

A Study of Leadership in the Management of Village Development Program: The Role of Local Leadership in Village Governance

Kushandajani^{1,*}, Teguh Yuwono², Fitriyah²

¹ Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Diponegoro, Tembalang, Semarang, Jawa Tengah 50271, Indonesia

email: kushandajani@live.undip.ac.id

² Department of Politics and Government, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Diponegoro, Tembalang, Semarang, Jawa Tengah 50271, Indonesia

Abstract: Policies regarding villages in Indonesia have a strong impact on village governance. Indonesian Law No. 6/2014 recognizes that the “Village has the rights of origin and traditional rights to regulate and manage the interests of the local community.” Through this authority, the village seeks to manage development programs that demand a prominent leadership role for the village leader. For that reason, the research sought to describe the expectations of the village head and measure the reality of their leadership role in managing the development programs in his village. Using a mixed method combining in-depth interview techniques and surveys of some 201 respondents, this research resulted in several important findings. First, *Lurah* as a village leader was able to formulate the plan very well through the involvement of all village actors. Second, *Lurah* maintained a strong level of leadership at the program implementation stage, through techniques that built mutual awareness of the importance of village development programs that had been jointly initiated.

Keywords: local leadership, village governance, program management

I. INTRODUCTION

In the hierarchical system of government in Indonesia, the *desa* (village) is located below the *kecamatan* (district). *Desa* are divided into *dusun* (hamlets), then rukun warga (RW or a citizen association), and rukun tetangga (RT or a neighborhood association), as seen in Figure 1: (Kushandajani, 2016). The government hierarchy in Indonesia. Divisions in a *desa* (village)

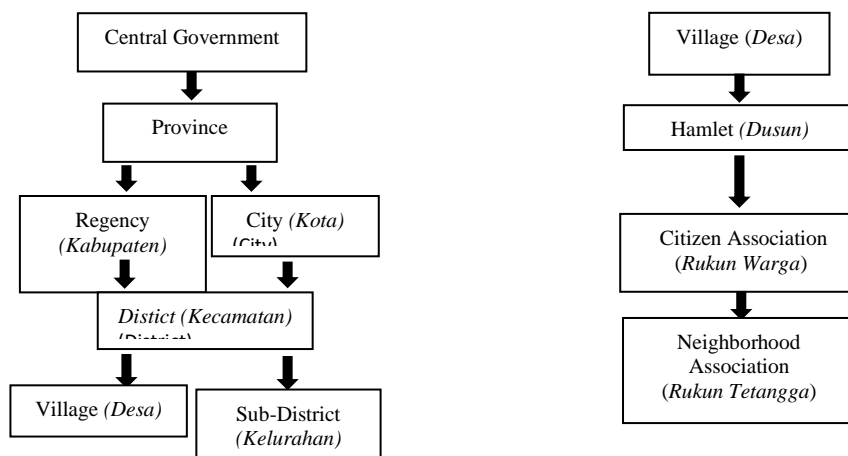


Figure 1. (a) The government hierarchy in Indonesia; (b) Divisions in a *desa* Political reality in Indonesia shows that the village is the owner of genuine autonomy, and has for centuries been a

dynamic element of society in Indonesia. With its autonomy, the village has so much diversity, consciously or not, has become a source of cultural wealth for Indonesia (Kushandajani, 2011).

Village autonomy can be seen from several indicators (Kushandajani & Puji Astuti, 2017; Ahmad & Ahmad, 2018). First, from how the leader is directly elected by the village community. Second, from the rights of the village government to prepare and implement its own budget, called the Village Revenue and Expenditure Budget (*APBDesa*). Third, the village is an autonomous government organ. Fourth, the village authority is based on origin rights and local jurisdiction, in addition to that conferred by the regency/city, provincial, or national governments, in accordance with the provisions of legislation (Kushandajani, 2016).

This can be observed in Article 18 of the 1945 Constitution. The article reflects the state's recognition of what is today called "village autonomy." Moreover, by referring to the village as an "original structure that has origin rights," according to the 1945 Constitution, only villages are guaranteed autonomy (Kushandajani, 2008). In addition, village autonomy is also reflected in the behavior of the village community, which maintains their socio-cultural life. Thus, village autonomy is different from regional autonomy (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2019; Kushandajani, 2015).

The presence of Law No. 6 of 2014 has major implications for village structure. First, the presence of the Law of the Village, or Village Law, reflects the spirit and appreciation of the village as it is acknowledged to have existed before the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia was formed in 1945. Second, there is considerable diversity of characteristics and types of villages. Although it is realized that in a unitary country there needs to be homogeneity, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia continues to recognize and guarantee the existence of both legal community units and customary law community units, along with their traditional rights. Third, this recognition is reflected in the village origin rights and village-level local authority. Fourth, control of the Village Fund, which is large enough to maintain village operations, requires proper governance, considering that the village officers are not necessarily schooled in management of public funds, unlike regional officials (districts/cities).

Through its existing authority, the village seeks to manage all development programs it has initiated and implemented itself. In the context of managing the village development program, the presence and role of its leaders, in this case the village head, is a key (Mursyidin et al., 2019). Under the village head, village authority and governance can succeed or fail. In other words, village autonomy is strongly influenced by the strength of local leadership especially that of the village head as its highest administrative authority.

II. METHODOLOGY

The use of a mixed method allowed for the collection of reliable fresh data while employing a triangulation method comparing findings from case studies with surveys (Farquhar, 2012; Fowler, 1988; Gliem, J. A., & Gliem, 2003). Case studies were the first technique, used so that researchers could analyze problems from multiple perspectives, namely organizational, situations, events, and processes, by answering "how" and "why" research questions (Cooper, DR, & Schindler, 2006; Creswell, JW, & Clark, 2007; Myers, 2009; Yin, 2003) Case studies are qualitative approaches to examining histories or bounded-systems. Employed were in-depth data retrieval, such as interviews and observations. Surveys were the second research technique, used so that findings could be generalized (Cooper, DR, & Schindler, 2006), especially considering that the study population was expected to represent the views of stakeholders and parties involved in the administration of village governance. The survey in this study was used to answer research questions "who," "what,"

“where,” “when,” and “how much” (Cooper, DR, & Schindler, 2006).

The key informants of the study occupied various strategic levels in the community, including village heads and officials, community leaders, women's groups, farmer groups, and others, identified by purposive sampling. For the survey, 201 respondents were used to meet the critical limit of samples for quantitative analysis, by using multivariate analysis, specifically structural equation modeling (Hair, JF, Black, WC, Babin, BJ, Anderson, RE, & Tatham, 2006). Fowler has stated that, to improve the precision of research results, there must be at least 150 to 200 samples (Fowler, 1988). The population of this study were village government organizers and the community in Lerep Village, which represented the best and ordinary practices.

In collecting data, the study used a non-probability sampling technique called purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen because each sample has the characteristics, opinions, or special behavior (Cooper, D. R., & Schindler, 2006) concerning the village leader's role towards village governance. Through purposive sampling, researchers can find the most knowledgeable informants. In this way, they are able to get a comprehensive view from various perspectives. Data from the case study was collected by interview, using specified guidelines.

Reliability and validity as phenomenological paradigms cannot be achieved as easily as a positivistic paradigm, which uses quantitative data. However, referring to Collis and Hussey, research involving a number of research team members must compare the interpretation of data by a number of research members and discuss the results in meeting forums (Collis, J., & Hussey, 2009). The validity of this study is determined by ensuring that key informants are people who truly have the capacity to answer a number of questions in in-depth interviews (Ibid.).

For the case study, Yin mentioned three analysis techniques, namely pattern-matching, explanation-building, and time-series analysis (Yin, 2003). But for this study, only the latter two were used. Pattern-matching is used to classify different data from various sources. In this case, the data will be reviewed, reduced, tabulated, and categorized according to the relevant concept. Explanation-building is performed by explaining the pattern-matching process and forming a hypothesis-generating process that can be used for further research, especially quantitative studies.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lerep Village, administratively, is one of 11 villages and sub-districts located in Ungaran Barat District, Semarang Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The village has traditional social and cultural aspects potential, which is an added value for the village, with its local wisdom still embedded, such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) via village charity (*sedekah desa*), circumcision (*sunatan*), marriage (*manten*), and so on.

The area of Lerep Village is around 682.29 hectares, at an average height of 500 m above sea level. It is the second largest village in West Ungaran District, consisting of 10 *RW* and 69 *RT*, as well as seven *Dukuh*—Indrokilo, Lerep, Soka, Tegalrejo, Lorog, Karangbolo, and Mapagan. Agricultural land consists of rice fields (21.96%), other crops (24.36%), plantations (22.21%), community forests (22.21%), and ponds (2.11%). Meanwhile, non-agricultural land includes houses and buildings (26.83%); other land use reaches 2.5%. It can be seen from the livelihood data of the population, most of whom work as private employees (52.30%) and entrepreneurs/traders (23.50%). The rest are industrial workers (13.20%), civil servants (5.80%), farmers (4.60%), and others. The male and female population are relatively balanced at 6,823 (50.54%) and 6,677 (49.46%), respectively. Lerep Village is managed by the village head (*Lurah*), who is directly elected by the community. In

carrying out their duties and authority, the *Lurah* is assisted by several village officials as described in Fig. 2:

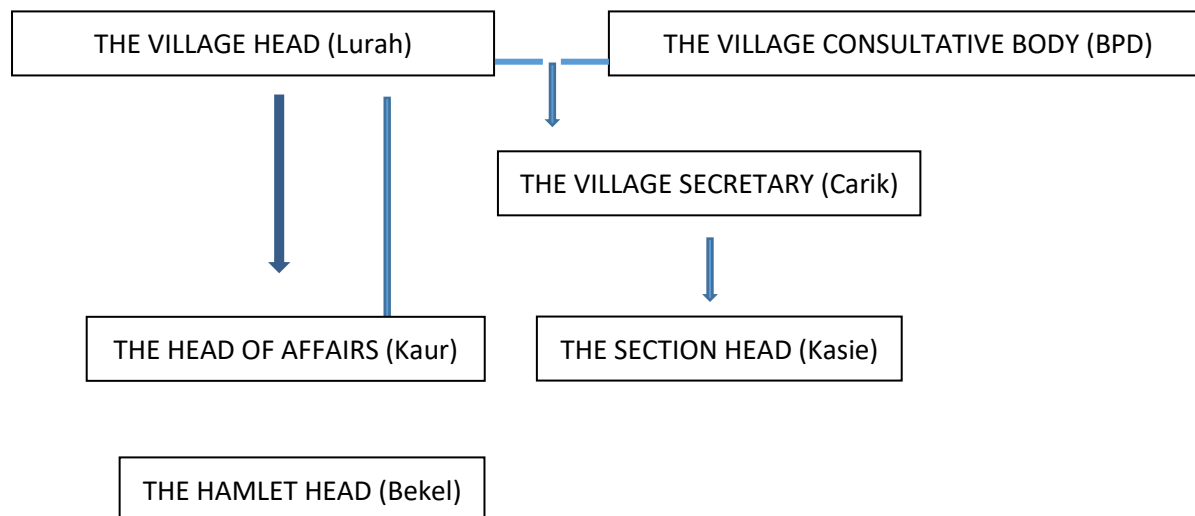


Figure 2. Government Organization Structure 2017 of Lerep Village

Village Consultative Body (*BPD*) discharges government functions. Its members are democratically-appointed representatives of the villagers, based on regional representation. The Village Secretary (*Carik*) is the manager of the Village Secretariat. The Secretary helps *Lurah* in carrying out government administration. The Manager of Affairs (*Kasie*) assists the Village Secretary in matters of administrative services, supporting the implementation of government duties. The Section Manager (*Kaur*) is a technical implementing position. The Section Manager is tasked with assisting the Village Chief in carrying out operational tasks. The Hamlet Head (*Bekel*) is the *Lurah*'s representative in hamlet areas.

The structure and work procedures of village government are defined by the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 84 of 2015 on Village Government Organizational Structure and Work Procedure, as a function of the Republic of Indonesia Government Regulation No. 43 of 2014 on Implementation Regulation of Law No. 6 2014 on Villages, as amended by Government Regulation No. 47 of 2015 on Amendment No. 43 of 2014. *Lurah* is the head of the Village Government and leads its administration. They are in charge of organizing the government and implementing community development and empowerment. As outlined in Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, the *Lurah* organizes village governance and development, fosters community social assistance, and empowers rural communities.

Those four fields may appear to be distinct but in fact are inseparable from the functions of village governance. The success of a village leader is measured by their ability to promote community development and citizen empowerment. In fact, in reality, the ability of the *Lurah* to inspire village communities will significantly impact community participation in their governance. The *Lurah* has the authority to direct the village administration, based on policies established jointly with the *BPD*; submit a draft village regulation; establish regulations that have been approved by the *BPD*; compile and submit draft village regulations regarding *APBDesa*, pending discussion and enactment with the *BPD*; foster the life of the village community; likewise the village economy; coordinate village development in a participatory manner; represent the village inside and outside the court and appoint legal counsel, in accordance with applicable legislation; and implement other tasks in accordance with applicable legislation. The findings in Lerep Village, can be seen in the

following figures:

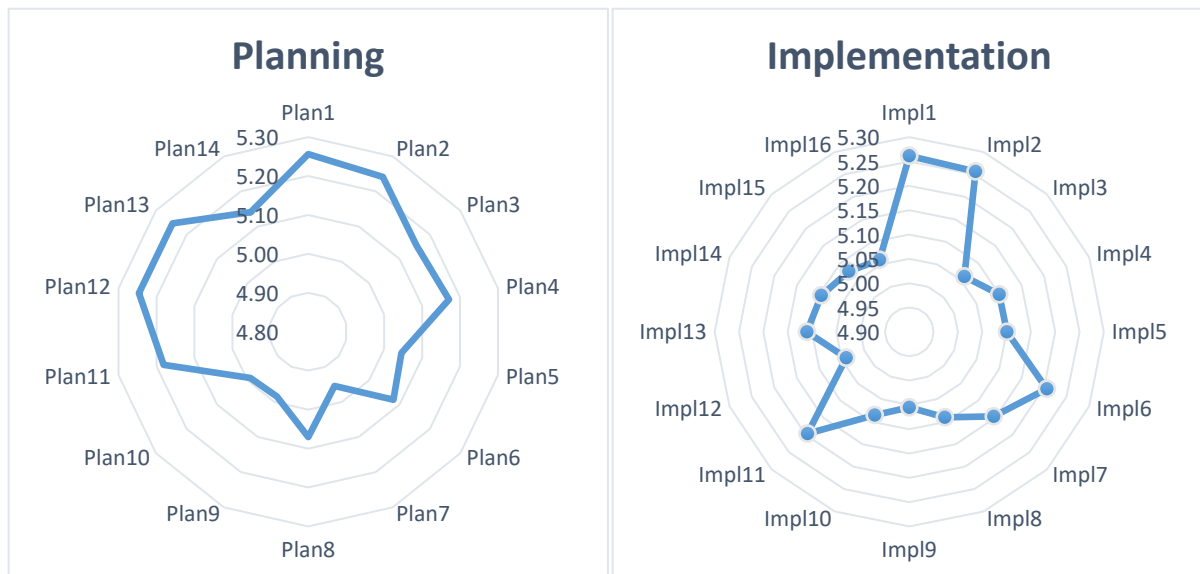


Figure 2. Results of Respondents' Appraisal of the *Lurah*'s Leadership Program Planning and Implementation Ability

Table 1. Average results of Respondent Appraisals of the *Lurah*'s Program Planning Abilities

Planning		Average
1	Formulate the village vision	5.26
2	Formulate the village mission	5.24
3	Plan the stages to achieve the village vision	5.16
4	Plan the stages to achieve the village mission	5.17
5	Establish strategies for achieving the village vision	5.05
6	Establish strategies for achieving the village mission	5.08
7	Identify challenges/threats faced by the village	4.95
8	Identify opportunities for development in the village	5.07
9	Identify strengths of the village	

		4.98
10	Identify weaknesses of the village	4.99
11	The village has an institution to plan the use of the Village Fund	5.18
12	Involve the community in village meetings	5.25
13	Involve community leaders in village meetings	5.25
14	Preparation of village planning documents	5.14
Variable Average		5.13

Table 2. Average results of Respondent Appraisals of the *Lurah's* Program Implementation

Implementation		Average
1	Build awareness within the community about the importance of village development	5.26
2	Encourage the community to participate in village development	5.26
3	Coordinate the stages of achievement of the village program	5.06
4	Address issues that arise in implementing village programs	5.10
5	Motivate the community to implement village programs	5.10
6	Build the spirit of village officials	5.21
7	Maintain program implementation documents	5.15
8	Use technology/computer/internet to maintain program implementation documents	5.09
9	Prepare reports on program implementation	5.06
10	Share reports on program implementation to related parties	5.09
11	Provide information to the public	5.20
12	Use technology/computer/internet to provide information to the	5.04

	public	
13	Manage village human resources for program implementation	5.11
14	Manage village economic resources for program implementation	5.10
15	Manage village social and cultural resources for program implementation	5.08
16	Execute the program in accordance with applicable regulations	5.06
Variable Average		5.12

The above finding indicates that leaders are the pioneers and innovators for rural communities (Mohammadpour, Yaghoubi, Kamalian, & Salarzehi, 2017). In fact, a number of studies, such as several from South Australia, show that there is a strong correlation between leadership and governance. However, the leader here is not limited to a fixed position; they are also someone, who, when possessing certain abilities, is able to act as a mediator between citizens and larger government entities (Beer, 2014).

Likewise in Malaysia, leadership and personal qualities play an vital role in capacity building, especially in creating a sense of belonging in the local culture (Mohamad, Kesavan, Razzaq, Hamzah, & Khalifah, 2013). The ability of a leader to understand the local culture, to refrain from forcing the implementation of their ideas, being an exemplar, and respecting various parties, is the quality of leadership in a rural area. Strong relationships between leaders and trust between related parties are essential for cooperation. Related to the focus of this research, leaders play a central role in implementing accountable village government, as stated by Palmer, that leaders in Indonesia are important approaches, especially for shared interests related to ownership issues (Palmer, 2007). A community looks for the ideal leader to have a vision, be patriotic, charismatic, and firm in their stance (Fuad, 2014).

Compared to the previous village leader, the present *Lurah* in Lerep has a more agile character. He has an extensive network with his counterparts at the Semarang Regency and Central Java Province; he is skilled in nurturing and establishing ties with other village institutions, such as *BPD* and Village Community Resilience Board (*LKMD*); and motivating the village community to collaborate in its development, for example, due to limited funds, the village government only gave three million rupiah for a program that was supposed to draw 10 million. Therefore, the other seven million came from community self-help. This leadership characteristic is the reason why the *Lurah* was re-elected.ⁱ

From the perspective of village officials, the *Lurah*'s leadership skills derive from several talents: (1) the ability to inspire the community; (2) likewise, his skill at embracing various actors, including youth, Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*), Family Empowerment Development (*PKK*), Small and Micro Medium Enterprises (*UMKM*), and village-owned enterprises (*BUMDes*); (3) he encourages community participation in the village development by building enthusiasm for community initiative; (4) village financial management is controlled by the team, not by the village leader himself. Problems have indeed arisen, but they have been due to changes in the village infrastructure program, from concretization to paving, which requires time to be decided together, between the community and the *BPD* and the village leader, to the making of the minutes.ⁱⁱ "...The village leader has a high motivating ability, and is able to find the right solution to the problems of

development in the village.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to *Lurah* with the village apparatus, there is one institution that is considered his partner in preparing a plan for *APBDes*, the village budget. That is the BPD. (That will change with the implementation of a village-level development program). Budgeting is based on the principle of “prolog” (pro meaning pro, or in favor of, the society, and log means logical). All program plans must be followed in accordance with the wishes of the community. The discussion takes place in two stages. First, the draft of *APBDes* brought by the village government is discussed internally, in advance, with the BPD, so that what is less appropriate can be asked and deliberated at that time. If it is in accordance with the wishes of the citizens, then it is agreed. But if it is not, it must be removed, so that the design of the Village Fund is in accordance with the wishes and needs of the community. The coordination that was built between the village leader and the BPD was quite good and creative. It also consistently considered the community’s future. “I myself salute him. As long as the activities and programs carried out by the village government are in the interests of the community, the BPD supports them because they are quite responsive to the interests of the community. But it still must be monitored well.”^{iv} Every Monday (*Senin*), the village leader and village officials meet to review reports and evaluations of program implementation.

Through management of the *BUMDes*, the village-owned enterprises, the *Lurah* is able to raise the village potential, such as agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. At present, *BUMDes* has seven business units, and in 2019 will join in a cooperative venture with Indofood. With heightened motivation and enthusiasm, they look to be able to develop a relatively new *BUMDes*. “It is rare for *BUMDes* to be formed and then given assistance by the village. But with the current leader, newly established *BUMDes* were directly assisted by 100 million rupiahs in the 2017 budget. For the 2018 budget, *BUMDes* gets another 100 million, though, to date, we have only received 50 million.”^v

The current findings can be compared with those of Fiedler (Supriyono & Trisnawati, 2015), who asserted that effective leadership can be realized, given several criteria: First, leader-subordinate relationships where staff have high trust in the leader, and vice versa, leaders respect the aspirations of their staff. Second, task structure where each staff has a clear function, optimizing performance. Third, the leader’s inherent power and authority creates the confidence to corral their resources. Fourth, destination-tiered theory, where effective leaders are able to motivate their staff to work in line with their vision. Leaders, in this case, set the rhythm of staff work and provide adequate appreciation, increasing staff morale and self-confidence. In addition, leaders invite staff participation in the decision-making process. Fifth, transformational leadership is needed, where leaders make significant changes in the organization with the hope that the staff is able to improve their work performance while advancing in their careers. Transformational leaders must become agents of change, daring to make breakthroughs, believing in the abilities of others, have strong values and characters, be able to learn well, and have the mental fortitude to work in complex situations with a clear vision.

Mahmood's study describes the impact of transformational leaders on organizational culture, how they promote trust and “sharing of knowledge (tacit and implicit) among individuals within the organization” (Mahmood & Khattak, 2017). In contrast to Mahmood, Öztürk’s study sees “organizational actors with cultural values differing from those of their followers but with certain cultural orientations are more likely to be labeled as leaders.” (Öztürk, Varoğlu, & Varoğlu, 2017) The main role of leaders is to encourage creativity, and encourage innovative thinking among workers (Ahmad & Sahar, 2019; Eisele, 2017). Thus, leaders are also required to conduct various courses, in order to be able to work in various levels of corporate governance, and develop their

managerial skills (Birknerová, Birkner, & Zbihlejšová, 2017). According to Akdol, leaders are people who are able to integrate the abilities of Servant Leadership and the Leader Member Exchange (LMX) (Akdol & Sebnem Arikboga, 2017). In fact, heterogeneity and multi-function leaders of organizations such as the Community-Based Development Association and the Rural Workers' Unions have a much greater capacity than “single or dual-function local organizations for carrying out a partnership process and to respond to family-based, small-scale rural producers’ interest” (Sobrinho & Vasconcellos, 2012). Therefore, good leaders give responsibility to their staff, so that they have the ability and skills improvement (Apak & Gümüş, 2015).

Observing various research findings, it is evident that a *Lurah*'s inspired leadership is a key requirement for the implementation of good village governance. The leadership characteristics needed for governance include: agility (having high enthusiasm for realizing the program), having a broad network, being able to empower the community and embrace various village actors, the capacity to involve the community in the village development, a talent for motivating others, entrusting village finances to the village management team, and be able to coordinate tasks with village officials.



Figure 2. Relationships among *Lurah* and various Village Actors

In the context of administering village governance in Indonesia, it is undeniable that the leadership of the village head is the dominant factor in all governance processes—administrative, political, economic, social, or cultural. The study of the implementation of village governance in the existing social and cultural realities of the village often focuses on the role of the village head in fulfilling his functions, both in terms of government politics and the socio-cultural sphere. For decades, even hundreds of years, village leadership faced various pressures in many forms. Thus, village leadership has been able to protect villagers from pressures both outside and within the village. Whether national political events or policies from the central, provincial, and district levels, all can be accommodated by the village leader and adapted to the practice of local village conditions (Kushandajani, 2011). Antlov called it “rural leadership patronage,” given the importance of the role of the village leader in assisting the central government, and a representation of the country's presence (Antlov, 2002). The findings above also prove that “the relationship between the leadership types and qualities that increase motivation of the employees” manifests itself in the village (Apak & Gümüş, 2015).

IV. CONCLUSION

There are several important conclusions concerning the results of this research. First, the *Lurah* as decision maker is able to formulate a vision and mission; set a strategy for achieving goals; identify strengths and weaknesses; identify threats and opportunities; involve all village actors in village decision-making; and arrange all planning documents properly, as a legal basis for action. Secondly, the *Lurah* should be able to build community awareness on the importance of village development and move the community to participate; coordinate the stages of achievement of village programs; and overcome problems that arise in implementing village programs. In addition, *Lurah* need to motivate the community to implement village programs; build the spirit of village officials; and manage village human, economic, social and cultural resources for program implementation. Thirdly, the research demonstrates the strong leadership role of the *Lurah* in village governance, especially in the implementation of village development programs. The ability of the village leader, integrated with the community's expectations, results in good program management.

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ⁱ Interview result with Pasimin, Chairperson of Village Community Resilience Board (*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa* (LKMD)) of Lerep Village, May 09, 2018.

ⁱⁱ Interview result with Indarsih (Head of Village Financial Affairs) of Lerep Village, 9 May 2018.

ⁱⁱⁱ Interview result with Sri Lestari, Secretary of Lerep Village, 14 May 2018.

^{iv} Interview result with Wardoyo, Head of Village Consultative Body (BPD (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa*)) Lerep Village, 14 May 2018.

^v Interview result with Ratni, Director of BUMDes Gerbang Lentera Lerep Village, 14 May 2018.