

ETHICS OF POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN RURAL INDONESIAN VILLAGES

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ABSTRACT. This study explores the political entrepreneurship ethics of village heads in setting village development policies and the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study applies a qualitative methodology and observational analysis method with the interview as the main data-gathering technique, discovering *musyawarah* (deliberation), obedience to regulation, transparency and participation, empathy, priority scale, and Islamic teachings as the principles held by village heads in policy-making. The village heads also draw on *musyawarah*, obey regulations, and transparency and inclusiveness to avoid conflicts of interest in making policies. Meanwhile, the justification for policy-making is based on regulation and *musyawarah*. The results of the analysis demonstrate the convergence of political entrepreneurship ethics, namely, adherence to rules and *musyawarah*, in setting village development policies. They are inseparable from the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of exploring principles, efforts, and ethical justification of policy-making help to understand the political entrepreneurial actions, which have been left unexplained in the analytical framework of political entrepreneurship as an independent variable. Finally, the context of the pandemic needs to be understood in relation to changes in the policy process. The outbreak can amend the ethical meaning of obeying regulations and *musyawarah* in setting the village development policies that are implemented by political entrepreneurs. This implies that a pandemic can be considered for its contribution to shaping the ethics of political entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Political Entrepreneurship; Ethics; COVID-19; Indonesia; Village

ABSTRAK. Studi ini mengeksplorasi etika kewirausahaan politik kepala desa dalam menetapkan kebijakan pembangunan desa dan konteks pandemi COVID-19. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dan metode analisis observasional dengan wawancara sebagai teknik pengumpulan data utama. Studi menemukan musyawarah, ketaatan terhadap peraturan, transparansi dan partisipasi, empati, skala prioritas, dan ajaran Islam sebagai prinsip yang dipegang oleh kepala desa dalam pembuatan kebijakan. Kepala desa juga menerapkan musyawarah, taat peraturan, transparan dan inklusif untuk menghindari konflik kepentingan dalam pembuatan kebijakan. Sementara justifikasi pengambilan kebijakan didasarkan pada regulasi dan musyawarah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan adanya konvergensi etika kewirausahaan politik yaitu ketaatan pada aturan dan musyawarah dalam menetapkan kebijakan pembangunan desa. Hal-hal tersebut tidak dapat dipisahkan dari konteks pandemi COVID-19. Temuan atas eksplorasi prinsip, upaya, dan pembenaran etis dalam pembuatan kebijakan membantu memahami tindakan kewirausahaan politik, yang selama ini tidak dijelaskan dalam kerangka analisis kewirausahaan politik sebagai faktor independen. Terakhir, konteks pandemi perlu dipahami terkait perubahan dalam proses kebijakan. Wabah dapat mengubah makna etika menaati peraturan dan musyawarah dalam menetapkan kebijakan pembangunan desa yang dilaksanakan oleh para wirausahawan politik. Hal tersebut berimplikasi bahwa pandemi dapat dipertimbangkan kontribusinya dalam membentuk etika kewirausahaan politik.

Kata kunci: Kewirausahaan Politik; Etika; COVID-19; Indonesia; Desa.

INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic (COVID-19) was an extraordinary event that posed a challenge to elected political leaders at all levels of government. COVID-19 has become a disruptive factor in the world with its far-reaching impacts. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, 2020) called it “a catastrophe taking an enormous toll on humanity disrupting lives and livelihoods” across economic, social and regional sectors.

Schwab and Malleret (Schwab & Malleret, 2020) categorize the impacts of a pandemic as macro, micro and individual impacts. The extent

and magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 have led to a crisis. Schwab and Malleret (Schwab & Malleret, 2020) claim that COVID-19 has triggered an unprecedented world crisis in modern history. The COVID-19 pandemic is also said to be not just a massive global health problem, but rather, it sparked crises at every social, cultural, environmental and economic level (Lupton & Willis, 2021). Boin et al. (Boin et al., 2020) call it the second transboundary mega-crisis to hit contemporary society in this century (after the financial crisis) because COVID-19 has put pressure on health systems in many countries, which has had an impact on economic and social vulnerabilities. Meanwhile, other crisis depictions refer to COVID-19 as a multi-system problem (Hynes et al., 2020).

The multidimensional crisis that started as a public health crisis due to COVID-19 elicited various responses from individuals, groups and governments. The response to the crisis shows the crisis factor as a driving force for political action, including the government's and village government's response to an epidemic. The crisis prompted village heads to try to find a way out.

As an elected leader, the village head is a political entrepreneur. According to Roberts and King (1991, as cited in (McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011)) a political entrepreneur is an individual who holds an elected leadership position in the government. Additionally, an elected leader has the authority to allocate resources (McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011).

This definition indicates that political entrepreneurship is the practice of political leadership of elected leaders. As a political entrepreneur, the village head has to be able to bring public benefits to the practice of political leadership in the village, such as in setting development policies.

Meanwhile, the recognition of village autonomy (UU number 6 of 2014 concerning village) normatively provides policy space for village heads. These elected leaders have sufficient space to respond to the demands and needs of villagers, including during a pandemic situation, in village development policies. The crisis due to the COVID-19 outbreak has encouraged village heads to find solutions although they have to stay within regulations.

So far, village heads have taken formal measures to respond to public needs and demands through village development policies (political entrepreneurship practices). As a political entrepreneur, the village head is a public entrepreneur who carries out several relevant leadership practices, namely, advocating for new ideas and making proposals, defining and framing problems, specifying policy alternatives, mediating ideas among various policy actors, mobilizing public opinion, and helping to frame the agenda for decision-making (Roberts and King, 1991, as cited in McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011).

Political entrepreneurs embody three factors that drive their political entrepreneurial instincts and activities (McCaffrey & Salerno, 2011), namely, 1) the special intentions of political entrepreneurs; 2) elements of entrepreneurial behavior (alertness and discovery) to benefit from the political system; and 3) the role of political entrepreneurs to change (form, change, and consolidate) political institutions. The latest study by Lentsch (Lentsch, 2018) stresses new institutional incentives, whose target is obtaining seats in parliament and transforming the political system

from within to encourage political entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, Mishra and Jain's (Mishra & k Jain, 2020) study stresses the importance of the special intentions of political entrepreneurs, one of which is to maintain patronage relationships.

Furthermore, Sobari (2019) found a cultural explanation for the practice of political entrepreneurship. Local cultural practices and values mixed with Islamic values motivate a political entrepreneur in a Javanese village to develop his village and provide social and material benefits.

Petridou et al. (2015) mapped the literature on political entrepreneurship studies which answered four questions: who are political entrepreneurs?; how does the political entrepreneur strategy work?; where, at what level, and in what policy areas) and political entrepreneurship as independent/dependent variable and top-down/bottom-up approaches?; and what are the formal political rules, policy outcomes, and the practice of political entrepreneurship?

Specifically, this study seeks to explore the political entrepreneurship ethics of village heads, particularly in setting village development policies. The assumption is that every political entrepreneur adheres to the principles of morality (ethics) that guide every political action. In this study, the political action in question is the activity of setting village development policies.

Thus, this study does not fully position political entrepreneurship as an independent/dependent variable. It seeks to explore those ethics of political entrepreneurship that guide village development policy-making.

In addition, this study positions political entrepreneurship in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic that gave rise to health crises and other crises is a contextual factor or set of conditions that may or may not encourage the ethics of political entrepreneurship. The context of the epidemic that hit the whole country and the wider world as a non-natural disaster is an important study focus for the development of political entrepreneurship theory. This study seeks to contribute to that academic challenge.

Meanwhile, the ethics referred to in this study echo Charney's (2011) simple definition of political ethics. He explains political ethics as principles or criteria that justify the morality of political actions of political agents. Specifically, this study seeks to explain the principles held by village heads and the justification for their actions in making village development policies in response to the pandemic.

The scope of political ethics in this study includes three main elements: first, the principles or criteria

of morality held by village heads in making village development policies during a pandemic; second, the strategy of the village head avoiding conflicts of interest in making policies or the way the village head faces the dilemma of representation (public or constituent) in making village development policies; and third, the role of ethics/morality for the village head to justify (consider) in village development policy-making.

Therefore, the questions posed in this study are: what are the principles held by a village head in making village development policies in response to a pandemic crisis? How does the village head position himself in making village development policies to avoid conflicts of interest? What ethical justification does the village head consider in deciding village development policies during an epidemic?

By focusing on ethical exploration, this study highlights its academic contribution. Previous studies have not explored ethical issues in the practice of political entrepreneurship. This study seeks to explore and understand the ethics of political entrepreneurship for village heads in the Malang Regency in making village development policies, especially during a pandemic. Findings regarding the ethics of political entrepreneurship can expand on the empirical facts of existing political entrepreneurship practices.

METHODS

This study aims to explore the ethics of political entrepreneurship held and expressed by village heads as elected leaders. These principles are considered by village heads in making village development policies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). This study applies an observational analysis method, commonly deployed in studies of political leadership.

Gains (as cited in t'Hart and Rhodes (eds.), 2014) explains that among the various analytical perspectives on and methods of political leadership, observational analysis is an appropriate method to use in this study because observational analysis allows researchers to provide an in-depth description to understand the political entrepreneurship ethics of village heads and their village development policy preferences during COVID-19.

Gains (2014) cites Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) explanation that observational analysis is associated with a constructivist/interpretive approach coupled with inductive reasoning. Observational analysis is considered capable of "revealing the

world around the observed leader, his beliefs and practices."

In political studies, observation is a methodological choice in qualitative research (Harrison & Startin, 2013). This study is consistent with a methodology that focuses on the meaning and interpretation of political phenomena, namely, the village head's political entrepreneurship ethics in a pandemic.

To obtain information, this study uses in-depth interviews and reading of documents relevant to village development policies. Through these data collection techniques, the researcher explored the experiences and knowledge of village heads' political entrepreneurship ethics. Interviews were also conducted with other relevant informants who had knowledge and experience of making village development policies. Moreover, the study analyzed several documents, namely, regulations of the government and the Malang Regency concerning the allocation of village funds (DD) and village funds allocation (ADD).

This study interviewed several informants, namely, village heads (political entrepreneurs), the village secretary, and the head of the village consultative body (BPD). The criteria for determining informants were mainly that each informant had firsthand knowledge and experience about village development policy-making in the last three years of the pandemic (2020–2022).

To process and analyze data collected from fieldwork, this study deployed inductive data analysis with grounded theory (Sarantakos, 2017). The researcher practiced three coding processes—open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

This study determines research locations based on village development index (IDM) status. The status refers to the 2021 IDM ranking published by the Minister of Villages, Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (Minister of Villages). Referring to this ranking, this study identified three villages as research locations based on IDM status categories in the Malang Regency: developing villages (*berkembang*), developed villages (*maju*), and independent villages (*mandiri*).

Sukomandiri Village (pseudonym) in Tumpang Sub-district was selected to represent the research location with an IDM status score of 0.9551. Sukomaju Village (pseudonym) Poncokusumo Sub-district was selected as a research location with an IDM developed status score of 0.8152. Sukourip Village (pseudonym) Singosari Sub-district was selected to represent the research location with an IDM developing status score of 0.7056.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. The Indonesian government responded to this statement by designating COVID-19 as a public health emergency on March 31, 2020 (Presidential Decree number 11 of 2020). In addition, the government stated COVID-19 as a non-natural national disaster on April 13, 2020 (Presidential Decree number 12 of 2020).

Responses to handling COVID-19 were carried out in village settings. The Minister of Home Affairs ordered the implementation of Ministerial Regulation Number 20 of 2018 which encourages the roles and responsibilities of village heads through village spending for handling COVID-19 in their area. Meanwhile, regarding the use of village funds, the Minister of Villages issued regulation number 06 of 2020 concerning the Priority for Use of Village Funds in 2020. The regulation states that DD can be used for preventive measures in social services, particularly in health services. Handling the impact of COVID-19 in villages can be in the form of direct cash assistance from DD for poor families. These are families who have lost their livelihoods, those using the family hope program (PKH) and the non-cash food assistance program (BPNT), pre-employment cardholders, and families with family members who are vulnerable to chronic illnesses.

In more detail, the Minister of Villages issued Circular Letter Number 8 of 2020 concerning the COVID-19 Responsive Villages and the confirmation of a village cash labor incentive (PKTD). The village government has the mandate to recruit village volunteers to fight COVID-19, prevent and handle COVID-19, carry out intensive coordination with the district government, allocate more budget for PKTD activities and t a budget for disaster management, emergencies and village urgency (Care Peduli Foundation, 2020).

The regions then followed up on these regulations. The Malang Regency Government stipulated Regent Regulation number 14 of 2020. One of its provisions (Article 14 paragraph 1A) required village governments to prioritize ADD to tackle the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a social safety net in the form of village fund unconditional cash transfer (BLT *dana desa*). The same priority was also set in regulating the use of DD in Malang Regency in 2021 through the stipulation of (Kabupaten Malang, 2021). In 2022, the disbursement of village funds also continued to prioritize handling COVID-19 and providing BLT to beneficiary families according to presidential regulation number 104 of 2021.

Principles of Decision-making During COVID-19

The study took place in three villages with different IDM statuses. However, the village heads in the three villages were the first elected leaders. They were sworn in concurrently as village heads at the end of 2019. COVID-19 was the first experience of a non-natural disaster that hit their villages and all villages in Malang Regency simultaneously.

Regarding the principles held by village heads in making village development policies during the pandemic (2020–2022), the first statement conveyed is the principle of *musyawarah* (deliberation). Widodo (pseudonym), the Head of Sukomandiri Village, stated explicitly:

In terms of decision-making, I took the earliest step through *musyawarah*. No matter how small or how big the issue is, my legal umbrella is from the results of *musyawarah*, sir (personal communication, September 8, 2022)

Susanto (pseudonym), the Head of Sukomaju Village, expressed a similar answer regarding the principle of *musyawarah* which is conducted through the coordination of village budget allocation (APBDesa) with the heads of RT (neighborhood unit), RW (community unit), BPD, and related institutions, including community leaders. (personal communication, September 9, 2022)

Wiyono (pseudonym), the Head of Sukourip Village, also applied coordination in making village development policies. He coordinated with the heads of RT, RW, BPD, and village staff and a secretary in making development policies, especially when determining project priorities (personal communication, August 12, 2022).

Budianto (pseudonym), the Head of BPD of Sukomandiri, confirmed the principle of *musyawarah* in making village development policies carried out by the village head. In the interview he stated:

The highest decision-making in our village is in the *musdes* (village *musyawarah*). The *musdes* is held when several programs have been planned through the RKPDDes (the annual village working plan). Even then, there still needs to be some sort of follow-up to a decision-making meeting, including the *musdes*. The village head standard refers to several rules. Especially when it comes to development, it is related to the DD and the ADD. (personal communication, September 23, 2022)¹

¹An explanation of the principle of *musyawarah* was confirmed by Nono, Secretary of Sukomandiri Village (personal communication, September 8, 2022); Bambang, Head of BPD Sukomaju (personal communication, September 15, 2022); Yudo (pseudonym), head of BPD Sukourip (personal communication, August 26, 2022).

According to informants, the principle of *musyawarah* is practiced in the form of dialogue on making village development policies. The village head invites stakeholders in the village to discuss issues before making a decision. Based on these interviews, it can be seen that the principle of *musyawarah* is a compromise between the demands and needs of the community and the pandemic which “forces” the village head to refocus the budget for handling the pandemic.

In the national ideology of Pancasila, *musyawarah* is one of the principles that guide the nation of Indonesia. *Musyawarah* is the basic principle contained in the fourth principle mentioning “Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberation among representatives.” *Musyawarah* describes the process of discussion to reach a consensus (deliberation for a consensus).

The ideal principle of *musyawarah* in the context of Pancasila is understood as solving problems through the contestation of ideas. Decisions taken in *musyawarah* are based on the best ideas, not the results of voting or the number of majority votes (Tjarsono, 2013).

The village head expands *musyawarah* with the principle of transparency. *Musyawarah* is part of the transparency of public funds allocation to villagers. Susanto, the Head of Sukomaju Village, said:

As the village head, regarding these funds, we try to be as transparent as possible, according to our respective duties and functions. With the current year’s budget, it’s really limited, right. Forty percent for this, for BLT, food security is 30 percent, another percentage is for COVID (personal communication, September 9, 2022)

The principle of transparency is also applied in Sukomandiri. Budianto, the BPD head of Sukomandiri shared his experience when he was involved in policy-making with the village head (personal communication, September 23, 2022).

The meaning of transparency in *musyawarah* is to convey information openly regarding village development budget allocations. Residents were given general information regarding the amount of the budget and budget allocations. When conducting interviews, the researcher made observations about this form of transparency. The researcher found a summary of the APBDes displayed in front of the village’s office on a large banner (3 m x 5 m). The banner showed the general APBDes allocation for the current year (2022).

Not only embracing transparency, the principle of *musyawarah* is also combined with the principle of participation. Sunarko (pseudonym), the Secretary of Sukourip Village, testified:

So, after being elected as a village head (Wiyono) wants to involve all levels of society, as well as transparency. So, when he first served as the village head, he was indeed assigned to prepare the RPJMDes for up to six years. He really wanted the involvement of all villagers (personal communication, August 12, 2022).

Budianto, the Head of BPD of Sukomandiri, added that the involvement of residents was considered in the village meeting for preparing RKPDes or APBDes (personal communication, September 23, 2022).

Therefore, the principles of *musyawarah*, transparency, and participation are inextricable. In making village development policies, *musyawarah* is a space for transparency, consultation, and negotiation between village heads and those stakeholders representing villagers. However, the negotiation space in village meetings did not run deliberately, because, during the pandemic, budget allocations were strictly determined by the government and regency.

The third principle that guides village development policy-making is obedience to rules. In normal circumstances, a village head is “surrounded” by at least three layers of rules. Village heads must follow regulations set by the president (presidential regulation), ministers (ministerial regulations issued by the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Villages), and regents (regent regulation). Likewise, in a pandemic, village heads are “forced” to comply with these three levels of regulations, especially in budget allocations for village development.

Three years of village development policies during the pandemic (2020–2022) were stressed by government and regency policies that regulate budget refocusing for handling COVID-19 in villages. Budianto, the BPD head of Sukomandiri, testified his experience of making development policies with the village head:

Policy-making always takes *musyawarah*, the government meetings. The basis remains in the rules. During the COVID period, the regulations can change at any time. So, there is a bit of a mess. Many of the plans made in the RKPDes (the annual village working plan) have been delayed. In making policies, the village head adheres to rigid principles, national regulations, and regional government regulations. Regulations that kept changing during the COVID had implications for the performance of the village government and also the decisions that had been announced in the RKPDes. A lot of physical and non-physical projects were delayed (personal communication, September 23, 2022)

A different expression regarding the principle of obedience to regulations was conveyed by the Head of Sukourip Village. Wiyono said:

The important thing is I don't interfere with the law, sir. That's the main thing I avoid. So, to take this step, there must be input sir, maybe from friends, from people close to me. Of course, I will coordinate, at least with the village secretary so there won't be regulation mistakes, sir. (personal communication, August 12, 2022)

The village head tries to avoid "problems" in policy-making by obeying regulations (government and regency). Therefore, these normative principles often guide discussions between village heads and their staff when deciding on development budget allocations during the pandemic. At the same time, the village head's usual creativity in developing development policies was suppressed.

Yudo (pseudonym), the Head of the Sukourip BPD testified to his experience in making decisions with the village head during the pandemic time. He saw the caution of the village head to obey the rules in making development policies. He reported:

As long as I work with him, during his leadership, he is always careful. Being careful is always the main thing to talk about, rather than the courage to make decisions. Anyway, everything is very noticeable, for some reason. What is clear is that every time he makes a decision he always does not dare to make a decision right away. It must be discussed first with the sub-district. He doesn't dare to do that, definitely wait first, anything like that. Either he's afraid that something will go wrong or he doesn't know what to do, he must be waiting for his superiors. Later, if the superiors say something like this, then he runs it (personal communication, August 26, 2022).

Compliance with the law in formulating village development policies is also carried out through consultation with the nearest district government, namely, the sub-district. Nonetheless, the regulation of the role of sub-districts in assisting villages does not yet have an adequate legal basis (Syukri, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic created a health crisis which then resulted in other crises. The Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting survey (2020) found that the household economy had deteriorated after the pandemic by up to 70 percent (June 2020). One of the indications is that residents experiencing a decrease in income have reached 75 percent. This situation prompted the village head to be more sensitive to the condition of his residents.

Under these circumstances, the village head adheres to the principle of empathy. Widodo, the

Head of Sukomandiri Village, expressed his empathy:

...All this time, in leading this (village), I have prioritized the language of heart. So, when someone is experiencing a painful condition and I ask for their opinion, I will position myself as him. So, here I am full of tolerant language. That is related to my personal principles, sir (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

In this situation, the village head seeks to identify himself in the same state of feeling or thought as the residents. Susanto, the Head of Sukomaju Village, expressed a different view:

I always at least coordinate with the staff here, per region. Together with the BPD, if they can respond to residents' complaints or others, if there are residents who are sick, they must be responsive. I always get myself involved, you know. Sometimes I wander around, and pay attention if there are complaints with aid that residents can't get (personal communication, September 9, 2022).

The act of the village head going around and meeting residents was confirmed by Suparto (pseudonym), the Secretary of Sukomaju village (personal communication, September 15, 2022).

The "space" of the village development budget is reduced due to many obligations for budget allocations for handling COVID-19 from the government and regency. This situation requires village heads to be able to make effective development policies due to budget constraints. According to Budianto, the chairman of BPD Sukomandiri, the pandemic has changed the allocation of the development budget, with only around 30 percent left. Indeed, the village government was still able to allocate 70 percent of the development budget to accommodate residents' suggestions, before the pandemic (personal communication, September 23, 2022). Thus, the next principle to be considered by the village head is to determine the priority scale of development policies.

Suparto, the Secretary of Sukomaju village, stated that the village head set village development policies according to the priority scale and he decides which priority to work on first. Due to the pandemic, priorities have changed (personal communication, September 15, 2022). Meanwhile, Wiyono, the Head of Sukourip Village, implicitly explains the principle of priority scale in setting village development policies:

When it is related to development, I consider the conditions and situation in the neighborhood, sir. If it's really urgent in that neighborhood, it should be prioritized. So, the others have to be given in first.

Because this is what many people need, sir. That's what prioritized (personal communication, August 12, 2022).

Finally, principles originating from Islam shape village development policies during a pandemic. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad served as an example that the village head followed, especially when he heard complaints from the community. Susanto, the Head of Sukomaju Village said, "Yes, we are honest, sir, I am from (refer to) a religious point of view, yes, at least from the examples of the prophet. From the examples of the prophet, it is better to do something than doing nothing" (personal communication, September 9, 2022).

Meanwhile in Sukomandiri Village, the village head conducts the *khotmil qur'an*² ritual as an effort to pray to God to get the best results from all the efforts that have been devoted. Nono (pseudonym), the Secretary of Sukomandiri Village, testified about the religious effort:

It is, (principles) religious. He conducts *khotmil Qur'an* every month. That's for all staff who are available. Yes, the goal is for us to strive in the world while still praying to leave the results to God. So, the goal is like that, so that everything goes well (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Although religious principles are not dominant in encouraging development policy-making by the village head, this principle is still important to note, bearing in mind that religious ritual practices are part of villagers' daily lives. Thus, the village head could not get away from the village's religious customs.

Dealing with the Dilemma of Representation

This study discovers several ethical efforts made by village heads to maintain their morality criteria in village development policy-making during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, the village head conducts *musyawarah* or coordination with stakeholders before making decisions. Susanto, the Head of Sukomaju Village, gave a short answer, "Look, even if you support me or not, I'll deal with the projects fairly. It's not just my supporters that I prioritize, I always coordinate with neighborhoods" (personal communication, September 9, 2022).

Susanto's statement was confirmed by Suparto, the Secretary of Sukomaju village that the village head is trying to work with the BPD and community leaders to ensure fair policy-making (personal communication, September 15, 2022). Meanwhile, Bambang (pseudonym), the Head of the Sukomaju BPD testified to his experience in *musyawarah* with the village head:

First of all, we were told that there were such funds. Usually, at these meetings they are told about the funds for this, for others. I was indeed invited for discussion, then maybe for the RAB (budget plan); it will also be discussed. In the implementation, yes, we are still monitoring, wondering how much funding is available and so on. We are still discussing, for example, we will discuss where the projects will be located (personal communication, September 15, 2022).

The same experience was conveyed by Wiyono, the Head of Sukourip Village, that to avoid policies that favored constituents, he coordinated with the RT and RW heads (personal communication, August 12, 2022). The village head's statement was confirmed by Sunarko, the Secretary of Sukourip Village. To the best of his knowledge, the village head asked for consideration from staff, community leaders, and BPD to avoid making detrimental decisions (personal communication, August 12, 2022). Yudo, the Head of the Sukourip BPD also confirmed that *musyawarah* held by the village head was to maintain the objectivity of his decisions (personal communication, August 26, 2022).

The second effort to avoid conflicting interests is where the village head seeks to comply with the applicable rules in making development policies, especially the allocation of APBDes. Wiyono, the Head of Sukourip Village, explicitly stated:

As for the APBDes, I follow the rules, sir, the rules from above. So, yes, if there are regulatory instructions from above, yes, we have to obey them, because if we violate them, that's a problem, sir. So, allocate this a certain percentage, provide it with a certain percentage. So, we must follow, not carelessly. Like yesterday (during the pandemic), food security, disaster management are provided with a certain percent. So, I really follow the rules. Because if you don't obey, the funds won't be disbursed (personal communication, August 12, 2022)

This statement was confirmed by Sunarko, the Secretary of Sukourip Village. The village head follows the rules set by the government and regency (personal communication, August 12, 2022). The village head of Sukomaju (personal communication, September 9, 2022) and the village head of Sukomandiri (personal communication, September 8, 2022) expressed similar obedience to the rules in making development policies.

The guidelines for allocations of DD and ADD are indeed the most frequently mentioned as a reference point for development allocations. The head of BPD Sukomandiri confirmed the village heads' answer:

²*Khotmil Quran* is the practice of reciting the Koran until it is completed within a certain period of time, either in groups or individually.

So, the ethics that the village head is to open up to people who support him or not. So, there is no action for the village head to prioritize his supporters. What is there is open to anyone. Because indeed the management of DD and ADD has been given guidance by the government (personal communication, September 23, 2022).

During the pandemic, obeying the rules actually created a contradictory situation. On the one hand, simply following the rules made the village head minimize the risk of conflict of interest and the risk of violating the law. At the same time, the allocation arrangements have suppressed the aspirations of the citizens. The Secretary of Sukomandiri Village stated explicitly, "Yes, so the village autonomy proclaimed through DD is no longer working. Because the DD (allocation) of 68 percent has been determined for COVID and so on." (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

The third initiative taken by the village head to avoid conflicts of interest is being transparent and inclusive. The head of BPD Sukomandiri testified his experience:

The village head is very welcome when someone is dissatisfied so that things can be transparent.... Mr. *Kades*, after becoming (elected) actually welcomes all, both those who support him or those who don't. ...So, the etiquette of the village head is to open up to people who support him or not. So, there is no action for the village head to prioritize his supporters (personal communication, September 23, 2022).

The experience of the head of the BPD is important in demonstrating the actions of the village head who seeks to respond to constituent and non-constituent demands in the same way and with the same attitude. Meanwhile, Susanto, the Head of Sukomaju Village, gave a short answer, that in adopting a policy regarding the allocation of village development funding, everything is divided equally, without distinguishing between supporters and non-supporters (personal communication, September 9, 2022).

However, behind this inclusive principle, the village head continues to carry out his political interests (pork-barreling) simultaneously. Widodo, the Head of Sukomandiri Village, stated clearly:

Well, specifically, development (decision) is partial, sir. Put it in RW 1, because in RW 1 there have been several suggestions, now one of these suggestions came from constituency figures who were trying to help me. Automatically, and politically this is what I will prioritize. But still, the concept of meeting the needs of many people is also my

consideration. This is how we respond so that our constituents' proposals can be realized. It seems that the impression is for the benefit of many people, but here politically we are still carrying out the proposals from our constituents (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Based on these answers, avoiding conflicts of interest does not mean being completely without interests. The village head still has a specific strategy for realizing constituent demands in village development policies.

Ethical Aspects to Justify Decision-making

The final question in this study is about the role of the village head's political entrepreneurship ethics in justifying village development policy-making. Justification means considerations or aspects that are good reasons for making village development policies. The researcher asked simple questions of the village heads and other informants regarding what aspects were considered most in making village development policies during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022).

The first and most frequent justification given by informants was regulation. Widodo, the Head of Sukomandiri Village, stated clearly about huge budget allocation for anticipating the pandemic and other pandemic-related financing:

What is clear is that we still follow government regulations. Because the rules are clear, what's important is that whatever the government regulations are, we present them at the village meeting. So, let them know exactly the condition of our budget. Then, our posts (financing) follow government regulations. The village government in 2022, if I may say so, will have castrated its dignity. With the (Republik Indonesia, 2021), DD and ADD (allocation) of 40 percent for BLT, 20 percent for food security, and 8 percent for COVID. Of this, 68 percent is the village government's right to manage finances, but this cannot be done because of this presidential regulation. This 32% percent (the rest) is for routine allocations assuming a total budget of Rp 1 billion, then the remaining 320 million, including for routine budget. DD (including) for the routine budget only 80 million left. What it is for Sukomandiri Village with a population of 14 thousand (not enough). If I allocate it to neighborhood A, neighborhood B will complain. So, I still follow the president's rules while still being accountable to the community through village *musyawarah* (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Suparto, the Secretary of Sukomaju village similarly confirmed that the village head did not dare

to violate the rules in making village development policies (personal communication, September 15, 2022).

Meanwhile, Wiyono, the Head of Sukourip Village, followed the rules when making non-infrastructure development policies. He answered briefly, “In that case, I follow the rules and seeing other needs too, sir, if it’s not enough, it’s reduced, shared it out” (personal communication, August 12, 2022). Sunarko, the Secretary of Sukourip Village added that the consequence of justifying the rules in making village development policies during a pandemic is a failure to comply with development plans deriving from community proposals (personal communication, August 12, 2022).

The second aspect of consideration for the village head in making village development policies during the pandemic is *musyawarah*. The village head makes *musyawarah* a mechanism that must be pursued amidst the limited space for development policy-making due to the pandemic. Widodo, the Head of Sukomandiri Village, said that he is trying to be accountable for making development policies that he does in village meetings, especially because of pressure from the government regulations that limit the village’s development policy space (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

Nono, the Secretary of Sukomandiri Village, confirmed the village head’s explanation that village meetings could not fully become a village head forum to fulfill his promises to villagers. Government rules prevent the village head from fully exercising his power to manage all village administration households (village autonomy) (personal communication, September 8, 2022).

The Convergence of Ethical Aspects

Table 1 provides a summary of the findings of this study based on three open research questions. Based on findings in three villages, this research reveals the ethics of political entrepreneurship of the village heads in making village development policies during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022). Village heads adhere to six principles in

policy-making: *musyawarah*, transparency and participation, adherence to rules, empathy for the needs of residents, priority scales, and Islamic teachings.

Meanwhile, to avoid conflicts of interest in policy-making, village heads take ethical measures, namely *musyawarah*, adherence to rules, and transparency and inclusiveness. The ethical aspects of policy-making by village heads consist of rules and *musyawarah*. Based on these findings, Table 1 shows the convergence of political entrepreneurship ethics in making village development policies—the principles and practices of obedience to rules and *musyawarah*.

The convergence of political entrepreneurship ethics shows the similarity of ethical facts in making village development policies in the pandemic. The three village heads demonstrated similarity of principles, efforts to avoid conflicts of interest, and ethical aspects considered in making development policies, namely, the ethical facts of obedience to rules and *musyawarah*.

Obedience to the rules set by the government and regency is a principle that is held as well as an aspect that is considered by village heads when making village development policies. They also obey government and regency regulations to avoid the dilemma of representing development policies that prioritize the interests of constituents or villagers.

However, adherence to the rules “leaves a burden” to the village head. As political entrepreneurs, village heads have policy space to express leadership creativity in policies and programs that can solve villagers’ problems. Nonetheless, the epidemic prompted the government and regency to issue imperative policies, especially regarding village fund allocations. The government and regency make rules that order the allocation of a “mandatory” budget for handling the pandemic and consequently negate the village head’s budget capacity to meet villagers’ demands.

Until the third year of the pandemic (2022), village heads could only utilize 32 percent of the APBDes portion to meet villagers’ demands. The

Table 1. Convergence of Political Entrepreneurship Ethics

The principles of decision-making	Avoiding conflicts of interest	Aspects to justify decision-making	Ethical convergence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Musyawarah</i> • Transparency and participation • Obedience to rules • Empathy • Priority scale • Islamic teachings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Musyawarah</i> • Obedience to rules • Transparency and inclusiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules • <i>Musyawarah</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obedience to rules • <i>Musyawarah</i>

Source: *The Study’s Findings, 2022.*

budget portion includes financing village staff's salaries. As a result, the amount of the budget that can be used for village development is much smaller than before the pandemic.

Meanwhile, *musyawarah* is a convergence of ethical facts in village development policy-making which shows the practice of discussion to reach a consensus. The village head, together with stakeholders, conducts consultations and negotiations on development policy planning in the village consultative forum (*musdes*). However, the pandemic has made government regulations regarding village budgeting imperative. Thus, the ethical facts of *musyawarah* are no longer a space for consultation and negotiation between village heads, stakeholders and villagers. *musyawarah* is just a limited room for clarification only.

In *musyawarah*, the village head conveyed information regarding the reallocation of the village development budget (refocusing) for handling the pandemic in the village, as instructed by the government and the regency. The village head conveyed changes to the development plan and its consequences, which meant he could not fulfill the development aspirations of villagers in the last three years. Hence, *musyawarah* is not an ethical effort to meet the demands of all citizens, but to fulfill the orders of the rules. In other words, *musyawarah* has changed from a deliberation forum to one for approval and clarification of village development policies.

Based on the findings, this study expands the political entrepreneurship literature as mapped by Petridou et al (2015). Exploration of the three ethical elements of political entrepreneurship (principles, effort, and justification) in making village development policies is useful for understanding the actions of village heads as political entrepreneurs. The principles or criteria of morality that are held, efforts to avoid conflicts of interest, and aspects that are considered by elected political leaders in making policies can function as different independent variables to explain political entrepreneurship; this is something that is not explained by Petridou et al (Petridou et al., 2015) in their political entrepreneurship analytical framework.

As an elected political leader, the village head's political entrepreneurship practices are correlated or influenced by independent variables. Thus, ethics can be considered as new variable.

Finally, this study examines the ethics of political entrepreneurship in the context of the pandemic. The outbreak turned out to be related to changes in village development policy-making

compared to before the pandemic. The ethical convergence of village development policy-making, namely, adherence to rules and *musyawarah*, is inseparable from the impact of handling the outbreak. There has been a change in the ethical meaning of obedience to rules and *musyawarah* in the practice of political entrepreneurship due to the crisis caused by the pandemic. Therefore, the pandemic as a non-natural disaster can be another explanatory factor that contributes to shaping the ethics and practices of political entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSION

This research has academic implications for the study of political entrepreneurship. It adds new insights into the convergence of the three ethical elements of political entrepreneurship. The convergence of principles, efforts and ethical considerations shows the ethics of making village development policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely, obedience to rules and *musyawarah*.

The findings and analysis of this study add to the political entrepreneurship literature/analytical framework as mapped by Petridou et al (2016). Exploration of principles, efforts, and ethical justification for making village development policies is important for understanding political entrepreneurial activity.

Finally, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic can be understood in relation to changing village development policies. The pandemic has changed the ethical meaning of compliance with rules and *musyawarah* as a convergent fact between principles, efforts, and ethical justification for making village development policies. The implication is that a pandemic as a non-natural disaster can be considered for its contribution to shaping the ethics of political entrepreneurship.

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