

The Pattern of Communication in Community Groups Supported by Bandung City Government

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Abstract. *The argument that the media influences our behavior both directly and indirectly is indeed a significant concern for mass media “connoisseurs.” The Internet, in particular, is a powerful medium that provides a vast array of information. The use of the internet, whether through websites, social media, or other platforms, follows a basic concept of openness, allowing various types of information to be shared by and with many people. The position of the Kelompok Informasi Masyarakat (hereinafter referred to as KIM) was confirmed based on the Minister of Communication and Information Regulation Number 8 of 2010 concerning the Development and Empowerment of Social Communication Institutions. It is a Community Information Group formed by the community, from the community and for the community, independently and creatively managing information and community empowerment to enhance added value. As a form of community empowerment, the existence of KIM is an alternative solution for raising awareness about the importance of group dynamics, especially in information exchange and fostering partnerships with various government agencies at the district and city levels. This case was analyzed using the theories of group communication, communication ethics, and communication media, which are integral to understanding the communication patterns within KIM*

Keywords: *media communication, group communication, community empowerment*

Article Info:

Received 27 Mar 2024, Revised 5 Jun 2024, Accepted 22 Jun 2024, Available online 30 Jun 2022

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INTRODUCTION

The success of a country's development program is closely tied to the involvement of both the government and society. Development is the process of improving the economic and social well-being of the community (Farida & Qabandiya, 2022). This necessitates the government involving the community as implementers of various policies, a process known as community empowerment. Empowerment is a planned effort designed to change or reform an individual or community/society from a state of powerlessness to one of empowerment, with an emphasis on independence (Malta, 2023). Empowerment is also defined as enabling individuals or groups to gain control over their lives and work collectively (Purworini et al., 2023).

(Sudarmanto et al., 2020) explain that community empowerment involves efforts to enhance the dignity and status of certain groups of citizens facing poverty and underdevelopment. Community empowerment is thus a key concept in improving people's welfare within the context of development. (Laksono, 2018).

With the participation of groups and support from state facilities, it is hoped that the existence of a community can be sustained and strengthened. This serves as the basis for the concept of community empowerment in several regions. (Setiadi & Pradana, 2022). This concept is realized through various government programs, including the establishment of Kelompok Informasi Masyarakat (KIM) in various cities across the country, aimed at empowering communities by

providing information that adds value to their lives. Through KIM, it is expected that there will be an increase in awareness of the importance of information, as well as improved access to and utilization of information through these community groups.

Since its establishment in 2006, Bandung has developed 151 KIM forums across every neighborhood and district. These forums have been gradually developed through activities such as socialization, training, and technical guidance aimed at strengthening relationships, coordination, and enhancing the human resources of KIM. Ideally, KIM serves as a mediator of communication between the community and the government (Diskominfo Kota Bandung dan Kelurahan). However, in the process of activities and dissemination of information, there are several issues that indirectly affect the communication pattern within KIM. These include the lack of familiarity of the local head (Lurah) with KIM in their area, an overload of responsibilities in the locality handled by the same person leading to a lack of focus on managing KIM, the absence of communication between neighborhood authorities, KIM, and the community, insufficient dialogic communication, lack of financial support, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and inadequately accommodated KIM activity programs. Furthermore, the system of leadership turnover at the neighborhood level and within the Bandung Communication and Information Office (Diskominfo) over time also leads to policy changes that impact KIM. Addressing these issues requires establishing good communication patterns among the various stakeholders involved so that KIM becomes increasingly known to the people of Bandung and can serve as an effective mediator between the government and the community. With the advancement

of information and forms of community empowerment today, this research aims to answer several questions, including the role of KIM in the community in Bandung and the communication patterns used by KIM in disseminating information.

As a community-based organization, communication among KIM members typically occurs informally and is deeply rooted in Sundanese values and customs. This form is consistent with the opinion of Ferdinand Tonnies (Wasistiono, 2019), who explained the classic distinction between two types of social organizations that are still relevant today, namely: (a) *Gemeinschaft* is a form of communal living where members are bound by pure, natural, and enduring inner relationships, for example, *paguyupan*, (b) *Gesellschaft* is a form of communal living where members have temporary relationships and are united by common interests.

Thus, the members of KIM in Bandung consist of various elements of society who consciously join and actively participate in various government programs (Diskominfo). They are generally active in their residential areas, including neighborhood management, including RT/RW (neighborhood associations) and other local organizations. There is no coercion in involving KIM members because KIM is formed and managed by, from, and for the community. KIM is oriented towards providing directed, accurate, honest, and impartial information services, empowering the community according to its potential and needs, and serving as a partner to the government. Several goals underlie the formation of KIM, including promoting national intelligence, empowering communities, enhancing community welfare, strengthening national integrity, achieving good governance, and fostering community participation in the information dissemination process. Specifically, (Kasiyanto, 2016) explains

the objectives of the formation of KIM, including (1) meeting the information needs that benefit the community, (2) enhancing welfare and intelligence, (3) improving the prosperity, welfare, and justice of the community, and (4) enhancing the quality of human resources to support the success of development. The presence of this group is expected to serve as a network for disseminating information from urban centers to remote rural areas. Therefore, every individual involved in KIM must be able to communicate effectively, both with the community and with the government. In the concept of community empowerment, group communication is an important factor to consider because it emphasizes dialogic (two-way) communication. Through dialogue, the feeling of control and ownership can be minimized. The existence of KIM plays a crucial role as a facilitator in bridging the communication and information gap between the government and the community (bottom-up approach). This differs from structural groups within government institutions formed instantly and implemented through government policies or by a group executing government projects (top-down approach). The empowerment approach for KIM is tailored to the characteristics of the group and its region. In this context, empowerment should not be a means to intervene in the group for purposes beyond the functions of KIM. The forms of KIM activities in various sub-districts, cities, and regencies in Indonesia are diverse, but they all aim to find solutions to common problems in those areas by prioritizing social values within the community's social structure. For instance, involving KIM members in handling hoaxes in Pasuruan Regency and Serang Regency, helping to promote tourism, small and medium enterprises, culture, and local potential in Pesisir Barat Regency, Lampung Province,

among others. Kasuatik and Nasution (2015) found that in the Deli Serdang Regency, the Infokom office involves KIM in government activities, especially those related to the functions of KIM in the field of information.

Specifically, according to Diskominfo (2018), several forms of community empowerment are outlined to enhance their capacity to become KIM, including: (1) Facilitating access to information through various sources, including interpersonal and mass media such as print, electronic, and new media, which are limited by technology and information. (2) Providing facilities for discussing information obtained from the media and selecting useful information for the group. (3) Providing facilities for implementing information deemed beneficial in group activities and other community activities. (4) Facilitating the building of networks horizontally with other groups and vertically with local government authorities. (5) Providing facilities for disseminating useful information to other parties in need. (6) Advocating for the community to capture and convey aspirations to receive attention from the government. (7) Facilitating the use of information to improve welfare and living standards.

In the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, information technology requires all government components as institutions to constantly prepare themselves, especially the quality of human capital, to face the challenges of new globalization in public services (Zacharias et al., 2021; Závadská & Závadský, 2020). Therefore, various points are also adjusted to the current information channels that can be utilized by the government agencies overseeing KIM organizations. One approach is to leverage new media that supports group communication within KIM. New media can be described as a mass

communication tool using internet technology. Romli (2018) explains that new media refers to the demand for access to content (information) anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, centered on interactive user feedback and fostering creative participation and media content. Another perspective explains that new media are dramatically influencing virtually every business and every organization (Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Kraus et al., 2021). The selection of new media as the current communication media used by KIM is supported by several unique characteristics outlined by (Fachruddin, 2019) as follows: (1) Digitalization: A characteristic of new media usage. Almost all communication media are now digital-based. (2) Convergence: The combination of various media, including print media, television, radio, and the internet through various media sites. (3) Interactivity: The continuous communication process between media platforms and humans. (4) Virtuality: An online platform accessed to interact with the contacted object directly. (5) Hypertextuality: Internet documents usually involve text, HTML, or links. (6) Simulation: The presentation of real events enhanced with certain effects to appear more dramatic. (7) Dispersal: The public can be producers, distributors, or consumers of information.

Through the strengths of these new media characteristics, the distribution of various activities that have been and will be carried out by KIM is currently communicated through various new media platforms, especially social media, managed by KIM Kota Bandung, KIM at the neighborhood level, and Diskominfo Kota Bandung. The utilization of social media aligns with the current development of mass media, which consists of: (1) Printed Media: This medium delivers information in written form through various publications like newspapers,

tabloids, and magazines. (2) Electronic Media: Electronic media employs electronic technology for broadcast transmission, including radio, television, and film/video. (3) CyberMedia: Also referred to as online or electronic print media, cyber media encompasses content distributed through the internet, accessible online or electronically, and sometimes in print. Examples include websites, news portals, blogs, social media platforms, and more.

The three types of media typically serve four functions (Ibrahim & Samsiah, 2022): (1) Educational function: Mass media acts as a medium for providing education to the public, serving as a beneficial agent that educates society. (2) Informative function: It disseminates news to the public. For instance, electronic media delivers information through news programs or other informative content presented in light formats, thereby contributing to the enhancement of knowledge and understanding. (3) Entertainment function: Mass media offers entertainment to the general public through a variety of programs and content. (4) Influence function: Mass media influences society at large through the programs or news it presents.

Bandung City's government has garnered appreciation from various institutions for its use of social media (Mustafa et al., 2021). Therefore, the new media channels used by KIM include social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, with some activities also being reposted on the social media accounts of the Bandung City Communication and Information Office. According to Nasrullah (2016), social media focuses on users' presence and facilitates their interactions and collaborations, thereby serving as an online medium that fosters relationships and social bonds. Widjajanto (2013) describes social media as a medium

designed to disseminate messages through social interaction, utilizing easily accessible and wide-reaching publication techniques. Furthermore, Dave Evans and Jack Mc Kee, in the same book, mention the uses of social media, including: (1) Conveying innovative ideas for products or services. (2) Providing early warnings of emerging problems or opportunities. (3) Sharing testimonials. (4) Facilitating market expansion, especially in the case of new product marketing. (5) Enabling the flow of consumer service tips from one user to another. (6) Expressing sentiment views about legislative actions. (7) Identifying competition threats or exposing weaknesses.

Safko and Brake (2009) elucidate that social media strategies rely on four pillars: communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment. By using social media, many companies try to exploit new forms of interaction, collaboration, and knowledge sharing by leveraging social software's social, collaborative dimension (Razmerita et al., 2014). This approach effectively supplements face-to-face or offline dialogic communication.

Referring to those definitions, KIM utilizes several social media platforms for various publication and reporting activities related to internal issues. These social media platforms include Facebook (Kimktbdg Kim Kota Bandung Official), the website (Kelompok Informasi Masyarakat (KIM) Kota Bandung), x (fk kim kota bandung), Instagram (kimkotabandung), and YouTube (kimkotabandung). The utilization of social media is one of the efforts to increase media coverage regarding KIM activities. Through a variety of posts, including verbal updates such as status updates and non-verbal content like photos and videos, the community stays informed about various aspects of KIM activities, which actively

engage in community empowerment. The integration of written text, audio-visual content, and photography in the digital realm is facilitated by media convergence. In this millennial era, the community develops rapidly in various fields, supported by daily access to digital media (Permana & Mahameruaji, 2019). This aligns with the findings of Irwan & Purnamasari (2022), Sitinjak et al. (2022), and Khatimah (2018), which assert that mass media acts as an environmental factor that influences audience behavior through classical conditioning, operant conditioning, or the process of imitation (social learning).

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method, based on post-positivist philosophy, to investigate natural object conditions (as opposed to experiments), with the researcher serving as the key instrument. Data sources are sampled purposively and through snowball sampling. Data collection techniques involve triangulation (combination) while the data analysis is inductive/qualitative. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Abdussamad & Sik, 2021). In the research process, the researcher employs the technique of participant observation data collection, which, according to Ardianto (2016), involves the researcher fully participating in the activities of key informants who are the subjects of the research and sources of research information. The research subjects are the Community Information Groups (KIM).

The choice of qualitative methodology is based on the uniqueness, diversity of stories, and the development of information flow within KIM, adapted to contemporary conditions, especially in its functions and roles as a mediator between the interests of the community

and the government in various fields. This is also in line with Creswell's opinion (Jalaluddin Rakhmat, 2017), which states that qualitative research methods evolve according to needs, utilizing open-ended questions, interviews, document, and audiovisual data, and often involving text and image analysis as well as interpreting themes and patterns. The research pattern used is the descriptive pattern, which attempts to describe a phenomenon, event, or incident that occurs at the present time (Arikunto, 2010). This study focuses on current issues as they exist at the time of the research.

Arikunto (2014) explains that data collection techniques enable researchers to gather data for further analysis. In general, there are four types of data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, documentation, and combination/triangulation-observation interviews and observation- (Sugiyono, 2020). Data collection techniques used in this study are: (1) Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Three FGD meetings were held with a total of 50 regional leaders in the City of Bandung. (2) Interviews: Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders involved in KIM activities, including staff from government agencies responsible for KIM (Diskominfo staff), KIM members, sub-district/local authorities, and several local villagers. (3) Observation: This involved observing various activities, tracking communication patterns between the government agency, KIM members, and other stakeholders, and noting relevant interactions to provide additional data. (4) Literature Review: In this phase, the researcher collected data and information from previous research and related concepts found in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and other sources. Through literature, the researcher hopes to get theoretical support that will enrich the discussion.

Online media was also utilized for this purpose.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion section presents the analysis of various data elements and interviews, interpreted using several supporting theories. To facilitate the analysis, the author organizes the discussion according to the research questions.

KIM (Community Information Group) and similar organizations are formed independently by the community, for the community, and from within the community. The group activities are comprised of information management and community development. As stated by Dicky Wishnumulya R., the Secretary of the Department of Communication and Informatics of Kota Bandung, during the Training of Trainers (T.O.T) activity for Strengthening the Institutional Capacity and Role of Community Information Groups (KIM) in Kota Bandung's Sub-Districts, held on May 12-13, 2020:

“In facing the digital era through its tasks and functions, especially in delivering development information, the Communication and Informatics Department of Kota Bandung continues to encourage and develop community participation, one of which is through the Community Information Groups (KIM).”

KIM's position was established by the RI Minister of Communication and Information Regulation No. 08/PER/M.KOMINFO/6/2010 concerning Guidelines for the Development and Empowerment of Social Communication Institutions on June 1, 2010. Consequently, KIM should be established in every city, regency, and region to serve as a vehicle for information and communication between the group's members and the government, and vice versa. KIM has

become the government's dialogue partner in formulating public policies and serves as a means to enhance community empowerment in the field of information, as well as functioning as an institution or group.

KIM plays an important role in helping the government disseminate information. Its position as a mediator between the government and the community provides KIM with opportunities to develop its organization through various activities. As a form of community empowerment, KIM needs to strengthen its communication strategy to optimize its role within the community. On the Diskominfo website, Lilis Yuliani, Head of Community Information Partnership at Diskominfo Kota Bandung, highlights that in Kota Bandung, "KIM serves as a collaborative partner in disseminating information, aiming to enlighten the nation, empower the community, enhance the welfare of the people, strengthen national integrity, and achieve good governance while fostering community participation in information dissemination" (<https://diskominfo.bandung.go.id>).

KIM coordinates with the Bandung City Information and Communication Service to carry out its daily activities. Previous work programs conducted by KIM have resulted from cooperation between the group and various stakeholders, including the government, community leaders, mass media, and the private sector. Therefore, in several activities, the process of communication in small groups becomes very effective. Small group communication (micro group) refers to a communication setting where there is an opportunity for verbal feedback, allowing the communicator to engage in interpersonal communication with individual group members. The feedback in small group communication is typically rational, with members

maintaining each other's feelings and adhering to existing norms (Nurhanifah et al., 2022). This form of communication is also conducted with various parties that support KIM activities. The involvement of various stakeholders is a form of support for various activities carried out by KIM, as stated by the chairman of KIM, Bandung Doddy Rachmadi:

"The government and representatives from the private sector supported this activity so that the community could feel the role of KIM. For example, the public will file a report to KIM when there is a non-functioning street light, and KIM communicates with various parties to resolve the issue."

District Head Jajang Afipudin, S. said that his village has received support from the private sector through KIM activities. Below is his statement:

"In my district, not everyone has good financial condition. To overcome several problems, such as infant malnutrition, KIM cooperates with a baby food company to distribute baby food for infants who require additional sustenance,"

"In my district, not everyone has good financial conditions. To address several issues, such as infant malnutrition, KIM collaborates with a baby food company to distribute baby food to infants who need additional sustenance,"

This illustrates KIM's significant role within the village community. Besides its community programs, the organization also implements various operational activities across the district, which are communicated to the community through KIM in the subdistrict. This highlights KIM as an additional information channel that extends government information, aligning

with its functions, such as: (1) Serving as an information vehicle. (2) Acting as an information channel among KIM members. (3) Facilitating information flow from KIM to the government. (4) Disseminating government information to the community. (5) Acting as dialogue partners with the Government, Provincial Government, and District/City Government in formulating public policies. (6) Promoting community literacy in information, mass media, and information and communication technology among KIM members and the community. (7) Serving as an institution with economic value.

Based on KIM's seven functions, the organization plays several crucial roles in the community empowerment process, including: (1) Facilitator for the community: KIM facilitates various community activities. (2) Regional government's partner: KIM disseminates information at the village or subdistrict level. (3) Absorber and distributor of community aspirations: KIM represents the aspirations of the village community. (4) Stream of information flow: KIM enhances its ability to access information from various media sources. (5) Hub of information for the village community or districts: KIM serves as a central information hub for the local community or districts.

The advancement of information technology has profoundly impacted various aspects of people's lives. While there has been a notable shift towards online communication patterns, in practice, reliance solely on modern forms of communication is insufficient. This means that development of online communication patterns does not necessarily eliminate the offline communication pattern, which sometimes still dominates our social life. The challenges identified in the introduction regarding information dissemination

must be addressed to ensure effective communication among the government, KIM, and the community.

As a government partner, KIM holds an essential position in disseminating information within the community, acting as a mediator between the government and the community. During its information dissemination process, KIM utilizes modern technology to access information, which is adapted to the organization's capacity to provide information and communication technology infrastructure, or to the availability of such infrastructure within the KIM environment. In line with this directive, so far, the process of disseminating information carried out by KIM from the government to the community and vice versa uses various communication media, both those of a personal and social media nature. This approach aligns with the concept of empowerment within KIM. Based on discussions with various managers of the Bandung City KIM, the authors conclude that the communication channels used in the information dissemination process are highly diverse.

KIM uses new media as a modern communication channel to disseminate information, engage with people, and strengthen relationships. KIM Bandung utilizes several social media platforms, including YouTube for presenting various documentation of the organization's activities in video form, as well as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The use of various forms of new media is in line with the empowerment efforts carried out by KIM, particularly in providing access to information through various sources, whether through interpersonal media, print and electronic mass media, or new media constrained by information technology (Diskominfo: 2018).

New media refers to tools or mediums used to deliver messages to a wide audience using digital technology or

networks of technology, communication, and information (Damayanti, 2023). Through various types of social media, everyone can observe the various activities of KIM in Bandung. Additionally, KIM Bandung uses its social media platforms to inform the public about government activities. However, upon utilizing social media, KIM also faces several obstacles, such as limited human resources to manage the accounts, which leads to the lack of public engagement in the organization's updates. The lack of human resources to manage the social media accounts is caused by the fact that most KIM members have other commitments, preventing them from focusing solely on managing social media. Currently, one of the most frequently used social media platforms is WhatsApp.

In addition to social media, KIM also utilizes traditional mass media to enhance its information dissemination process. This form of media varies for each district or region, including: (1) Public activities circulars (2) Public announcements at public places (e.g., community health centers and mosques) (3) Public announcements in small groups (4) Traditional announcement methods (e.g., kentongan)

The use of traditional media is considered more effective in terms of community acceptance. Some KIM administrators explained that the efficacy of this traditional communication pattern resulted from the face-to-face method, as stipulated by Buber (Gudykunst, 2003), which states that group communication is an important factor in community development. This was caused by each participant's acceptance of the presence of interlocutors, in which dialogue has feelings to control and minimized, even during conflict. Moreover, traditional communication methods can be very helpful because, in some regions, there are people who still do not possess

smartphone devices.

Considering that KIM members come from a very diverse society, they need to pay attention to ethical elements when delivering information to the targeted community. Such ethical issues often trigger conflicts within KIM, especially when communicated through text messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp, LINE, SMS, etc.). This concern was conveyed by Ms. Dieny Ferbianty, Head of Dissemination and Information at the Diskominfo of Bandung City, who shared her experiences regarding ethical issues within KIM:

“Since KIM members and administrators come from diverse backgrounds, issues sometimes arise when conveying messages to other administrators or the government. For example, some individuals use informal or inappropriate language in their communications. While their intention might be to appear friendly, the recipient can misunderstand it, especially when the message is delivered through social media. Not everyone understands the ethics of communication within an organization” (interview with Mrs. Dieny)

The statement shows that there is sometimes a lack of precision in crafting messages, which can occasionally trigger conflicts. Although communication ethics issues have not yet caused major conflicts between KIM administrators and the government, these ethical concerns remain significant within the organization. As a legal and recognized organization, KIM also needs to pay attention to this. As Desi (2006) argues, “Ethics in the scope of the organization is a pattern of attitudes and behaviors expected of each individual and group of members of the organization, which as a whole will shape organizational culture in line with the goals and organizational philosophy.”

From interviews with KIM

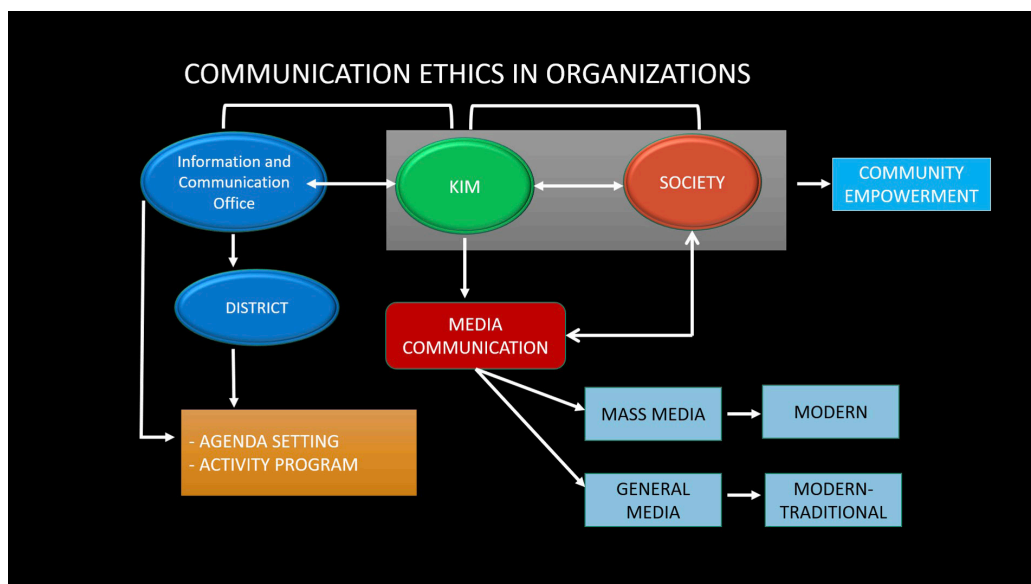


FIGURE 1: Ethics of Communication in KIM

members, the author observed that ethical issues arise due to the participants' diverse characteristics. This is closely tied to Sundanese culture, which recognizes different language styles based on the speaker's age, categorized into formal, semi-formal, and casual. When interacting with older individuals, speakers are required to use a formal language style, whereas a casual style is typically used among peers or with younger people. Age diversity within KIM is one of the key reasons why ethical considerations are crucial in the communication process.

The picture above explains that KIM holds a position as a mediator during the information dissemination process between the government and the community. Due to its position, KIM must ensure that the information it conveys is comprehensive and easily understood by recipients. Additionally, KIM's activities are closely linked to government programs, such as the training conducted by Diskominfo in Bandung to enhance the capacity of KIM members within the community.

For information dissemination, KIM Bandung City utilizes both online and offline communication channels. It is important to note that ethical

considerations must be adhered to when delivering messages to minimize conflicts.

CONCLUSION

As part of the community empowerment process, KIM plays a crucial role in every district in Bandung, both as a government partner and as a representative of the people's aspirations toward the government and vice versa. Effective communication is essential for disseminating information. In disseminating the information, KIM utilizes internet-based communication patterns (online) and traditional communication patterns (offline). The application of these two communication patterns depends on the interests and characteristics of targeted community in a region. Ethical considerations are necessary to ensure smooth communication between the sender and receiver. The author hopes that this research will be the basis for further similar research in the future, of course with different topics, theoretical studies and issues.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to thank

the Faculty of Communication Science Universitas Islam Bandung and KIM Kota Bandung for supporting this paper.

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