



INTER-STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAM IN INDONESIA

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(Naskah diterima: 1 October 2025, disetujui: 28 October 2025)

Abstract

Digital transformation brings new opportunities and challenges to poverty alleviation efforts in Indonesia. The government, private sector, and civil society play a crucial role in creating an inclusive ecosystem that ensures equitable digital access. This study aims to analyze communication patterns among stakeholders in digital poverty alleviation programs, highlighting coordination, collaboration, and emerging communication barriers. The research approach employed descriptive qualitative methods with in-depth interviews and analysis of inclusive digital policy documents. The results indicate that communication among stakeholders remains vertical and fragmented, with the government dominating and local communities limited in its involvement. Effective cross-sector collaboration occurs when participatory communication mechanisms, information transparency, and trust between actors are in place. This study confirms that adaptive and inclusive strategic communication is a key factor in the success of digital poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia.

Keywords: development communication, stakeholders, digital inclusion, digital poverty, cross-sector collaboration

Abstrak

Transformasi digital membawa peluang dan tantangan baru dalam upaya pengentasan kemiskinan di Indonesia. Pemerintah, sektor swasta, dan masyarakat sipil berperan penting dalam menciptakan ekosistem inklusif yang memastikan akses digital merata. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pola komunikasi antar pemangku kepentingan dalam program pengentasan kemiskinan digital, dengan menyoroti koordinasi, kolaborasi, dan hambatan komunikasi yang muncul. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik wawancara mendalam dan analisis dokumen kebijakan digital inklusif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi antar pemangku kepentingan masih bersifat vertikal dan terfragmentasi, dengan dominasi peran pemerintah dan keterlibatan terbatas dari komunitas lokal. Kolaborasi lintas sektor yang efektif terjadi ketika ada mekanisme komunikasi partisipatif, transparansi informasi, dan kepercayaan antar aktor. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa komunikasi strategis yang adaptif dan inklusif merupakan faktor kunci keberhasilan program pengentasan kemiskinan digital di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: komunikasi pembangunan, pemangku kepentingan, inklusi digital, kemiskinan digital, kolaborasi lintas sektor



I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has become a key pillar of global socio-economic development. In Indonesia, digital transformation not only brings efficiency but also opens up opportunities to address social disparities, including poverty. However, amidst the rapid growth of the digital economy, digital poverty remains a serious challenge, characterized by limited access to internet infrastructure and digital devices, as well as low digital literacy among low-income communities (BPS, 2024).

Programs such as the Digital Talent Scholarship, the National Digital Literacy Movement (GNLD), and 100 Smart Cities represent government efforts to encourage inclusive digital transformation. However, implementing these programs requires effective coordination and communication between various stakeholders: central and regional governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society.

According to participatory development communication theory (Servaes, 2018), development success is determined not only by the provision of infrastructure, but also by the ability of development actors to communicate collaboratively and understand shared goals. In the context of alleviating digital poverty, communication serves as a bridge between macro policies and the micro needs of society.

Therefore, this study focuses on how communication between stakeholders is carried out in digital poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia, as well as how coordination, trust, and public participation factors influence the effectiveness of the program.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

Theoretical Basis

a) Development Communication Theory

Development communication plays a crucial role in driving social change and community well-being. According to Servaes (2018), effective development communication is not simply a top-down process of conveying information, but rather a two-way dialogue between policymakers and the community. This approach is known as participatory communication, in which the community is actively involved in every stage of development.

b) Stakeholder Theory

This theory was first proposed by Freeman (1984) but continues to evolve in the context of modern strategic communication. Stakeholder theory explains that every

development organization or program has a variety of actors with different interests, and communication is a crucial mechanism for aligning these interests (Freeman, 2010).

In digital poverty alleviation programs, actors such as the government, technology industry players, educational institutions, and internet users must interact intensively so that digital policies can reach all social strata. According to Morsing and Schultz (2020), dialogue-based stakeholder communication is an effective communication approach for building trust and cross-sector collaboration.

In the context of digital poverty alleviation programs, development communication theory explains that the success of digital transformation depends not only on technological infrastructure, but also on the communication skills of development actors in government, the private sector, academia, and local communities to agree on a shared vision. According to Melkote and Steeves (2021), participatory communication can strengthen the community's sense of ownership of the program.

In the digital context, communication between stakeholders includes information transfer, negotiation of interests, and the formation of a shared vision for digital inclusion. According to Heeks (2022), effective communication is a crucial element in Digital Development Governance, where program sustainability depends on the extent to which stakeholders share data, resources, and social responsibility

Previous Research

A study by Nasution & Yuliani (2021) showed that cross-sector coordination in village digitalization programs is often hampered by differing priorities between institutions. Meanwhile, research by Putra and Wahyuni (2022) highlighted the importance of two-way communication between the government and local communities in addressing the digital literacy gap.

In a regional context, Lim (2020) revealed that private sector involvement in digital inclusion projects in Southeast Asia is increasing, but cross-sector communication remains top-down. This study expands on this study by focusing on communication mechanisms between actors in the context of digital poverty alleviation policies in Indonesia.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the communication process and interactions between stakeholders in digital poverty alleviation programs.

Data Sources

The data sources used in this study are:

1. Primary data in the form of in-depth interviews with eight informants from government (Kominfo, Bappenas), the private sector (inclusive digital startups), and civil society (digital literacy communities).
2. Secondary data from national digital transformation policy documents, GNLD reports, and official publications from BPS and Kominfo.

Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

Data were collected through online interviews and document analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Three main themes were analyzed:

1. Communication and coordination patterns across actors.
2. Communication barriers and differing interests.
3. Collaboration strategies and communication innovations in inclusive digital programs.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and member checking.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Communication Patterns Between Stakeholders

Research results indicate that communication between stakeholders in digital poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia occurs at three main levels:

- (1) policy communication at the central government level,
- (2) implementation coordination at the regional level, and
- (3) direct interaction with beneficiary communities.

However, the established communication patterns are still dominated by a vertical and bureaucratic model, where the government serves as the information center and primary decision-maker.

Most community digitalization programs, such as the National Digital Literacy Movement (GNLD), Smart Villages, and 100 Smart Cities, position the community as a recipient of information, not a producer of knowledge. This situation results in limited feedback loops and low participation of the digital poor in the planning stage.

As Servaes (2018) points out, effective development communication must be dialogic and participatory. In the context of this research, participatory communication has only emerged in several regions with active collaboration between local communities and universities, such as Sleman and Bandung Regencies.

Development Communication in the Context of Digital Transformation

Research findings indicate that development communication in Indonesia still tends to follow a top-down approach, where policies and programs are designed by the central government with little involvement from grassroots communities. This underscores the relevance of Servaes' (2018) theory of participatory development communication, which states that development cannot be effective without a two-way dialogue between policymakers and beneficiary communities.

In the context of digital poverty alleviation, communication is not merely a means of conveying information, but also a social process for constructing shared meaning about what constitutes "digital poverty" and how to address it. The findings of this study indicate that most communication remains oriented toward information transfer, rather than social transformation.

In fact, digital transformation demands adaptive, horizontal, and collaborative forms of communication. When communication is packaged in a participatory manner—for example, through digital community forums, collaborative training, and public feedback mechanisms—community engagement increases, and local innovations can emerge as more contextual solutions.

Barriers to Communication and Collaboration

This research identified three main barriers:

1. Information asymmetry, where differences in understanding between institutions lead to miscommunication in program implementation.
2. Sectoral ego, which occurs when institutions tend to emphasize their own achievements without cross-sector coordination.
3. Lack of digital literacy at the community level, resulting in low community participation in the communication process.

These three conditions may indicate the need for a shift from transactional communication to collaborative communication that emphasizes dialogue and co-creation (Morsing & Schultz, 2020).

Dynamics of Collaboration and Communication Strategy

Despite these barriers, the research identified good practices in collaborative communication in several regions:

Government-Community Collaboration in Yogyakarta, where the local government collaborates with the Jogja Digital Valley community and local ICT volunteers. They hold regular monthly communication forums to discuss challenges facing the community's digitalization. This model has successfully created more horizontal coordination because each party has the opportunity to speak and offer suggestions.

Public-Private Partnership in Bandung, where a local startup collaborates with the Communications and Informatics Agency (Kominfo) to provide digital-based training for MSMEs. Communication is conducted through coordination group chats and weekly online meetings, expediting the resolution of technical and administrative issues.

Both practices demonstrate that when communication is open, prompt, and participatory, cross-sector collaboration becomes more productive. This supports the theory of cross-sector collaboration proposed by Bryson et al. (2015), which states that successful collaboration is strongly influenced by structured, trust-based communication mechanisms.

The Role of Technology as a Communication Mediator

This research also found that digital technology is not only a communication tool, but also a non-human actor that plays an active role in shaping relationships between parties (Heeks, 2022). Platforms such as Satu Data Indonesia, SIPD, and the Smart Governance Dashboard serve as a means of data exchange between institutions, but not all regions have equal capacity to use them.

Thus, digital technology acts as a mediator of power and knowledge, in accordance with the Actor–Network Theory (ANT) framework. In some cases, policy decisions are influenced more by digital system data than by direct public input, indicating the existence of a form of algorithmic power in digital development communication.

Communication and Technology: The Role of Digital Mediation

Within the Actor Network Theory (ANT) framework (Heeks, 2022), digital communication involves not only humans but also technology as a non-human actor that shapes the flow of information and decision-making.

The research found that in many government digital programs, digital systems such as data dashboards, monitoring applications, and aid distribution algorithms function as regulators of communication patterns between institutions. This creates a new form of algorithmic power, where communication decisions are largely determined by digital systems rather than social dialogue.

However, on the other hand, digital platforms also open up new opportunities for participation. Local communities use social media, WhatsApp groups, and open data channels to convey their aspirations and reports from the field. This means that digital communication spaces become a dialectical arena for power and participation, between data control and community voice.

These findings reinforce Heeks' (2022) thesis that digitalization in development is not only technical but also political, as it determines who has access to information and who has the right to define development problems.

Multi-Actor Communication Model for Digital Development

Based on the results and theories analyzed, this study develops a conceptual model of "Inclusive Multi-Actor Communication," which encompasses four main dimensions:

Dimensi	Deskripsi	Implikasi
Struktur	Melibatkan pemerintah, swasta, akademisi, dan komunitas sebagai aktor sejajar	Mengurangi dominasi komunikasi top-down
Proses	Komunikasi berlangsung dalam bentuk dialog, bukan instruksi	Meningkatkan partisipasi masyarakat
Teknologi	Teknologi digital sebagai mediator interaksi dan transparansi	Menjamin akses dan keterbukaan data
Budaya	Membangun etika komunikasi berbasis kepercayaan dan empati	Memperkuat kolaborasi lintas sektor

Table 1. Multi-Actor Communication Model

Source: Researcher's Results

V. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that communication between stakeholders plays a strategic role in the success of digital poverty alleviation programs in Indonesia. The findings indicate that the success of collaboration between the government, the private sector, academia, and civil society is largely determined by the quality of communication, which is dialogical, open, and oriented toward equality.

First, in terms of communication structure, the pattern of relationships between actors is still dominated by the government through a top-down approach, which has implications for limited space for community participation. This underscores the need for a shift towards participatory development communication, as proposed by Servaes (2018), where

communication becomes a means of empowerment, not simply a means of conveying messages.

Second, power dynamics and cross-sectoral coordination indicate that information asymmetries persist between central and regional actors, as well as between policymakers and field implementers. This imbalance often hinders data synchronization, program implementation, and outcome monitoring.

Third, the use of digital technology has opened new opportunities to accelerate cross-sector communication through open data platforms, collaborative applications, and online reporting systems. However, technology also brings new challenges in the form of algorithmic dependency and limited digital literacy at the community level.

Fourth, the research findings confirm that collaborative communication emphasizing information transparency, equal dialogue, and open feedback mechanisms has been shown to increase the effectiveness of coordination and community participation. Therefore, communication between stakeholders can be viewed as a governance mechanism that determines the sustainability of digital development programs.

Theoretically, this research enriches the study of development communication and public policy communication by positioning digital technology as a new actor in the cross-sector communication ecosystem. Practically, these findings emphasize that effective communication is a key foundation for building digital inclusion and reducing social disparities resulting from digital transformation.

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