

DRIVING FACTORS AND BARRIERS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TOLONDADU I VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT

The strategic involvement of the younger generation is a key determinant for sustainable rural development, yet it is often restricted by complex structural realities. This study aims to determine and analyze: (1) the driving factors motivating youth participation in local governance, (2) the primary structural and personal barriers hindering their engagement, and (3) the collaborative strategies between the village administration and local youth organizations to build an inclusive rural ecosystem. Executed in Tolondadu I Village, Bolaang Uki District, South Bolaang Mongondow Regency, this study adopted a qualitative design rooted in a post-positivist paradigm. Data were collected over a two-month period through field observations, secondary documentation, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a purposive sampling technique with three key informants: the Village Head (*Sangadi*), the Village Secretary, and the Chairman of *Karang Taruna*. The data were evaluated using qualitative-descriptive analysis and validated through persistent observation and source triangulation. The results indicate that: (1) institutional inclusion serves as the primary structural catalyst, where open-door democratic spaces like formal community meetings (*Musyawahar Desa*) alter the youth's position from passive observers to active stakeholders by granting voting rights; (2) youth engagement remains suboptimal due to a dual layer of constraints, consisting of demographic out-migration for higher education or external jobs as a structural barrier, and a profound psychological shift toward career individualism and financial pragmatism as a personal barrier; and (3) overcoming these challenges requires an active co-production framework, where the village administration utilizes its budgetary and regulatory authority to create localized economic pathways, while *Karang Taruna* leverages its peer network to realign these public programs with youth aspirations for personal prestige and financial security.

Keywords : Youth Participation, Village Development, Structural Barriers, Financial Pragmatism, Karang Taruna, Collaborative Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable rural and village development currently relies heavily on the active engagement of the youth generation as the primary catalyst for economic growth and social cohesion. Globally, however, there is a concerning trend where youth interest in core rural sectors, such as agriculture, continues to decline due to negative perceptions regarding social status and low income potential [1][2]. This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the high rate of youth migration from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities, even though emotional ties to their homeland (place attachment) often influence their

decisions to stay or return [3][4]. On the other hand, exposure to social networks and digital platforms has begun to reshape the socialization patterns of rural youth, offering new pathways to knowledge while simultaneously introducing risks of disconnection from real-life social interactions within their local communities [5].

Despite the challenges posed by these global trends, youth involvement has proven to deliver significant socioeconomic impacts on the welfare of rural communities. Active youth engagement in various business sectors is shown to tangibly increase household incomes, alleviate poverty, and strengthen

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local food security [1][6]. Through participation in managing local potential such as rural tourism, creative industries, and smallholder farming, young people contribute directly to rural economic revitalization [7][8][9]. Furthermore, targeted capacity-building programs and training initiatives have successfully fostered young leaders capable of generating new employment opportunities and reducing local unemployment rates [10][11].

Strategically, the position of youth in village development is irreplaceable because they bring innovation and fresh ideas crucial for modernizing rural governance. As the global agricultural sector faces the threat of an aging farmer population, the younger generation steps forward to offer adaptive approaches driven by technology and entrepreneurship [12]. Moreover, global digital transformations demand the integration of more transparent and efficient governance models; in this context, the younger generation's comprehension of decentralized governance structures and modern technological adaptations can serve as a strategic pillar for a more self-reliant, secure, and automated rural economic ecosystem [13]. Engaging youth in decision-making processes promotes social inclusion and equity, ensuring that the aspirations of vulnerable groups are accommodated in public policy [14][15], while strengthening community resilience through enterprise diversification [11][16].

However, the immense potential of the youth segment remains frequently constrained by systemic and structural barriers on the ground. To date, most rural youth still face

limited access to land ownership rights, capital funding sources, and adequate supporting infrastructure [7][17][2]. Socio-cultural constraints and the dominance of older demographics within village bureaucracies also commonly restrict the space available for youth to voice transformative ideas [17]. Without concrete solutions to dismantle these structural boundaries, youth contributions to development cannot reach their optimal threshold.

Therefore, strategic and collaborative policy interventions from governments and stakeholders are imperative to establish a supportive ecosystem for rural youth movements. Future development policies must focus on delivering youth-friendly financial and technical assistance, alongside mainstreaming the role of youth in formulating village regulations to align with contemporary demands [1][14][12]. Enhancing the quality of formal education and vocational training relevant to the local rural context is also urgently required [10]. By constructing an enabling and inclusive environment, youth will no longer be viewed merely as passive beneficiaries of development, but as the primary actors steering villages toward sustainable economic independence.

Based on the aforementioned context, the tension between potential and reality is clearly reflected in Tolondadu I Village, Bolaang Uki District, South Bolaang Mongondow Regency. While the village government has actively sought youth involvement by including them in decision-making forums and voting processes, their

overall engagement in physical and non-physical development remains suboptimal. Empirical evidence from the field reveals that this limitation is significantly driven by a geographic drain, as many local youths choose to pursue higher education or seek employment opportunities outside the region. Furthermore, this trend is exacerbated by an internal pragmatic shift among the younger generation, who increasingly prioritize immediate financial stability and career prestige—assets that are perceived as unattainable within the current rural ecosystem. Consequently, this study seeks to address the critical gaps between youth aspiration and community development by investigating the following core research questions: (1) What driving factors currently motivate and shape youth participation in the development of Tolondadu I Village? (2) What are the primary structural and personal barriers that hinder the optimization of youth engagement in local governance and programs? and (3) How can the village administration and the Karang Taruna youth organization collaborate to overcome these barriers and foster a more inclusive ecosystem for rural development?

Literature Review

Driving Factors Motivating Youth Participation

The engagement of the younger generation in rural development is heavily dictated by their access to foundational resources and the presence of empowering structural mechanisms. Empirical evidence suggests that when youth are provided with secured access to land, dedicated financial

credit, and technical agricultural training, their propensity to participate in local economic initiatives increases significantly [18][19][20]. Furthermore, the role of community-based youth organizations and robust intergenerational collaboration acts as an essential catalyst, fostering institutional trust and a deeper sense of territorial belonging [15][21]. Beyond material and structural incentives, modern literature highlights that youth are profoundly driven by intrinsic motivations, such as the desire to assume leadership roles, pilot local innovations, and secure a platform where their voices actively influence village decision-making processes [22][23]. Conversely, severe economic pressures most notably persistent rural unemployment frequently serve as a push factor, driving youth to engage in entrepreneurial activities and smallholder cooperative farming purely as a vital livelihood and survival strategy [19][20].

Structural Barriers Hindering Youth Participation

Despite these varied motivations, systemic deficiencies across rural landscapes create formidable barriers that marginalize and restrict youth agency. Chief among these structural obstacles is the widespread deficit in rural infrastructure, combined with restricted access to technological networks and capital markets, which severely cripples the growth of youth-led rural enterprises [18][24]. This marginalization is compounded by rigid socio-cultural norms and entrenched bureaucratic structures within village administrations; local councils are frequently dominated by older generations, causing severe intergenerational

conflicts and a distinct lack of institutional recognition for youth-led ideas [25][26]. Furthermore, rural economies face intense structural and demographic vulnerabilities driven by the "mobility imperative" [27]. Because economic, educational, and cultural capital remain highly concentrated within urban centers, rural youth face systemic pressures to migrate, which progressively drains local communities of their most dynamic human resources and weakens sustained community-led development [27][28].

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design rooted in a post-positivist paradigm. According to Creswell and Creswell, qualitative research focuses on investigating natural, real-world conditions of the research object where the researcher functions as the primary human instrument [29]. This approach allows the researcher to interact directly with the field to gain a comprehensive, holistic, and deeply contextual understanding of youth participation dynamics in village development without manipulation or experimental constraints [30].

Research Location and Timeline

The research was conducted in Tolondadu I Village, Bolaang Uki District, South Bolaang Mongondow Regency. The field data collection, observations, and structural interviews were carried out over a two-month period, spanning from June to July 2023.

Data Types and Sources

The data utilized in this study are classified into two distinct categories:

1. **Primary Data:** Information gathered directly from the research site through first-hand interactions. In this study, primary data were acquired via semi-structured interviews and field observations conducted with key village officials and youth representatives.
2. **Secondary Data:** Supplementary information collected indirectly through intermediaries, institutional archives, and official documentation. As defined by Sugiyono, secondary data serve as a vital empirical complement to validate and contextualize the primary findings retrieved from the field [30].

Research Informants

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, targeting individuals who possess strategic authority, deep knowledge, and direct involvement in the village's developmental and youth affairs.

Table 3.1 List of Research Informants

No	Informant Position	Institution / Representation	Quantity
1.	Sangadi (Village Head)	Tolondadu I Village Government	1
2.	Village Secretary (Sekdes)	Tolondadu I Village Government	1
3.	Chairman of Karang Taruna	Tolondadu I Village Youth Organization	1
Total			3

Data Collection Methods

To ensure data richness, three interconnected data collection techniques were deployed:

1. Observation: Following Nasution's framework, systematic field observation was utilized as the baseline method to witness the ongoing socio-economic interactions and community engagements within the village.
2. Interviews: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted based on self-reporting and subjective insights from the informants. This allowed the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives regarding administrative roles, structural barriers, and pragmatic constraints.
3. Documentation: This technique involved capturing photographic evidence, meeting logs, official village decrees, and structural profiles relevant to the research topic to support the narrative analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach. The analytical process involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The descriptive nature of this technique ensures that the raw interview transcriptions and observational notes are systematically categorized, interpreted, and aligned with the core objectives of the study to generate meaningful answers to the research questions.

Data Trustworthiness (Validity)

To ensure the rigorous quality and scientific integrity of this qualitative study,

data validity was evaluated using three core criteria of trustworthiness:

1. Credibility (Internal Validity): To guarantee that the findings represent empirical reality, the researcher engaged in persistent observation, peer debriefing, and source triangulation (cross-verifying accounts between the *Sangadi*, *Sekdes*, and *Karang Taruna* chairman).
2. Transferability (External Validity): To allow these findings to be understood or applied in similar rural governance contexts, the researcher provides a thick, detailed, and highly systematic description of the Tolondadu I Village setting.
3. Dependability (Reliability): Given the interpretive nature of qualitative inquiries, dependability was maintained by creating a clear audit trail of the research process, ensuring that data collection, processing, and conceptualizations are auditable and structurally sound.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This section presents the empirical findings gathered from field research conducted in Tolondadu I Village, Bolaang Uki District, South Bolaang Mongondow Regency. Data were obtained through primary in-depth interviews with three key informants who represent the village governance and youth leadership:

1. Informant BN (The Sangadi / Village Head of Tolondadu I)
2. Informant UK (The Village Secretary of Tolondadu I)

3. Informant AD (The Chairman of Tolondadu I Karang Taruna / Youth Organization)

Driving Factors Motivating and Shaping Youth Participation

The first objective of this study was to identify what drives the younger generation in Tolondadu I Village to participate in local governance and developmental programs. Based on the interviews, the primary driving factor identified is institutional inclusion through institutionalized democratic spaces provided by the village administration.

The Village Secretary, Informant UK, highlighted that the young generation actively engages when the village government hosts formal community meetings (*Musyawaharah Desa*). He stated:

"In my opinion, the presence of the young generation has really helped our work in the village, this is proven at the time when the village government held meetings, they took part in the forum and took part in voting. Although it has not been seen as much as possible, but it has been very helpful, this is because most of the youth are outside the region." ~ (UK, Village Secretary. 2024)

This indicates that when the local government provides an accessible platform and grants voting rights, it acts as a structural catalyst that motivates youth to step up and shape both physical and non-physical development policies in the village.

Primary Structural and Personal Barriers Hindering Youth Engagement

Despite the available civic spaces, the research found that youth participation in

Tolondadu I Village remains suboptimal due to a combination of two significant barriers: demographic out-migration (structural) and pragmatic value shifts (personal).

Structural Barrier (Geographic Out-Migration): Both the Village Head (*Sangadi*) and the Village Secretary noted that a large portion of the local youth population is physically absent from the village. Informant BN explained:

"In my opinion, youth have carried out their duties and functions in supporting the development in the village even though it has not been maximized, this is because most of the young people prefer to continue their education and also some have worked outside the South Bolaang Mongdow area." ~ (BN, Village Head. 2024)

This out-migration for higher education and external employment drains the village of its most dynamic human resources, leaving fewer young people on the ground to consistently drive local initiatives.

Personal Barrier (Pragmatic and Materialistic Orientation): On a personal level, the mindset of the current generation has shifted toward individualized career goals rather than community volunteerism. Informant AD, the Chairman of Karang Taruna, explicitly identified financial pragmatism as a core barrier:

"Financial issues and career achievement are top priorities for today's young generation. They tend to have a desire to achieve wealth and fame. The pragmatic attitude of some young people, who prioritize personal

interests such as the desire to be financially successful and gain popularity in their careers, seems to contradict the low level of participation." ~ (AD, Chairman of Karang Taruna. 2024)

Collaboration Between Village Administration and Karang Taruna to Overcome Barriers

To bridge the gap between youth priorities and village needs, the research evaluated how the formal duties of the village leaders intersect with the structural mandate of the *Karang Taruna* organization.

The Role of Village Administration: As the executive leader, Informant BN possesses the formal authority to design community development, youth sports, and organizational empowerment programs. His duties include maintaining partnership relationships with community institutions to foster a more inclusive environment.

The Role of Karang Taruna: Concurrently, Informant AD, as the youth leader, is mandated to design strategic work programs, generate independent operational funding, and provide policy input to the village government while maintaining youth cohesion.

Synthesis of Collaboration: The data suggests that overcoming the barriers of youth out-migration and financial pragmatism requires a strategic alignment of these two entities. The village administration can utilize its regulatory authority and budget to create localized economic opportunities and entrepreneurship programs. In turn, *Karang Taruna* can utilize its leadership structure to

align these village programs with the youth's aspirations for personal financial success and career prestige, thereby creating a sustainable and self-reliant economic ecosystem within Tolondadu I Village.

DISCUSSION

Driving Factors Motivating and Shaping Youth Participation

The empirical findings from Tolondadu I Village reveal that institutional inclusion serves as the primary structural catalyst driving youth engagement in local governance. Based on the field data, the village administration has deliberately opened accessible, institutionalized democratic spaces, which successfully alters the youth's position from passive observers to active stakeholders. This is evident during formal community meetings (*Musyawahar Desa*), where the young generation actively engages in forums, assists the village apparatus, and exercises their voting rights to directly shape physical and non-physical rural development policies.

This mechanism strongly aligns with the literature by Trivelli and Morel, who argue that collaborative governance models which integrate youth voices into decision-making processes are essential for fostering true rural inclusion and innovation [15]. The structural open-door policy implemented by the Tolondadu I village government acts as an extrinsic motivator. In the broader rural development context, such supportive institutional actions play a significant role in encouraging youth involvement and shifting them away from political apathy. By granting

voting rights in community forums, the local government provides a sense of structural empowerment that validates the youth's place within the village administration.

Furthermore, this institutional backing triggers the activation of intrinsic motivations among the local youth. When young people are given a legal and formal platform to express their thoughts, it reinforces their desire for meaningful participation, community self-reliance, and leadership identity [22]. The willingness of the youth in Tolondadu I Village to participate in forums reflects a deep-seated passion for community development that emerges when the environment is welcoming and structurally supportive.

However, a critical nuance found in the field data shows that this participation has not yet reached its maximum potential because a large portion of the local youth population resides outside the region. This reveals that while the driving factor of institutional inclusion is highly effective, its total impact remains physically constrained by the ongoing demographic challenge of youth out-migration. Therefore, the driving factors in Tolondadu I Village do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they constantly battle structural limitations.

Ultimately, the case of Tolondadu I Village confirms that building an inclusive rural socioeconomic ecosystem relies heavily on strengthening local collaborative governance. When village administrators actively back youth initiatives and treat the younger generation as genuine partners in governance, it builds vital institutional trust,

laying down a strong strategic foundation for sustainable and equitable village growth [15].

Primary Structural and Personal Barriers Hindering Youth Engagement

Despite the available civic spaces provided by the village governance, the empirical evidence demonstrates that youth participation in Tolondadu I Village remains suboptimal. Field data reveals that this limitation is caused by a dual layer of constraints: demographic out-migration acting as a structural barrier, and a pragmatic value shift acting as a personal barrier. These two dimensions work simultaneously, preventing local youth from consistently embedding themselves within the village's long-term development agenda.

On a structural level, the physical absence of the younger generation severely cripples local development efforts. Observations from both Informant BN (Village Head) and Informant UK (Village Secretary) confirm that a substantial portion of the local youth population is physically detached from the village due to geographic relocation. This out-migration is primarily driven by the pursuit of higher education and employment opportunities outside the South Bolaang Mongondow area.

In rural sociological discourse, this phenomenon represents a classic demographic drain, frequently termed the "youth outflow" or "mobility imperative," where rural territories are progressively depleted of their most dynamic human capital [31]. This systematic resource drain creates a substantial structural vacancy on the ground, leaving fewer energetic individuals to consistently

sustain, execute, and monitor local community programs. Consequently, even when the village administration devises inclusive policies, the baseline youth population required to power these initiatives is drastically diminished due to urban migration trends [32].

On a personal level, this structural vacuum is further exacerbated by a profound psychological and cultural shift among the remaining or connected youth. Informant AD (Chairman of Karang Taruna) explicitly identified an entrenched attitude of financial pragmatism and career individualism as a core internal barrier. The contemporary younger generation heavily prioritizes personal upward mobility, wealth accumulation, and individual career status aspirations that they perceive as fundamentally incompatible with traditional, non-monetary community volunteerism.

This internal tension aligns closely with global findings regarding the rise of career pragmatism among rural youths, who increasingly perceive rural-based livelihoods as economically unviable and socially less lucrative [32]. When youth internalize a materialistic orientation, their intrinsic motivation to engage in local community initiatives diminishes, leading to high political and social apathy. The immediate pursuit of socioeconomic survival and individual prestige directly contradicts the self-sacrificing nature of rural community development [17].

Ultimately, the findings from Tolondadu I Village indicate that the suboptimality of youth engagement is not merely a matter of administrative neglect, but rather a structural

and psychological mismatch. The village struggles to retain its youth physically because the local economy cannot compete with urban centers, while simultaneously failing to engage them psychologically because the village's development model does not fulfill their pragmatic financial and career expectations. Addressing these barriers therefore requires a systematic overhaul of how rural development is marketed to the modern, career-oriented generation [33][17].

Collaboration Between Village Administration and Karang Taruna to Overcome Barriers

To effectively bridge the gap between youth career priorities and the village's development needs, the structural alignment between local governance and youth leadership must move beyond mere coexistence into active co-production. Field data from Tolondadu I Village demonstrates that the formal authority of the village leaders directly intersects with the structural mandate of the local youth organization (*Karang Taruna*). As the executive head, Informant BN possesses the regulatory and budgetary authority necessary to design public facilities, direct community development, and initiate organizational empowerment programs. Concurrently, Informant AD, representing youth leadership, holds the mandate to organize strategic grassroots programs, maintain group cohesion on the ground, and provide direct policy inputs to the village administration.

The empirical findings suggest that mitigating the systemic challenges of youth out-migration and career pragmatism requires

a strategic, unified framework where these two entities synthesize their respective strengths. The village administration can leverage its public budget and legal authority to establish localized economic opportunities, small-scale entrepreneurship programs, and supporting infrastructure. In tandem, *Karang Taruna* can utilize its peer-to-peer network and leadership structure to realign these village-backed programs with the youth's intrinsic desires for personal financial security and modern career prestige. This collaborative synthesis forms a functional mechanism that can successfully convert a pragmatically isolated youth demographic into active agents of a self-reliant rural economic ecosystem.

This localized approach heavily resonates with contemporary rural development literature, which emphasizes that top-down infrastructure funding must be met with bottom-up institutional backing to achieve long-term sustainability. Partnerships between local village administrations and structured youth groups are vital for building essential competencies, project management capabilities, and leadership skills within rural territories [15]. By giving youth organizations the agency to co-manage community-focused programs, the local state fosters a deeper sense of territorial belonging and institutional trust, effectively countering the socio-economic pressures that drive out-migration.

Furthermore, integrating youth-led strategies into official village planning helps dismantle the rigid institutional barriers that historically marginalize younger demographics in rural governance. When a village administration shifts its policy toward

flexible, decentralized, and youth-focused economic inclusion, it directly accommodates the aspirations of vulnerable and younger groups within public policy frameworks [34]. This strategic alignment ensures that local development programs are structurally stable and socio-culturally adaptive to the shifting values of the modern generation.

Ultimately, the synthesis of collaboration observed in Tolondadu I Village confirms that building an inclusive rural socioeconomic ecosystem requires transforming youth from passive beneficiaries into genuine partners in collaborative governance. When the institutional authority of the village leaders and the mobilized energy of *Karang Taruna* operate as cohesive, interlocking pillars, the village can establish localized pathways for financial and professional achievement. This dual institutional backing provides the necessary structural foundation to overcome geographic out-migration, ensuring sustainable, community-led, and equitable rural growth [35][15].

CONCLUSION

Based on the empirical findings and discussion regarding youth engagement in Tolondadu I Village, Bolaang Uki District, South Bolaang Mongondow Regency, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Driving Factors: Institutional inclusion serves as the primary structural catalyst driving youth participation. The deliberate opening of accessible democratic forums, specifically through formal community meetings (*Musyawah Desa*), effectively

shifts the younger generation from passive observers into active stakeholders. Granting youth formal voting rights and collaborative roles in planning serves as a powerful extrinsic motivator that reinforces their intrinsic desire to influence physical and non-physical village policies.

2. Barriers to Engagement: Despite the availability of these civic spaces, youth participation remains suboptimal due to a restrictive dual-layered constraint. Structurally, the village faces a severe demographic drain and a "mobility imperative," as a significant portion of the dynamic youth population migrates out of the region for higher education and urban employment. Personally, this structural vacuum is worsened by an internal pragmatic value shift among the remaining youth, who heavily prioritize immediate financial stability, individual wealth, and career prestige—aspirations they perceive as fundamentally incompatible with traditional, non-monetary community volunteerism.
3. Collaborative Framework: Bridging the mismatch between youth career priorities and village developmental needs requires shifting from mere administrative coexistence into active institutional co-production. By synthesizing the executive, regulatory, and budgetary authority of the village administration with the peer-to-peer network and grassroots structure of *Karang Taruna*, the village can build localized, youth-focused entrepreneurship programs. This collaborative framework

successfully embeds youth aspirations for financial and professional success into the village's long-term development plans, providing the essential foundation for a self-reliant and inclusive rural socioeconomic ecosystem.

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