

Analysis of Local Government Governance after Local Head Corruption Prosecution

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Abstract

The prosecution of corruption cases involving regional heads remains a recurring issue in Indonesia and affects governmental stability and local governance quality. This article aims to analyze local governance conditions after corruption prosecution, using Ponorogo Regency as a case study following the designation of Regent Sugiri Sancoko as a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission. This study employs a qualitative descriptive case study approach based on literature review and document analysis. The findings show that corruption prosecution leads to leadership transition, changes in bureaucratic dynamics, and increased public demands for transparency and accountability. However, post-prosecution governance still faces structural challenges, including weak internal oversight, limited human resource capacity, and policy uncertainty. Therefore, legal enforcement should be accompanied by systemic governance improvements.

Keywords: Regional Head Corruption, Local Government Governance, Leadership Transition, Ponorogo

Abstrak

Penindakan tindak pidana korupsi yang melibatkan kepala daerah merupakan fenomena yang masih sering terjadi di Indonesia dan berdampak pada stabilitas pemerintahan serta kualitas tata kelola pemerintahan daerah. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis kondisi tata kelola pemerintahan daerah pasca penindakan korupsi kepala daerah dengan studi kasus Kabupaten Ponorogo setelah penetapan Bupati Sugiri Sancoko sebagai tersangka oleh Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif dan studi kasus melalui studi literatur dan telaah dokumen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penindakan korupsi memicu transisi kepemimpinan, perubahan dinamika birokrasi, serta meningkatnya tuntutan publik terhadap transparansi dan akuntabilitas. Namun, tata kelola pemerintahan pasca penindakan masih menghadapi hambatan struktural, seperti lemahnya pengawasan internal, keterbatasan kapasitas sumber daya manusia, dan ketidakpastian kebijakan. Oleh karena itu, penindakan hukum perlu diikuti dengan pembenahan tata kelola pemerintahan daerah secara sistemik.

Kata Kunci: Korupsi Kepala Daerah, Tata Kelola Pemerintahan Daerah, Transisi Kepemimpinan, Ponorogo

Introduction

Corruption is a criminal act involving the abuse of public power or authority to obtain personal or group gain at the expense of the country's finances and economy. In Indonesian law, corruption is defined as an unlawful act committed to enrich oneself or others through the abuse of position or authority, as stipulated in Law Number 31 of 1999 concerning Eradication of Corruption Crimes as amended by Law Number 20 of 2001. This regulation emphasizes that corruption is not only considered a criminal offense, but also an extraordinary crime due to its widespread impact on governance, public services, and public trust. From a governance perspective, corruption reflects a failure of the supervisory system, weak accountability, and ineffective mechanisms for controlling power, particularly in local government (Fuentes-Ramírez, 2018).

By the end of 2025, IPDN Professor and former Director General of Regional Autonomy Prof. Dr. Djohermansyah Djohan recorded that around 412–413 regional heads had been implicated in corruption since the direct election system was implemented in Indonesia (academics/researchers and national media compiled this data) (Zamzami, 2025). In addition, another report covering the period from 2024 to May 2025 shows that 201 regional heads (including governors, regents, and mayors) have been charged with various

corruption cases by the KPK during that period (Pasaribu, 2025). And the crackdown continues, with reports of regional heads being caught red-handed continuing into early 2026, such as the arrest of two regional heads in January 2026 (Isaac, 2026). The data indicate that corruption among regional heads is a systemic problem that cannot be fully controlled through existing prevention mechanisms.

Currently in Ponorogo Regency, the handling of alleged corruption involving Regent Sugiri Sancoko has become an important event that has led to public demands for improvements in regional governance. Sugiri Sancoko has been named a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in connection with allegations of bribery for positions, the Ponorogo Regional General Hospital project, and the acceptance of gratuities within the Ponorogo Regency Government. As a result of his legal status, Sugiri has been suspended as Regent, and the government must now be led by an appointed acting official (Plh). Legal action against regional heads implicated in corruption cases by law enforcement agencies, such as the Corruption Eradication Commission and the Attorney General's Office, not only affects the individuals concerned but also has serious consequences for the stability and legitimacy of regional government. The detention or legal status of regional heads often results in a leadership vacuum, delays in strategic policy-

making, and a decline in public trust in local government (Bau, 2025). This situation reflects structural problems in regional governance, where oversight and control systems have not been fully effective in preventing abuse of authority.

Corruption in local government significantly hinders regional development because it reduces the government's ability to provide basic public services, exacerbates poverty, lowers the quality of education and health services, and hinders investment growth in the region (Wicaksono et al., 2025). Several large-scale activities, namely the construction of the Monumen Reyog dan Museum Peradaban, the UNESCO Creative City Ponorogo celebration, and the Ponorogo Intimate event, have reportedly been canceled or postponed in response to the political situation and the region's reputation following the sting operation. The cancellation of these activities has the potential to affect cultural promotion, the tourism sector, and regional economic activity. Another equally important impact is the decline in public trust in local government. Allegations of corruption, especially those related to positions and projects, create the perception that the bureaucracy is not operating in a clean and professional manner, making the public more skeptical of government policies. This weakened trust can affect public participation

and support for regional development programs (Ginting et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have shown that after corruption crackdowns, local governments generally take various corrective measures, such as restructuring the bureaucracy, strengthening internal oversight functions through regional inspectorates, and increasing the transparency of regional financial management based on digital systems (Shidqi & Arfiansyah, 2025). However, the effectiveness of these efforts is highly dependent on the political commitment of local leaders, bureaucratic culture, and the institutional capacity of local governments (Riwanto & Suryaningsih, 2024). Although law enforcement plays an important role as an instrument for ending corrupt practices, there is a gap in academic literature between the aspect of law enforcement alone and the conditions of local government governance that occur after such enforcement. Therefore, a more comprehensive analysis is needed of the dynamics of local government governance after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption, including how internal oversight mechanisms, accountability, and public decision-making processes operate after such legal events occur.

Based on this background, this study focuses on the dynamics of local government governance after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption, using the case

study of Ponorogo Regency. The research questions in this study are: what is the condition of local government governance after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption, and what obstacles are encountered in efforts to reform local government governance after such prosecution? The objectives of this study are to analyze the condition of local government governance after the prosecution of the regional head for corruption, identify the institutional and bureaucratic dynamics that occur, and examine the structural obstacles in efforts to improve local government governance after legal action has been taken.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research design with descriptive methods and an inductive approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand and analyze in depth the conditions of local government governance after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption in a natural context. Qualitative methods are used to study objects in their natural conditions, with the researcher as the key instrument, data collection techniques through triangulation, inductive data analysis, and an emphasis on meaning rather than generalization (Safarudin et al., 2023). Through this approach, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of policy

and local government governance following the prosecution of local government officials for corruption.

Referring to the research objectives, the research design used is descriptive qualitative to describe, analyze, and interpret the policy phenomena and local government governance conditions that occurred after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption. An inductive approach was used to draw conclusions based on empirical facts and findings obtained from the research data. This study uses a case study approach with the research locus in Ponorogo Regency. Case studies were chosen because they allow researchers to examine phenomena in depth and contextually within certain space and time constraints. K Robert, (2018) explains that case studies are an appropriate research strategy when researchers want to understand complex contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not clearly defined. Thus, the case study of Ponorogo Regency was used to analyze reforms and efforts to improve local government governance after the prosecution of the regent for corruption. The data sources in this study are secondary data obtained through literature studies and document reviews. Secondary data includes laws and regulations related to local government and the eradication of corruption, official

releases and decisions by law enforcement agencies, supervision and audit reports, local government policy documents, as well as scientific journal articles and credible national media reports. Data collection techniques were carried out through documentation and literature searches. The data obtained was then analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques, which included the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing as proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, (2014).

Data validity is maintained through source triangulation techniques by comparing information obtained from various official documents and scientific publications. With these techniques, the research results are expected to have an adequate level of validity and be able to provide a complete picture of the condition of local government governance after the prosecution of the regional head of Ponorogo Regency for corruption.

Result and Discussion

The phenomenon of corruption involving regional heads is important for analyzing the condition of regional governance after legal action. In Ponorogo Regency, the handling of alleged corruption by regional heads provides scope for studying the dynamics of oversight, accountability, and regional governance after corruption has been

prosecuted. The following discussion will outline the condition of regional governance after the prosecution of regional heads for corruption.

1. Prosecution of Corruption by Regional Heads and Issues of Regional Governance

The crackdown on corruption involving regional heads, such as the arrest of Ponorogo Regent Sugiri Sancoko by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), can be understood as an indication of serious problems in regional governance. In November 2025, Sugiri Sancoko was named a suspect in three corruption cases involving approximately Rp2.6 billion in bribes and gratuities related to job appointments, a construction project at Dr. Harjono Regional General Hospital, and the acceptance of gratuities involving local officials and private parties. The sting operation also implicated a number of important local officials, including the Regional Secretary and the Director of the Regional General Hospital, indicating the existence of transactional bureaucracy in the management of public authority in Ponorogo Regency (Feisal, 2025). This corruption case shows a pattern of direct bribery, where money is given directly to influence the decisions of regional heads regarding appointments and the management of strategic projects, as

identified in the typology of regional head corruption by Sadhono Hadi et al. In addition to direct bribery, the gratification practices that have been uncovered also show a tendency toward tribute patterns, in which gifts are given as part of an ongoing power relationship between regional heads and bureaucratic actors (Hadi et al., 2020).

In public governance studies, corrupt practices are often linked to weak accountability and transparency in government administration. Accountability requires public officials to be accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and supervisory institutions, while transparency relates to openness of information and decision-making processes. When these two mechanisms do not function effectively, the scope for abuse of authority becomes greater because public and institutional oversight does not function optimally. These findings are consistent with research showing that low levels of accountability and transparency in public institutions correlate with an increased potential for corruption, particularly due to the difficulty of detecting hidden transactions and unethical behavior in government bureaucracies (Safira et al., 2024).

The corruption case involving the Regent of Ponorogo is not an isolated

incident. Data from the Corruption Eradication Commission shows that since the reform era, dozens to more than a hundred regional heads have been caught up in corruption cases with relatively recurring patterns, such as abuse of authority in job transfers, project procurement, and political patronage at the local level. This pattern shows that law enforcement, although important as a deterrent effect, has not been able to be the sole solution in overcoming regional head corruption. This phenomenon more reflects a systemic failure in ensuring the effectiveness of internal controls, the independence of audit mechanisms, and the formation of a bureaucratic culture that upholds integrity (Dhanny, 2025).

Corruption among regional heads also points to structural problems in the form of information asymmetry and high concentration of power in the hands of regional executives. In many cases, regional heads and the bureaucratic elite have greater access to information, budgets, and power networks than supervisory institutions and the public. This situation increases the likelihood of abuse of authority when checks and balances are not effective. Empirical studies show that poor public governance correlates with increased opportunities for corruption at the local level, as weak oversight systems are unable

to curb opportunistic behavior by public officials (Kaufmann et al., 2010). Furthermore, corruption among regional heads is a multidimensional phenomenon that is not only related to legal violations, but also reflects weak public participation, lack of information transparency, and inconsistent law enforcement in government administration (World Bank, 2023)

The case in Ponorogo Regency shows that when public officials are not strongly bound by accountability standards, when access to public information is limited, and when internal reward and sanction systems do not function effectively, corrupt practices can flourish even within formal government structures. Therefore, the prosecution of regional heads involved in corruption should be understood not only as a law enforcement process, but also as a point of evaluation of regional government institutions. A number of policy studies show that without comprehensive institutional reform, including strengthening internal oversight, increasing information disclosure, and restructuring power relations within the law enforcement bureaucracy, there is a risk that only short-term changes will result, without sustainable improvements in governance (OECD, 2018).

2. The State of Local Government Governance Following the Prosecution of Local Government Heads for Corruption

The action taken against the Regent of Ponorogo, Sugiri Sancoko, by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) through a sting operation on November 7, 2025, shows the serious condition of local government administration. The designation of Sugiri Sancoko as a suspect in corruption related to bribery for job appointments and project procurement at the Dr. Harjono Ponorogo Regional General Hospital, as well as the acceptance of gratuities, reflects serious abuse of authority at the local leadership level. KPK investigators even seized evidence of approximately Rp 500 million in cash during the sting operation and named four suspects, including the Regional Secretary and the Director of Ponorogo Regional General Hospital, indicating the involvement of the bureaucratic network in this case (Hakim, 2025). The level of corruption has a negative correlation with local government performance. The higher the intensity of corrupt practices, the lower the performance of local governments, particularly in terms of program effectiveness, quality of public services, and regional financial management (Khairudin et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of corruption involving regional heads is widespread in various provinces and districts/cities in Indonesia, where many regional heads are involved in corrupt practices in the administration of local government (Suhendi, 2020). The data shows that cases such as Sugiri's did not only occur in Ponorogo, but also in other areas, reinforcing the pattern of weak governance in several regions. For example, in the 2025 period, the KPK also arrested and charged some other regional heads, including the Governor of Riau, Abdul Wahid, who was arrested by the KPK in a case of alleged extortion of the Public Works and Public Housing budget, and the Regent of East Kolaka, Abdul Azis, who was implicated in a case of bribery and buying and selling of positions, as well as the Mayor of Madiun, East Java, in connection with allegations of bribery and gratification, showing that regional head corruption often involves abuse of authority in various provinces in Indonesia (HARIANKOMPAS, 2025). From a governance structure perspective, the cases of Sugiri Sancoko and several other regional heads demonstrate the limitations of internal oversight functions and weaknesses in public control systems in regional government. This is further reinforced by research identifying patterns

of collective corruption involving regional heads and other bureaucratic actors, who form collusive networks to divert public funds for personal or group interests (Hidayaturrahman et al., 2025).

The post-enforcement phase is a critical period that determines whether the regional government is capable of making institutional adjustments or will instead be trapped in a pattern of bureaucratic stagnation. After Ponorogo Regent Sugiri Sancoko was named a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and underwent legal proceedings, Deputy Regent Lisdyarita was appointed as Acting Regent of Ponorogo to maintain the continuity of regional government. Lisdyarita's appointment as Acting Regent was decided immediately after the suspect was named, through a radiogram from the Ministry of Home Affairs (Kemendagri) received by the Ponorogo DPRD to ensure that there was no vacancy in the local government. In this confirmation, the Chairman of the DPRD emphasized that the local government must continue to run without hindrance even though legal proceedings were ongoing (Sujarwoko, 2025).

Lisdyarita, who previously served as Deputy Regent, emphasized that the wheels of government continue to run

normally, public services are not disrupted, and all civil servants (ASN) in every regional apparatus organization (OPD) are required to work professionally in accordance with applicable regulations. She stated that her office respects the ongoing legal process and calls on all elements of society to maintain a conducive environment and administrative stability. The official statement from the Acting Regent demonstrates efforts to alleviate public concerns and ensure that government services, from the village to the regency level, continue to operate routinely (Kominfo, 2025b).

In internal administration, this transition also had an impact on the implementation of technical government policies. For example, the transfer of 138 structural officials within the Ponorogo Regency Government, which had been delayed due to the dynamics of Sugiri Sancoko's position after his arrest, was then continued and implemented under the authority of Lisdyarita as Acting Regent. This shows that after the legal status of the previous regional head was determined, the regional government continued to reorganize the bureaucracy in order to maintain the continuity of government operations (Eka et al., 2025). Institutionally, the swift implementation of the acting

regent position and the confirmation of his duties by the Ministry of Home Affairs based on the provisions of Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government reflects formal adjustments in the regional government structure following legal action. This provision explains that the deputy regional head is obliged to carry out the duties and authorities of the regional head if the regional head is temporarily unable to do so, for example, due to undergoing legal proceedings or a period of detention (Kominfo, 2025a).

Although the leadership transition was carried out to maintain government stability, it should be noted that the ongoing legal process continues to have socio-political impacts. The presence of an acting regent in this situation requires managerial skills that not only maintain the continuity of public services but also respond to public expectations for transparency, accountability, and improvements in regional governance following the crackdown on corruption. The situation in Ponorogo after the transition shows that the internal dynamics of local government are greatly influenced by non-elective and institutional leadership change mechanisms, a condition that requires bureaucratic experience, intensive coordination between OPDs, and legislative

support to keep public policy focused on the welfare of the community (Kominfo, 2025b).

Overall, the condition of local government governance after the prosecution of local government heads for corruption shows that legal action is an important step in stopping the abuse of authority, but it is not enough to bring about structural improvements in governance. Corruption crackdown function more as a corrective mechanism against individual perpetrators, while systemic governance issues, such as weak internal oversight, low integration of accountability systems, and a bureaucratic culture that tolerates transactional practices, remain entrenched in local government structures. This condition shows that the success of law enforcement has not been fully followed by the ability of local government institutions to carry out continuous internal corrections. Institutional reform after the prosecution of local government corruption needs to be understood as a process that goes beyond mere law enforcement. Such reform must be directed at improving internal oversight systems, restructuring power relations within the local bureaucracy, and increasing transparency and accountability in every stage of public decision-making. Without structural changes that address the root

causes of governance issues, legal action risks producing only superficial stability and will be unable to prevent the recurrence of similar patterns of corruption in the future (Ramadhani & Yuliafitri, 2025).

3. Obstacles to Local Government Governance After Corruption Crackdowns

Although actions against regional heads, such as the case of Sugiri Sancoko in Ponorogo, may trigger the need for governance reforms, in practice, various structural and institutional obstacles hinder the reform process. These obstacles are not only administrative in nature but also include aspects of resources, bureaucratic culture, and internal oversight mechanisms.

a. Weaknesses in Internal Control and Audit

One of the main obstacles in local government administration is the weakness of internal oversight mechanisms. Research shows that strengthening internal controls and audit functions is crucial in reducing the risk of corruption at the local government level, but many local governments still do not have mature and capable internal oversight systems (Assanti, 2024). Weak internal oversight opens opportunities for abuse of authority and budget manipulation, especially in strategic work units such as the finance department and the goods and

services procurement unit, thereby limiting the effectiveness of corruption prevention (Shidqi & Arfiansyah, 2025).

b. Limited Human Resource Capacity

Another obstacle is the limited capacity of human resources (HR) in implementing clean and accountable governance. Many regional officials still have low competence in the areas of supervision, application of public accounting standards, and use of budget management information systems. This condition is noted as an obstacle because, without competent human resources, the implementation of good governance policies will be hampered. In the case of Ponorogo, this kind of HR challenge also affects the local government's ability to respond quickly to changes after a change in leadership (Prabowo, 2024).

c. Limitations on Public Participation and External Oversight

Community participation as external oversight is often less than optimal in the context of local government. Low levels of citizen involvement in monitoring the use of public funds or development planning can weaken social control over local officials. Such obstacles are exacerbated by information that is not fully disclosed and limited public reporting mechanisms,

leaving room for local elites to act opportunistically. Research on the challenges of anti-corruption leadership in local government also shows that low community participation is one of the obstacles in efforts to eradicate corruption at the local level (Khaira Maulidiah et al., 2024).

d. Regulatory and Governance System Barriers

Local government administration also faces obstacles in terms of regulations and institutional systems. Although regulations such as Law Number 30 of 2014 on Government Administration and Law Number 23 of 2014 on Regional Government provide a legal framework to ensure accountability and transparency, their implementation is often hampered by inconsistent interpretations and limited resources to ensure full compliance. In many cases, existing regulations are not accompanied by adequate technical operational guidelines for all local government agencies, resulting in inconsistent implementation across regions (Rahayuningtyas & Setyaningrum, 2018).

e. Organizational Culture and Local Leadership

Organizational cultural barriers also have a clear impact on governance. In a number of

local governments, including several districts that have been caught in corruption cases, the bureaucratic culture tends to have low integrity and be tolerant of transactional behavior. Research on local leadership ethics shows that ethics and leadership styles that do not emphasize accountability and professionalism are factors that weaken local government governance (Rodzi, 2024).

f. Political Uncertainty and Leadership Transition

Leadership transitions, such as the one that occurred in Ponorogo from Sugiri Sancoko to Lisdyarita as Acting Regent, can create short-term policy uncertainty. A rapid transition process, although necessary for government continuity, often results in a strategic vacuum because acting officials do not yet have full political legitimacy or strong networks within the regional bureaucracy, so that important decisions are sometimes delayed or influenced by concerns about internal political stability (KPK, 2025).

4. Psychological and Organizational Impacts in the Bureaucracy Following Corruption Crackdowns

Following the crackdown on corruption, changes in the work environment and internal and external pressures on

government officials are not only administrative in nature, but also psychological and organizational. With the designation of Ponorogo Regent Sugiri Sancoko as a suspect in a case of alleged bribery in the management of positions and projects within the Ponorogo Regency Government by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), there have been impacts that are not only structural but also psychological within the local bureaucracy. Corruption enforcement in government institutions can create uncertainty and emotional pressure among civil servants (ASN), due to the sudden increase in the risk of sanctions and scrutiny.

Several studies show that intensified anti-corruption campaigns and increased surveillance can have a significant psychological effect on government employees, in the form of increased symptoms of stress and depression due to career uncertainty and higher risk of sanctions, as found in an empirical study in China that assessed the mental health of government employees during the anti-corruption enforcement period. This study shows that anti-corruption campaigns are statistically associated with an increase in symptoms of depression among government employees, implying that such pressure affects their mental well-being and work

dynamics (Fu & Zhou, 2024). This kind of psychological impact is also relevant to contextualize in cases of regional head corruption in Indonesia because a work environment that is increasingly wary of the risk of mistakes or sanctions can trigger a tendency for the bureaucracy to become more cautious (risk averse) and hinder strategic decision-making that requires initiative and innovation.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis, the prosecution of regional heads for corruption has a dual effect on regional governance. Legally, such prosecution serves to stop corrupt practices and uphold the principle of accountability. However, structurally and organizationally, cases such as the naming of Ponorogo Regent Sugiri Sancoko as a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) pose complex challenges. The transition of leadership from the active regional head to the acting regent requires the bureaucracy to adapt quickly, maintain continuity of public services, and respond to increasing public pressure for transparency and policy legitimacy. This condition also highlights the importance of an adaptive bureaucracy that is capable of maintaining administrative stability amid a dynamic legal situation.

In addition, structural obstacles remain apparent, such as weaknesses in internal

oversight, limited human resource capacity, a bureaucratic culture that is still vulnerable to transactional practices, and policy uncertainty due to changes in non-elective leadership. These obstacles serve as a reminder that law enforcement alone is not enough to ensure effective and sustainable regional governance. Institutional reform and capacity building of the apparatus need to be continued so that corruption enforcement does not only have a temporary deterrent effect, but also encourages improvements in the quality of governance.

Therefore, law enforcement should be used as momentum to make systemic reforms in local government governance. These efforts can include strengthening internal oversight mechanisms, increasing the professionalism and integrity of the apparatus, consistent implementation of regulations, and increasing transparency and accountability in public decision-making. With a systemic and sustainable approach, corruption cases can not only be prevented from recurring but also encourage the creation of a more effective, accountable, and trusted local government, so that the benefits of law enforcement become more widespread and significant.

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