

MAPPING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION MODELS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT IN INDONESIA'S DISADVANTAGED REGIONS: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Development communication serves as a strategic instrument for community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions, yet empirical evidence regarding its models remains fragmented across diverse contexts. This study systematically reviewed empirical evidence on development communication models implemented to support community empowerment in rural and disadvantaged Indonesian regions. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines for methodological transparency, literature searches were conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The search identified 1,462 publications, resulting in 1,214 unique records after duplicate removal. Following screening, 105 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, and nine empirical studies met all inclusion criteria for qualitative synthesis. Findings reveal that participatory communication was the predominant model, characterized by dialogue, stakeholder collaboration, local knowledge integration, and collective decision-making. Persistent barriers were also identified, including limited institutional capacity, inadequate infrastructure, geographical isolation, cultural diversity, socioeconomic disparities, and local power dynamics. Overall, adaptive, participatory, and context-responsive models demonstrated greater capacity to strengthen community participation, institutional capacity, and local empowerment. The review concludes that development communication is most effective when communities act as active participants and strategies align with local sociocultural conditions, establishing an evidence-based foundation for sustainable empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

Development communication is increasingly understood not merely as a mechanism for disseminating Development communication is increasingly understood not merely as a mechanism for disseminating development information but as a process through which communities participate in defining problems, negotiating interests, and shaping development

outcomes. In Indonesia, participatory development communication has demonstrated its relevance in connecting government initiatives with local needs, knowledge, and community capacities, particularly in rural and agritourism contexts (Prastyanti et al., 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2024). However, this participatory orientation remains difficult to realize in disadvantaged regions, where limited educational attainment, socioeconomic constraints, geographical isolation, inadequate communication infrastructure, and unequal access to decision-making continue to restrict meaningful community participation (Harahap et al., 2024; Sulistiani & Syarifuddin, 2024). Consequently, the effectiveness of development communication cannot be assessed solely from the availability of communication channels or the dissemination of development information, but must also be examined in relation to the social, institutional, cultural, and geographical conditions in which communication takes place (Halil et al., 2022; Situmorang et al., 2023).

The Indonesian development context is characterized by substantial spatial and socioeconomic inequalities. Western regions contribute a considerably larger share of national economic output than eastern regions, while disparities in human development, poverty, infrastructure, and access to information remain evident between urban and rural areas (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Wedi & Fathurrahman, 2025). These inequalities are particularly consequential for development communication because communities in remote areas may experience restricted connectivity and limited opportunities to access, interpret, and negotiate development information. Communication therefore functions simultaneously as an instrument of development intervention and as a mechanism through which power, participation, local knowledge, and institutional relationships are negotiated. Evidence from Indonesian rural communities indicates that two-way and participatory communication can strengthen community capacity, ownership, and collective decision-making, whereas communication dominated by top-down practices may reproduce unequal participation (Dwinarko et al., 2023; Jaya & Sarwoprasodjo, 2024). Similar concerns have been identified in development communication research showing that power relations and trust can determine whether marginalized groups become active participants or remain passive recipients of development programs.

The theoretical shift from linear communication toward participatory, relational, and community-centered approaches has consequently become central to contemporary development communication research. This shift emphasizes dialogue, local knowledge, community agency, and collaborative decision-making rather than one-way information transmission (Ihsaniyati et al., 2023; Sulistiani & Syarifuddin, 2024). However, participation itself should not be treated as a uniform or automatically empowering process. Research on development communication demonstrates that participation may remain limited when technological access, institutional arrangements, power relations, or local sociocultural structures constrain the capacity of communities to influence development decisions. Similarly, community-centered communication models suggest that empowerment becomes more sustainable when decision-making power is progressively shared with communities and communication strategies recognize local knowledge and contextual characteristics. These perspectives indicate that the effectiveness of development communication is generated through the interaction of communication models with actors, institutional arrangements, territorial conditions, and mechanisms of community empowerment.

Despite the growing literature on development communication and community empowerment, an important theoretical gap remains. Existing studies have generally examined individual communication practices, specific empowerment programs, particular stakeholder groups, or localized community contexts, resulting in fragmented evidence concerning how communication models operate across different disadvantaged settings (Hiswanti et al., 2023; Ihsaniyati et al., 2023; Mustanir et al., 2025). Previous empirical investigations have identified participatory, relational, dialogic, and adaptive communication approaches, but these approaches have rarely been synthesized by simultaneously considering the relationships among the communication model, participating actors, territorial and sociocultural context, structural barriers, and mechanisms through which communication contributes to community empowerment (Kuncoro et al., 2024; Muliati et al., 2026; Saputra et al., 2024). Thus, the unresolved issue is not simply which communication models have been implemented, but under what contextual and relational conditions these models become capable of producing meaningful empowerment outcomes. A systematic synthesis that integrates these dimensions is therefore required to move beyond descriptive identification of communication models toward an explanatory understanding of how development communication functions within disadvantaged communities. This gap is particularly important because localized case studies provide valuable contextual evidence but do not, individually, establish a consolidated framework for comparing communication models, actors, contextual constraints, and empowerment mechanisms across disadvantaged regions.

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is appropriate for addressing this gap because it enables evidence from geographically and methodologically diverse studies to be systematically identified, evaluated, compared, and synthesized using transparent and reproducible procedures (Page et al., 2021; Xiao & Watson, 2019). Rather than treating the reviewed studies as independent cases, the SLR enables cross-study comparison of publication characteristics, communication models, stakeholder configurations, contextual conditions, structural barriers, and empowerment mechanisms. The review period of 2015–June 2026 also captures the recent evolution of development communication research during a period characterized by increasing digitalization, participatory governance, and changing communication practices. The use of multiple scholarly databases further broadens the evidence base and facilitates the integration of internationally visible and Indonesia-focused research. Accordingly, the present review is designed not only to identify what communication models have been reported, but also to explain how these models interact with actors and contextual constraints in shaping community empowerment outcomes.

Based on the identified research gap and the proposed analytical perspective, this study addresses five research questions:

1. RQ1: What publication patterns characterize empirical research on development communication and community empowerment in rural and disadvantaged regions of Indonesia, particularly in terms of publication year, journal outlet, geographical setting, and thematic focus?
2. RQ2: What development communication models have been implemented to support community empowerment in rural and disadvantaged regions?
3. RQ3: What stakeholders and patterns of stakeholder interaction are involved in the implementation of development communication for community empowerment?
4. RQ4: What structural, geographical, socioeconomic, cultural, and power-related barriers influence the effectiveness of development communication initiatives?
5. RQ5: What integrated strategic directions can be derived from the evidence to strengthen context-sensitive and sustainable community empowerment through development communication?

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically map the publication patterns and empirical characteristics of development communication research on community empowerment in Indonesia's rural and disadvantaged regions; identify the dominant communication models; analyze stakeholder configurations and interactions; examine structural, geographical, socioeconomic, cultural, and power-related barriers; and synthesize strategic directions for strengthening context-sensitive community empowerment. Beyond descriptive mapping, the study seeks to develop an integrated evidence-based framework linking communication models, actors, contextual conditions, barriers, and empowerment mechanisms. This framework is intended to clarify the conditions under which development communication can move from information dissemination toward meaningful participation, local ownership, institutional strengthening, and sustainable community empowerment.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify, critically evaluate, and synthesize the existing body of scientific evidence concerning development communication models for community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions. The review was conducted systematically, transparently, and comprehensively following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines to ensure methodological rigor, reproducibility, and transparency throughout every stage of the review process. The systematic review protocol comprised literature identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, data extraction, methodological quality appraisal, and qualitative evidence synthesis. This structured approach enabled the integration of empirical findings from diverse geographical settings, disciplinary perspectives, research methodologies, and community development contexts to develop a comprehensive understanding of development communication practices implemented in disadvantaged regions across Indonesia. Furthermore, the review was designed to identify publication trends, communication models, stakeholder involvement, communication channels, empowerment strategies, implementation challenges, policy implications, and research gaps that may contribute to strengthening inclusive, participatory, and sustainable community empowerment through effective development communication.

The literature search was conducted systematically in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 Statement using five scientific databases, namely Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The databases were selected to capture peer-reviewed studies across communication studies, rural and regional development, public policy, sociology, community development, and related interdisciplinary fields. To improve retrieval precision, the search strategy used Boolean operators (AND and OR) to combine three substantive concepts development communication, community empowerment, and disadvantaged or geographically constrained areas with Indonesia specified as a separate geographical-context term. This structure was adopted to ensure that retrieved studies addressed both the substantive focus of the review and the Indonesian context, rather than retrieving studies that merely mentioned Indonesia without examining disadvantaged or comparable regional settings.

The search string was formulated as follows:

("Development Communication" OR "Communication for Development" OR "Participatory Communication" OR "Community Communication") AND ("Community Empowerment" OR Empowerment OR Participation OR "Community Development") AND ("Disadvantaged Regions" OR "Disadvantaged Areas" OR "Rural Areas" OR "Remote Areas" OR "Underdeveloped Regions" OR "3T Regions" OR "Frontier, Outermost and Least Developed Regions") AND (Indonesia)

This formulation operationalized the geographical scope more strictly by treating Indonesia as a required contextual criterion rather than as an alternative to disadvantaged, rural, remote, or underdeveloped areas. Accordingly, a study was considered potentially relevant only when its title, abstract, keywords, or indexed metadata indicated a connection with Indonesia and with a disadvantaged, rural, remote, underdeveloped, 3T, or otherwise geographically constrained community context. The revised search structure was intended to reduce the retrieval of Indonesian studies that discuss development communication or community empowerment but do not concern the disadvantaged-region context addressed by this review.

Study selection strictly followed the PRISMA 2020 Statement guidelines to ensure transparency, consistency, and reproducibility throughout the review. From an initial 1,462 records retrieved across electronic databases, 1,214 unique articles were screened by title and abstract after duplicate removal. Following the exclusion of 1,109 irrelevant records, 105 full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility, ultimately resulting in 9 primary studies selected for qualitative synthesis.

Studies were included if they were peer-reviewed empirical research published in English between January 2015 and June 2026, focusing on development communication and community empowerment within Indonesia's disadvantaged, rural, or marginalized regions. Conversely, non-empirical publications (such as literature reviews, editorials, and policy briefs), non-English works, duplicates, and studies lacking full-text access or sufficient methodological clarity were excluded to establish a credible, high-quality evidence base.

To minimize bias and ensure consistency, a standardized two-stage data extraction protocol, covering initial bibliographic identification and detailed methodological and substantive findings, was established prior to the review. The extracted data was systematically organized into thematic categories to facilitate cross-study comparisons of publication trends, communication models, stakeholder collaboration, and empowerment practices. This thematic structure successfully mapped research gaps in development communication within disadvantaged regions of Indonesia, establishing a solid foundation for evidence synthesis and policy recommendations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literature Search Strategy

Table 1. Literature Search Strategy and Study Selection Process Based on PRISMA 2020

Stage	Description	Results
Databases	Literature searches were conducted using five internationally recognized scientific databases.	Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar
Search Strategy	Boolean operators (AND, OR, and NOT) were applied to combine keywords related to development	("Development Communication" OR "Communication for Development" OR "Participatory Communication" OR

	communication, community empowerment, and disadvantaged regions.	"Community Communication") AND ("Community Empowerment" OR Empowerment OR Participation OR "Community Development") AND ("Disadvantaged Regions" OR "Rural Areas" OR "Remote Areas" OR "Underdeveloped Regions" OR Indonesia)
Research Focus	Development communication models implemented to support community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions.	Development communication, participatory communication, stakeholder collaboration, and community empowerment in disadvantaged regions
Records Identified	Publications retrieved from all electronic databases before duplicate removal.	1,462
Records after Duplicate Removal	Unique publications remaining after removing duplicate records.	1,214
Records Screened	Articles screened according to publication year, document type, language, and topical relevance.	1,214
Records Excluded during Screening	Articles excluded during title and abstract screening.	1,109
Full-text Articles Assessed	Studies meeting the eligibility criteria for full-text evaluation.	105
Full-text Articles Excluded	Studies excluded after full-text assessment because they failed to satisfy the inclusion criteria.	96
Studies Included	Empirical studies fulfilling all eligibility criteria and included in the qualitative synthesis.	9
Reporting Guideline	Standard reporting framework adopted for the systematic review.	PRISMA 2020
Purpose of PRISMA	To ensure transparency, consistency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor throughout the study selection process.	Systematic, transparent, and reproducible evidence synthesis

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2026

The systematic literature search initially identified 1,462 publications retrieved from five internationally recognized scientific databases. After duplicate records were removed, 1,214 unique articles remained and subsequently underwent title and abstract screening according to the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Following the eligibility assessment, 105 full-text articles were evaluated, of which 96 studies were excluded because they lacked empirical evidence, demonstrated insufficient methodological rigor, did not specifically examine development communication for community empowerment, focused primarily on digital communication technologies without community empowerment outcomes, or failed to satisfy the established eligibility criteria. Consequently, nine empirical studies were included in the final qualitative synthesis, providing a credible evidence base for mapping development communication models, stakeholder participation, communication strategies, implementation challenges, and policy implications related to community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions.

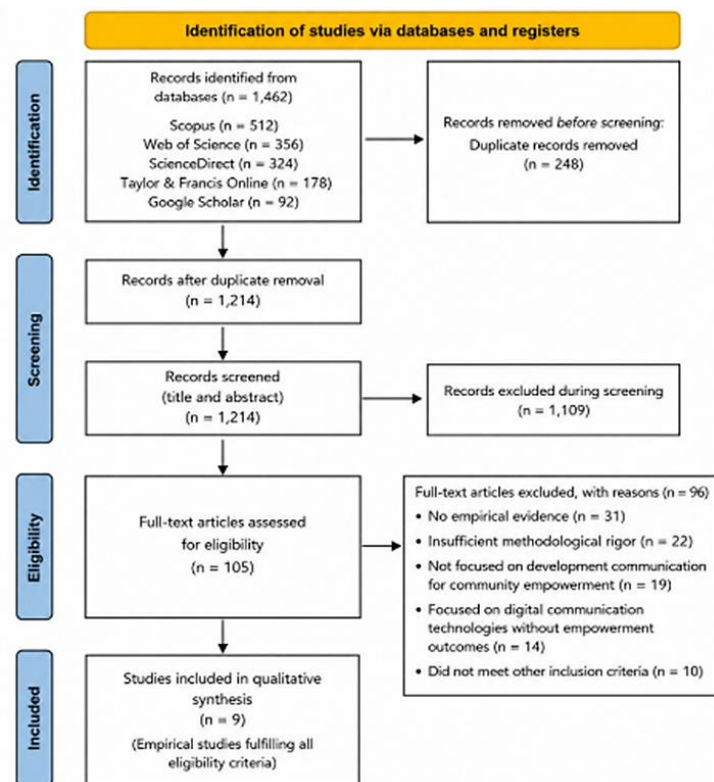


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Literature Search and Study Selection Process
Source: Author's compilation based on PRISMA 2020, 2026

Figure 1 illustrates the complete PRISMA 2020 workflow adopted throughout this systematic review, beginning with literature identification, duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and the final inclusion of empirical studies. Each stage was implemented systematically using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure methodological consistency while minimizing selection bias. The PRISMA framework enhanced the transparency, reproducibility, and credibility of the review by explicitly documenting every decision throughout the screening process. Consequently, only methodologically rigorous and highly relevant empirical studies concerning development communication and community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions were synthesized, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the review findings.

Quality Assessment and Risk of Bias

Table 2. Methodological Quality Assessment and Risk of Bias of the Included Studies

Assessment Domain	Evaluation Criteria	Summary of Findings	Risk of Bias
Research Objectives	Clarity, consistency, and relevance of research objectives	All included studies explicitly examined development communication, participatory communication, or community empowerment within disadvantaged or marginalized communities.	Low
Study Design	Appropriateness of research design	The reviewed studies employed qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, participatory action research, ethnographic, case study, and survey approaches	Low

Community Context	Adequacy of contextual description	appropriate for examining development communication practices. Most studies clearly described the socioeconomic, geographical, cultural, and institutional characteristics of disadvantaged communities, although several investigations focused on specific local contexts that may limit broader generalization.	Moderate
Communication Model	Transparency of communication approaches	The majority of studies comprehensively described communication models, stakeholder interactions, participatory mechanisms, and communication channels, although conceptual variations were observed across studies.	Moderate
Stakeholder Participation	Validity of stakeholder engagement	Most investigations adequately reported the involvement of local governments, community organizations, NGOs, traditional leaders, academics, and community members throughout the empowerment process.	Low
Data Collection	Reliability and credibility of empirical evidence	Data collection methods, including interviews, observations, surveys, focus group discussions, and document analysis, were generally well documented and appropriate for the research objectives.	Low
Analytical Methods	Suitability of analytical techniques	Appropriate qualitative thematic analysis, descriptive statistics, content analysis, and mixed-methods integration were consistently employed across the reviewed studies.	Low
Reporting Quality	Completeness and transparency of reporting	Nearly all studies clearly described research procedures, findings, limitations, and practical implications, facilitating evidence synthesis and reproducibility.	Low
Generalizability	Applicability to broader disadvantaged regions	Several studies focused on particular rural or marginalized communities; therefore, broader validation across diverse regional contexts remains necessary.	Moderate
Overall Methodological Quality	Overall strength of empirical evidence	Collectively, the nine empirical studies demonstrated moderate-to-high methodological quality and provided a robust evidence base for understanding development communication models supporting community empowerment.	Moderate

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2026

The methodological quality assessment demonstrated that the nine included empirical studies generally exhibited moderate-to-high methodological quality with an overall low risk of bias across most evaluation domains. Research objectives, study designs, data collection procedures, analytical approaches, and reporting quality were consistently well documented, reflecting strong methodological rigor and facilitating cross-study comparison. Moderate levels of bias primarily originated from contextual differences in community characteristics, communication models, and regional settings, which may affect the transferability of findings across Indonesia's diverse disadvantaged regions. Nevertheless, the overall quality of evidence was considered sufficiently robust to support the thematic synthesis and the formulation of policy recommendations regarding effective development communication for community empowerment.

Cross-Study Analytical Synthesis of Development Communication Models, Mechanisms, and Contextual Conditions

Table 3. Cross-Study Analytical Synthesis of Development Communication Models, Mechanisms, and Contextual Conditions

Analytical Dimension	Cross-Study Evidence	Studies Supporting the Pattern	Analytical Interpretation
Participatory orientation	Six of nine studies explicitly incorporated participatory, dialogic, bottom-up, relational, or participatory-mapping mechanisms.	(Darmastuti et al., 2024; Kuncoro et al., 2024; Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023; Safitri et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2024; Yustikasari et al., 2021)	Participation constitutes the dominant orientation, but it is operationalized through different communication arrangements rather than a single standardized model.
Dialogue and community voice	Community members were involved through discussion, interviews, focus groups, informal communication, planning, implementation, evaluation, or collective mapping.	(Darmastuti et al., 2024; Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023; Safitri et al., 2025; Yustikasari et al., 2021)	Dialogue creates opportunities for communities to articulate needs and influence development decisions, thereby strengthening ownership.
Local knowledge and contextual adaptation	Communication strategies were adjusted to cultural practices, local resources, geographical conditions, and community structures.	(Kuncoro et al., 2024; Muliati et al., 2026; Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023)	Contextual adaptation functions as a condition that determines whether participatory communication can operate effectively.
Stakeholder-mediated institutional strengthening	Government agencies, community organizations, local leaders, and supporting institutions were connected through communication processes.	(Fitri & Adi, 2025; Luthfie et al., 2026; Saputra et al., 2024)	Communication strengthens institutional capacity when stakeholder interaction is translated into organizational support, leadership, and resource mobilization.
Capacity and ownership formation	Communication was associated with improved skills, institutional capacity, leadership, business capacity, and community engagement.	(Fitri & Adi, 2025; Luthfie et al., 2026; Safitri et al., 2025; Yustikasari et al., 2021)	Empowerment is strengthened when communication generates capabilities that communities can subsequently use independently.
Power-related constraints	Intergenerational power relations and dependence on local authority figures affected communication outcomes.	(Kuncoro et al., 2024; Muliati et al., 2026)	Participation is weakened when communicative authority remains concentrated in particular social actors.
Institutional and resource constraints	Limited institutional resources and organizational capacity restricted implementation.	(Fitri & Adi, 2025; Saputra et al., 2024)	Communication effectiveness depends partly on the institutional capacity to sustain participatory processes.
Geographical and infrastructural constraints	Physical isolation, limited infrastructure, and restricted digital accessibility interrupted communication processes.	(Muliati et al., 2026; Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023; Saputra et al., 2024)	Infrastructure is an enabling condition, but digital connectivity alone cannot replace locally trusted and culturally appropriate communication.
Overall synthesis	Participatory communication produced stronger empowerment outcomes when combined with contextual adaptation and multi-stakeholder collaboration.	Cross-study synthesis of all nine studies	The evidence supports a context-adaptive participatory framework rather than a universal communication model.

Source: Synthesized by the Author from Various Sources (2026)

Characteristics of the Included Studies and Synthesis of Research Findings

A total of nine empirical studies published between January 2015 and June 2026 were systematically synthesized to examine the implementation of development communication models for community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions. The reviewed studies represented diverse geographical settings, including rural, remote, border, coastal, indigenous, and socioeconomically marginalized communities, and employed qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, participatory action research, ethnographic, case study, and survey methodologies. Across the included literature, participatory communication emerged as the dominant communication model, emphasizing dialogue, community engagement, stakeholder collaboration, local knowledge integration, and collective decision-making as fundamental

mechanisms for strengthening community empowerment. The synthesis further revealed that effective development communication depends on multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government agencies, local communities, non-governmental organizations, academics, community leaders, and civil society organizations, while persistent structural barriers including limited institutional capacity, inadequate communication infrastructure, socioeconomic disparities, geographical isolation, and cultural diversity continue to constrain communication effectiveness. Collectively, these findings provide comprehensive evidence for mapping development communication practices, identifying implementation challenges, and informing policy strategies aimed at promoting inclusive, participatory, and sustainable community empowerment throughout Indonesia's disadvantaged regions.

Table 4. Characteristics of Included Studies on Development Communication Models for Community Empowerment in Indonesia's Disadvantaged Regions

Author (Year)	Study Design	Research Subjects and Objects	Intervention	Findings
(Kuncoro et al., 2024)	Interpretive qualitative	Traditional weaving artisans in South Central Timor Regency (TTS), East Nusa Tenggara (a region with disadvantaged characteristics), and the development communication structure implemented within artisan groups.	Analysis of the development communication structure implemented through community groups supported by the Department of Trade, Industry, Cooperatives, and SMEs.	Development communication in TTS has not yet fully achieved community empowerment because it remains dominated by intergenerational power dynamics. An adaptive communication model that accommodates local cultural structures is required to ensure balanced empowerment across both younger and older generations. The findings emphasize the importance of communication facilitation that recognizes local cultural diversity to strengthen the capacity of traditional weaving artisans.
(Fitri & Adi, 2025)	Descriptive qualitative	Communities in Bukit Permata Village, East Kutai Regency (Indonesia's 3T region), focusing on agricultural and livestock-based economic empowerment strategies.	Implementation of the Five Core Outcome Areas (5 BHP) approach, including organizational strengthening, administrative improvement, capital development, productive business enhancement, and income generation through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.	The 5 BHP intervention strategy was systematically implemented and successfully strengthened community institutions and productive economic activities in disadvantaged regions. This structured approach effectively addressed infrastructure limitations and geographical isolation. The model provides an evidence-based framework for sustainable community empowerment in disadvantaged areas.
(Luthfie et al., 2026)	Qualitative (observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions,	Village government officials and the community of Gunung Putri Village during the process of achieving	Intensification of development communication through advocacy, community organizing, network development,	Development communication played a central role in strengthening local leadership and promoting village innovation. The resulting model positioned communication as an integral component throughout the



Author (Year)	Study Design	Research Subjects and Objects	Intervention	Findings
	and document analysis)	independent village status.	and capacity-building activities.	village development process toward self-reliance. Community participation increased substantially alongside strengthened leadership and communication-based innovation.
(Saputra et al., 2024)	Qualitative	The Provincial Office of the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) of Southeast Sulawesi and communities involved in the stunting reduction program.	Application of linear, relational, and convergent development communication models.	The relational communication model proved to be the most effective in enhancing community engagement throughout the stunting reduction program. Major implementation barriers included limited institutional resources, socio-cultural resistance, and geographical accessibility constraints. A relational communication approach is recommended to improve development communication effectiveness in disadvantaged regions.
(Yustikasari et al., 2021)	Descriptive qualitative	Extremely poor rural communities in Pangandaran Regency, West Java.	Development of a community empowerment communication model based on local community organizations (Islamic study groups, Family Welfare Movement/PKK cadres, and Integrated Health Service Posts/Posyandu) through skills training programs.	The proposed community empowerment communication model enabled local community organizations to independently implement capacity-building initiatives through practical skills training. This bottom-up approach proved more effective than conventional top-down interventions. The program successfully enhanced household economic capacity through productive, skills-based activities.
(Safitri et al., 2025)	Qualitative	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Pelem Village, Simo District, Boyolali Regency, and the Department of Cooperatives and Manpower.	Dialogic and top-down development communication integrated with participatory approaches throughout planning, implementation, evaluation, and utilization stages.	Community participation was evident throughout planning, implementation, evaluation, and benefit utilization through discussion forums and practical skills application. The dialogic-participatory communication model strengthened stakeholder relationships, improved product quality, and enhanced the utilization of social media for business development. This approach proved

Author (Year)	Study Design	Research Subjects and Objects	Intervention	Findings
(Darmastuti et al., 2024)	Qualitative (in-depth interviews, observation, and focus group discussions)	Community members of Bugel Village, Salatiga, participating in community empowerment initiatives.	Implementation of the participatory 4W communication strategy (Wangun, Waras, Wareg, and Wasis) using informal communication approaches.	effective for empowering rural MSMEs. The participatory 4W communication model, emphasizing structural development, health, welfare, and wisdom, effectively supported community empowerment initiatives. Informal communication based on active community participation enhanced local engagement in utilizing community resources and potentials. This model provides a practical reference for participatory development communication at the village and subdistrict levels.
(Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023)	Naturalistic qualitative	Communities in highly disadvantaged villages located in Lembang District, Pinrang Regency.	Participatory mapping of local potentials through focus group discussions, interviews, and the establishment of Community Working Groups (Pokja).	Community development strategies in highly disadvantaged villages require participatory mapping of local resources, challenges, and community needs. The establishment of Community Working Groups served as a strategic mechanism for overcoming infrastructure limitations and restricted accessibility. This participatory approach facilitated the formulation of context-specific development interventions tailored to local social conditions.
(Muliati et al., 2026)	Interpretive qualitative case study	Village government officials and residents of Bonto Somba Village, Maros Regency, characterized by geographical and digital accessibility constraints.	Implementation of development policy communication under conditions of limited physical and digital accessibility.	The effectiveness of development policy communication in remote areas was determined primarily by the alignment of communication messages with local geographical conditions and cultural communication practices rather than by digital infrastructure alone. Development information was frequently received only partially and remained highly dependent on trusted local authority figures. Adaptive communication models responsive to geographical constraints are therefore essential for improving community participation in disadvantaged regions.

Source: Synthesized by the Author from Various Sources (2026)

The cross-study synthesis demonstrates that the nine empirical investigations converge on a common empowerment logic despite substantial variation in intervention design and local context. The strongest commonality is the positioning of communication as an interactive process through which communities participate in defining problems, identifying resources, implementing activities, and evaluating outcomes. However, the studies differ in the institutional form through which this participation is organized: some rely on community organizations and informal communication, others on relational interaction, participatory mapping, structured empowerment programs, or advocacy and capacity building. This distinction is analytically important because it shows that the effectiveness of development communication cannot be attributed to a particular communication label alone. Rather, effectiveness emerges when the selected model creates meaningful communicative space for community voice and connects that participation with concrete institutional or economic opportunities.

The evidence further suggests that dialogue is the proximal mechanism, whereas contextual adaptation and stakeholder collaboration function as enabling conditions. Dialogue enables community members to express needs and participate in decisions; local contextualization ensures that the content and process of communication are socially and geographically appropriate; and stakeholder collaboration provides institutional resources, organizational support, and continuity. These mechanisms are visible across different models: participatory mapping converts local knowledge into development priorities, the 4W strategy embeds communication within informal community interaction, relational communication strengthens engagement among program actors, while structured empowerment models connect communication with institutional and economic capacity. The convergence of these mechanisms indicates that empowerment is not generated by communication exposure itself, but by the conversion of communication into participation, participation into capacity, and capacity into greater community ownership.

At the same time, the synthesis identifies clear boundary conditions. Participatory communication becomes less effective when existing power structures restrict whose voice is recognized, when institutional resources are insufficient to sustain engagement, or when geographical and communication infrastructures limit interaction. (Kuncoro et al., 2024) shows that intergenerational power relations may reproduce unequal participation, while (Saputra et al., 2024) identifies institutional and socio-cultural constraints that weaken relational communication. (Muliati et al., 2026) demonstrates an additional boundary condition: where physical and digital access is limited, development information may be received incompletely and may depend heavily on trusted local authorities. These findings qualify the general assumption that participation is inherently empowering. Participation contributes to empowerment only when communicative access, institutional support, and decision-making influence are sufficiently distributed among community actors.

The comparison also reveals an important distinction between communication models and communication functions. The 5 BHP approach, relational communication, 4W strategy, participatory mapping, and adaptive communication should not be interpreted as competing universal models. They perform different functions within the broader empowerment process. Structured approaches provide organizational and economic scaffolding; relational approaches maintain interaction and trust; participatory mapping translates community knowledge into collective priorities; informal communication facilitates accessibility and social proximity; and adaptive approaches modify communication according to contextual constraints. The evidence therefore supports a modular understanding of development communication, in which different communication functions are combined according to the characteristics of the community and the institutional environment.

Overall, the nine studies support a refined analytical proposition: development communication contributes to community empowerment when participatory dialogue is connected to contextual adaptation, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity development. The absence of any one of these elements may weaken the pathway from communication to empowerment. A participatory process without institutional support may generate discussion without sustained implementation; institutional intervention without community voice may reproduce top-down relations; and digital communication without contextual adaptation may fail to reach or engage communities facing geographical and cultural barriers. Thus, the principal cross-study finding is that the success of development communication depends less on the communication channel or model label than on the capacity of the communication process to redistribute participation, mobilize local knowledge, strengthen institutional relationships, and generate community ownership.

Discussion

The synthesis of the nine included empirical studies indicates that participatory communication is the most frequently represented orientation in development communication for community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions. Across the reviewed cases, participatory practices were associated with community dialogue, local knowledge integration, collective decision-making, and engagement of multiple stakeholders, including local governments, community organizations, traditional leaders, and local communities (Fitri & Adi, 2025; Kuncoro et al., 2024; Luthfie et al., 2026). Specific approaches, including the 5 BHP approach, relational communication, and the 4W strategy, demonstrated positive outcomes within their respective reported contexts, particularly in relation to institutional strengthening, community engagement, and participation. However, these findings should not be interpreted as evidence that one model is universally more effective than another, because the reviewed studies examined different geographical, institutional, cultural, and programmatic settings without direct comparative designs. The synthesis therefore supports participatory and context-responsive communication as a recurring pattern across the evidence rather than establishing a universally superior communication model.

A critical assessment of the evidence indicates that the included studies generally demonstrate moderate-to-high methodological quality, with low risk of bias in several domains, particularly research objectives, study design, data collection, and analytical procedures. Nevertheless, the strength of the evidence is constrained by contextual heterogeneity and differences in how communication models are conceptually defined and operationalized. Studies conducted in specific settings, including South Central Timor, East Kutai, and Bonto Somba Village, provide detailed contextual evidence but cannot by themselves establish that similar outcomes would occur across Indonesia's diverse disadvantaged regions. (Kuncoro et al., 2024; Muliati et al., 2026), for example, identified intergenerational power relations, sociocultural resistance, geographical constraints, and dependence on trusted local authorities as important conditions shaping communication processes. At the same time, most of the reviewed evidence remains qualitative, limiting the assessment of measurable and long-term empowerment outcomes. Thus, the methodological quality of the studies supports confidence in the interpretation of the reported cases, but it does not justify broad causal or comparative claims regarding the relative effectiveness of particular communication models.

Comparison across the reviewed studies reveals a consistent emphasis on participatory and dialogic communication, although the specific mechanisms and outcomes vary across contexts. (Kuncoro et al., 2024) showed that development communication in traditional weaving communities was influenced by intergenerational power relations, whereas (Saputra et al., 2024) reported that relational communication was associated with stronger community engagement in the stunting reduction program. (Fitri & Adi, 2025) and (Luthfie et al., 2026) similarly reported positive outcomes associated with structured communication and institutional strengthening within their respective community settings. These findings indicate convergence in the role of communication as a mechanism for facilitating participation and institutional interaction, but they do not demonstrate that one approach consistently outperforms another. Likewise, the geographical and infrastructural constraints identified by (Muliati et al., 2026), (Rasyid & Prasetyo, 2023; Yustikasari et al., 2021) indicate that communication outcomes are strongly conditioned by accessibility and local institutional arrangements. (Safitri et al., 2025) and (Darmastuti et al., 2024) further demonstrate that sustained participation across planning, implementation, evaluation, and utilization can support empowerment processes. Taken together, the evidence suggests a recurring association between participatory communication and positive community-level outcomes, while the magnitude and sustainability of these outcomes remain context dependent.

The theoretical implication of the synthesis is that development communication in disadvantaged regions is better understood as a context-dependent participatory process than as the application of a universally effective model. The reviewed evidence supports the relevance of participatory and relational principles because these approaches repeatedly appear in cases where communities are involved in articulating needs, sharing local knowledge, and participating in collective decisions (Safitri et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2024; Yustikasari et al., 2021). From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that policymakers and development practitioners should prioritize communication arrangements that allow meaningful community participation, strengthen stakeholder coordination, and accommodate local sociocultural conditions. The 5 BHP approach, the 4W strategy, relational communication, and other participatory approaches may therefore serve as context-specific reference points rather than standardized models for universal application (Darmastuti et al., 2024; Fitri & Adi, 2025; Saputra et al., 2024). Their reported positive outcomes should be interpreted in relation to the institutional, geographical, and

sociocultural conditions in which they were implemented. Consequently, adaptation and contextual assessment should precede the transfer of any communication model to other disadvantaged communities.

The principal limitations of this review concern the limited number of included studies, the predominance of qualitative research designs, contextual heterogeneity, and the scarcity of longitudinal evidence. These limitations restrict the extent to which the reported associations between communication approaches and empowerment outcomes can be generalized or interpreted causally across Indonesia's disadvantaged regions. In particular, the absence of direct comparative studies prevents the determination of whether the 5 BHP approach, relational communication, 4W strategy, participatory mapping, or other approaches produce superior outcomes under equivalent conditions. Future research should therefore incorporate larger and more geographically diverse samples, quantitative or mixed-methods designs, longitudinal outcome measures, and comparative research designs. Such studies would enable researchers to examine not only whether participatory and adaptive communication approaches are associated with improved empowerment outcomes, but also which mechanisms contribute to these outcomes and under what contextual conditions they are sustained. Further investigation into the integration of digital communication technologies with locally grounded participatory practices is also warranted, particularly in regions where digital access remains uneven.

Table 5. Higher-Order Synthesis of Mechanisms and Conditions Shaping Development Communication Effectiveness

No.	Higher-Order Theme	Cross-Study Pattern	Mechanism	Limiting Condition	Implication
1	Participatory communication	Participation is the dominant orientation across six of nine studies.	Dialogue and community voice enable collective decision-making.	Participation may remain symbolic under unequal power relations.	Participation should include actual influence over development decisions.
2	Contextual adaptation	Communication models vary according to cultural, geographical, and institutional conditions.	Local contextualization increases relevance and accessibility.	Standardized communication may fail in highly diverse communities.	Communication design should be adapted to local conditions.
3	Stakeholder collaboration	Government, community organizations, local leaders, and supporting institutions repeatedly interact in empowerment processes.	Collaboration connects community participation with institutional resources.	Weak institutional capacity can interrupt continuity.	Multi-stakeholder coordination should be embedded in program design.
4	Capacity development	Communication is linked to skills, leadership, institutional, and economic capacity.	Participation is converted into practical capabilities and community ownership.	Short-term interventions may not produce sustained capacity.	Communication should be linked to continuous capacity-building activities.
5	Structural accessibility	Geography, infrastructure, and digital access shape communication effectiveness.	Accessible communication enables sustained interaction and information flow.	Physical and digital isolation restricts participation.	Offline, interpersonal, and locally trusted communication should complement digital channels.
6	Integrated empowerment pathway	Effective cases combine participation, adaptation, collaboration, and capacity development.	These elements jointly transform communication into sustainable empowerment.	Weakness in one component can reduce overall effectiveness.	A context-adaptive participatory framework is more appropriate than a universal model.

Source: Researcher Processed Data, 2026

Table 5 consolidates the cross-study evidence into a higher-order explanatory framework rather than merely listing individual findings. The synthesis indicates that reported empowerment outcomes are associated with the interaction of participatory dialogue, contextual adaptation, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity development. Structural accessibility and local power relations function as important conditions that may facilitate or constrain these processes. The evidence therefore suggests that community empowerment should be interpreted as an outcome of an interconnected communication process rather than as a direct consequence of adopting a particular communication model. Importantly, the reviewed studies

do not provide sufficient comparative evidence to establish the relative effectiveness of individual models under equivalent conditions. The analytical contribution of the synthesis consequently lies in identifying recurring mechanisms and contextual conditions associated with positive outcomes rather than ranking communication models according to effectiveness.

The integrated evidence synthesis further indicates that development communication in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions is best conceptualized as a context-adaptive participatory process. Across the nine studies, participation provides a recurring mechanism through which communities articulate needs, contribute local knowledge, engage in collective decision-making, and develop ownership of empowerment initiatives. However, these processes are conditioned by contextual adaptation, stakeholder collaboration, institutional capacity, accessibility, and local power relations. Where these conditions are weak, communication may remain dependent on dominant local actors, become constrained by geographical and infrastructural barriers, or fail to generate sustained participation. The resulting evidence pattern therefore supports an integrated framework in which participatory dialogue represents a central mechanism, while contextual adaptation and stakeholder collaboration function as enabling conditions and local power structures, institutional capacity, and accessibility operate as boundary conditions. This framework provides a more cautious explanation of variation in reported empowerment outcomes without assuming that any single communication model is universally superior.

Overall, the evidence synthesis indicates that positive community empowerment outcomes are repeatedly associated with the interaction of participation, contextual adaptation, stakeholder collaboration, and capacity development. Participatory communication is prominent across the reviewed studies because it creates opportunities for community voice, collective decision-making, local knowledge integration, and program ownership. However, participation alone does not guarantee empowerment, as its implementation is shaped by power relations, institutional capacity, geographical accessibility, infrastructure, and sociocultural compatibility. The 5 BHP approach, relational communication, 4W strategy, participatory mapping, and adaptive communication should therefore be understood as context-specific operational forms of a broader participatory orientation rather than as universally superior models. The principal contribution of this review is the identification of a context-adaptive participatory framework in which dialogue functions as a central communication mechanism, while institutional collaboration and local contextualization influence the conditions under which positive empowerment outcomes may emerge and be sustained.

CONCLUSION

The systematic review synthesized nine empirical studies published between 2015 and 2026 and identified *participatory communication* as the predominant development communication model for community empowerment in Indonesia's disadvantaged regions. Across the reviewed studies, dialogue, active community participation, stakeholder collaboration, local knowledge, and collective decision-making consistently emerged as important features of communication practices, while geographical, infrastructural, institutional, and sociocultural constraints remained significant contextual challenges. The evidence therefore indicates that communication approaches need to be adapted to the characteristics and needs of local communities rather than applied through a uniform model.

This review contributes by consolidating fragmented empirical evidence on development communication models, stakeholder involvement, and contextual barriers within disadvantaged Indonesian regions. It provides an evidence-based synthesis showing that participatory, relational, dialogic, and adaptive approaches are repeatedly associated with community engagement and institutional strengthening across specific local contexts, while the limited number of studies and predominance of qualitative designs constrain broader generalization. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of recurring patterns across the reviewed contexts rather than as definitive evidence of causal superiority over conventional top-down communication models.

Future research should expand empirical coverage to a wider range of disadvantaged regions and employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine how communication approaches influence measurable and sustained community empowerment outcomes. Further studies should also investigate how digital communication can be integrated with participatory approaches while accounting for differences in infrastructure, accessibility, and local sociocultural conditions. Comparative research across communication models and governance contexts is likewise needed to strengthen the empirical basis for developing more context-sensitive and transferable development communication frameworks.

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