, not just procedural change. Local values such as *siri’ na pacce* (shame and solidarity) are used as a moral foundation to reconstruct money politics as a form of betrayal of collective dignity, not simply a violation of the law.

However, a paradox arises when this awareness is not translated into structured collective action, particularly in the form of formal reporting. No official reports were submitted to Bawaslu during the last election period in the five pilot villages. This phenomenon is not an indication of ignorance, but rather a rational choice in the

context of social pressure and the absence of institutional protection. As one resident of Tonralipue expressed it: “I’m afraid I’ll feel sorry... if I report it, it will ruin the relationship.” The culture of silence, in this case, functions as an adaptive mechanism to maintain social harmony amidst a tightly knit community structure.

According to the collaborative governance model (Ansell & Gash, 2008), the success of collaboration depends on shared commitment and learned trust between state and community actors. However, in the Wajo context, the absence of whistleblower protection mechanisms and the imposition of bureaucratic sanctions, such as making administrative matters difficult for recipients of money politics, actually undermine trust and reinforce a culture of silence. Residents do not view Bawaslu or the village government as honest brokers, but rather as actors capable of exacerbating social conflict. Consequently, the ideal co-production of oversight, where society and the state jointly produce democratic security, is hampered by an imbalance between normative awareness and procedural security.

Furthermore, structural economic pressures complicate the internalization process. Many residents understand that money politics is wrong, but still accept it due to poverty: “I take it for food and groceries.” This demonstrates that the internalization of democratic values cannot be separated from the material context, without integration with economic empowerment programs, political education risks becoming elitist and irrelevant to vulnerable groups.

Thus, although the seeds of value change have sprouted, marked by symbolic rejection and moral dialogue at the community level, the internalization process remains fragmented and has not yet become an established social norm. To address this paradox, an institutional design is needed that protects whistleblowers, integrates economic approaches, and avoids punitive sanctions. Only then can the value of anti-money politics transform from individual awareness into a collective commitment rooted in local democratic life.

3.4. Internalization of Local Democratic Values in the Village Awareness Program for Supervision and Anti-Money Politics in Wajo Regency

Research findings indicate that the internalization of anti-money politics values as a social norm, not simply a form of administrative compliance, is still in the early stages of transition in Wajo Regency. Although there has been a shift in public perception from viewing money politics as a source of good fortune to understanding the practice as a moral and legal violation, this process is uneven and remains fragile. This condition aligns with the theory of participatory governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Fung, 2006) which emphasizes that healthy local democracy does not only depend on formal institutions, but also on the ability of society to internalize democratic values as part of its collective identity.

These value changes do not occur instantly, but rather through a gradual process influenced by cultural, religious, and local wisdom approaches, such as shame and empathy. This aligns with the concept of norm internalization in institutional theory (Monari et al., 2016), which holds that a rule will be effective only if it is adopted as a moral standard by social actors, not merely through external coercion. In Kalola and Lampulung villages, for example, communities have begun to reject the practice of money politics not out of fear of legal sanctions, but rather out of concern about damaging the village’s dignity or betraying the trust of its votes. This phenomenon indicates a shift from transactional to normative logic, an early sign of the internalization of values. However, some communities in Tonralipue and Assorajang

villages still accept money due to economic pressures and a strong culture of silence. This situation strengthens the argument from [Jain \(2017\)](#) that low political literacy and structural poverty are the main obstacles to the process of internalizing democratic values in developing countries.

In the context of supporting internalization, several factors play a crucial role, including local wisdom, moral leadership, and informal approaches. Utilizing local values such as *siri'* (the practice of marriage) and religious teachings has proven effective in framing money politics as a “disgrace” and “sin,” rather than simply a violation of the law. This approach is successful because it touches on a deeper moral dimension than simply positive rules (Abdul Malik, interview). Furthermore, consistent village leadership, as demonstrated by the village heads in Lampulung and Kalola who were elected without money politics and provided free public services, has served as a concrete example. This reinforces the theory of moral leadership ([Brown et al., 2005](#)) which emphasizes that leaders who are consistent with their values are able to build trust and inspire changes in community behavior. Furthermore, informal approaches through activities such as religious studies, celebrations, and guard posts are considered more effective than formal forums because they are more in tune with the social rhythms of the community. These findings support [Putnam's \(2001\)](#) view that social capital in the form of trust and informal networks is more influential in building participation than bureaucratic structures.

However, in addition to these supporting factors, there are also a number of structural barriers that hinder the process of internalizing values, including economic conditions, a culture of silence, and policy inconsistencies. Many citizens still view money politics as “seasonal good fortune” due to the fragile economic conditions. This phenomenon aligns with the theory of clientelism ([Hicken & Nathan, 2020](#)), which explains that poor voters tend to trade their votes for direct assistance to meet short-term needs. Furthermore, a culture of silence and social fear also act as obstacles, as citizens are reluctant to report vote buying violations due to fears of being ostracized or hated by their neighbors. This reflects the strong pressure of group norms, which often overrides legal awareness. Furthermore, policy inconsistencies also exacerbate the situation, as monitoring programs are only active in the lead-up to elections and are not sustained afterward. Changes in leadership within the Elections Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) leading up to the election also disrupt the continuity of the program (interview with Dr. Abdul Malik), indicating the weak institutionalization of participatory policies at the local level.

3.4.1. Success Mechanism: High Political Commitment as a Formal Foundation for Participatory Governance

One of the key drivers of the partial success of the Village Awareness, Supervision, and Anti-Money Politics Program in Wajo Regency was the strong political commitment of institutional actors, particularly the Wajo Regency Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu) and the local government. This commitment was not merely rhetorical but manifested through an explicit formal policy framework, initial resource allocation, and active involvement in designing a collaborative architecture with village communities. Within the context of participatory governance theory ([Ansell & Gash, 2008; Fung, 2006](#)), this kind of political commitment functions as an enabling condition, an initial condition that allows for the formation of deliberative space and citizen participation in election supervision.

However, as emphasized by [Fung \(2006\)](#), the mere existence of formal structures does not automatically result in effective deliberative democracy or co-production. What is crucial is the quality of integration between formal structures and informal social dynamics at the grassroots level. In Wajo Regency, the Regency Elections Supervisory Agency not only issues technical policies but also actively facilitates collaborative forums involving village governments, religious leaders, and residents. This role aligns with the concept of an honest broker in collaborative governance ([Ansell & Gash, 2008](#)), where public actors create a neutral space for various stakeholders to engage in dialogue and collaboration. In practice, these forums serve as a platform for the public to not only receive information but also participate in formulating local context-based oversight strategies.

A strong political commitment is also evident in the inclusive planning process. The designation of five pilot villages—Lampung Lampulung, Desa Kalola, Desa Tonralipue, Desa Tosora, and Kelurahan Assorajang—was carried out through collective deliberations that took into account the level of vulnerability to money politics, the readiness of village officials, and community enthusiasm. This approach reflects the principle of problem-solving governance, which is responsive to local realities rather than the application of uniform policies from above. Thus, the political commitment in Wajo not only creates a formal foundation but also opens up space for mutual accountability (accountable autonomy), a central concept in participatory governance that emphasizes that accountability mechanisms from the center must support local authority ([Fung, 2006](#)).

However, further analysis shows that political commitment in Wajo Regency remains episodic and projective, particularly as its intensity increases leading up to elections and then weakens after the election period concludes. This creates structural tensions within participatory governance: despite a strong formal foundation, participatory oversight authority has not been permanently institutionalized within the village government structure, for example, through Village Regulations or integration into Village Development Planning Deliberations. As a result, citizen participation remains dependent on the initiatives of local elites and does not become a collective right and responsibility guaranteed by the system.

These findings confirm a critical proposition in the participatory governance literature that high political commitment without strong institutionalization risks resulting in symbolic participation. As noted by [Ansell and Gash \(2008\)](#), effective collaboration requires a clear institutional design, including participation rules, process transparency, and resource sustainability. In Wajo, the absence of a whistleblower protection mechanism and inconsistent post-election funding indicate that this formal foundation is insufficient to sustain long-term co-production oversight.

Thus, the strong political commitment in Wajo Regency served as an initial catalyst for participatory governance but has not yet transformed into a resilient local democratic architecture. To achieve this, political commitment must go beyond rhetoric and temporary allocations and be institutionalized into permanent village governance, so that community participation no longer relies on elite generosity but becomes an integral part of a sustainable local democratic system.

These findings have important implications, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of participatory governance by demonstrating that the internalization of democratic values at the village level depends heavily on the integration of formal institutions, local wisdom, and community economic conditions. Without a holistic approach, participatory

programs risk becoming merely ceremonial (Dr. Andi Bau Mallarangeng). Practically, the results of this study demonstrate that election oversight cannot be achieved solely through formal reporting mechanisms. It must also be built around ongoing political education, protection for whistleblowers, and economic empowerment of residents. Therefore, the Awareness Village Program will only be effective if it is developed into a sustainable social movement, not simply a temporary project in the lead-up to the election.

However, this study has several limitations. The study area, which included only five villages in Wajo Regency, limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the use of qualitative methods without quantitative instruments limits the objective measurement of behavioral change, for example, in assessing reporting levels before and after program implementation. The lack of post-election data also hinders the assessment of the sustainability of value internalization. Therefore, future research suggests developing a local democratic values internalization index that can measure changes in attitudes, behaviors, and social norms more comprehensively. Cross-district comparative studies are also needed to examine the influence of cultural and economic variables on the success of value internalization. Furthermore, similar programs should be designed to be sustainable throughout the year, by integrating political education activities into the school curriculum and community traditional and social activities.

Table 2. Dynamics of the Implementation of the Village Awareness Supervision Program in Wajo Regency

Aspect	Key Findings	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors	Policy Implications
Success Mechanism	There has been a shift in participation from apathetic to selective-active in the 7 pilot villages, particularly in rejecting money politics and monitoring violations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political commitment of the Wajo General Elections Supervisory Agency Consistent local leadership (Lampulung, Kalola) The value of <i>siri'na pacce</i> as a moral foundation Informal approaches (religious study groups, celebrations, patrol posts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation is still episodic and dependent on elites. Not yet institutionalized (Village Regulations, Village Development Planning Deliberations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutionalize through village regulations Integrate into Village Development Planning Deliberations Establish sustainable non-material incentives
The Paradox of Participation	Normative awareness has increased (symbolic rejection of money politics), but there has been no formal reporting to the General Elections Supervisory Agency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective local religious and cultural narratives Social trust among residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture of silence (fear of ostracization) No whistleblower protection Bureaucratic sanctions reinforce fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection for whistleblowers Replace punitive sanctions with restorative, educational ones Involve traditional/religious leaders
Structural Barriers	The program is projective: intensive before the general election, weakening after the general election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-actor collaboration Mobilization of informal actors (neighborhoods/hamlets, Family Empowerment and Welfare, Youth Organizations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited budget and human resources (1 supervisor/village) Inconsistent policies Economic pressures (poverty - logically) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding from the Regional Budget/Village Budget Increase the capacity and number of supervisors Integration with economic empowerment

Comparatively, these findings confirm that the effectiveness of the Anti-Money Politics Village program relies heavily on a contextual and participatory approach, as evidenced by the partial success in Wajo Regency, driven by cultural synergy. Conversely, top-down and minimally structured implementation, as identified in the national study, has had a limited impact. Therefore, the sustainability of this program requires a shift from mere symbolic declarations to systematic institutionalization. Policy recommendations include developing a flexible roadmap and guidance

module, providing legal protection for whistleblowers, and integrating the program with village development and economic empowerment agendas to break the cycle of community dependence on money politics.

Since the program's implementation in five pilot villages—Lampung Lampulung, Kalola, Tonralipue, Tosora, and Assorajang—subtle shifts in community participation patterns have occurred.

4. Conclusion

Research findings indicate that the Supervision-Aware Village and Anti-Money Politics Programs in Wajo Regency have triggered initial changes in how the community views democracy, although these values have not yet become firmly rooted as strong social norms. By combining local wisdom such as *siri' na pacce* (shame and empathy), the role of religious leaders, and informal communication approaches, the program has successfully shifted the perception of money politics, which was once considered *dalle* (seasonal fortune), to a moral and legal violation. However, this change remains fragile. It continues to be hampered by economic instability, a culture of silence, fear of reporting, and inconsistent policies after the election. This research addresses the three formulated objectives. First, the program's effectiveness is partial: it fosters critical awareness and limited participation but has not yet driven sustainable collective behavioral change. Second, synergy among Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Agency), village governments, and the community occurs through joint forums, the involvement of informal leaders, and the use of cultural values. However, this collaboration remains temporary and vulnerable to leadership changes. Third, these findings generate concrete policy recommendations in three important areas: First, the immediate establishment of a whistleblower protection system at the district level through a Regent's Regulation is essential. This system should include an Electoral Whistleblower Protection Unit, an online reporting channel that guarantees anonymity, psychosocial support for whistleblowers, and strict sanctions against anyone who intimidates or retaliates. Second, the Awareness Village Program needs to be formally institutionalized into the RPJMDes and APBDes. This can be achieved by integrating the participatory oversight agenda into the Village Development Planning Meeting (Musrenbangdes) and providing a fixed budget for outreach, village supervisor training, and non-material incentives, such as prioritizing public services for residents who actively monitor. Third, collaboration between Bawaslu (Elections Supervisory Agency), the Village Development Agency (PMD), and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) must be strengthened as part of a structural economic strategy. This can be achieved through BUMDes-based empowerment programs such as MSME training, access to micro-capital, or labor-intensive programs before the election, as well as the implementation of "Money Politics-Free Village" certification accompanied by fiscal incentives (additional village funds). Regular social audits are also necessary to prevent the empowerment program from being misused as a new cover for money politics. Theoretically, these findings enhance participatory governance theory by emphasizing that its success in regions depends heavily on the integration of three elements: open, formal institutions; social capital rooted in local culture; and economic interventions that reduce citizen vulnerability. Without addressing all three elements, efforts to combat money politics risk becoming mere ceremonial gestures with minimal impact. Therefore, transforming local democracy involves not only changing mindsets but also overhauling material incentives and establishing genuine institutional safeguards.

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