

Accountability Network of Civil Society Organizations in Bali (A Case Study of the Csos in the Tabanan and Jembrana Regencies)

¹I Nengah Punia*² Nazrina Zuryani ³Muhammad Ali Azhar

^{1,2}Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Udayana University Denpasar, Indonesia

²Sociology Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Udayana University Denpasar, Indonesia

³Political Science Study Program Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Udayana University Denpasar, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Email: Inengah_puniah@unud.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study discussed the accountability of CSOs, specifically the accountability network. This study used the theory of social networks and interactions to find out a classification of CSO accountability patterns in Bali. This study also used qualitative data with a case study strategy at two CSO loci in the Tabanan and Jembrana Regencies. The data were collected through several layers of activities, namely preliminary studies by distributing simple survey questionnaires, confirming the survey entries through the Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and extending of the substance through interviews. In general, it was found that the practice of accountability network in these two areas did not work. The CSOs did not feel the need to be accountable, particularly in their financial statements. The funding issue made the CSOs' movement limited. Many CSOs were formed only with the organizational motives, but without the strong network. The emergence of the large number of CSOs is supported by the social fund assistance from the government in the effort to mitigate the impact of the disaster, particularly near to the general election period. This study also found the human resource constraints in the management of the CSOs.

Keywords: *Civil Society Organizations, Accountability, Network*

A. INTRODUCTION

In a democratic state, the emergence of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is unignorable. Apart from the state and market, the role of CSOs is equally important as not only a controller, but also a partner in the state management. A strong civil society is one of the

variables measuring the quality of democracy and can encourage a change and democracy.

Linz and Stepan (1996) proposed that CSOs and the state are two organizations based on human activities dealing with the achievement of public goals, such as welfare, justice, human rights, environment, and political freedom. The difference lies only in the use of

power that the state relies on the authority and power because politically it can use legitimate coercive power. On the other hand, civil society does not have coercive power and relies more on a willingness to participate in the public sphere to realize the society goals.

In Indonesia, it is commonly known that CSOs have a stronger capacity when there is a shift from state-centered to society-centered state. This momentum brings the development of CSOs to grow massively. This change occurred when the reformation period was finding its momentum and growing a demand for an equal relationship between the government and CSOs in a good governance.

The increasing number of CSOs in Indonesia is very beneficial for the progress of democracy because CSOs is the fastest organization to take advantage of freedom. Suharko (2016) assessed that CSOs are considered to have strong values to uphold the human rights and truth (SATUNAMA, Thursday 9/6-17).

However, one thing to be a concern in the midst of the development of the number of CSOs is the accountability and performance mechanism of the networks with the government, private sector, and other CSOs. In fact, these two factors are the main factors in ensuring the sustainability of CSOs, indicated by the lack of transparency, limited funding sources, and low-quality human resources.

These two factors work when a number of CSOs receive an assistance from donor agencies. However, the increasing number of CSOs is not in line with the increase in the accountability of the CSOs to the donor agencies. This creates a weak autonomy degree for the CSOs. The funds, particularly from the international institutions, are not managed properly. It invites a negative impression as quoted from the CSO Index or Civil Society Diamond that the CSOs in

Indonesia lie in the values of equality, democracy, and human rights, but not in the dimension supporting accountability and network. Much progress has been made but has not been able to encourage the emergence of good and strong CSOs in Indonesia.

Therefore, this study investigated the CSOs' accountability networks from the consistency of the agenda of the CSOs in the Tabanan and Jembrana Regencies. Both are known as the areas with many tourism destinations supporting the emergence of CSOs certainly affiliated with foreign donor agencies. The condition allows the CSOs to thrive along with various types of movement activities.

B. METHODS

This study was qualitative research obtaining the data through several layers of activities. First, a preliminary study was done by distributing simple survey questionnaires to the research informants. There were 15 CSOs' main executives in the Jembrana Regency and 8 CSOs' main executives in the Tabanan Regency along with 2 government officials who managed of the CSOs. Second, the results of this survey were mapped, categorized, and confirmed by the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities. During the pandemic situation, this activity was carried out online three times for both regencies. Third, the results of the general mapping of the opinions during the FGD then focused through interview technique.

The results were then compiled in a theoretical framework on accountability. In this study, the accountability network was defined by Benveniste (Nazrina et al., 2016) as a general instrument that every public organization must demonstrate the mission it carries out. Accountability can also be interpreted as the obligations of individuals or authorities entrusted with

managing public resources to respond to the matters relating to their responsibilities.

Thus, this study is aimed to investigate the accountability of the CSOs as the reflection of the regular and streamlined interrelation among the NGOs. This interrelation is highly desired by the stakeholders, such as the government, funding agencies, and society from both the general and the assisted society, as a manifestation of the CSOs' activities.

C. RESULTS

Suhatmansyah (2013) stated that the strength of the NGOs and CSOs lies in the network. In this context, there is a thin line between NGOs and CSOs, that NGOs do not have as many masses as CSOs. Therefore, networking is commonly aimed only at NGOs because NGOs can be formed by one to three people and have activities and programs. This is the working space of the networking concept in the NGOs. Regarding the difference in mass membership, CSOs can turn into political parties at any time so that network in the context of mass organizations is not so adhered because CSOs can be directed by some interested parties to certain political affiliation.

Nugroho (2020) stated that CSOs need to be turned back to their initial roles and functions, namely as a social articulator, government supervisors, power controllers, and public-space creator. As a forum for people's aspirations, CSOs have an important role in creating a democratic culture. The more the CSOs in a society, the better the democracy in a country.

However, based on the results of the study, it is very difficult to expect the ideal CSOs as stated by Suhatmansyah (2013) and Nugroho (2020). These were observed in the followings. The core management of CSOs was still dominated by the 1990s generation that most of them, both sociologically and politically, had

direct experience of 'witnessing' the practices of collusion, corruption, and nepotism during the New Order government. This practice also included the stigmatization of the behavior of groups considered 'close' to the power in both the central government and local government. This contributed to the emergence of aversion from most of the CSO elites when the CSOs were considered synonymous with the representation of the government's interests. In their perspective, however, the CSOs remained immune from 'the power', in terms of both performance and budgeting. During the FGD, the CSO elites openly refused to identify their CSOs as 'the people' close to the power, even if it was just a joke made by their colleagues in their network.

The 'close to the power' term for these elites was seen as a new reproduction of the collusion, corruption, and nepotism practice that they avoid. 'Close to the power' means that there is a potential of the CSOs to be uncritical and not independent so that they try to avoid this term, even though the elites are already democratic.

There is a certain discourse framing among them. During the FGD, for example, there was one participant who always issued a statement that his organization is not like KNPI, which could access the power at any time. KNPI was well-known to be close and even directly involved in the main circle of the power elites, both at the central and regional levels, particularly in the affiliation with the Golkar political party. For the CSO elites, it becomes a reluctance if their existence is identified as supporting CSOs, or in their terms as '*onderbouw*' of the formal power. For them, the choice of their CSOs to be independent, neutral, or impartial, is important keywords in every existing forum, including during the FGD.

The statement about the neutrality and independence of the CSOs becomes paradoxical when it comes to the discussion on the financing to ensure the sustainability of the organization. Most of the CSOs agree that the ‘granted funds’ only provided by the government, in this case the bureaucracy or members of the council, are one of the important contributions expected by them. This is also an affirmation that most of the CSOs in Jembrana still require financial assistance from the government, particularly in funding the organizations. Interestingly, they are also very reluctant to be called ‘the organization’ of the formal power holders in their region, both the bureaucracy and the council.

It is still very difficult to come across the CSOs that truly have the capacity of a well-maintained accountability network with routine and healthy performance and budgeting, considering that so far, the existing CSOs have never agreed to the same direction of communication. Most of the CSOs are temporary, and the synergies of the networks are formed severally. Even a few of them are formed only for the purpose of fulfilling the vote support capacity during the election process in the local government, or in some cases the emergence of CSOs is only for the fulfillment of administrative responsibility for the issued social assistance funds which are allocated annually in the budget of the bureaucracy and council (Interview with Basir, the journalist of Radar Bali).

The absence of the networking aspect among the CSO actors is also seen in the FGD. It appeared that at least most of the participants were still attached to the terms such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in their organizations. So far, the state seems to ‘abandon’ and only provide a forum for

‘routine or formal’ coaching or funding. The state ignores the importance of intense communication that should be built between the members and the CSOs, particularly in providing a support system for the sustainability of the organization.

In addition, the FGD and direct interviews in this study showed that the biggest constraint faced by the CSOs is human resources (HR). The influence of the CSOs is currently fading, one of which is due to inadequate human resources. Moreover, CSO is just an organizational label without a clear vision and mission with minimal personnel that make most of the chairpersons also serve as secretaries and members.

The lack of human resources is a concern for the elites or the management of the CSOs because it will greatly affect the circulation of the elites or power within the CSOs. In line with the argument presented at the beginning of this analysis, that the CSO elites are still dominated by the 90s generation do not attract much interest from the next generation, particularly millennials, to join the CSOs. The issue of human resources in the re-organization of the CSOs, particularly in the process of the circulation of the CSO elites, has always been a dilemmatic and hampering issue for the development of the CSOs.

D. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

One of the strengths of CSOs lies in their networks, and this conclusion underlies this study. The purpose of the study is to see the dynamic of the CSOs in the current democratic climate, particularly the interrelation among the CSOs in the midst of the public information disclosure era. In fact, the interrelation is highly desired by the stakeholders as a manifestation of the CSOs’ activities.

However, the existing CSOs have not progressed better than other democratic institutions such as political parties. CSOs

have even left their initial ideas. In fact, CSOs are formed only for certain interests which are often indicated to be not in line with the main goals as an independent and non-profit institution.

The results indicate that it is very difficult for the CSOs in the Tabanan and Jembrana Regencies to expect the CSOs to be able to run an accountability network. This is due to several factors such as: limited regulations and weak enforcement of regulations and political will from all stakeholders to concern about the future of CSOs.

Therefore, this study proposes some recommendations. First, the CSOs should not only exist when the government issues the social fund assistance to cope with the disaster condition or particularly to face the general election period. Second, the CSOs should have an organizational passion and a strong networking, so the government can guide them. Third, in providing assistance, the government should not discriminate CSOs. Fourth, human resources are crucial aspect for the CSOs since the quality of human resources has an extraordinary impact on the organization with a clear vision and mission.

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