

Communication Strategies of Village Governments in Enhancing Community Participation for Sustainable Development

Hendro Siswanto¹, Tria Patrianti², Sa'diyah El Adawiyah³

^{1,2,3}Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Hendro Siswanto

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse the communication strategies implemented by village governments to enhance community participation toward sustainable development. The research focuses on communication methods such as Village Development Planning Meetings (*Musrenbang*), traditional and digital media, as well as communication barriers that arise at the village level, including information gaps and paternalistic cultural norms. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of interpersonal communication by village leaders in building trust and fostering active community participation. A qualitative approach was employed in this research, with fieldwork conducted in several villages in Indonesia. The findings indicate that effective communication strategies—particularly the use of information technology and the personal approach of village heads—significantly increase citizen participation. This study contributes theoretically to the literature on participatory development communication and offers practical implications for communication governance at the village level.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Community Participation, Sustainable

Development, Village Government, Interpersonal Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable village development does not rely solely on the availability of funding or formal policies from the central government, but is also heavily influenced by the level of active participation from the local community. In the context of sustainable development, community involvement is not only seen as a form of democratic legitimacy but also as a strategic factor to ensure that every development program aligns with local needs and potentials.

Various studies have shown that communication strategies implemented by village governments, particularly by village heads and their staff, play a vital role in fostering community participation in both physical development activities—such as infrastructure projects—and non-physical initiatives, including empowerment and public education (Ramadhani et al., 2024; Surahmi & Farid, 2018). Effective communication strategies involve direct approaches to citizens, program socialization efforts, and the creation of dialogue spaces between the government and the community. Furthermore, successful village communication is marked by its ability to encourage voluntary contributions from the community, whether in the form of

labour, equipment, or financial support (Kodrianingsih et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the village level reveals that low levels of community participation remain a critical issue. This is often caused by a lack of information, non-participatory communication practices, and suboptimal approaches employed by village governments in delivering development programs (Kurniawan & Artisa, 2023). Therefore, village government communication strategies must be examined in depth as part of efforts to strengthen citizen participation and ensure sustainable development at the local level.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyse the communication strategies used by village governments to enhance community participation, particularly within the framework of sustainable development. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically to the literature on participatory development communication and practically to the governance of communication at the village level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Development Communication

Development communication, also known by various terms such as development support communication (Melkote, 2000) and participatory communication (Jacobson & Servaes, 1999). requires epistemological reflection to understand effective approaches to social change. It examines the role of media in driving social transformation. Although new communication technologies are often seen as solutions, history shows that excessive enthusiasm for new media (e.g., radio, television, video) needs to be critically examined, given their limitations in global access and their tendency to promote one-way information transmission rather than participatory dialogue or social resistance (Mody, 2000; Wilkins & Waters, 2000).

In Indonesia, development communication is still predominantly characterized by a

linear model, although the participatory model is increasingly acknowledged as essential (Rusadi, 2014). Integrating linear and participatory models in rural empowerment programs can support the achievement of development goals. Participatory communication—characterized by dialogue, interaction, and community engagement—plays a significant role in strengthening social capital for village development. Effective development communication patterns require the active role of local leaders in disseminating information and involving multiple stakeholders; however, uneven communication efforts can negatively affect the level of community participation (Wahyuvi et al., 2020). The convergence communication model, which integrates various approaches and resources, has been proposed as a strategy to optimize development outcomes (Rusadi, 2014).

Sustainable Development

The SDGs emphasize the principle of “leaving no one behind,” including within the context of villages, which are at the forefront of achieving global development goals (UNDP, 2015). In Indonesia, villages have a strategic role in implementing various aspects of the SDGs, such as poverty reduction (SDG 1), quality education (SDG 4), and strong institutions (SDG 16). Therefore, ensuring active community participation through effective communication strategies becomes key to accelerating inclusive and sustainable development.

Government Communication Strategies

According to Rogers (2003), government communication strategies must be contextual and consider communication channels that match the characteristics of the target community. This includes choosing the most effective method—whether face-to-face communication, digital media, or traditional media—based on accessibility and residents’ preferences. Communication success at the village level

largely depends on the government's ability to align development messages with local values and to ensure that communication is two-way and participatory. Strategies that are not only informative but also dialogical are key to creating meaningful engagement in sustainable development.

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication refers to face-to-face interactions between two or more individuals aimed at fostering understanding, building social relationships, and facilitating cooperation (DeVito, 2016). In the village governance context, interpersonal communication becomes crucial as it enables direct dialogue between village officials and residents, ultimately strengthening trust, transparency, and citizen participation in the development process.

Interpersonal communication theory emphasizes the importance of honesty, empathy, and openness in building effective relationships (Berlo, 1960). Village heads who actively listen to citizens' aspirations, respond constructively, and consistently foster emotional closeness are more likely to receive support and active engagement from the community in village development initiatives.

In village development research, interpersonal communication is considered a bridge between technocratic planning and the actual needs of residents (Rogers, 2003). Through this approach, village heads and their staff do not merely serve as information transmitters, but also as facilitators of participation, negotiators of interests, and nurturers of social relationships.

MATERIALS & METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a literature review method to analyse the communication strategies of village governments in the context of sustainable development. Data were collected through a systematic review of various documents,

official reports, academic journals, results of Village Development Planning Forums (*Musrenbang*), and village communication policies from several regions in Indonesia, particularly villages in Central Java. The literature review focused on themes such as development communication, community participation, communication barriers, and interpersonal communication practices of village heads. Sources were selected purposively based on relevance and the currency of information. Data analysis was conducted using thematic approaches and narrative synthesis to identify patterns of communication strategies and factors influencing community participation in village development.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Based on the literature review and empirical data, village governments' communication strategies for promoting community participation in sustainable development tend to emphasize participatory and collaborative approaches. Village governments act not only as policy messengers but also as facilitators who activate the community's potential and collective awareness through various communication channels.

One of the primary strategies identified is direct community engagement through village development planning forums (*Musrenbang*). These forums serve as formal venues for gathering public aspirations and aligning village development programs with local needs (Bagus, 2021; Kodrianingsih et al., 2023). In addition, community empowerment programs—such as skills training, local economic outreach, and MSME mentoring—form a crucial part of educational and transformative communication strategies.

Interpersonal communication between village officials and residents was also found to have a significant influence on the effectiveness of participation. Village leaders who establish emotional and dialogic relationships with citizens tend to

be more successful in mobilizing public involvement (Bagus, 2021). In this context, the presence of informal figures and the role of local sociocultural norms enhance the reach and impact of communication.

Effective communication strategies are also characterized by the use of multiple media—both conventional tools such as mosque loudspeakers and village notice boards, as well as digital platforms like WhatsApp groups, social media, and smart village apps. This media combination facilitates information distribution and broadens message outreach to diverse age groups and social strata (Bagus, 2021; Surahmi & Farid, 2018). Furthermore, providing technical assistance and guidance to help residents understand development issues serves as a tangible form of participatory and empowering communication. Research by Wulandari & Susanto (2021) shows that the intensity and quality of interpersonal communication between village heads and citizens positively correlate with levels of participation in *Musrenbang* and other development activities. In villages with communicative leadership, there is increased community ownership of programs and a reduction in social conflict stemming from miscommunication.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal structural and cultural challenges that hinder effective village communication. One major challenge is the information gap, where some residents lack adequate access to development-related information. Moreover, in several areas, strong paternalistic cultural norms discourage or suppress citizen input, as decisions are perceived to be solely the domain of village elites (Kodrianingsih et al., 2023).

Community participation itself can be categorized into two types: physical and non-physical. Physical participation includes contributions of labour, materials, and presence at development events, while non-physical participation refers to the provision of ideas, feedback, and involvement in the planning and evaluation

of development programs (Surahmi & Farid, 2018). Key supporting factors for participation include a high proportion of productive-age residents and the availability of sufficient local human resources. Conversely, participation barriers often stem from low awareness of citizens' roles in governance and development (Bagus, 2021). Overall, the findings confirm that inclusive, open communication strategies tailored to local socio-cultural characteristics have a positive impact on increasing community participation in sustainable village development. Therefore, adaptive and dialogic communication strategies must continue to be developed to overcome participation barriers and strengthen collaboration between village governments and local communities.

CONCLUSION

Village government communication strategies play a critical role in fostering community participation in sustainable development. Approaches such as *Musrenbang*, empowerment programs, and effective interpersonal communication have proven effective. The use of both traditional and digital media also helps broaden message outreach.

However, challenges such as information gaps and persistent paternalistic cultures continue to hinder participation. Community participation manifests in both physical and non-physical forms, supported by productive age demographics and local human resources. Raising participatory awareness requires inclusive and educational communication. With the right strategies, synergy between village governments and communities can be strengthened to support the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Declaration by Authors

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