

ABSTRACT

Agricultural extension bureaucrats (AEBs), as frontline bureaucrats, own dual identities as agents of the state, doing the bidding of the government; and as citizen-agents, who inform, involve, and enable citizens (and communities) to interact and influence authorities. In the Central Java regencies of Batang, Blora, and Cilacap, they behave in a community-leaning way to secure a compliant farmer-citizenry - this is a form of exercising power. This study seeks to understand if their community-leaning behaviour, is driven by the need to enhance power – and if political entrepreneurship is at play.

This study relies on qualitative interviews, to unlock and uncover knowledge, through systematic enquiry. This is because prior research on this topic is sketchy, and valid knowledge to establish the causal relationship behind the community-leaning behaviour, is buried in the minds of the AEBs. The study uses multiplicity cases (Batang, Blora, and Cilacap regencies) in a holistic-multiple case design, using 16 AEBs, as samples. The theoretical relationship between compliance and power is explored, from the narrative grounded data that is generated. The examination extends to the theoretical perspective of political entrepreneurship. The research incorporates the narratives and inferences from the narrative, in the review.

The study discovers that the AEBs upgrade their power by exercising community-leaning behaviour, instead of simply discharging their principal duties and functional roles. They see the power upgrade as a necessity, to secure compliance from the citizenry. The study also discovers that AEBs act as political entrepreneurs, as they disrupt the prevailing status quo. The findings of this study contribute to the relational and improvisational aspects in the daily work and public engagement of frontline bureaucrats, that is understudied, and to the concept of political entrepreneurship of street level bureaucrats.