

BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST: GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES

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Abstrak

Public trust is one of the most fundamental elements in the successful implementation of government policies, especially those related to improving public welfare. In the context of public communication, the government plays an important role as the main source of information, opinion maker, and manager of public perception of the policies being implemented. This article aims to analyse how government communication strategies play a role in building, maintaining, and strengthening public trust in the process of implementing public welfare policies. This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive paradigm, conducted through a literature review as the basis for analysis, which includes an analysis of various official government documents, academic publications, policy reports, and media reports. The results of the study show that public trust can be fostered through communication that is transparent, participatory, consistent, and empathetic. In addition, active community involvement in the process of policy formulation and evaluation has been proven to increase public legitimacy and support for government programmes. Thus, effective public communication is not only a channel for conveying information, but also a strategic instrument in strengthening the credibility, accountability, and positive image of the government in the eyes of the community.

Kata kunci: Government Communication, Public Trust, Social Policy, Community Welfare, Communication Strategy.

Abstract

Kepercayaan publik merupakan salah satu elemen paling fundamental dalam keberhasilan implementasi kebijakan pemerintah, terutama kebijakan yang berkaitan dengan peningkatan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Dalam konteks komunikasi publik, pemerintah berperan penting sebagai sumber informasi utama, pembentuk opini, dan pengelola persepsi masyarakat terhadap kebijakan yang dijalankan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana strategi komunikasi pemerintah berperan dalam membangun, memelihara, serta memperkuat kepercayaan publik dalam proses pelaksanaan kebijakan kesejahteraan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode studi literatur yang mencakup analisis terhadap berbagai dokumen resmi pemerintah, publikasi akademik, laporan kebijakan, serta pemberitaan media. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan publik dapat tumbuh melalui komunikasi yang bersifat transparan, partisipatif, konsisten, dan empatik. Selain itu, pelibatan masyarakat secara aktif dalam proses penyusunan hingga evaluasi kebijakan terbukti mampu meningkatkan legitimasi dan dukungan publik

terhadap program pemerintah. Dengan demikian, komunikasi publik yang efektif tidak hanya menjadi saluran penyampaian informasi, tetapi juga instrumen strategis dalam memperkuat kredibilitas, akuntabilitas, serta citra positif pemerintah di mata masyarakat.

Keywords: *Komunikasi Pemerintah, Kepercayaan Publik, Kebijakan Sosial, Kesejahteraan Masyarakat, Strategi Komunikasi.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public trust in the government has become an increasingly important issue in various areas of communication, especially when it comes to policies that directly impact public welfare (Zamharira & Abdullah, 2023). Various surveys and news reports show that public trust is dynamic and fluctuates, influenced by the level of openness, speed of response, and clarity of information provided by the government to the public. In this context, public communication plays a crucial role, not only as a medium for communicating policies, but also as a bridge between the government and citizens in building a common understanding of the objectives, benefits, and impacts of each social policy (Pananrangi et al., 2024). When government communication is one-way and lacks participation, the public tends to be sceptical of the policies issued. Conversely, open, transparent, and empathy-based communication can strengthen the emotional bond between the government and the public, which ultimately increases public trust in state institutions.

The importance of effective and transparent public communication is increasingly felt at a time when welfare policies are a top priority. According to Adeniran et al. (2023), the government is required not only to issue policies that favour the people, but also to be able to explain openly how these policies are designed, implemented, and evaluated. In today's digital age, the public is increasingly critical of the information that circulates. When information from the government is inconsistent or lacks credibility, the public easily seeks comparisons from other sources that may not necessarily be accurate. This condition shows that the success of welfare policy implementation is not only determined by the substance of the policy itself, but also by the extent to which the government is able to manage public communication in a professional, accountable, and participatory manner so that the policy message is truly conveyed and well received by the wider community (Judijanto et al., 2024).

The purpose of this study is to analyse the role of government communication in building public trust in policies related to people's welfare. The discussion focuses on how the government designs communication strategies that are not only informative but also persuasive and responsive to public needs. In addition, this study seeks to explain various factors that influence the level of public trust in government communication, including aspects of transparency, public participation, and consistency of messages delivered through various media. Through this study, it is hoped that a deeper understanding can be found of how effective public communication can strengthen government legitimacy and increase public acceptance of the welfare programmes being implemented.

Based on this background, the research questions in this study include several key questions, namely: (1) what form does government communication take in disseminating information about social welfare policies? (2) what factors influence the level of public trust in government communication? and (3) how can public communication strategies increase public trust in government policies? The answers to these questions are expected to contribute theoretically and practically to the development of communication science, particularly in the fields of public communication and government communication, and to serve as a reference for government institutions in strengthening their relationship with the public through communication strategies that are more humanistic, open, and oriented towards mutual welfare.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature study method as the main basis for exploring and analysing the phenomenon of government public communication in building public trust in welfare policies. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a broader interpretative space for the meaning, context, and communication process that takes place between the government and the public. The data in this study was obtained through an in-depth review of various relevant and up-to-date scientific sources, including Sinta 1 and Sinta 2 accredited national journals published between 2021 and 2025, as well as scientific books from publishers and authors with high academic credibility in the fields of public communication, public policy, and government science. The selection of the 2021–2025 period as the source period was intended to ensure that the analysis results reflect the latest developments in government communication practices and the dynamics of public trust in the digital and post-pandemic era. The data collection process was carried out by selecting literature based on relevance, validity, and reliability of information, followed by *content analysis* to find patterns, themes, and conceptual relationships between public communication, policy transparency, and the formation of public trust. The results of the interpretation of these various sources were then synthesised to obtain a comprehensive picture of the government's communication strategies in increasing public trust in social welfare policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The government's success in implementing social welfare policies is not only determined by the quality of the policy substance, but also by how the policy is communicated to the public (Listiana et al., 2025). In an era of rapid information and increasing demands for transparency, government communication has become the main bridge between policy makers and the beneficiary community. The results of a study by Pananrangi et al. (2024) show that public perception of policies is not only shaped by the content of the policies themselves, but also by the process of delivery, openness of information, and the government's ability to manage public opinion constructively. Therefore, understanding the patterns of government communication is crucial in the context of building public trust.

The increase in digital interaction between the government and the public has influenced the way public communication is carried out (Dunan, 2021). The government is now required to adapt to the dynamics of social media and information technology that enable the public to access, verify, and respond to information quickly (Salim, 2025). In this situation, one-way communication is no longer adequate. Governments need to establish more dialogical two-way communication that is open to feedback and capable of fostering a sense of community ownership of public policies. This challenge becomes even more complex when sensitive issues such as social assistance, subsidies, or health insurance are linked to perceptions of injustice and bureaucratic inefficiency.

The results of the analysis show that public trust in government communication is not something that can be built instantly, but rather through a long process involving consistency of message, honesty, and community involvement (Bahri, Firdaus, & Wijaya, 2024). Governments that are able to explain the reasons behind their policies in easy-to-understand language, are open to criticism, and are quick to respond to public issues will find it easier to gain public trust (Erdocia, 2023). Thus, public communication is not only a technical instrument for conveying information, but also a strategic foundation for building the social and political legitimacy of government policies.

A. Government Communication Patterns in Welfare Policies

Government communication patterns in public welfare policies reflect the extent to which the government understands public needs and expectations (Sastrawan & Rahmawati, 2025). Based on the analysis by Marbun, Antarani, and Putri (2023), the most effective communication pattern is one that is participatory and oriented towards the public interest. The government not only conveys decisions, but also opens up a space for dialogue that allows the public to respond to the policies that are being designed. Vertical communication patterns from top to bottom have been shown to often cause information gaps and reduce public trust, as the public feels that they are not directly involved in the decision-making process (Gbarale & Lebura, 2021).

In practice, the messages used by the government must be informative, empathetic, and relevant to the community's conditions. Messages that are too technocratic or full of bureaucratic terms often fail to be understood by the grassroots community (Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2024). Therefore, the government needs to adapt the language of communication to the social context of the message recipients. The media used is also diverse, ranging from conventional channels such as television and radio to digital media such as official government websites, social media accounts, and public service applications. The use of these various platforms allows policy messages to be disseminated more widely and reach various levels of society (Ernungtyas, Irwansyah, Boer, & Qadrifa, 2024).

An effective delivery strategy requires careful communication planning, involving audience analysis and determining the most appropriate media (Dermawan & Barkah, 2022). The government also needs to build a credible digital presence through the presentation of accurate, consistent, and easily verifiable data (Wijaya et al., 2024). By combining informative and persuasive approaches, the government can transform policy

communication into a means of building long-term relationships with the public. In the context of public welfare, this strategy is important because it concerns sensitivity to the social and economic conditions of citizens.

The relationship between the government and the public will be stronger if communication is two-way and responsive to the needs of the community (Ayuna et al., 2024). A government that actively responds to aspirations, answers complaints, and corrects policies openly demonstrates a commitment to transparency and accountability (Retno, Nandika, Hamdi, & Putri, 2024). This pattern of interaction reinforces the perception that the government is not present as a ruling authority, but as a partner that serves the public interest. Thus, a collaborative communication pattern becomes the foundation for the formation of sustainable public trust.

B. The Dynamics of Public Trust in Government Communication

Based on research by Mustaqim and Haroni (2025), public trust in government communication is greatly influenced by consistency between statements and actions. When the government conveys messages that are not in line with the reality of policies in the field, the level of public trust will decrease dramatically. The factor of transparency is key, because the public now has the ability to assess the accuracy of information through various sources. In the digital context, delays or inaccuracies in information can quickly trigger distrust and worsen the government's image (Yudha, Hakim, & Phanphongsa, 2025).

In addition to transparency, public participation also plays a significant role in shaping trust. People who are given the space to participate in the policy formulation and evaluation process will feel more valued and tend to have a positive view of the government (Masse & Ilyas, 2024). This participation not only increases the legitimacy of policies, but also encourages the public to participate in monitoring and ensuring that policy implementation runs according to its objectives. Thus, public trust is not only built through top-down communication, but also from horizontal interactions between the public and the government (Budiana, 2025).

Consistency of messaging is another element that determines the stability of public trust (Kumalasari et al., 2024). The government must maintain consistency between the narrative conveyed through various media and actual actions in the field (International Conference on Law and Society, 2025). Inconsistent messages between officials or institutions can cause confusion and undermine the credibility of the government. Therefore, inter-agency coordination is an important aspect in maintaining the integrity of public communication (Chikezie et al., 2024). On the other hand, honesty in communicating the limitations or constraints of policies can actually strengthen public trust, as it demonstrates a realistic and responsible attitude.

In addition to internal factors, the dynamics of public trust are also influenced by the social environment and the media (Zhang & Zhang, 2024). According to research by Freiling, Stubenvoll, & Matthes (2023), the uncontrolled flow of information on social media often gives rise to misinformation that has the potential to erode trust in the

government. , to overcome this, the government needs to be actively present in the digital ecosystem, not only as a conveyor of information, but also as a guardian of the credibility of public narratives (Febriana, 2025). Thus, public trust can be maintained through a combination of information transparency, consistent communication, and responsiveness to the dynamics of public opinion (TKurnia, Wulung, & Cindoswari, 2024).

C. Strategies for Building Public Trust

The government's communication strategy in building public trust requires a planned, adaptive, and data-driven approach (Bahri, Firdaus, & Wijaya, 2024). The government needs to develop a communication system that can effectively integrate conventional and digital channels. Strengthening digital communication channels is an urgent need in the modern era, as the public is now more active in seeking information through online platforms (Topsümer, Durmuş, & Yılmaz, 2023). Governments that are consistently present with informative, transparent, and responsive content will be more easily accepted by the public than those that only rely on traditional communication channels (Jamalullail, Safira, & Hamdi, 2023).

The role of government public relations has become increasingly strategic in maintaining the flow of information so that it remains credible and constructive (Yusuf, Khairil, & Kaddi, 2025). Public relations is no longer just a spokesperson, but also a public opinion analyst who must understand audience psychology and social dynamics in society (Babatunde, 2022). Through public information disclosure, public relations can foster trust that the government has no hidden agenda in the policies it implements. Public relations also needs to ensure that every message conveyed is in line with public service values and the principles of government accountability (Babatunde, 2022).

Community involvement is key to the success of strategies to build public trust. The government needs to create participatory communication spaces, such as public consultation forums, policy surveys, and feedback mechanisms that are widely accessible (Emmanuel & Ewoh, 2025). By actively involving the community, the government not only gains moral support but also obtains richer insights to improve future policies (Achmad, 2024). This process creates a mutually reinforcing communication cycle between the government and the community.

Ultimately, public trust is the result of the government's consistency, integrity, and openness in communication (Budiana, 2025). ly effective public communication is not merely a tool for promoting policies, but a long-term investment in building social legitimacy. When the community believes that the government acts in the common interest and is open to criticism, public communication becomes the main foundation of *good governance* (Prasetya, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that government communication plays a very important role in building public trust in the implementation of social welfare policies. Public trust is not only formed from policy outcomes, but also from a communication process that is conducted openly, consistently, and oriented

towards community participation. Governments that are able to explain the objectives and benefits of policies honestly and respond to public aspirations will find it easier to gain social legitimacy. Public communication in the context of welfare policies serves not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a strategic mechanism to strengthen the relationship between the government and the public, while building a sense of ownership of the programmes being implemented.

The results of the study show that the government's ability to adapt to technological developments and changes in community communication behaviour is an important factor in maintaining public trust. The use of digital media and interactive channels has opened up new opportunities for the government to establish closer ties with the community. However, the success of digital communication still depends on the speed, accuracy and precision of the information conveyed. The government must be able to deliver honest and relevant communication, especially amid the increasing flow of disinformation in the public sphere. Transparency and consistency are the main foundations for the government to maintain its credibility in the eyes of a society that is increasingly critical and information-savvy.

Public trust can grow sustainably if government communication is carried out based on the principles of openness, honesty, and public service ethics. Community involvement in every stage of policy, from planning and implementation to evaluation, will strengthen policy legitimacy and increase public trust in the government. Therefore, effective public communication should not only focus on delivering messages, but also on building dialogue and partnerships that are equal between the government and the community as key stakeholders in social development. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the government strengthen its public communication system with a participatory, adaptive, and data-driven approach. The government needs to design a communication strategy that not only emphasises the dissemination of information but also fosters two-way interaction that allows the community to play an active role in assessing and providing feedback on policies. Every community welfare programme should be accompanied by a well-thought-out communication plan, involving various social strata and using language that is easy to understand so that policy messages can be widely accepted.

The government needs to enhance the role of public relations as the front line in maintaining the credibility and reputation of public institutions. Public relations not only serves as a conveyor of information, but also as a manager of public opinion who understands the character of society and is able to build a positive image through empathetic and factual communication. The government is also expected to strengthen inter-agency coordination so that every message conveyed remains consistent and in line with the values of transparency and accountability.

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