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## Governmentality Practices in Community Empowerment: One Step to Create Economic Income and Social Protection in Pematang Johar Village, Deli Serdang Regency

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#### **Abstract**

Linking governmentality practices to community empowerment programs in rural areas is based on the Indonesian government's claim that the success of development in villages is due to the involvement of the central government in directing development planning in villages through the various technical regulations they issue. Village governments are only given space for elaboration and accommodation of regulations made by the central government based on local values, local potential, needs and interests of village communities. The existence of this space for elaboration and accommodation makes the practice of governmentality applicable in rural areas, namely giving freedom and authority to villages but at the same time directing them with various possible choices that are actually desired by the state. This article finds the operation of governmentality practices in the discourse of increasing economic welfare rationalized by the Pematang Johar Village Government for the community through the development of rice field tourism objects in their village. This discourse is able to change the village community's perception of the goals of village development, which until now have only been understood in terms of infrastructure development. Through this discourse, the village government is able to form empowered people; namely village people who are continuously trained in skills, corrected and disciplined. The self-adaptation that they carry out is of course aimed at increasing their capacity and quality from the status of the tasks they carry out daily in the rice field tourism which leads them to become economically prosperous.

**Keywords:** Governmentality, Community Empowerment and Economic Welfare Discourse

#### Introduction

The implementation of development in rural areas in Indonesia has undergone changes after the publication of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. In this law, village governments are given authority in development planning which covers four areas, namely; in the field of Village Government Implementation, Implementation of Village Development, Development of Village Communities and Empowerment of Village Communities based on community initiatives, original rights and village customs (Sholahuddin dkk, 2017). Even though gaining the authority to carry out development does not mean that central government intervention in village government is non-existent. However, by granting a number of formal authorities, the village government acts as a legal entity which is an inseparable part of the official government system. The impact is that the development goals designed by the village cannot be separated from the national development goals set by the central government (Aritonang, 2015). Villages are only given space to elaborate and accommodate various interests of local values that exist in the community in the village development policy process.

Specifically, this can be seen from the Regulation of the Minister of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (Permendes PDTT) Number 21 of 2015 which contains the central government's direction for village governments to prioritize the use of village funds for infrastructure development such as; roads, irrigation, simple bridges and embankments. In the following period, through Permendesa Number 16 of 2018, the central government directed village governments to prioritize the use of village funds in implementing community empowerment. This form of regulation is claimed by the central government to have a positive impact on village development governance which is marked by an increase in the number of basic infrastructure in villages such as roads, posyandu, early childhood education units, village market units and so on which has an impact on reducing the number of underdeveloped villages and increasing the number of independent village in Indonesia. Data from the Ministry of Villages PDTT shows that in 2015 the number of independent villages was only 174 villages and in 2022 it will increase to 6,238 (Yudha, 2023). This means that since the existence of village funds in 2015 there has been an increase of 6,064 independent villages until 2022.

The central government's claims regarding the success of village development above provide an illustration that village development planning and efforts to improve the welfare of village communities cannot be separated from the rules and controls made by the central government. Villages are only given space to elaborate and accommodate regulations made by the central government based on local values, needs and interests of village communities. The existence of space for elaboration and accommodation makes the practice of governmentality applicable in rural areas, namely by giving freedom to villages but at the same time directing them. In Foucault's concept of governmentality, this condition is interpreted as a form of 'the conduct of conduct', namely a certain action that can present various possible choices of action, but itself chooses the action that is actually desired by the state (Foucault, 2000).

Therefore, this article is interested in looking at governmentality practices in rural areas, especially those related to community empowerment programs. Linking governmentality practices and community empowerment programs in rural areas is further facilitated by the

PDTTrans Ministerial Regulation No. 16 of 2018 concerning Priorities for the Use of Village Funds in 2019 which gives the main priority for the use of village funds in the aspect of community empowerment. This is stated in article 4 paragraph 1, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3. In paragraph 1; explained the priorities for using village funds to finance the implementation of programs and activities in the field of village development and village community empowerment. In verse 2; It is detailed that the Priority Use of Village Funds can be used to finance the implementation of cross-sector priority programs and activities. Meanwhile, paragraph 3 explains the purpose of the regulations in paragraphs 1 and 2, namely; It is hoped that it can provide maximum benefits for village communities in the form of improving the quality of life, improving welfare and overcoming poverty as well as improving public services at the village level.

The existence of evidence of governmentality practices means that this research no longer looks at governmentality practices carried out by the central government towards village governments but the research focuses on governmentality practices carried out by village governments towards village communities. There are at least two aspects that will be discussed, namely; First, how are the governmentality practices implemented by the central government operationalized by the village government for village communities? Second, what is the impact of governmentality practices on community empowerment programs in creating economic income and social protection in Pematang Johar Village? At this stage it will be seen how the formation of prosperous 'human subjects' is carried out. In Foucault's practice of governmentality, this conception is included in the category of the subject of government, namely various types of individuals and collective identities that arise from and receive government activities.

The argument above is the urgency of writing this article. Until now, there has been no previous research in Indonesia that discusses governmentality practices in rural areas, especially after the enactment of Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages. So far, research related to village development and village government has mostly been directed at looking at the readiness of village officials in implementing village laws (Badaruddin dkk, 2017), looking at aspects of accountability and policy in managing village funds (Abidin, 2015; Fajri, 2015; Dura, 2016) or look at the role of village government such as the Village Head and Village Consultative Body in village development (Prasojo & Luluk, 2015; Roza & Laurensius, 2017). Meanwhile, research related to village community empowerment looks more at aspects of the factors that influence the success and failure of empowerment programs in rural areas (Daraba, 2015; Jatmikowati & Suroso, 2016) or looks at aspects of the role of village government in implementing community empowerment programs (Ulumiyah dkk, 2013).

Research studies that link the analysis of governmentality practices and community empowerment in rural areas can only be found in research conducted outside Indonesia, namely in rural Ethiopia and rural India. In Ethiopia the research looked at the implementation of community-based drinking water production in rural Amhara. Governmentality analysis in this research is used to look at power relationships in drinking water management (Annala, 2021). Meanwhile, in India, research was carried out looking at governmentality practices in women's group empowerment programs. This research does not only look at the empowerment program

technically but looks more at the context of the relationship between state and non-state actors and the institutions involved in implementing the program (Sharma, 2006).

#### **Research Method**

This article refers to field research by conducting searches for nine months in Pematang Johar Village, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This research uses a qualitative-exploratory approach carried out with in-depth interviews, observations, group discussions with exploratory questions and documentation. This research interviewed 24 research subjects consisting of 8 people from the village elite (village head, Village PKK chairman, BUMDes chairman, BPD chairman, BPD members, two hamlet heads and village office staff), and 15 subjects from the village community, both directly involved in program management and those who were only beneficiaries of the community empowerment program through rice field tourism, as well as 1 subject from campus who was involved in planning the development of rice field tourism. The data obtained through interviews and discussions from each research subject was then compiled to reveal the forms of discourse and regulations implemented by each actor/agent in forming the subject of empowerment in Pematang Johar Village.

#### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Entering Pematang Johar Village**

Pematang Johar Village was chosen as the locus for writing this article because Pematang Johar Village has various development and community empowerment programs which are considered to have been successfully implemented. This success is reflected in the achievements achieved by the Pematang Johar Village Government, which managed to get the title of second best village in Indonesia in 2019 and became a model village in the North Sumatra Provincial Government area. At the beginning of 2020, the Pematang Johar Village Government launched their newest community empowerment program, namely the Tourism Village Program through rice field tourism. This program is a program developed by the village government involving various groups such as community groups, village entrepreneurial groups, universities and PT Kawasan Industri Medan (KIM) as Badan Usaha Milik Negara (BUMN).

Since it was inaugurated by the Deputy Governor of North Sumatra, the rice field tourist attraction in Pematang Johar Village has gone viral on social media and is immediately famous among the people of North Sumatra. Almost every week, rice field tourism in Pematang Johar Village is visited by many local people and also from outside the area. An average of 6,000 visitors come every holiday. The Pematang Johar Village Government even admitted that it had generated income of 30 million rupiah in one month from the rice field tourist attraction. This large income is of course also directly felt by groups of farmers who own rice fields above the tourist area and also felt by entrepreneurial groups who are around the rice field tourist attraction.



**Figure 1.** Rice Field Tourism in Pematang Johar Village, Deli Serdang Regency

Source: Research Data (2022)

This condition illustrates that efforts to empower the community and improve welfare in Pematang Johar Village have been carried out by developing creative management of local resources. Rice fields are the main potential of Pematang Johar Village, from an area of 2,217 hectares there are 1,750 hectares of rice fields with the majority of the village population working as farmers. The potential of this natural resource was then developed by the village government into a rice field tourist attraction. This choice is also inseparable from the regulations of PDTTrans Ministerial Decree No. 16 of 2018 Article 3 which explains the priority use of village funds based on several principles, including Village Resource Based Principles and Village Typology Principles.

The Village Resource Based Principle explains that the village government must prioritize the utilization of human resources and natural resources in the village in implementing development funded by the Village Fund. Meanwhile, the Village Typology Principle explains that the village government must consider the circumstances and reality of the unique geographical, sociological, anthropological, economic and ecological characteristics of the village, as well as changes or development and progress of the village.

Various stages were carried out by the village government to be able to build a rice field tourist attraction, starting from determining the location of rice field tourism, forming tourism awareness community groups, to managing the rice planting season which was previously only once a year, changed to three planting seasons a year. The change in the rice planting season was carried out so that the rice fields in Pematang Johar Village could continue to be filled so that visitors or tourists could enjoy the view of the rice fields from the planting period to the harvest period. Apart from that, the Pematang Johar Village Government also issued a Village Regulation (Perdes) which regulates the management of rice field tourism, including regulating the profit sharing mechanism for each rice field used as a tourist area.

All stages carried out by the village government in developing rice field tourism are aimed at empowering village communities in increasing economic income. This goal can be said to be appropriate because in many cases in other villages the establishment of village tourism can have a welfare impact on the community starting from expanding employment opportunities (Pamungkas dkk, 2015; Ulfa dkk, 2017), increasing economic income for the community (Damiasih, 2014; Safitra dkk, 2014) and building resilience socio-cultural society (Andayani & Muhammad, 2017).

#### Initial Steps to Operationalize Governmentality Practices in Pematang Johar Village

The first dimension of the working of governmentality practices is the reason of government. This dimension works to rationalize the government's goals so that subjects (read; humans as a social body) can accept and agree to programs implemented by the government (Inda, 2005). In developing rice field tourism in Pematang Johar Village, the village government carried out a negotiation process with the rice field land owners and also an accommodation process for the people in Hamlet VI, Pematang Johar Village. In the process of negotiation and accommodation, it was seen that the practice of the reason of government was carried out by spreading development ideas which included discourses on increasing welfare for village communities and increasing village original income (PADes).

The discourse on improving community welfare is constructed by providing the tagline; "Exploring Village Potential, Creating a Prosperous Community" which was then compiled into the Village Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMDes) with the agenda of Agrotourism Development (read: rice field tourism) in Pematang Johar Village. This tagline was composed by Sudarman after being elected as Head of Pematang Johar Village for the 2018-2023 period.

"That's what I'm campaigning for, because the village law is already in effect, so village fund facilities already exist. Next, I included the rice field tourism development agenda in the RPJMDes with the term building agrotourism." (Results of an interview with Sudarman, Head of Pematang Johar Village).

The discourse about improving community welfare is not something new in the implementation of development in rural areas. The issuance of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages has become a legal position for villages to develop and empower their communities (Aritonang, 2015). This legal position means that villages have authority in the areas of government administration, implementation of village development, development of village community and community empowerment based on community initiatives, original rights and village customs. The unwitting appearance of the diction "Creating a Prosperous Society" written in the tagline for the development of Pematang Johar Village cannot be separated from the spirit of the Village Law. Even if explored further, the discourse about improving the welfare of rural communities is an 'implicit' part of President Jokowi's third Nawacita, namely; "Developing Indonesia from the Outskirts by Strengthening Regions and Villages within the Framework of the Republic of Indonesia".

This spirit of development is part of a political program in which there must be political rationality to be conceptualized in such a way that it can be regulated in various regulations

ranging from legislation to technical regulations at the level of village head regulations (Perdes). Before arriving at the stage of conceptualizing regulations, forms of political reasoning are first arranged in which there are efforts to form discourse, the choice of language and regulatory vocabulary, as well as the reasons for choosing objects that can be managed (Inda, 2005). This form of political reasoning is also carried out by exchanging ideas between the village head and religious figures in Hamlet VI, Pematang Johar Village. The principle of "asking for ideas" is to convey planned development ideas to religious figures by asking them about these ideas.

"The important point is that if they have given input to our idea, it means it is no longer just our idea, but has become their idea or a joint idea. Then the development idea will spread more quickly because it is considered a common property; It's no longer just the property of the village government." (Results of an interview with Sudarman, Head of Pematang Johar Village).

The attitude of pretending not to know is the basis for the principle of "asking for ideas". This was done so that the community leaders who were asked felt that the idea of building rice field tourism was part of their ideas and made them participate in campaigning, supporting and overseeing the process of developing rice field tourism. The movement of religious and community leaders to support the development of rice field tourism is a sign that the idea of developing rice field tourism has spread and the aim of making the idea of developing rice field tourism a joint idea has been successfully carried out by the Pematang Johor Village Government. The form of intervention carried out by the village government in increasing the participation of religious leaders and village communities can be categorized as a way of regulating people's behavior by involving an understanding of power Çalışkan & McGregor (2019). Interestingly, this "asking for ideas" approach has similarities with the conduct of conduct technique in governmentality which is translated as the process of choosing something that has actually been chosen from the start (Foucault, 1982; Inda, 2005; Patton, 2014).

Not only through the process of "asking for ideas", the development of rice field tourism as a community empowerment program is also wrapped in a discourse of improving welfare for village communities. This discourse began during the Village Development Planning Conference (Musrembangdes) with the Village Consultative Body (BPD) and representatives of the village community. The rice field tourism development plan was presented by the Chairman of the BPD, namely Bukhari, by showing a sketch of the rice field tourism planning, the concept of rice field tourism that will be implemented and its impact on the community economy and the PADes of Pematang Johar Village. The promise of increasing economic income for the community and village meant that the proposal for developing rice field tourism was accepted by village community representatives and also by all members of the Pematang Johar Village BPD. Moreover, in the Musrembang it was also stated that the income generated from rice field tourism would later be used to help with the living needs of the poor, for example helping with family medical costs and education costs.

The discourse of increasing economic prosperity for village communities was deliberately planted by the Pematang Johar Village Government to influence village

communities' perceptions of village development goals. So far, village communities, especially in Pematang Johar Village, think that village development must take the form of infrastructure development such as paving roads, building drainage or repairing village alleys. This discussion brings awareness to the community that there are economic benefits that can be felt by the community if rice field tourism is built in Pematang Johar Village, people will come to visit the village, bring money and spend it in the village. This activity will certainly benefit village communities, especially those who have trading businesses.

Overall, it can be seen that the reason of government dimension in the governmentality practice implemented by the Pematang Johar Village Government cannot be separated from economic rationalization which was formed through the promise of increasing economic welfare for the community. This promise was accepted as a truth in economic discourse because in his leadership experience Sudarman already had the trust of the community. Foucault calls this condition the actualization of power through knowledge and it is almost impossible for this actualized power to not be supported by the truth of economic discourse (Syafiuddin, 2018). The existence of this economic welfare discourse is also a sign that the practice of governmentality has been running at the beginning of the development of rice field tourism, because the welfare discourse is part of the economic-political discourse which is generally applied in the practice of governmentality. In this section, the welfare discourse operates operatively through the rationalization of knowledge about the importance of rice field tourism as a village development program that can empower and prosper village communities.

The main target of this operative is the village community which is economically and politically controlled and controlled to approve development programs that are in the interests of the state, represented by the Pematang Johar Village Government. By using rationality, the government has the authority to formulate what development programs it considers appropriate in overcoming the problems that exist in society. Efforts to overcome poverty, backwardness and powerlessness as well as reasons for increasing welfare (especially in the economic field) become the object of government practice in which knowledge about these fields continues to be produced top-down. Management and use of language when producing this knowledge is an important key to the success of program rationalization. This condition is the basic nature of government, with the explanation that all governments positively depend on the elaboration of a certain language that represents and analyzes reality in a way that makes it amenable to political programs (Inda, 2005).

# The Impact of Governmentality Practices in Creating Economic Income and Social Protection

After the rice field tourism program was accepted as a community empowerment program and approved for construction, the Pematang Johar Village Government's next effort was to operationalize rice field tourism. Therefore, the village government formed a rice field tourism management unit which was then referred to as rice field tourism management. Rice field tourism management established by the Pematang Johar Village Government can be categorized as a dimension of the subject of government in the practice of governmentality. The subject of government can be divided into two group categories. First, the group that exercises authority. Second, groups regulated by authority (Dean, 1999). Generally,

government subjects in the first group are those with the status of politicians, bureaucrats and professionals. Meanwhile, those in the second group generally include those with the status of workers, consumers, students (read; people who receive training or education), and those with the status of social welfare recipients. By dividing the subject of government into two dance categories, we can see the form of practice of each subject of government. If we focus on the first group as holders of authority, then we will see how practices in government programs foster various types of individual identities and certain collective identities, as well as various forms of agency (Dean, 1999). In the context of rice field tourism in Pematang Johar Village, for example, the village government has been able to form individual identities consisting of people who work in rice field tourism with assigned roles and tasks such as; as unit head, secretary, treasurer, ticket guard, security, technician, waiter and MSME trader as well as game arena guard. Some of them were initially not subjects who had ever carried out tasks such as those given on rice field tours.

They are ordinary people, ordinary citizens, who because rice field tourism operates and opens up employment opportunities, they also get a new identity as rice field tourism employees with all their duties and functions. Overall, the identities that were formed accumulated into one collective identity which was then referred to as 'rice field tourism management'. The importance of subject formation like this - namely by attaching subjects to a certain identity, making them have capacities and qualities - can lead them to become prosperous subjects both individually and collectively.

In another category, namely in the second group, we will see how subjects who have obtained their identity individually and collectively try to develop themselves and their own 'identity'. It's just that the form of developing self-identity does not run freely but through a process of self-regulation which in the practice of governmentality is called instrumentalizing the human body (read; behavior). The aim is for bodies involved in development programs (such as rice field tourism) to become disciplined, obedient and controlled bodies. The process of instrumenting the program into the subject's body requires various forms of regulations that will be internalized into it, namely the body of the subject involved in managing rice field tourism, both directly and indirectly.

In its implementation, there are two forms of regulation that are instrumented within the village community involved in managing rice field tourism, namely; written regulations and unwritten regulations. Written regulations consist of village regulations regarding rice field tourism, a statement letter (commitment) between rice field tourism management, waiters and UMKM actors. Meanwhile, unwritten regulations take the form of producing discourse on economic welfare and income, producing advice and warnings, as well as awareness of the situation. This second form of regulation has a wider operational area coverage and is more effective in forming obedient and disciplined subjects than written regulations. This is because written regulations are only introductory regulations for a procedural agreement. Meanwhile, unwritten regulations are hidden regulations that are massively internalized into the subject's body.

Here it can be seen that the village community has become the object of power. In Foucault's view, society (read; social body) has been manipulated, trained and corrected to

become an obedient, responsible and skilled body so that it can increase its strength (Foucault, 1978). The words "increasing in strength" are interpreted by researchers as subjects who are 'ultimately empowered'. Conceptually, it can be said that an empowered subject is a subject who has been successfully disciplined. Here, disciplinary practices ultimately become an introduction for the subject to become empowered. This is because discipline is a mechanism for careful control of the subject. To get disciplined subjects, their bodies must be continuously tested and corrected until skill, dexterity and readiness finally become mechanisms that simply work within the body itself. Generally, the subjects who are members of rice field tourism are subjects who accept and adapt themselves to the provisions set by the village government and rice field tourism management.

The self-adaptation that they carry out is of course aimed at increasing their capacity and quality from the status of the tasks they carry out daily in the rice field tourism which leads them to become economically prosperous. Through rice field tourism they earn a monthly salary and income from trading food. Nur Mita, who works as an employee at rice field tourism, realizes that rice field tourism has become a part of her life because it has become a place for her to earn a living. Every month Nur Mita is paid Rp. Rp. 1,750,000,-. This monthly income makes Nur Mita understand that she must provide the best service so that tourists feel satisfied and want to visit the rice field tourism again.

All the data above shows an increase in economic income felt by each subject. Apart from that, the subjects also felt other changes in their lives from rice field tourism, such as: increased asset ownership and the ability to renovate their houses. This can be seen from what Lilis feels by being able to buy several household items such as; refrigerator and was also able to buy other electronic items that he couldn't afford before. Meanwhile, Nur Dewana admitted that she had succeeded in renovating her yard from the income from managing the rice field tourist parking lot and income from her accessories shop which is right in front of the rice field tourist attraction.

Apart from being in the form of economic income, the form of objective welfare resulting from community empowerment programs through rice field tourism also takes the form of social protection. This manifestation can be seen from the provision of medical assistance (read; health assistance) to all the people of Pematang Johar Village who need it. It is said to be social protection, because the assistance provided is aimed at responding to the risk of vulnerability and misery felt by village residents, especially vulnerability to health problems for those who live in helplessness and poverty. Providing this assistance is a promise made by the village head to community leaders. At that time, Sudarman, as the village head, said he would create a scholarship program and assistance program for sick people. Sudarman doesn't want any of his village residents to get sick and not be able to get treatment just because they don't have money. Therefore, it is hoped that rice field tourism can become a village business that can generate income for the village to help and empower poor community groups.

The form of medical assistance provided by the Pematang Johar Village Government through the management of rice field tourism funds is able to reduce the risks or health problems experienced by village communities, so that they can reduce the impact of prolonged misery resulting from the inability to meet medical costs. With this assistance, village

communities who are vulnerable to medical costs can escape misery and socio-economic insecurity. Because if people continue to be left at risk and vulnerability due to medical costs, it is possible that they will enter the vicious circle of poverty (Chambers, 1985) or what is known as a poverty trap (Suharto, 2009b).

Forms of assistance in the context of social protection provided by the government to its citizens if carried out with good assistance; starting from the right target recipients of aid, the management of aid providers is well organized and the aid provided is in accordance with community needs, the aid program provided can gradually increase the empowerment of weak community groups. Therefore, the implementation of community empowerment should no longer be seen in a narrow sense, limited to programs providing business capital, expanding access to marketing business products and skills training to improve skills with the assumption that if poor people are given capital and trained then automatically they will have a job and generate income which will make their lives better and no longer poor.

However, community empowerment must also be viewed within a broader framework, because efforts to improve community welfare – through empowerment programs – can be done in many ways. For those who have good health, perhaps providing business capital assistance and providing a business location could be a way for them to become more empowered. But for those who do not have adequate health, medical assistance is a way for them to become more empowered. Because this way they can be helped, recover and be productive again. Or at least, they no longer incur medical costs which sometimes put a huge burden on the household economy (Suharto, 2009b).

#### Conclusion

The practice of governmentality in the community empowerment program in the form of rice field tourism in Pematang Johar Village, Deli Regency ultimately became a step for the village government in creating new economic income for village communities. Rice field tourism built by the village government has succeeded in providing economic income for village communities who are involved directly or indirectly in managing rice field tourism. Not only does it have an economic effect, the village government's management of rice field tourism has also succeeded in providing health assistance to village communities in need in the form of assistance with medical costs and assistance with registering for national health insurance. The economic impact and social protection of rice field tourism makes rice field tourism function as a tool for community empowerment. It is said to function as a tool of empowerment because rice field tourism has become a commodity for the subjects involved in it. The subjects who trade in rice field tourism are not only seen in the framework of 'buying and selling' between traders and visitors, but more than that. Rice field tourism has formed a new identity for village community subjects with employment status in rice field tourism management and makes them economically empowered and health protected.

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