

Transparency in Government Political Communication: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze transparency in government political communication, focusing on the challenges faced and the opportunities that can be leveraged. Transparency is a crucial element in building public trust and strengthening government legitimacy in the era of modern democracy. However, the practice of transparency often encounters various obstacles such as the politicization of information, bureaucratic resistance, and low media literacy among the public. On the other hand, the development of information technology, the involvement of civil society, and regulations on information disclosure present strategic opportunities to enhance the transparency of political communication. This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method and descriptive analysis of various relevant sources. The findings show that the transparency of government political communication faces serious challenges, including the politicization of information, limited access in various regions, unclear regulations on information disclosure, low capacity of bureaucratic personnel, and the threat of hoaxes due to technological advancements, all of which further erode public trust. Nevertheless, amid these challenges, there are significant opportunities to be seized, such as advances in information and communication technology, increased public participation, demands for democratization, the implementation of e-government and smart city initiatives, the strengthening of openness regulations, and efforts to enhance digital literacy among the population. With the right strategies to manage these challenges and optimize the available opportunities, the government has great potential to achieve more transparent, accountable, and community-oriented public communication.

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of advancing science and technology, the public's need for transparent access to information is increasingly growing. The government, through Law Number 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure, has emphasized the importance of disseminating information by public institutions to all Indonesian citizens (Febriananingsih, 2012). These institutions include elements of the legislative, executive, and judiciary. Along with the rising public awareness, information transparency has become an urgent necessity to guarantee the public's right to obtain relevant data, particularly in the context of democratic and accountable governance (Wiryany et al., 2022).

Amidst the flow of information that now spreads without boundaries, transparency regarding the use of public funds, political decision-making, and the policies of state institutions has become increasingly important (Riwukore et al., 2022). The phenomenon of widespread cases of corruption, abuse of power, and other legal violations involving public bodies has worsened the level of public trust. Therefore, to restore public trust, the government and related institutions must consistently implement the principle of information transparency as a form of accountability to society (Rosidah et al., 2023).

Transparency in political communication is crucial for building public trust. Through open communication, the government can strengthen the legitimacy of policies, increase public participation, and prevent misunderstandings that could lead to social instability (Endro, 2014). Information transparency is not only an indicator of a healthy democracy but also an urgent necessity in an era of information globalization that demands speed and data accuracy (Rachmiatie et al., 2013).

In practice, the government faces various complex challenges. The politicization of information often occurs when data or facts are used for the benefit of specific groups rather than the public interest (Dwiyanti et al., 2023). Additionally, limited access to accurate and reliable information remains an obstacle, particularly in areas where information infrastructure is inadequate. Media manipulation, both internally and externally, also clouds efforts to build transparent and balanced political communication (Nuraliza et al., 2024).

On the other hand, developments in information technology provide significant opportunities for the government to enhance transparency in political communication. The presence of social media, official digital platforms, and public service applications enables information to be delivered directly, quickly, and widely to the public (Mukhsin, 2020). Technology also opens up space for public participation in expressing aspirations, criticisms, and actively overseeing the administration of government in a more real-time and engaged manner (Indrawan et al., 2023).

In addition to technological advancements, the demands for democratization also push for broader openness in political communication. Modern society is increasingly aware of its rights to know, question, and criticize every public policy (Indrawan, 2017). This active participation presents an opportunity for the government to build a more constructive relationship with its citizens. By utilizing information technology and encouraging public participation, transparent political communication can become an essential instrument in strengthening the quality of democracy in Indonesia (Cahyaningsih et al., 2019).

This research aims to analyze the importance of transparency in government political communication, identify various challenges hindering information openness, and explore opportunities that can be utilized to strengthen more transparent political communication. The benefits of this research are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of political communication studies and provide practical recommendations for the government and public institutions in designing communication strategies that are more open, accountable, and responsive to the demands of society in the digital and democratized information era.

Literature Review

Concept of Transparency in Government

Transparency in government is a fundamental concept that refers to the openness of public access to relevant information about government policies, programs, and activities. Transparency requires the government not only to provide accurate and truthful information but also to ensure that the information is easily accessible and understandable to the general public (Sumantri, 2023). In the context of modern democracy, transparency is an essential part of the principles of good governance, which aims to create a more accountable, responsible, and responsive government to the needs of the people (Arsik & Lawelai, 2020).

The principles of transparency in the public sector include openness, accuracy, timeliness, and relevance of information. Openness means that important information must be available without discrimination; accuracy demands that the government present correct and non-misleading data; timeliness emphasizes that information should be delivered as quickly as possible before it loses relevance; and relevance means the information provided must be directly related to public interests (Sari & Widyawati, 2021). The application of these principles helps promote public trust in the government while minimizing opportunities for corruption, abuse of power, and information manipulation (Gandi et al., 2025).

Transparency in government also serves as a bridge between the state and its citizens, strengthening the relationship based on trust and participation. With open access to information, the public has the opportunity to monitor, evaluate, and provide input on government performance (Hutahayan, 2020). This not only enhances the quality of public decision-making but also fosters a healthy democratic culture where citizens are actively involved in the development process. Therefore, transparency is not merely an administrative demand but also a crucial prerequisite for establishing an effective and integrity-based government.

Political Communication Theory

Political communication can be defined as the process of conveying political messages from one party to another in an effort to influence the attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of the public regarding certain political issues (Anshari, 2013). In a broader sense, political communication is not limited to interactions between the government and the people but also involves political actors such as political parties, mass media, interest groups, and civil society (Pureklolon, 2016). Political communication is an important medium for building power relations, conveying aspirations, debating policies, and shaping public discourse on various social and political issues.

In the context of governance, political communication has several vital functions. First, as a tool of legitimacy, communication is used by the government to gain and maintain public support for the policies and programs being implemented. Second, as a means of political socialization, where values of democracy, law, and public ethics are disseminated to citizens. Third, as a mechanism of social control, because political communication allows the public to voice criticism, evaluation, and demands toward the government. Through these functions, political communication plays a critical role in strengthening democratic systems and maintaining political stability (Heryanto, 2018).

Various models of political communication have been developed to understand how political messages are produced, disseminated, and received by society. One classic model is Harold Lasswell's model, which defines communication through five elements: "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?" This model emphasizes the importance of the source, message, medium, audience, and effect in the political communication process. In addition, there is the propaganda model that focuses more on the use of communication as a tool to control public opinion, often through manipulation or distortion of information. Conversely, the participatory model offers a more democratic approach, where communication occurs in two directions and the public plays an active role in political dialogue, not just as passive recipients. This model is more relevant in the modern context, emphasizing transparency, openness, and citizen participation in the political process.

Public Information Disclosure

Public information disclosure is a fundamental principle in the administration of a democratic state. This principle demands that the government and all public bodies provide easy, fast, and adequate access for the public to obtain the information they need. Access to information is crucial because it enables the public to understand government policies, programs, and activities more critically and rationally (Setiaman et al., 2013). Thus, public information disclosure functions not only as a form of public service but also as a basic right of citizens to know the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Beyond being a right, public information disclosure also plays an important role in encouraging public participation in governance processes. When information is widely and accurately available, society can provide input, criticism, and oversight of governance. This strengthens the legitimacy of public policies and improves the quality of decisions made by the government. Active public participation based on correct information can narrow the space for abuse of power, corruption, and policies that do not favor the public interest (Nurdiansyah, 2016). Therefore, transparency of information is a crucial prerequisite for building a culture of accountable and responsive governance.

Furthermore, public information disclosure is the main foundation for realizing the principles of good governance, namely effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable administration. By prioritizing openness, the government can build public trust, strengthen democracy, and support sustainable development. Information transparency also allows the public to monitor governance objectively, thus improving the performance of state officials and accelerating the achievement of national development goals (Indah & Hariyanti, 2018). Therefore, public information disclosure is not only important from the perspective of citizens' rights but also strategic in creating better governance that is oriented toward the public interest.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to provide an in-depth depiction of the phenomenon of transparency in government political communication, as well as to identify the challenges and opportunities involved. Data were collected through a literature review by examining various sources such as books, scientific

journals, legislation, official government reports, and relevant news articles. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, in order to generate a comprehensive understanding of transparency practices in political communication in the modern era.

In addition, during the data collection process, this study utilized documentation techniques to gather secondary data related to public information disclosure, political communication theory, and government communication practices in Indonesia. Data validity was tested using source triangulation techniques, by comparing and cross-checking data from various different sources to obtain a more accurate and reliable picture. With this approach, the research is expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of government political communication strategies that are more transparent, participatory, and effective in facing the dynamics of societal and information technology developments.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced by the Government in Achieving Transparency in Political Communication

1. Politicization of Information

One of the main challenges in achieving transparency in political communication is the politicization of information. Governments, in various situations, are often tempted to manage and present information that has been modified to suit certain political interests. Information that should be conveyed objectively and as it is often gets selectively constructed to build a positive image of the government in the eyes of the public or, conversely, to suppress criticism and weaken political opponents. This practice results in inaccurate information being received by the public, preventing them from obtaining a complete picture of current policies or actual conditions. Such politicization directly undermines the core principles of transparency—openness and honesty in delivering public information.

Moreover, the politicization of information also leads to a decline in public trust toward the government. When people realize that the information they receive does not always reflect reality, they become skeptical, even towards truthful information. As a result, the government's legitimacy in policy-making can be compromised, and public participation in democratic processes tends to decrease. Politicization of information can also fuel social polarization and widen the gap between the government and the public. Therefore, reducing the practice of politicizing information is a crucial step in strengthening transparency in political communication and rebuilding public trust in the long term.

2. Limited Access to Information

Limited access to information is a serious challenge to achieving effective transparency in political communication. Not all segments of society—particularly those living in remote areas or belonging to vulnerable groups—have the same opportunity to obtain relevant information from the government. Major obstacles include inadequate digital infrastructure such as uneven internet access, limited availability of technological devices, and insufficient communication networks. This situation creates an information gap between tech-savvy urban populations and people in rural areas, resulting in disparities in understanding government policies and programs.

Additionally, the low level of media literacy among the public worsens the problem of limited information access. Many individuals lack the skills to discern and understand valid information from various sources, making them vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda. On the other hand, complicated bureaucracy and lengthy administrative procedures for accessing public information also hinder people from obtaining needed information quickly and transparently. Consequently, the main goal of information openness—to enhance public participation in governance—becomes difficult to achieve. Therefore, improving digital infrastructure, enhancing media literacy, and simplifying information access procedures are urgent needs to support transparency in political communication.

3. Unclear Regulations and Implementation of the Public Information Disclosure Law

Although Indonesia has a legal framework in place in the form of Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure, its implementation in practice still faces many obstacles. Many public bodies have not optimally fulfilled their obligations to provide access to information openly and proactively. These obstacles arise not only from a lack of commitment among relevant institutions but also from a limited understanding of the principles of information openness among government officials. As a result, information requests are often responded to slowly, entangled in bureaucracy, or even ignored without clear justification, leading to public disappointment with the implementation of information disclosure.

Furthermore, the ambiguity regarding the limits of information that can be disclosed or exempted is a major source of the problem. While the Public Information Disclosure Law stipulates that not all information can be accessed—particularly information related to state secrets, security, or individual privacy—this limitation is often overused to reject information requests that are actually eligible for disclosure. The absence of detailed technical guidelines and uniform standards across public bodies leads to varying interpretations, creating legal uncertainty. This situation undermines efforts to build transparency and reduces the effectiveness of open and accountable political communication.

4. Lack of Capacity Among Government Apparatus

The lack of capacity among government officials is a significant challenge in realizing transparency in political communication. Not all officials or public institutions possess adequate communication skills or a sufficient understanding of the importance of transparency in governance. Many officials still view the dissemination of information to the public merely as a formality, rather than as an integral part of efforts to build public trust and participation. As a result, information delivery is often limited, unsystematic, and tends to be defensive when facing public criticism or questions.

Moreover, the lack of training in public communication and information management worsens the quality of transparency that the government should uphold. Officials without proper communication skills tend to deliver messages ambiguously, unclearly, or even in ways that lead to public misinterpretation. This condition not only hampers the healthy flow of information between the government and citizens but also amplifies public distrust toward state institutions. Therefore, enhancing human resource capacity through continuous public communication training is a crucial step to support the creation of transparent and effective political communication.

5. Challenges of Information Technology

Advancements in information technology bring double-edged effects to efforts in achieving transparency in political communication. On the one hand, technology provides extraordinary ease in disseminating information to the public quickly, widely, and efficiently. On the other hand, it also opens a vast space for the spread of hoaxes, disinformation, and misinformation that are difficult to control. False information that spreads rapidly through social media and other digital platforms can quickly shape misguided public opinion, often before the government has a chance to provide an official clarification. This challenge forces the government to be more agile in ensuring that accurate and timely information reaches the public.

Amid the flood of information that is not always trustworthy, maintaining credibility becomes a significant challenge for the government. Credibility is not only built through the speed of responding to circulating issues but also through consistency and honesty in delivering information, regardless of the situation. The government needs to develop a communication system that adapts to technological dynamics, including forming special teams to monitor, clarify, and counter the spread of false news. By building a communication mechanism that is transparent, accurate, and based on strong digital literacy, the government can maintain public trust in this challenging information era.

6. Low Public Trust

Low public trust toward the government is one of the main challenges in achieving transparency in political communication. Various cases of corruption, abuse of power, and information manipulation that occurred in the past have left deep scars in the relationship between the state and the public. As a result, even when the government delivers transparent and accurate information, it is often still met with skepticism or distrust. This condition shows that transparency alone is not enough; the government must also rebuild emotional and rational connections with the public through tangible actions that demonstrate a commitment to honesty, accountability, and openness.

Therefore, transparency efforts must be accompanied by strategic steps focused on restoring credibility. The government must consistently demonstrate integrity in every policy and public communication it undertakes. Additionally, involving the public in decision-making processes, opening inclusive dialogue spaces, and showing quick and open responses to criticism can help rebuild public trust. Strong credibility will become the main foundation for successful political communication, while also strengthening the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Opportunities to Improve Government Public Communication Transparency

1. Advances in Information and Communication Technology

Advances in information and communication technology (ICT) offer significant opportunities for governments to enhance transparency in public communication. By utilizing digital platforms such as social media, official government websites, and public service applications, information can be disseminated quickly, widely, and in real-time to the public. This technology enables more accurate, responsive, and direct information dissemination, reducing the delays often found in traditional communication systems. Additionally,

governments can use social media to foster two-way communication with the public, providing spaces for feedback and questions that can be promptly addressed.

However, despite the many advantages ICT offers, challenges related to information management also arise. Governments must ensure that the information shared through these digital platforms is verified, non-misleading, and free from manipulation. Therefore, it is essential for governments to establish clear policies on digital information management and ensure that all digital systems used maintain the accuracy and accessibility of information for all segments of society. In this way, information and communication technology can become a highly effective tool for promoting greater transparency in political communication.

2. Increasing Public Participation

The rise in public participation provides an opportunity for governments to build more open and inclusive communication. People are now more aware of their rights to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives, whether through monitoring, conveying aspirations, or engaging in policy discussions. With the growing number of individuals actively participating in public forums, such as policy consultations, referendums, or online platforms that allow citizens to voice their opinions, governments can leverage this momentum to build more transparent and accountable two-way dialogues. Governments can introduce policies and strategic steps that are more responsive to the needs and expectations of the public.

The increase in public participation also creates opportunities for citizens to be involved in monitoring government policies and programs. With public involvement, governments can more easily obtain feedback on policy implementation and more swiftly address any shortcomings or issues that arise. This not only enhances transparency but also strengthens the legitimacy of governance. As a result, through open and collaborative communication, governments can gain greater public trust, thereby reinforcing democracy and promoting more sustainable development.

3. Democratic Demands

The growing demand for democratization in many countries, including Indonesia, pushes societies to demand greater transparency, accountability, and openness from their governments. As public expectations rise for clean and transparent governance, governments are driven to improve their public communication systems. Modern societies seek easier and more open access to critical information, from political decisions to public budgeting. This demand presents an opportunity for governments to refine how they disseminate information and directly involve the public in more democratic decision-making processes.

Governments that respond effectively to these democratic demands will focus more on providing broader access to information and ensuring that every policy decision is well-understood and accepted by the public. This will not only improve transparency but also strengthen the legitimacy of governments operating under democratic principles. By constructively responding to democratization demands, governments can build stronger relationships with the public, boost civic engagement, and create more inclusive and accountable governance systems.

4. Implementation of E-Government and Smart City Initiatives

E-government and smart city programs offer substantial potential to enhance transparency and efficiency in public services. E-government refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to deliver government services to the public more easily, quickly, and efficiently. Through digital platforms, citizens can access information related to policies, budgets, and public services transparently and accurately, without physical or geographical barriers. Moreover, e-government systems enable governments to streamline administrative processes, reduce bureaucracy, and improve accountability in information delivery to the public. Therefore, the optimal implementation of e-government can significantly minimize the possibility of data or information manipulation that has historically occurred in the public sector.

Smart City, which utilizes technology to create smarter cities, also presents great opportunities for supporting transparency in public communication. By using various technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), smart sensors, and big data, smart cities can monitor and manage public services more effectively, as well as provide quicker and more transparent information to citizens. For instance, in the management of budgets or the utilization of public resources, the data collected can be accessed by the public in real-time, offering a clear view of the city government's performance. Thus, the implementation of e-government and smart city initiatives plays an important role in facilitating data transparency, accelerating public services, and reducing the potential for information misuse within public administration.

5. Strengthening Regulations and Commitment to Openness

Strengthening regulations and the government's commitment to public information openness is essential for creating effective transparency in public communication. The implementation of the Public Information Disclosure Law (Law No. 14 of 2008) provides a clear legal foundation to ensure that all public bodies grant equal access to information for the public. However, to truly achieve transparency goals, stricter enforcement of this law is needed, including addressing obstacles that may arise in its implementation, such as delays or barriers to accessing information. With stronger regulations, the public will feel more secure in accessing information, while the government will be held accountable.

In addition to the Public Information Disclosure Law, other regulations supporting information openness must also be reinforced to ensure the sustainability of this transparency. The government can introduce more specific policies regarding public data — for example, clarifying what can be disclosed to the public and what must remain confidential, considering national security or individual privacy interests. Strengthening the commitment to openness must involve all levels of government, from central to local, and include collaboration with the private sector working alongside the government. With a strong commitment and clear regulations, the information openness system will become more secure and help increase public trust in the government.

6. Increasing Public Digital Literacy

Improving digital literacy is one of the key factors for enhancing transparency in public communication by the government. A society with good digital literacy skills will be more

critical in receiving, verifying, and demanding the accuracy of information provided by the government. In an era where information spreads rapidly and is easily accessible, the prevalence of fake news, hoaxes, and unverified information often confuses the public. Therefore, efforts to improve digital literacy must involve various parties, including the government, educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Adequate digital literacy training programs can equip the public with the skills to filter the information they receive and avoid unreliable information.

On the other hand, digital literacy will also boost active public participation in democratic processes, such as elections, policy oversight, and public discussions related to government policies. A society proficient in utilizing technology will find it easier to access public information, participate in online forums, and provide constructive feedback on ongoing policies. Thus, improving digital literacy not only helps the public better understand information but also strengthens their role in maintaining government transparency and accountability.

CONCLUSION

Transparency in public government communication is a crucial element in building public trust and supporting the creation of an accountable government. Although the government faces various challenges, such as the politicization of information, limited access, and a lack of capacity among officials, there are also significant opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance transparency. Advances in information and communication technology, the implementation of e-government and smart city initiatives, and increased public participation provide a foundation for accelerating the dissemination of accurate and reliable information to the public. Additionally, strengthening regulations, maintaining a strong commitment to openness, and improving public digital literacy are also vital aspects for creating a more transparent and participatory public communication ecosystem. The implementation of policies that support information openness, combined with the growing use of technology, can help overcome existing obstacles while improving the quality of communication between the government and the public. To achieve maximum transparency in political communication, serious efforts are needed from the government, the public, and all related stakeholders to strengthen regulations, build the capacity of public officials, and enhance digital literacy, ensuring that citizens can access, verify, and use information effectively. Thus, transparency in political communication is not merely about providing information but also about strengthening public participation in all aspects of governance.

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