

# The Dynamics of Village Head Rhetoric in Succeeding Village Government Policies in Bantaeng Regency

**Mahmuddin\***

Universitas Negeri Makassar

**Mantasiah**

Universitas Negeri Makassar

**Sultan**

Universitas Negeri Makassar

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**Abstract.** This article discusses the dynamics of the Village Head's rhetoric in an effort to make village government policies successful in Bantaeng Regency, an area in Indonesia with distinctive social and cultural diversity. This study uses a qualitative approach with in-depth interview techniques and participatory observation to examine the role of Village Heads in communicating policies and mobilizing support from village communities. In this context, rhetoric not only serves as a means of communication, but also as a means to shape public opinion and influence people's behavior towards the policies taken. The results of the study show that Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency adopt various rhetorical strategies that focus on delivering messages in a persuasive and inclusive manner. Through the use of appropriate language and the selection of communication styles that are in accordance with the characteristics of the village community, the Village Head succeeds in increasing the community's understanding of government policies and building a sense of ownership of these policies. In addition, the rhetoric of the Village Head is also used to overcome obstacles in policy implementation, such as distrust or lack of understanding of the community towards the existing policy objectives. Another important finding is the significant influence of rhetorical communication in increasing community participation in the village development process. People who feel valued and involved in decision-making are more likely to support and actively participate in policy implementation. The study also highlights the challenges faced by Village Heads in using rhetoric effectively, including limited resources and cultural barriers that can affect community acceptance. Overall, this study provides deeper insight into the role of rhetoric in village governance and its contribution to the success of public policy at the village level. This research is expected to enrich the understanding of public communication in the context of local government and provide recommendations for communication capacity building policies for Village Heads in Indonesia.

**Key words:** Village Head Rhetoric, Village Government Policy, Community Participation, Bantaeng Regency, Policy Communication

## Introduction

Village governance in Indonesia plays a very important role in the country's governance system, given that almost 60% of Indonesia's population lives in rural areas. The Village Head, as a local leader, has a key role in managing and directing village policies that are directly related to the lives of the community. In the context of village government, the success of policy implementation does not only depend on administrative or technical factors, but also on the ability of the Village Head to communicate and influence the community. Effective communication is an important key in decision-making, policy delivery, and increasing community participation in development.

One of the most influential forms of communication is rhetoric. Rhetoric, in this context, can be interpreted as the art of communicating to influence the audience or society in an effective and persuasive way. The Village Head, as a community leader, is required not only to have good administrative skills, but also the ability to use rhetoric in influencing people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the policies taken. Therefore, the analysis of the rhetoric used by the Village Head in the success of village government policies is very important to understand the dynamics of communication in local government.

Bantaeng Regency, located in South Sulawesi Province, offers an interesting context for this research. This area is known for its thick social and cultural diversity, which of course affects the way the Village Head interacts with his community. The people of Bantaeng have strong cultural ties, with the values of mutual cooperation that are still inherent in daily life. This is certainly a challenge and at the same time an opportunity for the Village Head to use rhetoric to convey the village government's policy messages. With diverse community characteristics, Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency need to use a communication approach that is in accordance with local socio-cultural conditions to ensure that the policies implemented can be accepted and implemented properly.

The rhetoric of the Village Head is not only limited to conveying information about the policies taken, but also related to the way in which the Village Head builds a harmonious relationship with the community, overcomes differences of opinion, and motivates the community to actively participate in the implementation of policies. This rhetoric includes aspects such as the use of language, the right choice of words, and communication strategies that can create a sense of involvement and responsibility among villagers.

One of the main roles of the Village Head is as a mediator between the central or regional government and the village community. In many cases, policies issued by the central or regional governments are often distorted in the process of delivering them to the village community. The Village Head must be able to filter information that comes from the central or regional government, then package it in a form that is easier for the community to understand. This process of course requires good communication skills, including the ability to use rhetoric in conveying information in a way that is not only informative but also persuasive. For example, in the implementation of village development programs, the Village Head must be able to communicate the benefits and objectives of each policy in a way that can encourage the community to be actively involved in the process.

In Bantaeng Regency, village government policies that are often faced by village heads include related to natural resource management, infrastructure development, community economic

empowerment, and improving the quality of education and health in the village. These policies require full support from the community so that they can be implemented properly. Without the active participation of the community, it will be difficult for such policies to succeed. Therefore, the use of appropriate rhetoric is essential to overcome obstacles in policy implementation, such as distrust of the government, lack of understanding of policy benefits, or even rejection of policies that are considered unfavorable.

One concrete example of the importance of rhetoric in village policy is when the Village Head must explain and motivate the community to support infrastructure development programs. Infrastructure development in villages, such as roads, bridges, or other public facilities, often requires community participation in the form of labor or funds. The Village Head, using persuasive rhetoric, must be able to convey the importance of the development for the common welfare and convince the community to actively participate in the implementation of the program. In addition, the rhetoric of the Village Head is also very much needed in the process of managing conflicts that may arise between people who are pro and con to a policy.

In addition, it is important to note that the Village Head also has to face challenges in dealing with diversity in the community. This diversity includes differences in political, social, economic, and cultural views that can affect how people respond to the policies implemented. In this case, the Village Head must be able to use rhetoric to overcome differences of opinion and create an atmosphere that supports cooperation and unity in the midst of diversity. For example, in responding to differences of opinion related to infrastructure development, the Village Head must be able to communicate the goals of the development in a language that can be accepted by all parties, as well as explain the benefits for all village communities.

Rural communities, which tend to be more traditional and have strong emotional ties to the local culture, often require a more personalized approach to communication based on the values they hold. The Village Head, in this case, must be wise in choosing the words used so that they can touch the feelings and emotions of the community. The rhetoric used must be able to create a strong emotional connection between the Village Head and the community, as well as build mutual trust and mutual respect.

In this context, this study aims to examine how Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency use rhetoric in the success of village government policies. This research will also identify various communication strategies used by Village Heads to build community participation in village development. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of political communication science, especially in the context of local government, as well as provide recommendations for increasing communication capacity for Village Heads throughout Indonesia.

The rhetoric of the Village Head plays a very important role in the success of village government policies, especially in the context of Bantaeng Regency which has high social and cultural diversity. Village Heads must be able to use effective rhetoric to build community participation, explain policies clearly and persuasively, and overcome obstacles in policy implementation. By using relevant communication theories, such as Aristotelian rhetorical theory, social construction theory, and participatory communication theory, the Village Head can optimize his role as a leader who not only manages the administration, but also builds harmonious relationships with the community to realize sustainable development.

## Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring and analyzing the dynamics of the rhetoric of the Village Head in the success of village government policies in Bantaeng Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand phenomena that occur in the social and cultural context of rural communities, which cannot be measured or analyzed quantitatively. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore the meaning, experience, and interaction between the Village Head and the village community that is difficult to explain with numbers or numerical data.

This study uses a case study design, which focuses on an in-depth analysis of the use of rhetoric by Village Heads in several villages in Bantaeng Regency. The case study design allows researchers to analyze in detail how the rhetoric of the Village Head is used in different contexts, as well as how the dynamics of such communication affect the implementation of village policies. This research also adopts an ethnographic approach in terms of direct observation of the interaction between the Village Head and the community, with the aim of understanding social phenomena in the context of the daily life of the village community.

This research was carried out in Bantaeng Regency, which is located in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. The district was chosen because it has distinctive social and cultural characteristics, which allows research on the dynamics of the Village Head's rhetoric to be more interesting and relevant. The research subjects consisted of Village Heads in several villages in Bantaeng Regency, as well as village communities who participated in policies implemented by the Village Government. The Village Heads selected in this study are those who are active in implementing various public policies in their villages and have direct experience in communicating with the community regarding the policies implemented. In addition, community participation is also very important in this study, as they will provide a perspective on how the communication of the Village Head affects their perception and attitude towards the policies taken.

The data in this study was collected through the following techniques:

1. In-depth interviews were conducted with the Village Head, village officials, and the community involved in the implementation of village policies. This interview aims to explore how the Village Head uses rhetoric in conveying policies and motivating the community to participate.
2. Observation is carried out by being involved in activities carried out by the Village Head and the village community, such as village meetings, deliberations, or other social activities. This observation aims to gain a first-hand understanding of how the Village Head's rhetoric is applied in daily practice, as well as how the community responds to and participates in the policies implemented.
3. Documentation is used to collect relevant additional data, such as village policy documents, activity reports, and village deliberation archives. These documents will provide a more in-depth context on the policies implemented and how they are disseminated to the public.

Data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation will be analyzed using thematic analysis methods. This method is used to identify and analyze communication patterns that arise in the use of rhetoric by village heads, as well as to understand how these communication affect community perception and participation in village policies. Using various data collection techniques, such as in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, this study seeks to explore the experiences and perspectives of Village Heads and village communities related to the use of rhetoric in the decision-making process and implementation of village policies. Through thematic analysis and data triangulation, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the understanding of communication in village government, as well as provide practical recommendations for improving communication capacity for village heads throughout Indonesia.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study aims to explore and analyze how Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency use rhetoric to make village government policies a success, as well as how such communication affects community participation in the implementation of village policies. Based on in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation conducted, various dynamics were found that showed how the rhetoric of the Village Head plays an important role in managing policies and building active community participation.

### **1. The Use of Rhetoric in Conveying Village Policies.**

One of the main findings of this study is that Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency actively use rhetoric in conveying village government policies to the community. This rhetoric is not only limited to the use of spoken language, but it also involves the use of symbols, narratives, and emotions to build closer relationships with society. Village heads strive to communicate policies in a way that is easy to understand by all walks of life, especially those who do not have a higher level of education. In many cases, the Village Head uses simple and clear language so that the community can understand the purpose of the policy implemented. In addition, on several occasions, the Village Head also used personal narratives or success stories relevant to the daily lives of the community to arouse feelings and increase their understanding of the policy. For example, in village deliberations that discuss road infrastructure development plans, the Village Head often tells how similar projects in other villages have succeeded in improving the welfare of the local community. By using this narrative, the Village Head succeeded in associating the policy with the community's life experience and arousing their sense of ownership of the policy.

However, not all Village Heads use the same approach. Some Village Heads tend to be more formal and technical in their policy delivery, using data and statistics to support their arguments. While this can be very effective for a more educated or educated audience, this approach is sometimes ineffective for older people or those with lower educational backgrounds. This indicates that the Village Head must be able to adjust his communication style based on the audience he is facing.

## **2. Village Head Rhetoric in Increasing Community Participation**

One of the main goals of the use of rhetoric by the Village Head is to encourage community participation in the implementation of village policies. Based on the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the rhetoric used by the Village Head is very effective in increasing community participation, both in the form of contributions of time, energy, and other resources. Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency use various persuasive strategies to build community participation, one of which is by creating a sense of urgency and shared responsibility. In village meetings or citizens' deliberations, the Village Head often emphasizes that the success of the policy does not only depend on the village government, but also on the active role of the community. The Village Head said that the success of infrastructure development, for example, does not only involve a budget from the government, but also labor from the local community.

Using this rhetoric, the Village Head succeeded in motivating the community to participate in development activities, such as mutual cooperation in the construction of village roads or the construction of public facilities. In addition, the rhetoric of the Village Head is also used to build a sense of belonging and pride among the community. Village heads often associate policies with local values that are valued by the community, such as mutual cooperation, unity, and togetherness. In many cases, the Village Head describes the policy as part of the village's traditions and culture, which reinforces the sense of community involvement in the decision-making process. This not only increases community participation, but also strengthens social solidarity among villagers.

However, although many Village Heads have succeeded in increasing community participation through persuasive rhetoric, there are often challenges in involving the community. Some people in Bantaeng Regency, especially those living in more remote areas, show apathy towards village government policies. They feel that the policy is irrelevant to their needs or feel that they have no role in the decision-making process. In this case, the rhetoric used by the Village Head must be able to answer the community's distrust or indifference, for example by providing a more detailed explanation of the benefits of the policy and involving them in the planning process.

## **3. Rhetorical Strategies Used by Village Heads in Managing Conflicts**

In addition to conveying policies and increasing community participation, the rhetoric of the Village Head is also very important in managing conflicts that may arise among the community. In villages, especially those with social and cultural diversity, there are often differences of opinion regarding the policies implemented. Therefore, the Village Head must be able to use rhetoric to ease tensions and find solutions that are acceptable to all parties. This study found that Village Heads in Bantaeng Regency often use inclusive communication strategies in managing conflicts. The Village Head strives to listen to various opinions and inputs from the community before making decisions, and uses rhetoric that facilitates open discussions between the disputing parties.

The Village Head also often uses mediation language to find common ground between the warring parties. For example, in debates regarding the use of village land for development projects, the Village Head uses rhetoric that leads to mutual understanding and avoids the escalation of conflict. The Village Head emphasized the importance of common interests and how the policy will benefit the entire village community, even though there are parties who feel disadvantaged.

#### **4. The Influence of Rhetoric on Community Perception of Village Government Policies**

The rhetoric of the Village Head also has a significant influence on the community's perception of village government policies. One of the main findings of this study is that the rhetoric used by the Village Head can shape the community's perspective on the policies implemented. People who were previously skeptical of certain policies, such as infrastructure development or economic empowerment, can change their attitude if the Village Head succeeds in delivering the policy in a convincing way.

For example, in the village road construction policy that initially received rejection from some communities, the Village Head used rhetoric that linked the project to increased accessibility and economic opportunities for the community. The Village Head emphasized that the construction of the road will open up opportunities for the community to access a wider market, as well as improve their quality of life. This rhetoric succeeded in changing the views of the public who initially considered the policy irrelevant to be more supportive of the policy.

However, while rhetoric can influence public perception, in some cases, policy sustainability remains a challenge. People who previously supported certain policies may feel disappointed if the expected results are not achieved in a short time. In this case, the Village Head needs to use rhetoric that is more based on transparency and continuous communication to keep the community supportive of the policy even though the implementation process is time-consuming.

Overall, this study shows that the rhetoric of the Village Head plays a very important role in the success of village government policies in Bantaeng Regency. Village heads use a variety of communication strategies, including personal narratives, persuasive language, and inclusive communication, to convey policies, increase community participation, and manage emerging conflicts. Despite the challenges of engaging the entire community, especially those who feel apathetic or skeptical of policies, the use of appropriate rhetoric has proven effective in building better relationships between the Village Head and the community. Therefore, it is important for Village Heads to continue to develop their communication skills in order to manage complex social dynamics and ensure the success of village policies.

#### **Conclusion**

This research has revealed how important the rhetoric of the Village Head is in the success of village government policies in Bantaeng Regency. Based on the findings of in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, it can be concluded that effective communication between Village Heads and village communities has a significant influence on the success of policy implementation. The rhetoric of the Village Head plays a major role in increasing public understanding of the policies being implemented, establishing active participation in the village development process, and managing conflicts that arise among villagers.

In terms of policy delivery, the rhetoric used by the Village Head in Bantaeng Regency focuses on the use of simple and easy-to-understand language, as well as the application of local narratives that evoke community emotions. The use of local stories relevant to the lives of village people has been shown to be effective in making policies feel closer to their lives, as well as creating a sense of ownership of the policy. This proves that the right rhetoric can make policies more acceptable and well understood by rural communities, which has the potential to increase the success of policy

implementation.

The Village Head is also very successful in using rhetoric to encourage community participation. Through persuasive and inclusive communication, the Village Head is able to build a sense of shared responsibility among the villagers, which ultimately encourages them to actively participate in development projects and other social activities. Rhetoric that links policies to traditional values such as mutual cooperation and togetherness has succeeded in strengthening the sense of social solidarity among rural communities, which is an important capital in policy implementation.

The findings of the study show that by using the right rhetoric, the Village Head can change the community's skeptical attitude towards certain policies into a more supportive attitude. People who initially doubt certain policies, such as infrastructure development, can be reassured through communications that demonstrate the long-term benefits of those policies. This leads to the conclusion that the use of data-based communication and logic, as well as emphasized with stories that link policies to real benefits to people's lives, can strengthen acceptance of village government policies.

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