

Youth Participation in Village Governance: The Role of Former Japanese Internship Alumni in the Agriculture and Livestock Sectors.

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ABSTRACT

Village governance transformation is no longer solely dependent on formal institutional structures but is increasingly influenced by the participation of young generations who bring cross-cultural and technological experiences—particularly those gained abroad. This study highlights the contribution of youth who are alumni of Japanese internship programs in the dynamics of rural development, with a focus on the agricultural and livestock sectors in Selaawi Subdistrict, Garut Regency. These alumni not only return with technical skills but also embody values of productive work, discipline, and innovation acquired during their time in Japan. Using a qualitative approach through interviews and direct observation, the study reveals emerging patterns of youth participation in strengthening local institutions, managing resources, and initiating productive ventures for young farmers in rural areas. The main findings indicate that the presence of internship alumni contributes to the emergence of a more responsive, collaborative, and locally innovative governance model. The study also underscores that successful transformation depends not only on individual capacity but also on a supportive and adaptive socio-institutional environment. Within the policy framework of Indonesia's vision for food self-sufficiency as outlined by President Prabowo, the involvement of rural youth holds a strategic role in enhancing national food security.

Keywords: youth participation, Japanese internship alumni, village governance, agriculture, livestock, innovation

INTRODUCTION

Japan is known as a country with an advanced agricultural and livestock system, despite its limited land area. The country has built an efficient agricultural sector through the use of smart technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), automation, and precision farming systems. According to a study by Grosse et al. (2025), the use of GNSS devices and automated work recording in Japanese farmlands enables real-time management of production information, leading to greater harvest efficiency and reduced input usage (Grosse et al., 2025 – arXiv:2504.18222).

In the livestock sector, Ohashi et al. (2023) highlight how behavioral change among farmers in adopting new technologies is influenced by social values and institutional support. Their study shows that successful modernization in animal husbandry does not rely solely on technological availability but also on the presence of a supportive social environment (Ohashi et al., 2023 – arXiv:2307.03338). This makes Japan an ideal

destination for Indonesian youth to learn how technology can be integrated with social systems in the food sector.

The regeneration of agriculture and livestock faces serious challenges in the face of technological advancement like two sides of the same coin. If used wisely, technology can serve as a lever for optimizing agriculture and animal husbandry. However, it can also distract younger generations from becoming interested in these sectors. According to data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the number of farmers declined over the past 10 years from 31.7 million in 2013 to 29.3 million in 2023. In Garut Regency, data for 2024 shows that only 20% to 25% of the 7,995 total farmers fall within the 15–24 age range (1,599 young farmers). This highlights the urgent need for competent youth to serve as catalysts.

In Selaawi Subdistrict, Garut Regency, a promising initiative has emerged from alumni of Japan's internship program, who established the Self-Reliant Agricultural and Rural Training Center (P4S) "Taruna IKAMAJA." This institution functions not only as a space for technical training but also as a platform for sharing discipline and work ethics learned through international experience. Recognizing this, the local government has designated P4S as a strategic partner for youth training and leadership development in rural areas.

The involvement of these alumni reflects a shift from symbolic and ceremonial participation to active roles in rural development. Zaff et al. (2024) argue that youth involvement should be viewed as a long-term commitment, not merely formal attendance in village meetings. In this context, youth become agents of change, bringing a new vision of the village as a productive and innovative space.

Agriculture and livestock remain the economic backbone of rural communities. However, data from Ambarwati et al. (2024) shows declining interest among younger generations, partly due to negative perceptions of farming as an unpromising career. This stigma deters many youth from pursuing agricultural work. The presence of Japanese internship alumni serves as a "knowledge bridge," bringing positive external influences into the local context (Ambarwati et al., 2024).

Although formal institutional models like digital farmer cooperatives are not yet established, early signs of economic collaboration can be seen in the newly formed "Merah Putih Village Cooperative." Barnett & Ceci (2025) describe this spirit as a crucial factor in the successful transfer of innovation and knowledge at the local level.

Based on this background, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Describe the contribution of Japanese internship alumni in driving village governance transformation, particularly through P4S Taruna IKAMAJA.
2. Identify forms of participation and sectoral innovation in agriculture and livestock.
3. Analyze the challenges in strengthening youth involvement in institutional village development.

This study is expected to contribute to empirical understanding of transnational youth participation models in rural development, focusing on local resilience and sustainability.

This paper continues with the literature review, discussing prior studies and relevant theories. The methodology section follows, outlining the research design and instruments. This is followed by the findings and discussion section, and the final section provides conclusions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participation in Development

The transformation of village governance in the contemporary era is no longer solely reliant on formal bureaucracy or hierarchical village structures. In many cases—especially in villages facing modernization and

food security pressures—change is increasingly driven by new actors with different experiences and visions, such as youth and especially alumni of overseas internship programs like those in Japan.

To understand their role in village development, it is important to frame this issue within established political and social participation theories. Social participation theory provides a comprehensive framework to understand youth involvement in rural development.

One classic figure in this discourse is Robert Dahl (1961), who emphasized pluralism and power distribution in democratic local systems. Participation, he argued, is not just attendance at meetings, but a deliberative process where citizens—including youth—are involved in decision-making, program implementation, and policy evaluation.

In his work *Who Governs?*, Dahl stresses that citizen involvement, particularly by youth, is essential for local government accountability and responsiveness. This idea is further expanded by Cohen & Uphoff (1980), who outline four dimensions of participation, who involved as participation in decision-making, implementation, utilization of results and evaluation.

In Selawi, Garut Regency, these participation models can be observed in institutions like P4S Taruna IKAMAJA, founded by Japanese internship alumni. This center not only provides agricultural and livestock training but also serves as a space for dialogue among young farmers, a platform for performance evaluation, and a business incubator for village entrepreneurship.

According to Hermanto (2024) in the *Journal of Agriculture and Food Security*, the integrity and work ethic brought by overseas alumni have a significant correlation with social trust at the village level, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of their participatory leadership.

Participation is closely tied to civic engagement, which according to Zaff et al. (2024) refers to active individual involvement in community life through collective action and shared values. Their study of youth participation in suburban U.S. areas shows that informal engagement through discussion forums, entrepreneurship groups, or community clubs significantly shapes youth identity as change agents.

This context is highly relevant to Indonesian villages like Selaawi. Japanese alumni not only bring new technologies such as livestock feed biofermentation or efficient irrigation but also foster a mindset of collective action and structured work ethics. They serve as boundary spanners, linking global knowledge with local communities.

According to Putnam (2000) and his theory of social capital, local collaboration success is strongly influenced by social networks and mutual trust. Villages with high social trust are more likely to involve youth in strategic roles—not just as executors, but as innovators and change drivers.

In addition to values, alumni contribute to an essential element: transfer of learning. According to Barnett & Ceci (2002), learning transfer is the ability to apply knowledge and experience from one context to another. Its success depends on individual readiness, contextual similarity, and social support. Their recent study (Barnett & Ceci, 2025) confirms that effective transfer occurs when training is adaptive to local conditions rather than rigid or doctrinal.

In Selaawi, this process is evident in how Japanese agricultural technologies are simplified for local tropical conditions. Alumni conduct not just seminars, but hands-on field training, which Suryadi (2024) in *Journal of Village Innovation* describes as “value translation” the transformation of technical knowledge into locally accepted practices.

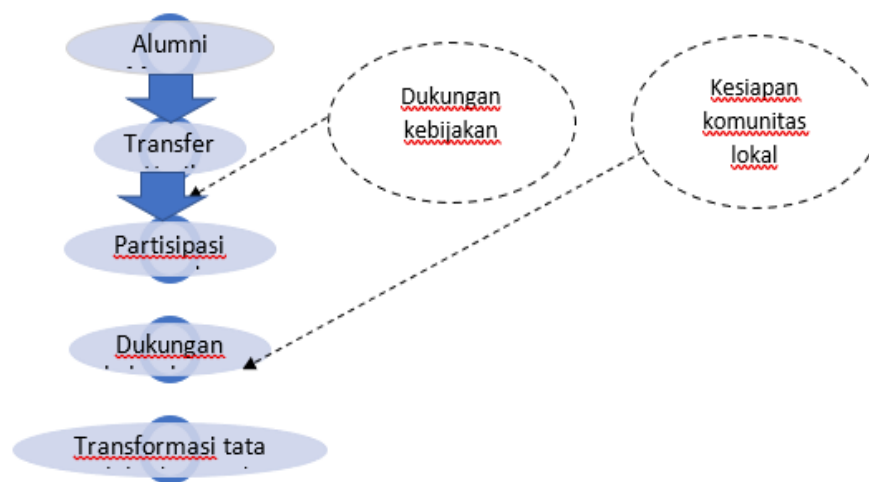
In conclusion, youth involvement in village development is not a casual social trend but the outcome of the interplay between participatory democratic ideals, social capital, and cross-cultural learning. The integration of Dahl’s participation theory, Putnam’s civic engagement, and Barnett & Ceci’s transfer of learning forms a

theoretical framework to understand transformative change in villages like Selaawi. These insights suggest that youth programs thrive not in isolation, but within a supportive social ecosystem that includes institutional structures, inclusive participation spaces, and credible youth leadership.

Integration of Theory and Practice

Theory	Concept	Application
Participation Theory (Dahl, 1961)	Inclusive decision-making	Youth involvement in village institutions
Civic Engagement (Putnam, 2000)	Social capital and active community	Gotong royong and village collaboration
Learning Transfer (Barnett & Ceci, 2002)	Adaptation of values and knowledge	Application of Japanese agricultural techniques locally

Image 1



Model Objective

To map the relationship between the participation of Japanese internship alumni, the institutional capacity of the village, and the transformation of village governance in the agricultural and livestock sectors grounded in theories of community participation and knowledge transfer from training experiences.

Youth Participation Models in Southeast Asia

Across Southeast Asia, youth participation in rural development has taken diverse forms, often shaped by government programs, civil society initiatives, and international partnerships. Unlike in Western contexts, where participation is frequently institutionalized through formal democratic channels, in Southeast Asia it is often hybrid combining state-led frameworks with community-driven practices.

For instance, Thailand's Young Smart Farmer (YSF) program has provided young people with technical support and entrepreneurial training, helping to modernize agricultural practices (Phonprapai et al., 2024). While the program demonstrates how structured government interventions can encourage youth engagement, scholars have noted that bureaucratic requirements and dependence on state subsidies may also limit long-term sustainability.

In the Philippines, youth participation is frequently embedded within cooperative and community-based systems. De Leon et al. (2023) observed that young farmers often rely on collective action to overcome barriers such as access to credit and market networks. This cooperative model reflects how strong social ties and community solidarity can amplify youth voices, but it also raises questions about whether such participation is inclusive of more marginalized youth who lack organizational affiliations.

In Vietnam, recent research highlights that rural youth are increasingly disengaged from agriculture due to limited land tenure security and the lure of urban opportunities (Nhat et al., 2025; Jamal et al., 2024). This points to a participation model that is less about formal involvement in rural governance and more about negotiating aspirations in contexts of uncertainty. For many Vietnamese youth, migration becomes a form of agency when rural livelihoods are perceived as stagnant.

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Shaari et al. (2025) emphasize that youth participation is often mediated by cultural values and family expectations. While engagement in agriculture is promoted through state programs, many young people remain hesitant without clear policy incentives or recognition of farming as a viable long-term career.

Taken together, these models show that youth participation in Southeast Asia cannot be understood as a single pathway. Rather, it is a mosaic of state scaffolding, community solidarity, and individual negotiation of aspirations. The regional evidence suggests that participation is most sustainable when institutional frameworks are flexible enough to accommodate local innovations and when young people are empowered to see themselves not just as beneficiaries but as active shapers of rural futures.

Research Gap

The growing body of literature on youth participation in Southeast Asia demonstrates both the promise and the challenges of engaging young people in rural transformation. Studies from Thailand (Phonprapai et al., 2024), the Philippines (De Leon et al., 2023), Vietnam (Jamal et al., 2024; Nhat et al., 2025), and Malaysia (Shaari et al., 2025) reveal diverse models of participation, ranging from state-driven agricultural modernization programs to community-based cooperatives and migration as a form of agency. These contributions significantly advance our understanding of the socio-economic and institutional dimensions of youth participation.

However, several gaps remain. First, much of the existing literature focuses on either macro-level policy frameworks or community-based collective action, while less attention is given to the micro-level experiences of individual youth actors, particularly those who bring international exposure such as alumni of overseas internship programs into their rural contexts. Second, while comparative studies across Southeast Asia have mapped structural barriers like land tenure insecurity, market access, and bureaucratic hurdles, fewer works explore how youth negotiate between global knowledge and local realities in shaping their participation.

Third, the sustainability of youth engagement is often treated as an assumed outcome of programmatic interventions. Yet, as the Indonesian case suggests, engagement is fragile and contingent on local power dynamics, resource distribution, and the ability of alumni networks to institutionalize their initiatives beyond the enthusiasm of the initial cohort. This dimension how participation endures or declines over time remains underexplored.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining the role of Japanese internship alumni in revitalizing rural youth participation in agriculture. By focusing on how international experiences are translated into local innovations, and how alumni navigate structural constraints such as elite resistance and limited institutional support, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of youth participation as a dynamic and negotiated process rather than a static outcome of policy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach using an exploratory descriptive design. The main focus is on gaining a deep understanding of the participation of youth and Japanese internship alumni in transforming village governance in Selaawi Subdistrict, Garut Regency. The qualitative method was chosen for its ability

to capture social dynamics, local narratives, and meanings embedded in institutional practices and agricultural-livestock innovations driven by alumni experience.

Yusriadi et al. (2025) suggest that the qualitative approach is highly suitable for studies that explore the links between social capital, community participation, and food security in rural areas. In this context, data collection goes beyond answering research questions it aims to capture social phenomena not readily visible on the surface.

Research Location and Participants

The research was conducted in villages within Selaawi Subdistrict, Garut Regency, with a specific focus on areas where P4S Taruna IKAMAJA is actively operating. The site was selected purposively, based on the presence of Japanese internship alumni and ongoing agricultural and livestock activities.

Participants were selected using snowball sampling, beginning with key informants (internship alumni) and expanding to:

1. Youth trainees from the local area
2. Members of the Merah Putih Village Cooperative
3. Village officials and community leaders
4. Agricultural and livestock extension agents

This approach allowed the researcher to capture diverse perspectives while also mapping the social networks surrounding P4S activities.

Data Collection Techniques

The main data collection method in this research was documentary analysis. This technique was chosen because documents serve as important sources for uncovering historical records, institutional transformations, and representations of youth roles in village development.

Following Bowen (2009), document analysis involves identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information contained in written documents, both formal and informal. The types of documents analyzed in this study included:

- Institutional documents: P4S Taruna IKAMAJA profiles, organizational statutes/bylaws, meeting minutes, and annual reports
- Village policy documents: Village Head Decrees, Medium-Term Village Development Plans (RPJMDs), Village Work Plans (RKPDs), and evaluation reports
- Secondary sources: Academic journals on youth participation, knowledge transfer, and civic engagement
- Supplementary sources: Online news articles from local media such as Radar Garut and Pilar Pertanian

Documents were selected based on the principles of credibility, representativeness, and relevance to the research topic (Scott, 1990).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, source triangulation was used. In addition to documents, ethnographically recorded semi-structured informal interviews were conducted with the village head, P4S leaders, and Japanese internship alumni. However, these interviews served only as contextual reinforcement—not as the main data set.

Document Summary Table

No	Document Type	Publication Year	Source / Institution	Actor Category	Relevance
1	Annual Reports of P4S Taruna IKAMAJA	2019–2023	P4S, Selaawi	Internship alumni	Knowledge transfer, modern agricultural training
2	RPJMDes of Mekarsari Village	2020–2025	Mekarsari Village Government	Village government	Youth roles in village development
3	Proposal for Integrated Farming Program	2022	Merah Putih Village Cooperative	Village cooperative	Institutional innovation & sustainable agriculture
4	News article: “Japanese Alumni Transform Garut”	2023	Radar Garut (local media)	Alumni & community	Transformation narrative and public representation
5	Ministry of Agriculture Training Guidelines	2021	Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Indonesia	National government	Youth training curriculum in farming and animal husbandry
6	BUMDes Mekar Sejahtera Activity Report	2020–2023	BUMDes Mekar Sejahtera, Selaawi	Village economic body	Youth involvement in agri-entrepreneurship
7	Scientific Article: Alumni Roles in Innovation	2022	Universitas Brawijaya (open access journal)	Academics & alumni	Prior studies on alumni-driven village innovation
8	Village Regulation on Youth Participation	2021	Sukarame Village Government	Village government	Legal basis for youth engagement in village forums
9	CSR Document from PT Pupuk Kujang to P4S	2022	PT Pupuk Kujang via CSR Program	Private partner	Collaboration in youth agricultural training
10	Garut Alumni Discussion Report	2023	Forum of Japanese Internship Alumni (Garut)	Alumni	Alumni networks and cross-border knowledge sharing

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using **manual thematic coding**, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The process involved several steps:

1. **Familiarization**, reading and re-reading transcripts and documents to immerse in the data.
2. **Generating initial codes**, highlighting significant words, phrases, and events related to youth participation, learning transfer, and social capital.
3. **Searching for themes**, clustering codes into broader themes such as “elite resistance,” “structural barriers,” and “alumni-led innovation.”
4. **Reviewing themes**, cross-checking with field notes and secondary documents to ensure consistency and credibility.
5. **Defining and naming themes**, refining the themes to capture both the descriptive and analytical dimensions of the data.

This manual approach, though more time-intensive than software-assisted analysis, allows for greater interpretive sensitivity. It enables the researcher to remain closely engaged with the data and adapt coding decisions to the cultural and contextual nuances of rural Indonesia.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied: **credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability**. Member checking was conducted with key informants to validate interpretations, while triangulation across interviews, FGDs, and documents minimized the risk of bias.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was guaranteed to ensure their safety and openness in sharing experiences. The study also adhered to local cultural norms, recognizing that respectful engagement is critical when working with rural communities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Social Context and Village Institutional Background

Villages in Selaawi Subdistrict, Garut Regency, are typical of agrarian communities in West Java undergoing transformation in governance systems. Traditions of gotong royong, Sundanese cultural values, and strong village institutions form the foundation for public participation. However, globalization and the challenge of farmer regeneration demand new, more adaptive approaches especially by engaging youth and overseas internship alumni.

P4S Taruna IKAMAJA, founded by Japanese internship alumni, serves as a tangible example of institutional revitalization. It functions not only as a technical training center but also as a social space where youth strategize on village economic development through innovation. This highlights that participatory spaces can emerge beyond formal structures—through actors with new forms of legitimacy, such as international experience and demonstrated success.

According to Dahl's theory of democratic participation (1961), a democratic society requires access to information, inclusion in decision-making, and the ability to shape public agendas. In this context, the alumni serve as catalysts by introducing values of transparency, efficiency, and collaboration acquired in Japan (Dahl, 1961; Putnam, 2000).

The Dynamics of Alumni Participation in Agriculture and Livestock Sectors

The transformation of youth participation in Selaawi District is evident in the way Japanese internship alumni return not merely as individuals with new skills, but as change agents who reignite young people's interest in farming. This aligns with the concept of youth civic engagement developed by Zaff et al. (2010), which includes youth involvement in building social networks, organizing community activities, and reformulating traditional practices into more efficient and adaptive ones.

Concrete evidence of this participation can be seen in training programs initiated by alumni, such as feed fermentation techniques, simple hydroponic cultivation, and the conversion of livestock waste into organic liquid fertilizer. Internal documents from P4S Taruna IKAMAJA show that these training sessions are inclusive, targeting not only former interns but also other village youth. This creates a ripple effect in promoting farmer regeneration.

The alumni's contributions demonstrate effective transfer of learning, as defined by Barnett and Ceci (2002). They transfer not only technical skills, but also work ethics and discipline gained during their internships in Japan. This is reflected in managerial insights such as harvest recording systems, feed-to-yield ratio calculations, and work scheduling through time-blocking methods. "Successful transfer of learning involves not only knowledge and skills, but also the ability to apply them in varied real-world contexts." (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). These practices represent a tangible integration of theory and practice. Rather than replicating

Japanese methods verbatim, the alumni adapt methods to Selaawi's local realities climate conditions, local feed consumption patterns, and institutional capacities. This adaptation process, referred to by Suryadi (2023) as "value translation", involves transforming international experiences into locally relevant solutions.

At the institutional level, the presence of the Koperasi Desa Merah Putih and the Young Farmers Communication Forum of Selaawi further shows that alumni participation extends beyond technical contributions to institutional strengthening and governance reform. This supports Putnam's (2000) notion that social capital built through trust, norms, and networks is vital for creating enduring collaborative structures.

Resistance from Village Elites

Despite these promising contributions, the data reveal that alumni-led initiatives often encounter resistance from village elites. Several local leaders expressed skepticism toward innovations introduced by alumni, viewing them as incompatible with traditional norms or as threats to established power structures. For instance, attempts to promote more transparent cooperative management or to diversify income sources were sometimes resisted by individuals who benefitted from existing hierarchies.

This pattern resonates with Dahl's (1961) framework of democratic participation, which underscores that inclusivity in decision-making is rarely automatic. In practice, participation is mediated by entrenched interests, where elites may limit youth involvement to symbolic roles rather than substantive decision-making. Such resistance highlights the political dimension of rural innovation, reminding us that technical knowledge alone cannot overcome power asymmetries.

Structural Barriers in Sustaining Engagement

Beyond elite resistance, alumni also face broader structural barriers that constrain youth participation. Limited access to land, inadequate financial capital, and unstable market channels remain persistent obstacles for young farmers. As Ngadi et al. (2023) argue, youth mobility in rural Indonesia is shaped not only by aspirations but also by systemic constraints that push many toward non-agricultural employment.

Interviews further revealed that bureaucratic hurdles such as complex loan application processes or rigid program requirements often discourage sustained involvement. In this sense, structural barriers are not merely technical shortcomings but reflections of institutional inertia, where existing policies fail to accommodate the dynamic needs of rural youth.

Alumni Networks and Long-Term Sustainability

A particularly significant finding concerns the sustainability of alumni engagement over time. While initial enthusiasm is high, long-term commitment depends on the existence of supportive networks and institutional scaffolding. Alumni who remain connected through farmer groups, training centers, or diaspora associations were more likely to sustain their initiatives and influence. In contrast, those working in isolation often faced burnout, disillusionment, or co-optation by local elites.

This finding underscores Putnam's (2000) theory of social capital: networks and trust are not only resources for mobilization but also critical safeguards against attrition. However, the durability of alumni initiatives remains fragile if not reinforced by structural reforms and intergenerational collaboration. Sustainability, therefore, is best understood as a relational process, requiring alignment between individual agency, collective solidarity, and institutional support.

Institutional Transformation Based on Innovation and Social Capital

Institutional transformation in Selaawi District is inseparable from the active role of Japanese internship alumni, who have successfully become drivers of innovation and connectors of social networks at the village level. Previously administrative and top-down, village governance structures have begun to shift towards

participatory and collaborative models. This reflects the concept of innovative governance described by Sørensen and Torfing (2011), which promotes cross-sector and cross-actor collaboration to strengthen local adaptability to global challenges.

One concrete outcome of this transformation is the establishment of a village agribusiness unit focused on organic farming, managed cooperatively by alumni and young farmers. According to the 2023 official report from BUMDes Selaawi Mandiri, village income rose by 23% compared to the previous year, largely due to integrated farming activities led by the alumni. These innovations not only boost the local economy but also improve resource management and expand market access for agricultural products.

Social capital serves as the core foundation of this transformation process. Putnam (2000) emphasized that trust, norms, and networks are essential components in building effective governance. In Selaawi, Japanese internship alumni act as bridging agents between formal village structures (e.g., village officials and BUMDes) and informal networks like farmer groups, young livestock communities, and local cooperatives.

Furthermore, the alumni practice collaborative leadership, where decision-making is deliberative and conducted through village meetings and public forums. This reflects the participatory governance approach proposed by Fung and Wright (2003), in which citizens become active subjects not passive beneficiaries in the policymaking process.

This phenomenon also highlights the importance of policy entrepreneurship, where alumni go beyond adopting existing policies by designing new, adaptive local systems. Examples include rotational farming systems based on planting calendars and commodity diversification based on both local and export market demands.

These findings reinforce the conclusions of Prasetyo et al. (2022), who argue that combining international experience with local capacity can foster more responsive governance to food security and climate challenges. In Selaawi's case, this model has even begun to inspire neighboring villages such as Limbangan and Cibatut to replicate alumni-driven innovations.

Challenges and Strategies for Replicating Participatory-Innovative Models

Replicating participatory and innovative models based on Japanese internship alumni, as implemented in Selaawi District, is not without challenges. Although local success is evident, the broader transformation across other villages both in Garut Regency and other regions of Indonesia faces several structural and cultural barriers.

One major challenge is the institutional capacity gap among villages. Not all village governments are open to innovation or capable of substantively involving youth in policymaking. This aligns with findings from Sutaryo and Haryanto (2020) in JPPUMA, which note that only a small number of villages in Indonesia have successfully integrated youth participation into their RPJMDes. This lack of capacity hinders the adoption of new, youth-inclusive models.

Another obstacle is the lack of external support systems, such as limited access to modern agricultural training, weak product marketing networks, and poor policy alignment across government levels (village, sub-district, regency). Rahayu (2021) from UGM's Journal of Social and Political Sciences affirms that village innovation replication requires cross-sectoral policy support and cannot rely solely on community-driven initiatives.

Culturally, local elite dominance and conservative views on youth roles can also inhibit replication. In some cases, returning alumni are seen as a threat to entrenched local authorities, especially when they promote openness, meritocracy, and institutional efficiency. Bebbington et al. (2008) have similarly noted that community-based institutional reform often faces resistance from patrimonial power relations.

To address these challenges, replication strategies must be designed contextually and incrementally. First, a village innovation incubation program should be facilitated by the District Department of Village

Development (Dinas PMD) or local universities. This would help villages design participatory strategies tailored to their specific socio-economic contexts. As suggested by Nugroho and Sulaiman (2020), social innovation models are only successful when accompanied by long-term capacity building and mentoring.

Second, a cross-village alumni network should be established as the main driving force. This can be formalized through cooperatives or communication forums, similar to what P4S Taruna IKAMAJA has implemented in Selaawi. With strong networks, best practices can be shared and developed through peer learning and inter-village collaboration.

Third, stronger synergies between villages and external institutions such as universities, NGOs, and research centers must be optimized. These partnerships can assist in conducting data-driven local needs assessments and accessing broader technical and policy resources. A successful example is Pentadio Barat Village in Gorontalo, which collaborated with Universitas Negeri Gorontalo for governance innovation (Yusuf et al., 2022).

With these strategies in place, the potential for replicating Japanese alumni-based governance models becomes more viable provided that local contextual factors and socio-cultural sensitivities are carefully addressed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has explored the role of Japanese internship alumni in revitalizing rural youth participation in agriculture within the context of Selaawi District, West Java. Findings demonstrate that alumni act as catalysts of innovation, introducing new practices and perspectives that reshape local youth perceptions of agriculture. Their international exposure provides both technical knowledge and social confidence to challenge the narrative that farming is a low-status occupation.

However, the research also reveals that alumni-led initiatives do not unfold in a vacuum. They are frequently confronted by resistance from village elites, who perceive new practices as disruptive to established hierarchies. Moreover, structural barriers including limited access to land, financial capital, and market channels further constrain the ability of youth to sustain meaningful participation. Even when innovations are initially well-received, their long-term sustainability depends heavily on the strength of alumni networks, the inclusiveness of local institutions, and broader policy environments.

Theoretically, the findings extend existing debates on democratic participation (Dahl, 1961), learning transfer (Barnett & Ceci, 2002), and social capital (Putnam, 2000). Youth participation is shown to be not simply a matter of individual initiative, but a negotiated process shaped by power relations, institutional structures, and community trust. Practically, the study underscores that efforts to strengthen rural youth engagement must integrate both technical training and political-institutional strategies to overcome elite resistance and systemic inertia.

Recommendations

For Policy Makers

1. **Institutional Support for Alumni Networks**, Governments and local authorities should formalize support for alumni associations, providing them with resources, recognition, and platforms for collaboration. Such institutional backing can help ensure that alumni initiatives outlast individual enthusiasm.
2. **Inclusive Governance Mechanisms**, Village decision making bodies should adopt participatory frameworks that grant youth substantive, not merely symbolic, roles. This may involve quota systems, youth councils, or the integration of alumni representatives in planning committees.

3. **Addressing Structural Barriers**, Policies must target fundamental constraints to youth participation, particularly access to land and affordable credit. Without addressing these systemic barriers, technical training alone will have limited impact.

For Educational and Training Institutions

1. **Bridging Global and Local Learning**, Internship and training programs should include modules on local adaptation, ensuring that returning alumni are equipped not only with technical skills but also with strategies for negotiating cultural and institutional challenges.
2. **Strengthening Peer to Peer Learning**, Alumni should be encouraged to serve as mentors for younger cohorts, fostering intergenerational continuity and preventing the decline of engagement once the initial cohort matures.

For Communities and Civil Society

1. **Fostering Trust and Reciprocity**, Community organizations can play a pivotal role in mediating between alumni and village elites, helping to build trust and mitigate resistance to change.
2. **Promoting Alumni Visibility**, By recognizing alumni contributions through public forums, local awards, or success stories, communities can reinforce positive role models that encourage broader youth participation.

Implications for Future Research

While this study has shed light on the dynamics of alumni-led youth participation in Indonesia, future research should adopt comparative approaches across different regions of Southeast Asia. Such work could deepen understanding of how structural and cultural variations influence the sustainability of youth engagement. In particular, longitudinal studies are needed to trace whether alumni-driven initiatives endure across generations and how they evolve in response to shifting economic and political landscapes.

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