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Social Accountability in a Socio-Cultural Framework: Exploring "Lapau" as an Arena for Budgeting Planning in Salayo Village, Solok Regency, West Sumatera Province

Arya Ananta Pramudya[1], Hendri Koeswara[2*], Desna Aromatica[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Andalas, Sumatera Barat, 25163, Indonesia

Abstract

Background This study investigates the role of 'lapau' as a mechanism for social accountability in the budget planning of the Salayo Nagari government. Set within the framework of village autonomy as defined by Law Number 6 of 2014, the research addresses the disparity between formal, procedural accountability and the substantive community practices that exist in reality.

Methods Through qualitative methodology involving interviews, observations and document analysis, the study identifies 'Lapau' as a critical informal public sphere. The presence of government officials within the 'Lapau' reduces social distance and encourages continuous dialogue, which contributes to greater public trust and responsiveness.

Results The findings suggest that this social arena facilitates transparency, direct discourse and rapid problem solving, thereby overcoming the limitations of rigid formal procedures. Instead of replacing the formal accountability mechanisms, the 'Lapau' works with the institutional arrangements that already exist by embedding accountability practices within social and cultural relations.

Conclusions Ultimately, the 'Lapau' strengthens the Nagari government's legitimacy and fosters a deeper emotional bond with the community, ensuring a sustainable response to citizen aspirations.

*Correspondence
*Name   : Hendri Koeswara
Email   : hendrikoeswara@soc.unand.ac.id

Introduction

The implementation of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages marks a new phase in the transformation of village governance in Indonesia. This regulation was introduced as a response to the development gap that has long distinguished rural areas from urban areas, as shown by BPS data, which recorded that in 2023, around 12.3% of the poor population still lived in rural areas, a figure more than double that of urban areas. Through the Village Law, the government has given village governments a stronger mandate for accountability, particularly in relation to financial management and improving the quality of public services, thereby requiring responsive village governments and participatory communities (Ra'is, 2022). This mandate has been reinforced by the substantial and increasing allocation of village funds, which reached more than IDR 71 trillion in 2024 for 74,961 villages. This situation calls for an accountability system that is not only formal but also responsive, transparent, and capable of ensuring that these substantial resources truly meet the needs of village communities (BPS, 2023; Kemenkeu (2024); OECD, 2022).

Within the existing regulatory framework, formal accountability has gained a strong legal basis, particularly through Permendagri No.20 of 2018 concerning Village Financial Management. This regulation systematically regulates the stages of planning, administration, reporting, and the mechanism for accountability of village budgets. However, various studies show that the existence of technical regulations does not necessarily guarantee the implementation of substantive accountability. Surya et al. (2025), for example, still finds practices of village financial irregularities, weak documentation, and low-quality reporting as structural problems that often arise. This indicates a significant gap between the normative framework and implementation practices at the village level, as also noted by studies from Bappenas (2022).

The limitations of these formal accountability mechanisms have prompted the need for a new approach that can bridge policy with the social dynamics of village communities. Social accountability mechanisms have since developed as an alternative that emphasizes citizen participation, process transparency, and direct interaction between the government and village communities. Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg (2016) emphasize that social accountability serves as a reinforcement for formal accountability, particularly because this approach opens social space for cmunities to engage in monitoring, assessment, and public decision-making. These findings align with the results of studies by Gaventa (2020), and Fox (2015), which demonstrate that citizen participation in the oversight process can enhance the performance of local governments.

Several studies in Indonesia have begun to demonstrate the positive impact of social accountability when supported by favorable social conditions. A study by Pramudya et al. (2025) in Kepenuhan Hulu Village found that transparency built by the village government, when accompanied by active community involvement, can strengthen public trust and create relationships that reduce the potential for irregularities. These findings are consistent with the research of Hasniati (2016) and Faidati & Khozin (2020), which emphasizes that the disharmony between the needs of residents and village budget documents often stems from a lack of substantive interaction between the village government and the community. This condition underscores the importance of social dialogue in promoting integrity in governance.

However, research on the relationship between social mechanisms and local culture in shaping village accountability is still minimal. Many studies tend to focus on legal, procedural, or administrative aspects, while the influence of social structures, cultural values, and informal interaction spaces has not been adequately explored. In fact, in the context of West Sumatra, the nagari social system and traditional values play a significant role in shaping bureaucratic behavior and patterns of community participation. This is reinforced by the findings of Yulivestra et al. (2025) and Ilham & Frinaldi (2025), who emphasize that the cultural identity of the Minangkabau people influences the way citizens engage in government affairs.

The phenomenon in Nagari Salayo provides a fascinating picture of how everyday social practices can be transformed into effective instruments of social accountability. The tradition of ""*Lapau*"," a community gathering space that serves as an informal discussion arena, is a vital medium for interaction between the nagari government and its residents. All issues that arise in the community, both nationally and locally, are typically presented, discussed, and critically debated in the "*Lapau*" (Zahari, 2023). Based on interviews with the Wali Nagari Salayo, all village officials are required to attend the "*Lapau*" to capture the community's aspirations and needs directly. The presence of the government in such egalitarian spaces shortens the social distance between policy makers and citizens, making the delivery of aspirations more natural and easier to follow up on. This pattern is reinforced by the findings of El Darman (2025) who state that informal interactions play a significant role in strengthening local governance.

The "*Lapau*" practice aligns with the views of Sørensen & Torfing (2021), who emphasize the importance of cross-actor interactions in strengthening public accountability. According to them, accountability cannot rely solely on administrative documents or formal reporting, but requires a space for dialogue that allows for the direct exchange of ideas, criticism, and clarification. "*Lapau*" provides a social space that breaks down the boundaries between the government and the community, allowing the process of conveying aspirations to occur without bureaucratic obstacles. Moreover, Malena et al. (2004) explain that social accountability mechanisms aim to complement and improve existing formal accountability. This perspective aligns with the interactive governance theory proposed by Ansell & Torfing (2021) and Fung (2009).

This study aims to fill the gap in previous research by examining how social accountability practices operate within the socio-cultural context of Nagari Salayo and how interactions in "*Lapau*" influence the Nagari budget planning process. Theoretically, this study contributes to the enrichment of the concept of social accountability, grounded in local culture. It broadens the understanding of the role of informal social spaces in village financial governance. To address this objective, this study adopts a social accountability framework that conceptualizes accountability as a set of interactional mechanisms between citizens and government actors. Drawing on the perspective of Camargo & Stahl (2016), social accountability in this study is analytically examined through three key dimensions: voice, enforceability, and answerability. Voice is understood as a various of mechanism, both informal and formal which people can express their preferences, opinions, and views and demand accountability from those in authority. Enforcement refers to circumstances in which, if people's mandate is not properly fulfilled, consequences are expected to arise. Answerability is defined as the obligation to provide clarification and the right to receive a

response. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a more responsive and participatory nagari governance model that aligns with the social characteristics of the community. These findings also have the potential to serve as a reference in the formulation of more contextual village government strengthening policies.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to describe in-depth the practice of social accountability through the existence of "*Lapau*" as an arena for village budget planning. This method was chosen for its ability to capture complex social dynamics and the meaning of actors' actions in the local context, as explained by Creswell & Creswell (2017). This study applies a descriptive narrative research type to systematically present the experiences and interactions encountered by researchers in the field (Sugiyono, 2022). Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to understand communication and interaction patterns in the "*Lapau*," while interviews were conducted with village officials, community leaders, and relevant residents. Documentation techniques complemented the findings by examining village planning documents, policy archives, and related administrative records. Primary data were obtained directly from the field through observations and in-depth interviews, capturing firsthand accounts, narratives, and interactional practices related to social accountability within the "*Lapau.*" Secondary data consist of written and archival sources, including village development plans, budget documents, official regulations, and supporting policy reports related to Nagari financial governance.

Data analysis used the Miles & Huberman (1994) model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. This approach ensures that interpretations are made consistently and systematically throughout the study. Furthermore, this study employs Camargo & Stahl (2016) Social Accountability Framework, which comprises voice, enforceability, and answerability, to examine how the "*Lapau*" tradition serves as a mechanism for conveying aspirations, enforcing social norms, and providing answers by the nagari government. This framework enables researchers to understand how social accountability practices are shaped within the socio-cultural context of Nagari Salayo and how interactions in "*Lapau*" impact the Nagari budget planning process.

Results and Discussion

The basic principles of social accountability are transparency and community participation (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015). Social accountability creates a space for dialogue that enables constructive interaction between the village government and the community, where community demands are no longer interpreted as threats but as a shared mechanism for building better governance (Pramudya et al., 2025). This constructive interaction also produces accountability mechanisms that are not only procedural but also reflect responsiveness to community aspirations. The primary objective of this interaction is to ensure the community's rights, enhance service quality, and ultimately improve community welfare through structured and meaningful community participation (Camargo & Stahl, 2016). In other words, accountability should no longer be merely an obligation to report, but also about the ability to listen, understand, and act based on the real needs of the community.

The unique and interesting dynamics related to accountability can be seen in the Nagari government system, particularly in Nagari Salayo, Kubung District, Solok Regency. The

strong socio-cultural ties between the Nagari government and the community have proven to be a crucial foundation for encouraging constructive interaction. This suggests that social accountability is fostered through strong socio-cultural ties within the Nagari government system. The Salayo Nagari government does not stand as a rigid bureaucratic entity, but rather as an integral part of the community that actively goes into the field to hear the aspirations of its citizens firsthand. Furthermore, the Salayo Nagari government is no longer in a position to determine the direction of budgeting; instead, it acts as a facilitator that opens up space for dialogue, responds to community needs, and plans budgets inclusively with the community. This study will explore how social accountability is created through strong socio-cultural ties in the Nagari government system in Nagari Salayo by explaining the contextual factors of social accountability that were found.

A. Voice (Community Aspirations)

Within the framework of social accountability, voice refers to the community's ability to express their preferences, needs, and interests to the government, which holds the public mandate. UNDP (2010) explains that voice encompasses not only the submission of complaints but also a collective process that enables the community to influence the development agenda, budget management, and the quality of public services. Camargo & Stahl (2016) emphasize that the effectiveness of voice requires three main conditions: first, citizens must understand their rights and obligations both as citizens and as service recipients; second, community aspirations must be aggregated so that they become collective demands, rather than fragmented individual opinions; and third, aspirations must be conveyed to relevant actors so that they can shape government preferences and behavior in decision-making. Thus, voice is a mechanism that is not only articulative, but also informative and transformational.

In the context of Nagari Salayo, voice does not primarily develop through formal mechanisms such as nagari deliberations or development planning forums, but rather lives in a social space that is more reflective of the community's culture and daily life: the *"Lapau"*. *"Lapau"* is a Minangkabau social institution that functions as a place for exchanging ideas, a space for discussion, and a gathering place for the community after activities. This informal space offers an egalitarian and fluid atmosphere that is unencumbered by protocol, allowing residents' aspirations to flow more naturally. This aligns with Gaventa's (2020) findings, which emphasize that deliberative spaces that are both "invited" and "claimed" by the community are often more effective in capturing aspirations than formal, bureaucratic spaces.

The aspirations of the people of Nagari Salayo are more evident in social spaces familiar to the daily lives of the Nagari Salayo community, namely the *"Lapau"*. The *"Lapau"* has become a deliberative arena where the Nagari government is actively present to absorb the community's aspirations. Based on the results of an interview with Ronald Reagan, the Wali Nagari Salayo, who explained that:

> *"...it is mandatory for all village officials to sit in the "Lapau." Sometimes, the community is busy working in the fields, so they don't have time. The "Lapau" is where the community gathers, and that is how we absorb the aspirations of the community... if we wait for the community to come here, it won't work... sometimes it's a matter of time, rather than going to meetings, it's better to go to the fields, that is how it usually is..."*

This indicates that the socio-cultural conditions of the Salayo community, which is

predominantly composed of individuals working in the agricultural sector, significantly limit citizen participation in formal forums. Previous studies have confirmed that time, work, and distance are often barriers to village community participation (Chambers, 2014; Cornwall, 2008). The Nagari government is aware of this and has chosen to be present directly in the community's interaction space. This strategy aligns with the concept of responsive governance (Fung, 2009), which involves the government's ability to adapt to the needs and social rhythms of its citizens. The socio-cultural conditions that keep the community busy with agricultural activities limit their participation in formal forums. It is these conditions that have prompted the Nagari government to become an integral part of the community's social space. Furthermore, Ronal Reagen, the Village Chief of Salayo, added:

> *"Sometimes the community is reluctant to come here, so we go directly to them. For example, if the community asks how to apply for BPJS, we can provide direct answers by phone, through Messenger, or on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. When we sit in the "Lapau", we can meet the community. For example, if a house collapses, we can be notified, or if a community member has our phone number, they can call us directly, and then we can work together. On average, the community has saved my number, so the nagari chief must be very social."*

Emotional closeness between the village government and its residents is crucial in fostering public trust and confidence. Fox (2015) refers to this phenomenon as thick engagement, a form of community involvement that develops through strong social relationships, rather than just formal, procedural interactions. Thus, the *"Lapau"* is not only a place to gather aspirations, but also a means of regenerating public trust, which, according to Putnam et al. (1994), is the primary foundation for successful local governance. The presence of the village head and village officials in this social space indicates that the *"Lapau"* is not only a meeting place for the community, but has also become an arena for interaction that bridges the community's aspirations with the responsiveness of the village government. Furthermore, interactions in the *"Lapau"* also create emotional closeness between village leaders and the community. The emotional closeness that is formed creates social legitimacy, allowing the community to feel closer and more confident in conveying their aspirations. Based on the results of an interview with Ronal Reagen, the Village Head of Salayo, who explained that:

> *"...sometimes near our homes, people are crying because they do not have money for school, transportation, or food, so we take care of everything... sometimes at least 50% of our salary is spent on that, not to mention social activities such as mutual assistance, where we sometimes have to buy cement... sometimes our monthly salary is spent on for the community, sometimes we sit at the "Lapau" and spend around 100 thousand rupiah... but on the other hand, that is what makes the community happy, because the community feels close to us. In the past, this was not possible, but now we are happy, and the community is not shy around us. An emotional closeness has been formed."*

This phenomenon demonstrates that voice in Salayo is not only related to the expression of aspirations but also to the practice of compassionate leadership, which is a form of leadership that is sensitive to the social realities of the community. Studies by Putri et al. (2021) confirm that leaders who build closeness by engaging with the community in informal settings, such as *"Lapau,"* are effective in stimulating residents to contribute ideas for development. This is because social closeness builds trust, encouraging residents to openly share their ideas and aspirations. The Nagari government responds to these needs quickly and concretely. This pattern forms a

transparent chain of aspirations and follow-up, an important indicator of the success of the voice mechanism.

Furthermore, the *"Lapau"* also serves as an arena for relevant actors to convey collective aspirations. The wali jorong (hamlet chief), youth leader, and Nagari Consultative Body are also present to ensure that community aspirations are conveyed to the nagari government. For example, the needs of young people are not merely complaints, but are brought to the social space of the *"Lapau"* by the youth leader, which is then followed up by the wali nagari (nagari chief). This pattern clearly demonstrates that the community's aspirations are not only voiced but also reach the right actors, enabling them to influence the government to respond concretely. In addition, the *"Lapau"* becomes an arena for the aggregation of collective aspirations because it is attended by strategic actors such as the wali jorong, youth leaders, and members of the Nagari Consultative Body (BPN). They act as brokers or liaisons between the community and the Nagari government. Based on the results of an interview with Ronal Reagen as the Wali Nagari Salayo, who explained that:

> *"...as for the relevant actors, mainly the jorong chief, the youth leader, and the BPN, their job is to absorb the aspirations of the community. Sometimes, if it is a youth team, for example, the youth soccer team, we also play there, so we know what their needs are. For example, if they need balls, in the past it was not easy to obtain even one ball, but now if they ask for one, we give them two. If they ask for balls in the morning, they will have them in the afternoon, because one of the intentions of becoming a village chief is to help the youth. We also play volleyball or watch the games there. For several years, there has been a village head's cup volleyball tournament, a village head's cup soccer tournament, and a futsal tournament. We divide it per jorong (hamlet), we have two art studios, and we facilitate all the equipment, the sound system..."*

Interaction in the *"Lapau"* does not stop at the process of listening to community aspirations, but also includes the responsiveness of the nagari government to the aspirations received. The Nagari government provides feedback by explaining the extent to which community aspirations have been fulfilled. The responsiveness of the Nagari government shows that the expression of aspirations in the *"Lapau"* can influence policy and resource allocation. This aligns with (Brinkerhoff & Wetterberg, 2016) argument that voice is only meaningful when it brings about changes in government actions. This practice demonstrates transparency in determining development priorities, allowing the community to understand which proposals can be realized within a fiscal year. Based on the results of an interview with Ronal Reagen, the Wali Nagari (village chief) of Salayo, who explained that:

> *"...when sitting in the "Lapau", we convey that what was discussed yesterday has been included in this year's APB, or perhaps cannot be a priority this year, because our funds are also limited, from 5, maybe 2 can be..."*

This type of dialogue encompasses two key aspects: transparency, which involves the government's ability to explain budgetary limitations and capacity clearly. Moreover, realistic expectation-setting is the process of building a common understanding of the scale of priorities. Both are key elements in answerability, but are also directly related to the quality of voice. This is because good aspirations require a clear response so that they do not stop at unilateral delivery. From a governance theory perspective, the pattern of interaction in the *"Lapau"* shows that informal social spaces can function as informal accountability arenas (Scott, 2020). Formal

regulations do not govern these spaces, but they possess strong legitimacy within local culture. The *"Lapau"* provides a social context that facilitates citizens' courage to speak up something that often does not happen in formal forums that are rigid and hierarchical (Peters, 2012).

This practice demonstrates that the *"Lapau"* serves as a platform for the Nagari government to provide explanations regarding the implementation of community aspirations. The village government must still determine priorities by considering its capacity and budgetary constraints. Discussions about development priorities and budgetary constraints ensure that the aspirations expressed by the community do not remain one-sided information, but are responded to through open clarification. At this point, the *"Lapau"* becomes not only an arena for expressing aspirations and government responsiveness, but also a forum for holding the village government accountable.

Voice in Nagari Salayo is formed through a combination of several key factors, including: The existence of an egalitarian social space of cultural value, namely the *"Lapau"*; Leadership that is close to the community, which strengthens public trust; The aggregation of aspirations by intermediary actors such as the wali jorong and youth leaders; The tangible and rapid responsiveness of the nagari government; and Two-way communication that provides space for clarification regarding development priorities.

These factors make the *"Lapau"* not only a place for the community to gather, but also a space that has been transformed into an arena for organic local democracy. The *"Lapau"* maintains the egalitarian and deliberative character of Minangkabau culture, while facilitating modern governmental functions such as development agenda setting and budget management. Thus, the voice that is born in the *"Lapau"* is not only articulate, but also effective in shaping the direction of village policy.

B. Enforceability (Social Consequences)

Enforceability is a crucial dimension of social accountability that explains how community demands, criticisms, or aspirations yield tangible consequences for the government if they are not properly addressed. This concept refers to the existence of mechanisms, both formal and informal, that can provide pressure or encouragement for public officials to act responsively (Camargo & Stahl, 2016). In the context of Nagari governance, enforceability is rooted not only in formal instruments such as audits or civil service regulations, but also in social norms, community expectations, and cultural sanctions that are formed from intensive interactions in social spaces such as *"Lapau."* In other words, enforceability arises from a combination of institutional and social forces that work simultaneously to ensure that the Nagari government remains on track with community expectations.

In Nagari Salayo, enforceability operates through a process of social oversight that occurs openly in the *"Lapau."* The characteristics of the *"Lapau"* as a public social space make it the central location for information exchange, issue clarification, and social assessment of the nagari government's behavior. This space fosters informal forms of accountability, which, according to O'Donnell (1998), can be a crucial mechanism for correcting and directing the behavior of public officials at the local level, particularly in areas where formal control is not yet fully effective. When government interactions with the community take place in full view of the public, every government action becomes vulnerable to social evaluation, whether in the form of praise or criticism. This condition creates a strong incentive for the Nagari government to maintain its reputation, demonstrate performance, and avoid maladministration that could damage its legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

Field findings show that most village officials understand the consequential nature inherent in the social space of the *"Lapau."* When community aspirations are followed up and appropriately clarified, the village government gains increased trust, social support, and strengthened legitimacy. Conversely, if aspirations are ignored or responded to slowly, social pressure arises through public discussion, open criticism, and informal reports from the community to the village head. This type of social pressure aligns with the concept of social sanctioning, which involves condemnation or negative judgment from the community that encourages the government to modify its behavior (Bendor et al., 2011). In societies with an egalitarian culture and open communication, such as Minangkabau, these forms of social sanctions are very effective because self-esteem (the self-esteem of ninik mamak and nagari children) is highly valued. The statement by the village chief of Salayo, Ronal Reagen, shows how enforceability works in practice:

> *"...service is indeed a priority for us in serving the community... if there are reports from the community about the village head's apparatus, we will take action and summon the person responsible... including in the disbursement of funds... we ask the inspectorate to investigate... budget discrepancies... so we meet with the people responsible, we meet with them by force... There was also a collapsed building. The investigation found that there was a shortage of materials... because of this negligence, we were responsible for around 4 million, we replaced everything..."*

This illustrates two forms of enforceability: informal social consequences, such as public complaints that prompt the village head to reprimand and summon officials, and formal institutional consequences, including inspectorate audits that result in findings of budget discrepancies and the obligation to compensate for losses by the parties concerned. These two forms simultaneously strengthen the accountability of the village government. Formal instruments such as audits act as a deterrent against irregularities, while social sanctions from the community reinforce the norm of integrity in daily interactions. This is in line with Fox's (2015) findings, which state that effective social accountability requires teeth (formal power) and voice (social pressure from the community). When the two work together, the chances of government responsiveness increase significantly.

In the context of Nagari Salayo, the concept of enforceability has strong cultural roots. Daily interactions at the *"Lapau"* provide the community with more complete and timely information regarding government practices. When issues arise, such as poor service, unclear budget use, or rude behavior by officials, these problems quickly spread through informal conversations. According to Scott (2020), this type of social space functions as a hidden transcript, a mechanism by which the community can monitor power informally. However, in the case of the *"Lapau"*, this transcript is not entirely hidden; it is actually a public transcript that is discussed openly and can directly lead to collective actions such as reprimands, public criticism, or direct reporting to the nagari chief.

The social space of the *"Lapau"* also creates a reputation mechanism for village officials. Reputation is a crucial form of social capital in local communities (Putnam et al., 1994). Those who are considered responsive, polite, and quick to respond to community complaints will be publicly praised. Conversely, officials who are slow to respond or make decisions that harm the community will face the risk of a negative reputation. A decline in reputation often results in a loss of social support, weakened coordination, or even community rejection of officials' involvement in village activities. Thus, enforceability works not only directly through reprimands but also through long-term reputation mechanisms. The village chief's further statement shows how enforceability has

developed into an internal discipline that prevents potential irregularities:

> *"From 2020 until now... we have never tried to touch the village funds... the incentive for 90 posyandu cadres... if 50 people come, the other 40 must be delivered on the same day... we are afraid of using it ourselves."*

This statement shows that enforceability has transformed into a self-enforcement mechanism. The village government exercises extreme caution in managing public funds due to concerns about social, moral, and legal consequences. This aligns with Bovens (2010) concept of internalized accountability, which posits that accountability can evolve from mere compliance with rules to a moral commitment that is internalized within public officials. Thus, enforceability is no longer only external in nature, but also becomes part of the work ethic.

In addition, the Minangkabau culture, which emphasizes shame as a form of social control, also enhances its enforceability. The value of shame compels stakeholders to behave in accordance with social norms, especially in open social spaces such as *"Lapau"*. Febrianty et al. (2023) demonstrates that the culture of shame and mutual reminders is an effective mechanism in maintaining the integrity of officials in villages in West Sumatra. In this context, the *"Lapau"* becomes a place where these values are consistently activated.

Enforceability in the *"Lapau"* also works through information disclosure. The Nagari government communicates various activities and the use of funds directly to the community through daily interactions. This transparency creates a condition that enables the community to conduct real-time monitoring. According to Fung et al. (2013), intensive community involvement in monitoring public budgets and projects can increase the likelihood of public investigations if government performance is deemed unsatisfactory. This is clearly evident in Nagari Salayo, where the community does not hesitate to voice direct criticism in the *"Lapau"* if they suspect irregularities in development projects.

Overall, enforceability in Nagari Salayo is the result of the synergy of three elements: (1) Minangkabau cultural norms and values, (2) the social structure of the *"Lapau"* as an arena for open deliberation, and (3) formal mechanisms such as inspectorate audits. These three elements complement and reinforce each other, creating an accountability ecosystem that relies not only on formal rules but also on strong social control. In this ecosystem, the Nagari government realizes that every decision, action, and public interaction will have consequences that impact its legitimacy, reputation, and public trust.

C. Answerability (Government Capacity)

Answerability is defined as the government's obligation to provide explanations and the public's right to obtain answers (UNDP, 2010). In the context of social accountability, answerability is understood as the government's responsiveness to the public's expressed aspirations (Camargo & Stahl, 2016). Answerability is also closely related to enforceability, because the consequences that the government may face encourage the obligation to provide answers. At the same time, answerability includes a feedback process, in which the community is informed about the extent to which their aspirations are being followed up, to whom they are conveyed, and what actions are being taken in response to these aspirations.

Social spaces such as *"Lapau"* enable a constructive feedback process between the Nagari government and the community. The community's aspirations are addressed through clear clarification, particularly regarding development priorities and budget constraints. Thus, the

Nagari government's response is not only a way to silence complaints but also a form of transparency that fosters public understanding of Nagari budgeting. Based on an interview with Ronal Reagen, the Wali Nagari (village chief) of Salayo, who explained that:

> *"We convey the community's aspirations, which are our priorities and which are most urgent, and we also convey that our finances are limited... because that is where we meet with the community. If we wait for the community to come here, it will not be possible..."*

Furthermore, the feedback process at the "*Lapau*" does not stop at merely conveying and absorbing aspirations, but also provides real answers to the aspirations that arise in the community. The aspirations conveyed through the "*Lapau*" and direct interaction with the village head are followed up in the form of programs that the community can directly feel. Based on the results of an interview with Ronal Reagen, the Village Head of Salayo, who explained that:

> *"...we personally prefer the village funds to be used in this way, directly enjoyed by the community. That is our motivation. It does not matter if the village funds run out, as long as the community truly feels the benefits. For example, our MSME program provides carts, and the school clothing assistance program for school children every year. includes shoes and bags. We also provide incentives, starting from family planning, posyandu, Quran teachers, imams, and garin, as well as early childhood teachers and MDA teachers. We distribute these incentives every 3 months. For soccer, we pay the coach and the volleyball coach on a monthly basis. The total for all incentives is around 500 million per year. That is how we facilitate the community."*

Development programs such as road repairs and house renovations are also tangible manifestations of the village government's response to community needs. This certainly strengthens the social legitimacy of the village government. This social legitimacy grows because the community directly feels the benefits of policies that also stem from their aspirations. Based on an interview with Ronal Reagen, the Village Chief of Salayo, who stated that:

> *"Most of the development is roads, such as Salayo-Gantuang Ciri, which had not been touched for 28 years. Finally, now the roads are good. They used to be very bad, to the point that an elderly person said to us, 'Thank you, Mr. Mayor, even though I am old, nothing has changed, but now there is a change. ...then for house renovations, alhamdulillah, we have renovated around 300 houses during our term. We are determined to serve the community, so that is how we serve them..."*

"*Lapau*" has become an arena that brings together the aspirations of the community and the responsiveness of the Nagari government, creating a feedback space that enables a reciprocal accountability process. This aligns with (Grandvoinnet et al., 2015), who state that social accountability is formed through reciprocal interactions between the capacity of the government and the critical power of the community, which reinforce each other and create an inclusive governance space. In this social space, the community is not only given the space to convey their needs and complaints, but also receives direct explanations about the extent to which their aspirations can be followed up. The Nagari Salayo government has made "*Lapau*" a practice of social accountability by utilizing the interactions that take place within it. The transparency sought through "*Lapau*" provides space for community participation, strengthens the legitimacy of the nagari government in the community's eyes, and, even better, creates emotional closeness between the nagari government and the community. This supports Pramudya et al. (2025) finding that community legitimacy is built through transparency, which in turn creates space for

community participation and becomes a tangible form of social accountability in village financial management. Thus, the "*Lapau*" is no longer just an ordinary social space, but has transformed into an arena where tangible social accountability practices are carried out. Community aspirations, government responses, and social consequences converge in a mutually reinforcing interaction, forming social legitimacy that serves as a crucial foundation for more inclusive and equitable village governance.

Conclusion

The practice of social accountability in Nagari Salayo is based on constructive interactions that grow in the social space of the "*Lapau*". The commitment of the Nagari Salayo Government to absorb and respond to community aspirations has transformed the "*Lapau*" from a mere gathering place into an arena that brings together community aspirations and government capacity, becoming a practice of social accountability that ensures the community's needs are truly a priority for the Nagari. In practice, the "*Lapau*" provides a space for transparency and participation that strengthens the social legitimacy of the nagari government. Community aspirations do not end as complaints, but are followed up with concrete actions that bring tangible benefits. The Nagari Salayo government has made the "*Lapau*" a practice of social accountability by utilizing the interactions that take place within it. The transparency sought through "*Lapau*" provides space for community participation, strengthens the legitimacy of the nagari government in the community's eyes, and, even better, creates emotional closeness between the nagari government and the community. This practice is a concrete manifestation of social accountability, which requires the government to commit to tangibly meeting the community's needs.

Despite the contributions of this study, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. This research is situated within a single nagari, namely Nagari Salayo, which possesses specific socio-cultural characteristics that shape the functioning of the "Lapau" as an informal accountability space. As a result, the findings should be interpreted contextually rather than generalized across all village governance settings. Future research is encouraged to move beyond descriptive analysis by developing and testing a village financial management model that explicitly institutionalizes community participation as a core governance mechanism. Such a model should examine how citizen involvement can be systematically integrated into budgeting planning, decision-making, and monitoring processes, not merely as consultative practices but as substantive components of financial governance. In addition, further studies may explore how socio-cultural interaction spaces, such as informal deliberative forums, can be aligned with formal financial management systems to enhance accountability, responsiveness, and policy effectiveness. This line of inquiry would contribute to the formulation of more inclusive and context-sensitive village financial governance models.

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