

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC TRUST: THE ROLE OF TRANSPARENCY IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN INDONESIA**Muhammad Yusuf**²Politeknik Praktisi Bandung
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<http://doi.org/10.23960/gjcg.v1i1.1>**Corresponding author :**R.Widya Setiabudi Sumadinata
(w.setiabudi@unpad.ac.id)**ABSTRACT**

Government communication plays a crucial role in promoting transparency and strengthening public trust in governance. Effective communication between government institutions and citizens enables the dissemination of public information, enhances policy understanding, and encourages citizen participation in governance processes. This study aims to explore the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust in governance in Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews and document analysis to understand citizens' perceptions of government communication practices. The findings indicate that government communication significantly contributes to improving public perceptions of transparency and institutional credibility. However, the study also reveals that the effectiveness of government communication depends on the clarity, accessibility, and interactivity of the information delivered to the public. Transparent and participatory communication practices can reduce information asymmetry and strengthen citizens' trust in government institutions. The results suggest that governments should adopt communication strategies that emphasize openness, clarity, and citizen engagement to improve governance quality and public trust. This study contributes to the literature on communication and governance by highlighting the importance of government communication in promoting transparency and strengthening trust in public institutions.

Keywords: Government Communication, Transparency, Public Trust, Governance, Citizen Engagement.

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi pemerintah memiliki peran penting dalam mendorong transparansi dan memperkuat kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap tata kelola pemerintahan. Komunikasi yang efektif antara institusi pemerintah dan masyarakat memungkinkan penyebaran informasi publik, meningkatkan pemahaman terhadap kebijakan, serta mendorong partisipasi masyarakat dalam proses pemerintahan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran komunikasi pemerintah dalam memperkuat transparansi dan membangun kepercayaan publik terhadap tata kelola pemerintahan di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode wawancara semi-terstruktur dan analisis dokumen untuk memahami persepsi masyarakat terhadap praktik komunikasi pemerintah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi pemerintah berkontribusi signifikan dalam meningkatkan persepsi masyarakat terhadap transparansi dan kredibilitas institusi pemerintah. Namun demikian, efektivitas komunikasi pemerintah sangat dipengaruhi oleh kejelasan, aksesibilitas, serta interaktivitas informasi yang disampaikan kepada masyarakat. Praktik komunikasi yang transparan dan partisipatif dapat mengurangi kesenjangan informasi serta memperkuat kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap institusi pemerintah. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap literatur komunikasi dan tata kelola pemerintahan dengan menekankan pentingnya komunikasi pemerintah dalam mendorong transparansi dan meningkatkan kepercayaan publik terhadap institusi pemerintahan.

Kata Kunci : Komunikasi Pemerintah, Transparansi, Kepercayaan Publik, Tata Kelola Pemerintahan, Partisipasi Masyarakat

A. INTRODUCTION

Effective government communication plays a crucial role in modern governance systems. Communication between government institutions and citizens enables the dissemination of public information, strengthens policy understanding, and facilitates public participation in governance processes. In recent years, governments around the world have increasingly recognized that transparent and effective communication strategies are essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring the successful implementation of public policies (Wirtz & Müller, 2022).

Public trust in government is widely regarded as a fundamental component of democratic governance. Trust encourages citizens to support government initiatives, comply with public policies, and participate in public decision-making processes. Conversely, low levels of trust may lead to skepticism toward government actions and reduce public engagement in governance activities (OECD, 2021). In this context, government communication plays a critical role in shaping citizens' perceptions of transparency, accountability, and institutional credibility.

Transparency has been identified as one of the key principles that influence public trust in government institutions. Transparent governance ensures that citizens have access to information regarding government decisions, financial management, and public service delivery. When governments provide clear and accessible information, citizens are more likely to perceive public institutions as accountable and trustworthy (Kim & Lee, 2020). In addition, transparency supported by effective communication practices can reduce information asymmetry between governments and citizens, thereby improving governance quality and institutional legitimacy.

In the era of digital governance, government communication has become increasingly important due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies. Governments are now expected to utilize various communication channels, including digital platforms and social media, to disseminate information and interact with citizens. Studies show that effective communication strategies through digital media can significantly influence public perceptions of government transparency and trust (Wirtz & Müller, 2022). These communication practices also enable governments to engage citizens more actively in governance processes.

In Indonesia, strengthening government communication and transparency has become a priority in improving governance quality and public service delivery. The implementation of open government initiatives and digital governance systems has encouraged government institutions to provide greater access to information and promote transparency in public administration. However, challenges remain in ensuring that communication strategies effectively reach citizens and contribute to strengthening public trust in government institutions.

Despite the growing importance of government communication in governance practices, existing studies have primarily focused on transparency and accountability from administrative or financial perspectives. Limited research has examined how government communication practices influence citizens' perceptions of transparency and public trust in governance contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust in local governance in Indonesia. By exploring the relationship between communication practices, transparency, and trust, this research seeks to contribute to the literature on communication and governance while providing insights for improving government communication strategies in the public sector.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Government Communication in Public Governance

Government communication refers to the process through which public institutions disseminate information, interact with citizens, and explain public policies to society. Effective government communication plays an important role in ensuring that citizens understand government programs, policies, and governance processes. Through clear and transparent communication, governments can improve public awareness, encourage civic engagement, and strengthen democratic governance. Recent studies highlight that effective communication strategies enable governments to maintain transparency and strengthen relationships between government institutions and citizens (Wirtz & Müller, 2022).

In modern governance systems, communication has become a strategic tool in shaping public perceptions of government performance and legitimacy. Governments are increasingly expected to adopt open communication practices that allow citizens to access information regarding policy decisions, financial management, and public services. Transparent communication helps reduce information asymmetry between governments and citizens and allows the public to evaluate government performance more effectively (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Furthermore, the development of digital technologies has significantly transformed government communication practices. Digital platforms, official websites, and social media have become important channels for

governments to communicate directly with citizens. These platforms allow governments to disseminate information more quickly and interactively, thereby increasing the accessibility of public information and strengthening citizen participation in governance processes (Mergel, 2020).

Transparency in Governance

Transparency is considered one of the core principles of good governance. It refers to the openness of government institutions in providing access to information related to public policies, decision-making processes, and financial management. Transparency enables citizens to monitor government activities and ensures that public officials remain accountable for their actions. According to previous studies, transparent governance contributes to improving institutional credibility and strengthening democratic accountability (Bisogno et al., 2022).

Transparency also plays an important role in building public trust in government institutions. When governments provide clear and accessible information about public programs and policies, citizens are more likely to perceive government institutions as responsible and trustworthy. Transparent governance practices reduce uncertainty and help citizens understand how public resources are managed, which can enhance citizens' confidence in government institutions (Dewi, 2021).

In the context of local governance, transparency becomes even more important because local governments are directly responsible for delivering public services and managing regional development programs. Ensuring that information about government activities is accessible to the public can improve citizen participation and strengthen accountability mechanisms at the local level (Indrawijaya & Nurmalasari, 2022).

Public Trust in Government

Public trust refers to citizens' confidence in the ability of government institutions to act in the public interest and manage public affairs effectively. Trust is a key factor that influences citizens' willingness to cooperate with government policies and participate in governance processes. When citizens trust government institutions, they are more likely to comply with regulations, support government initiatives, and engage in public programs (OECD, 2021).

Several studies have shown that public trust is strongly influenced by transparency, accountability, and effective communication practices. When governments provide transparent information and maintain open communication with citizens, people tend to perceive government institutions as more reliable and credible. Conversely, lack of transparency and ineffective communication may lead to distrust and skepticism toward government policies (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Government Communication, Transparency, and Public Trust

The relationship between government communication, transparency, and public trust has become an important topic in governance studies. Government communication serves as a mechanism for delivering information about government activities and policies, while transparency ensures that such information is openly accessible to the public. Together, these elements contribute to strengthening citizens' confidence in government institutions (Wirtz & Müller, 2022).

Empirical studies indicate that transparent communication practices can significantly enhance public trust by improving citizens' understanding of government policies and reducing uncertainty regarding government actions. Effective communication also allows governments to engage citizens more actively in governance processes, which can further strengthen democratic participation and institutional legitimacy (Bisogno et al., 2022).

However, the effectiveness of government communication in building public trust depends on how information is delivered and perceived by citizens. Communication strategies that prioritize openness, clarity, and accessibility are more likely to foster positive perceptions of government transparency and accountability. Therefore, examining the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust remains an important area of research in governance studies.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust in governance in Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for a deeper understanding of citizens' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations regarding government communication practices. The study adopted a case-oriented research design focusing on communication practices between government institutions and the public. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with selected informants, including community members, public policy observers, and individuals who have experience interacting with government information and public communication channels. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that participants possessed relevant knowledge

regarding government communication and transparency practices. In addition to interviews, this research also utilized document analysis of government publications, official reports, and digital communication platforms such as government websites and public information portals to support data triangulation. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved several stages including data reduction, coding, categorization of themes, and interpretation of patterns related to government communication, transparency, and public trust. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing information obtained from different informants and documentary sources. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to explain how government communication practices contribute to transparency and influence citizens' trust in governance.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal several important themes regarding the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust in governance in Indonesia. Based on the analysis of interview data and supporting documents, four key findings emerged that explain how communication practices influence citizens' perceptions of government transparency and trust.

Government Communication as a Tool for Information Dissemination

The study found that government communication plays a crucial role in disseminating public information related to government programs, policies, and public services. Effective government communication helps ensure that citizens are informed about decisions, regulations, and initiatives that may affect their daily lives. Informants in this study indicated that government institutions increasingly utilize various communication channels to distribute information to the public. These channels include official government websites, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, press releases distributed through mass media, as well as public announcements delivered through both online and offline means. The use of multiple communication platforms reflects the government's effort to adapt to technological developments and changing patterns of public information consumption.

The development of digital communication technologies has significantly transformed the way governments communicate with citizens. Digital platforms allow government institutions to disseminate information more quickly, efficiently, and widely compared to traditional communication methods. Through digital media, information can be shared in real time and accessed by the public regardless of geographical location. This also enables governments to interact more directly with citizens, allowing feedback, comments, and public responses to be received more easily. As a result, digital communication platforms have become an important tool in supporting transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance.

However, although information is now available through various communication channels, several informants mentioned that not all citizens actively access these platforms. This indicates that the presence of communication channels alone does not automatically guarantee effective information dissemination. Factors such as digital literacy, access to the internet, educational background, and awareness of government communication platforms can influence whether citizens are able to receive and understand the information provided by the government. In some cases, certain groups of society, particularly those living in rural areas or with limited access to technology, may experience difficulties in obtaining information through digital platforms.

This finding suggests that the effectiveness of government communication depends not only on the availability of information but also on the public's awareness, accessibility, and ability to utilize these communication channels. Therefore, governments need to continuously improve their communication strategies to ensure that information can reach diverse segments of society. This can be achieved by combining digital communication with more traditional forms of outreach, such as community meetings, local media broadcasts, and collaboration with community leaders. By implementing inclusive communication strategies, governments can ensure that public information is distributed more effectively and that all citizens have equal opportunities to access important information related to government programs and services.

Transparency Through Open Government Communication

Another important finding of this study is that transparent communication contributes significantly to improving citizens' perceptions of government transparency. Informants emphasized that when governments openly communicate information regarding policy decisions, budget allocation, and program implementation, citizens are more likely to perceive government institutions as transparent and accountable.

Transparency in communication reduces information asymmetry between government institutions and the public. When citizens have access to accurate and timely information, they are better able to understand government actions and evaluate the effectiveness of public policies. This openness can strengthen the legitimacy of government institutions and reduce public skepticism toward government activities.

The Role of Communication Clarity in Building Public Understanding

Another important finding of this study is that transparent communication contributes significantly to improving citizens' perceptions of government transparency. Informants emphasized that when governments openly communicate information regarding policy decisions, budget allocation, and program implementation, citizens are more likely to perceive government institutions as transparent and accountable. Transparency in communication allows citizens to better understand how decisions are made and how public resources are managed. When government institutions provide clear and accessible information, the public gains greater confidence that policies and programs are implemented in a fair and responsible manner.

Furthermore, transparent communication plays a critical role in strengthening the relationship between government institutions and the public. When governments consistently provide information about their activities, citizens feel more included in the governance process. Informants highlighted that transparency not only helps citizens understand government actions but also creates a sense of openness that encourages public trust. In this context, communication becomes a key instrument for building credibility and maintaining a positive relationship between the government and society.

Transparency in communication also helps reduce information asymmetry between government institutions and the public. Information asymmetry occurs when one party possesses more or better information than another, which can lead to misunderstandings or mistrust. By providing accurate, timely, and comprehensive information, governments can minimize the gap between what the government knows and what citizens know about public policies and programs. As a result, citizens are better able to evaluate government actions and assess whether policies are implemented effectively.

In addition, open access to government information enables citizens to participate more actively in public affairs. When citizens receive adequate information about government programs and policies, they are more capable of providing feedback, expressing opinions, and engaging in public discussions. This process not only enhances democratic participation but also encourages governments to be more responsive to the needs and expectations of society.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that transparent communication is a fundamental element in strengthening good governance practices. By ensuring that information about government activities is openly communicated, governments can enhance accountability, build public trust, and reduce skepticism toward government institutions. Therefore, improving transparency in government communication should be considered a strategic priority in order to create a more open, participatory, and trustworthy governance system.

Interactive Communication and Citizen Engagement

The study also highlights that the clarity of government communication is a crucial factor in ensuring that information can be effectively understood by citizens. Several informants noted that government information is sometimes delivered using technical or bureaucratic language that may be difficult for the general public to interpret. Government documents, policy explanations, and official announcements often contain formal terminology and administrative expressions that are not easily understood by individuals without a background in policy or governance. As a result, although transparency initiatives exist and information is technically available to the public, the intended message may not always be fully understood by citizens.

This situation indicates that transparency alone is not sufficient to ensure effective communication between the government and the public. Information must not only be accessible but also presented in a way that is understandable to different segments of society. When information is communicated in complex or overly technical language, citizens may struggle to interpret the meaning of government policies, which can lead to confusion or misinterpretation. In some cases, this communication gap may even create negative perceptions toward government institutions because citizens feel excluded from understanding important policy decisions.

Clear, simple, and accessible communication is therefore essential for improving public understanding of government policies and programs. Informants emphasized that governments should present information in language that is easy to understand, avoiding excessive bureaucratic terminology whenever possible. The use of plain language, visual explanations, infographics, and simplified policy summaries can help citizens better comprehend government messages. By adapting communication styles in this way, governments can ensure that

information reaches not only highly educated audiences but also citizens from diverse educational, economic, and social backgrounds.

Furthermore, improving the clarity of communication may also play an important role in reducing the spread of misinformation and misunderstandings. When official information is unclear or difficult to interpret, it creates opportunities for rumors or inaccurate interpretations to spread among the public. Clear communication helps ensure that citizens receive accurate explanations directly from government sources, which can minimize confusion and reduce the circulation of misleading information.

Ultimately, improving the clarity of government communication can contribute to strengthening public confidence in government institutions. When citizens clearly understand the purpose, implementation, and outcomes of government policies, they are more likely to develop trust in government actions. Therefore, governments need to continuously improve the way they communicate with the public by prioritizing clarity, accessibility, and inclusiveness in their communication strategies.

Government Communication as a Driver of Public Trust

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that government communication plays a central role in building public trust in governance. Effective communication practices that prioritize transparency, clarity, and citizen engagement can significantly influence how citizens perceive government performance and institutional credibility. Informants in this study consistently emphasized that the way governments communicate information to the public affects the level of trust citizens place in government institutions. When governments provide clear explanations regarding policies, programs, and public decisions, citizens are more likely to develop a positive perception of government accountability and integrity.

Effective government communication also contributes to strengthening the relationship between the government and the public. Communication that is transparent and accessible allows citizens to understand the rationale behind policy decisions and the implementation of public programs. This openness not only increases the level of public awareness but also encourages citizens to view government institutions as more responsible and responsive to public needs. When governments communicate openly and responsibly, citizens tend to perceive government institutions as more reliable, credible, and trustworthy.

Furthermore, citizen engagement in communication processes plays an important role in enhancing democratic governance. Governments that encourage two-way communication with citizens, such as through social media interaction, public consultations, and community engagement programs, are more likely to create a sense of inclusion among citizens. This participatory communication approach allows citizens to express their concerns, provide feedback, and contribute to discussions about public policies. As a result, communication becomes not only a tool for information dissemination but also a mechanism for fostering collaboration between the government and society.

In the context of Indonesia, improving government communication strategies may contribute significantly to strengthening transparency and enhancing public trust in governance systems. As a developing democracy with a diverse population and varying levels of access to information, Indonesia faces unique challenges in ensuring that government communication reaches all segments of society. Therefore, government institutions need to continuously improve their communication practices by utilizing both digital and traditional communication channels to ensure broader public access to information.

By ensuring that communication practices are transparent, accessible, and interactive, governments can foster stronger relationships with citizens and promote more effective and participatory governance. Improving communication strategies may also help increase public understanding of government policies, reduce misinformation, and strengthen citizens' confidence in government institutions. Ultimately, effective government communication can serve as an essential foundation for building sustainable public trust and improving the overall quality of governance.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that government communication plays a significant role in shaping citizens' perceptions of transparency, accountability, and trust in government institutions. Effective communication between government institutions and citizens is essential in modern governance, as it allows governments to disseminate information regarding policies, programs, and public services while also enabling citizens to better understand government actions and decisions (Lee & Li, 2020). Informants in this study indicated that government institutions increasingly rely on various communication channels such as official websites, social media platforms,

press releases, and public announcements to deliver information to the public. The increasing use of digital communication platforms reflects the transformation of government communication practices in the digital era.

The development of digital communication technologies has significantly changed how governments interact with citizens. Digital platforms enable governments to disseminate information quickly and reach a wider audience compared to traditional communication channels (Mergel, 2020). Through social media and online platforms, government institutions can communicate in real time and provide updates regarding public policies, government programs, and public services. This digital transformation also creates opportunities for governments to receive feedback and engage in direct communication with citizens, which can enhance public participation in governance processes.

However, the study also reveals that the availability of communication channels alone does not guarantee effective information dissemination. Several informants noted that not all citizens actively access digital communication platforms provided by the government. This indicates that the effectiveness of government communication depends not only on the presence of communication infrastructure but also on public awareness, digital literacy, and accessibility to information technology (Porumbescu, 2021). In many cases, citizens who have limited internet access or low digital literacy may face difficulties in obtaining information through digital communication channels.

Another important finding of this study is that transparent communication contributes significantly to improving citizens' perceptions of government transparency. Informants emphasized that when governments openly communicate information regarding policy decisions, budget allocation, and program implementation, citizens are more likely to perceive government institutions as transparent and accountable. Transparency in government communication helps reduce information asymmetry between the government and citizens by ensuring that relevant information is accessible and understandable to the public (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2019).

When citizens have access to accurate and timely information, they are better able to understand government actions and evaluate the effectiveness of public policies. This openness can strengthen the legitimacy of government institutions and reduce public skepticism toward government activities. Studies on public administration also suggest that transparent communication can improve public trust by demonstrating government accountability and openness in policy implementation (Cucciniello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2017).

The study further highlights that the clarity of government communication is a crucial factor in ensuring that information can be effectively understood by citizens. Informants pointed out that government information is sometimes delivered in technical or bureaucratic language that may be difficult for the general public to interpret. Although transparency initiatives exist and information is technically available, the intended message may not always be fully understood by citizens due to the complexity of language used in official communication.

Clear, simple, and accessible communication is therefore essential for improving public understanding of government policies and programs. Governments need to adapt their communication strategies by using plain language and simplified explanations so that information can be understood by citizens from diverse educational and social backgrounds (OECD, 2021). In addition, the use of visual communication tools such as infographics, videos, and interactive digital content can further enhance public understanding of government policies.

Furthermore, improving the clarity of communication may also help reduce misinformation and misinterpretation of government policies. When official information is unclear or difficult to interpret, it creates opportunities for rumors or inaccurate narratives to spread among the public. Clear and consistent communication from government institutions can help minimize misinformation and ensure that citizens receive accurate explanations directly from official sources (Mergel, 2020).

Overall, the findings indicate that government communication plays a central role in building public trust in governance. Communication practices that prioritize transparency, clarity, and citizen engagement can significantly influence how citizens perceive government performance and credibility. Governments that communicate openly and responsively are more likely to be perceived as reliable and trustworthy by the public (Porumbescu, 2021).

In the context of Indonesia, improving government communication strategies may contribute significantly to strengthening transparency and enhancing public trust in governance systems. As a developing democracy with diverse social and cultural backgrounds, Indonesia faces challenges in ensuring that public information can reach all segments of society. Therefore, government institutions need to develop inclusive communication strategies that combine digital communication with traditional outreach methods such as community meetings, public service announcements, and collaboration with local leaders.

By ensuring that communication practices are transparent, accessible, and interactive, governments can foster stronger relationships with citizens and promote more effective and participatory governance. Effective government communication can also serve as a foundation for improving public trust, enhancing accountability, and strengthening democratic governance in the long term

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined the role of government communication in strengthening transparency and building public trust in governance in Indonesia. The findings indicate that government communication is a crucial component in shaping citizens' perceptions of transparency, accountability, and institutional credibility. Effective communication enables governments to disseminate information about policies, programs, and public services, thereby improving public understanding of governance processes.

The results of this study show that transparency in government communication plays a significant role in fostering public trust. When government institutions openly share information regarding policy decisions, financial management, and program implementation, citizens are more likely to perceive government institutions as transparent and accountable. Access to accurate and timely information helps reduce uncertainty and strengthens citizens' confidence in government performance.

In addition, the clarity and accessibility of communication were found to be important factors influencing public perceptions of government transparency. Government information that is presented in clear and understandable language can improve citizens' understanding of public policies and governance practices. Conversely, communication that is overly technical or difficult to interpret may limit the effectiveness of transparency initiatives.

The findings also highlight the importance of interactive communication and citizen engagement in governance processes. Opportunities for citizens to participate in discussions, provide feedback, and interact with government institutions can strengthen the relationship between governments and the public. Such participatory communication practices contribute to the development of trust and encourage greater citizen involvement in governance.

Overall, this study emphasizes that effective government communication is essential for promoting transparency and strengthening public trust in governance. By adopting communication strategies that prioritize openness, clarity, and citizen engagement, governments can improve governance quality and build stronger relationships with the communities they serve. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and public administrators seeking to enhance transparency and trust through more effective communication practices.

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