

Government Communication Strategy in Restoring Public Trust in the Rebana Industrial Development Area of West Java

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ABSTRACT

The development of the Rebana Industrial Development Area in West Java is one of Indonesia's strategic initiatives to accelerate regional economic growth, industrial investment, and infrastructure connectivity. However, the implementation of this large-scale development agenda has also generated a public trust deficit caused by information asymmetry, agrarian conflict residues, environmental concerns, and perceptions of local community marginalization. This study aims to formulate a government communication strategy model for restoring public trust in the development of the Rebana industrial area. The study focuses on three main aspects: the communication style of government actors in constructing development narratives, crisis communication management mechanisms, and public trust restoration efforts involving local communities, investors, and government institutions. This paper uses a qualitative case study orientation supported by literature synthesis, document review, and a proposed fieldwork design. Data are designed to be collected through in-depth interviews, observation, document analysis, focus group discussions, and digital media narrative analysis. Informants are selected purposively from the West Java Provincial Government, the Rebana Management Agency, local governments, relevant stakeholders, and affected communities. The proposed analysis uses descriptive-interpretative techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The article offers an adaptive, transparent, dialogical, and participatory government communication protocol model. The model is expected to contribute to public sector communication studies and provide practical guidance for mitigating social resistance, strengthening public legitimacy, and supporting inclusive industrial development in West Java.

Keywords: *Government Communication Strategy, Public Trust Restoration, Rebana Industrial Area, Public Sector Communication, Social Resistance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's development agenda increasingly relies on large-scale spatial transformation, connectivity, industrial investment, and regional economic corridors. In West Java, the Rebana area has been positioned as a strategic growth zone that connects ports, airports, industrial estates, and local government jurisdictions. The region is associated with the national vision of Indonesia Emas 2045 and the acceleration of regional development as stated in Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2021 concerning the development of the Rebana area and Southern West Java. The policy places the Rebana area not only as an infrastructure project but also as a social and political communication arena in which governmental legitimacy, public acceptance, and stakeholder coordination are continuously negotiated.

The proposal underlying this article identifies the Rebana Industrial Development Area as a new economic corridor in northern and eastern West Java. It includes several districts and cities, such as Cirebon, Kuningan, Majalengka, Sumedang, Indramayu, and Subang, with supporting infrastructure such as Patimban Port and Kertajati Airport. The area is projected to generate investment, employment, and regional competitiveness. Yet the implementation of

strategic development in Rebana also reveals a paradox. On the one hand, investment realization and infrastructure connectivity have strengthened the government's narrative of progress. On the other hand, local communities have raised concerns about land conversion, environmental impacts, labor readiness, and the unequal distribution of benefits. These concerns indicate that industrial development cannot be approached merely as a technical, economic, or administrative process.

A key problem that emerges in this context is the public trust deficit. Trust deficit refers to the weakening of public confidence in the intention, capacity, and accountability of public institutions. In the Rebana case, the trust deficit is closely related to information asymmetry, residues of agrarian conflict, perceived marginalization of local communities, and the gap between official development narratives and everyday experiences of residents. The proposal also highlights the growth of digital counter-narratives in social media, especially when formal government communication is perceived as ceremonial, one-way, or detached from local anxieties. These dynamics show that communication is not merely the dissemination of information but a strategic process of constructing meaning, building legitimacy, managing conflict, and restoring relationships.

Government communication has traditionally been understood as the delivery of ideas, programs, and policy messages from government institutions to society in order to achieve public goals. Hasan (2014) emphasizes that communication in government settings should not place the government permanently as the speaker and society as the receiver, because in certain situations the public becomes the source of ideas and the government must listen. This reciprocal logic is particularly relevant in strategic industrial development where policies affect land, livelihoods, ecological risks, local identity, and future employment. In such settings, one-way communication may increase resistance, while dialogical and participatory communication can help align public expectations with policy implementation.

Strategic communication literature also underlines the importance of planning, persuasion, organizational goals, and stakeholder understanding. Smith (2002) conceptualizes strategic communication as planned informational and persuasive message delivery to build understanding and support. In public sector contexts, however, the communicative objective is broader than persuasion. Public communication must also maintain transparency, accountability, reputation, and legitimacy. Luoma-aho et al. (2021) argue that public sector reputation represents an intangible asset that shapes citizen evaluation of institutions. Therefore, when development projects face resistance, government communication must move beyond publicity and become a restorative mechanism that acknowledges public concerns, opens feedback channels, and translates public input into policy adjustment.

Previous studies in Indonesian government communication show that hierarchical communication can face limitations when dealing with community-based infrastructure and development programs. Rahman and Sjoraida (2017), for example, examined government communication in socializing sustainable infrastructure development in Subang and indicated the importance of communication strategy in gaining public understanding. The Rebana case extends this discussion because the area involves multi-level governance, several administrative jurisdictions, industrial investors, local communities, and digital publics. Thus, the communication challenge is not located only at the level of message content but also at the level of coordination, credibility, responsiveness, and institutional follow-up.

The purpose of this article is to formulate a government communication strategy model for restoring public trust in the Rebana Industrial Development Area of West Java. The article focuses on three research questions: how government actors construct development messages, how communication crises are managed in the context of resistance, and how public trust can be restored through transparent, dialogical, and participatory communication. The novelty of the article lies in its focus on restorative communication in a strategic industrial development area involving multi-level governance and digital counter-narratives. The paper proposes a dialogical-circular model that places listening, narrative co-creation, institutional coordination, and policy feedback as integrated elements of government communication.

2. METHODS

This article is designed as a qualitative case study with an exploratory orientation. The qualitative approach is appropriate because the research problem concerns meaning construction, public perception, institutional communication, crisis narratives, and trust restoration. A case study is suitable for examining the Rebana Industrial Development Area because the case involves a bounded spatial and policy context, multiple actors, and complex social dynamics. As Umar (2004) explains, a case study can be used to obtain a deep, detailed, and holistic understanding of a relatively specific object. In this paper, the object is not merely the physical industrial area but the communicative process through which government, investors, and communities negotiate the legitimacy of development.

The study site is the Rebana area in West Java, particularly the districts and cities connected to the industrial development agenda, including Cirebon, Kuningan, Majalengka, Sumedang, Indramayu, and Subang. These locations are selected because they represent the administrative and social landscape of the Rebana strategic development zone. The research is positioned within a two-year research plan from March 2026 to December 2027. The first phase focuses on identifying profiles, actors, elements, and practices of development communication, while the second phase focuses on modeling government communication strategies for restoring public trust.

The proposed data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are planned to be collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and focus group discussions. Secondary data consist of policy documents, government publications, media reports, academic literature, social media narratives, and digital communication materials produced by government institutions. The combination of these sources is intended to capture both official and public narratives. In this regard, the analysis does not limit itself to what the government communicates, but also examines how audiences interpret, challenge, or reproduce those messages in public and digital spaces.

Informants are selected using purposive sampling. The key informant categories include representatives of the West Java Provincial Government, the Rebana Management Agency, local governments in the Rebana area, regional leadership forums, public relations and communication officers, community leaders, local residents affected by development, business or industrial stakeholders, and experts in public policy or communication. Purposive sampling is relevant because the research requires informants who understand the development agenda, communication practice, social resistance, and public perception surrounding the Rebana area.

Data collection is organized into four main techniques. First, in-depth interviews are used to explore government communication styles, crisis management mechanisms, institutional

coordination, and perceptions of public trust. Second, observation is used to examine communication practices in public meetings, local engagement activities, and digital channels. Third, focus group discussions are conducted to validate initial findings and generate a more comprehensive interpretation of stakeholder concerns. Fourth, document and digital media analysis are conducted to map policy narratives, media framing, and counter-narratives circulating in social media. Digital narrative analysis is important because trust deficit in the Rebana context is not only produced offline but also circulated and amplified through online platforms.

Data analysis follows a descriptive-interpretative logic. The process includes data reduction, data display, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is conducted by selecting relevant interview statements, observation notes, documents, and digital narratives related to communication style, crisis management, trust restoration, and stakeholder engagement. Data display is conducted through matrices, thematic categories, and narrative mapping. Interpretation is conducted by relating empirical themes to concepts of strategic communication, government communication, public sector reputation, and collaborative governance. To improve validity, the study applies triangulation of sources, methods, and data types, as suggested in qualitative social research traditions (Nawawi, 1998).

Because the full fieldwork is designed to continue through the research period, this proceeding paper presents a conceptual and methodological model developed from proposal-based analysis, literature synthesis, and preliminary problem mapping. Therefore, the results and discussion section should be read as a proposed analytical framework rather than a final empirical generalization. This position is methodologically important to avoid overstating findings before field data are fully collected. The contribution of the paper is to offer a coherent model that can guide subsequent empirical investigation and policy communication practice in the Rebana area.

Table 1. Analytical dimensions of the qualitative case study.

Analytical Dimension	Focus of Inquiry	Main Data Source	Expected Analytical Output
Communication style	How government actors construct and deliver development messages	Interviews, official documents, media releases, digital content	Typology of government communication style in the Rebana area
Crisis communication	How institutions respond to resistance, conflict narratives, and public complaints	Interviews, FGD, media monitoring, social media narratives	Mapping of crisis response mechanisms and institutional gaps
Trust restoration	How public confidence is rebuilt through transparency, dialogue, and follow-up	Community interviews, FGD, policy documents, observation	Restorative communication protocol and stakeholder engagement model

Analytical Dimension	Focus of Inquiry	Main Data Source	Expected Analytical Output
Multi-level governance	How provincial, regional, agency, investor, and community actors coordinate messages and actions	Institutional interviews, coordination documents, policy brief materials	Coordination model for integrated public communication

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first analytical result proposed by this article is that public trust in strategic industrial development depends on the alignment between official narratives and local lived experience. In the Rebana context, the government's macro-level narrative emphasizes investment realization, infrastructure connectivity, new employment, and regional competitiveness. This narrative is important because large-scale development requires optimism and policy direction. However, when the narrative of progress is not accompanied by transparent information on land, environment, compensation, labor readiness, and community benefit, it may be interpreted as promotional communication rather than public communication. The gap between promotional optimism and local uncertainty becomes a source of public skepticism.

Trust deficit is strengthened when communities perceive that they are treated as objects of development rather than subjects of decision-making. The proposal notes that some residents feel like spectators in their own land. This perception is significant because public acceptance is not produced only by economic promises. It is also produced by recognition, respect, procedural fairness, and the ability of institutions to respond to grievances. When communities believe that information is incomplete, delayed, or inaccessible, they may develop counter-narratives that challenge the legitimacy of development. In the digital era, these counter-narratives can circulate rapidly through social media and create echo chambers that reinforce distrust.

From the perspective of government communication, the main issue is therefore not simply a lack of information but a lack of relational communication. A government may release many statements, press releases, or ceremonial messages, but these forms of communication do not automatically create trust if they do not answer the most relevant public concerns. Restorative communication requires the government to recognize that trust is damaged when communities experience uncertainty without sufficient explanation. Thus, the communicative task is not only to explain policy but also to repair relationships between institutions and publics.

3.1. Government Communication Style and Development Narrative

Government actors in strategic development areas often operate under pressure to present development as successful, urgent, and nationally significant. This creates a tendency toward top-down communication, where official institutions emphasize policy targets, investment figures, and infrastructure achievements. Such communication can be effective for investor confidence and national image, but it may be insufficient for local communities who need practical, concrete, and accessible information. In the Rebana area, message construction

should therefore balance the macro narrative of growth with the micro narrative of community protection.

A restorative communication style should include credibility, empathy, clarity, and responsiveness. Hasan (2014) explains that effective government communication requires follow-up, regulated information flow, feedback, empathy, repetition, mutual trust, effective timing, simplified language, effective listening, and attention to informal communication. These elements are highly relevant for Rebana because the affected public does not only need formal announcements. They need continuous explanation, local-language clarification, grievance mechanisms, and evidence that their concerns influence policy decisions.

The development narrative must also be reconstructed from a purely economic message into an inclusive social narrative. The statement that Rebana will bring investment and industrial growth is not sufficient if local communities worry about displacement, environmental degradation, or exclusion from employment. The government communication strategy should therefore articulate how development will protect local rights, improve local capacity, and create fair access to economic opportunities. In other words, communication should not frame the public as an obstacle to development, but as a co-owner of regional transformation.

3.2. Crisis Communication in Multi-Level Governance

Crisis communication in the Rebana area is complicated by multi-level governance. The development involves the central government, the provincial government, the Rebana Management Agency, district and city governments, investors, and local communities. Each actor may have different institutional mandates, communication styles, and levels of authority. If coordination is weak, public messages may become fragmented and inconsistent. Fragmented communication can deepen distrust because citizens may receive different explanations from different authorities.

A crisis communication mechanism should therefore be built around coordination, speed, accuracy, and accountability. Coordination means that institutions should agree on message substance, spokesperson roles, communication channels, and procedures for responding to public complaints. Speed means that the government must respond before rumors or counter-narratives dominate the public sphere. Accuracy means that communication must provide verifiable information, not merely normative reassurance. Accountability means that public communication should include institutional follow-up and not end with symbolic dialogue.

Digital media analysis is necessary because crisis narratives increasingly emerge outside formal public meetings. Social media allows residents, activists, journalists, and informal communities to produce alternative narratives about land, environment, labor, or policy fairness. These narratives should not be treated only as threats. They can function as early warning signals that reveal public anxiety. By monitoring digital narratives, government institutions can identify issues before they escalate into open conflict. However, monitoring should be connected to response. Without institutional response, sentiment analysis becomes a technical activity with limited restorative value.

3.3. Restorative Communication Protocol

Based on the problem mapping and theoretical synthesis, this article proposes a restorative government communication protocol consisting of six interrelated stages. The protocol begins with stakeholder mapping and issue diagnosis. This stage identifies affected communities,

vulnerable groups, local leaders, civil society actors, investors, and government agencies. It also identifies the most sensitive issues, such as land conversion, compensation, environmental risk, labor absorption, and benefit distribution. The objective is to ensure that communication begins from real concerns rather than from institutional assumptions.

The second stage is active listening and grievance capture. Public trust cannot be restored if the government only explains without listening. Listening should be organized through public forums, focus group discussions, local help desks, digital feedback channels, and community liaison officers. The third stage is transparent narrative construction. At this stage, the government prepares messages that explain not only the benefits of development but also its risks, mitigation plans, and policy limits. Transparency includes acknowledging uncertainty when data are not yet final and explaining how decisions will be updated.

The fourth stage is dialogical engagement. Engagement differs from socialization because it allows publics to question, negotiate, and influence the communication process. The fifth stage is policy feedback and institutional follow-up. This stage is crucial because public trust is restored not by words alone but by visible action. If communities submit complaints about land, labor, or environment, the government must show how those complaints are processed. The sixth stage is evaluation and adaptive communication. Trust restoration must be continuously evaluated using indicators such as complaint resolution, public sentiment, meeting participation, clarity of information, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Table 2. Restorative government communication protocol for the Rebana Industrial Development Area.

Protocol Stage	Communication Objective	Practical Action	Trust Indicator
1. Stakeholder mapping and issue diagnosis	Identify affected publics, sensitive issues, and communication risks	Map local actors, land issues, labor concerns, environmental anxieties, and digital narratives	Relevant publics and issues are clearly identified
2. Active listening and grievance capture	Transform public anxiety into structured institutional input	Open public forums, help desks, digital complaint channels, and community liaison mechanisms	Public concerns are recorded and acknowledged
3. Transparent narrative construction	Build credible development narratives based on evidence and local concerns	Prepare simple, accessible, and evidence-based messages including risks and mitigation plans	Public receives clear and consistent information
4. Dialogical engagement	Create two-way and multi-stakeholder deliberation	Conduct FGD, local dialogue, stakeholder meetings, and participatory communication activities	Public can ask, respond, and negotiate

Protocol Stage	Communication Objective	Practical Action	Trust Indicator
5. Policy feedback and follow-up	Convert communication into institutional action	Report complaint handling, policy adjustment, and coordination results	Public sees visible response and correction
6. Evaluation and adaptive communication	Measure trust restoration and adjust communication strategy	Monitor public sentiment, complaint resolution, participation, and satisfaction	Communication strategy improves over time

The protocol in Table 2 emphasizes that trust restoration is a process rather than a single communication campaign. The government should not understand public communication as a final step after policy decisions have been made. Instead, communication should be embedded throughout the policy cycle from planning and implementation to evaluation. This is consistent with collaborative governance, where public institutions and stakeholders share information, deliberate on problems, and adjust strategies based on public input.

The proposed model also highlights the importance of message consistency across government levels. When provincial institutions, district governments, and the Rebana Management Agency communicate different priorities or timelines, the public may perceive institutional uncertainty. Therefore, an integrated communication protocol should define who speaks, what information is shared, when updates are delivered, and how feedback is handled. A single dominant spokesperson is not always necessary, but message coordination is essential.

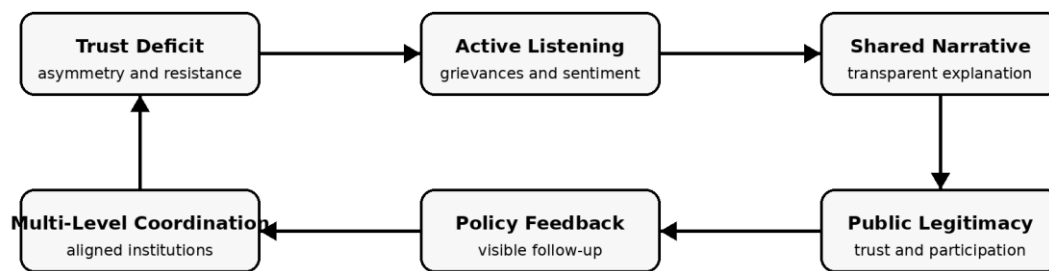
Another implication is the need to shift from event-based communication to system-based communication. Event-based communication usually appears in ceremonial socialization, press releases, or official visits. These activities may be necessary, but they are not enough to repair public trust. System-based communication requires permanent channels, clear procedures, documentation, monitoring, and accountability. In the Rebana area, this may include an integrated public information portal, district-level liaison teams, regular community briefings, and public dashboards on complaint handling and employment opportunities.

Restorative communication must also consider local identity and social memory. Communities affected by industrial development may not respond only to economic calculations. Their responses can be shaped by attachment to land, local livelihood systems, religious and cultural values, and previous experiences with government programs. Thus, government communicators should use language and channels that respect local contexts. Communication should be carried out not only through formal bureaucratic channels but also through trusted local figures, community organizations, religious leaders, and youth networks.

In digital spaces, the government should avoid defensive communication that dismisses public criticism as misinformation without first identifying the substance of the concern. Some digital narratives may indeed contain inaccuracies, but many also reflect real anxieties. A restorative digital strategy should include issue clarification, myth correction, response to frequently asked questions, visual explanation of policy stages, and human-centered stories

about community involvement. Digital communication should be interactive, not merely promotional. It should invite questions, provide updates, and direct citizens to concrete complaint channels.

Dialogical-Circular Government Communication Model



The loop links listening, explaining, coordinating, correcting, and validating public concerns.

Figure 1. Dialogical-circular model of restorative government communication.

The model proposed in Figure 1 integrates the above arguments into a dialogical-circular government communication framework. The starting point is the recognition of trust deficit. The next stages are restorative listening, narrative co-creation, multi-level coordination, responsive policy feedback, and restored public legitimacy. The arrows are circular because trust restoration is not linear. After policy feedback, new concerns may emerge and require renewed listening. This cyclical logic is essential in complex development projects where social, economic, and environmental conditions continue to change.

The theoretical implication of this article lies in its attempt to connect strategic communication, government communication, public sector reputation, and collaborative governance in a single restorative framework. Strategic communication provides the logic of planning and message alignment. Government communication provides the institutional context of public policy and citizen relations. Public sector reputation explains why trust and legitimacy matter as intangible assets. Collaborative governance explains why stakeholders must be involved in the communication process. By integrating these perspectives, the article argues that government communication in strategic industrial development should be evaluated not only by message reach but also by its capacity to restore relationships.

The practical implication is that the West Java Provincial Government, the Rebana Management Agency, and local governments need a shared communication protocol. The protocol should identify priority issues, assign communication responsibilities, establish response standards, and evaluate public trust indicators. It should also connect offline and online communication. Offline engagement is needed to build human relationships and listen to community concerns, while online engagement is needed to provide quick updates and respond to digital narratives. The combination of both channels can reduce information asymmetry and prevent public distrust from escalating into conflict.

For policy makers, the model suggests that communication should be treated as a governance instrument rather than a public relations accessory. If communication is positioned

only after policy decisions, it becomes a tool for explaining and defending decisions. If it is integrated from the beginning, it becomes a mechanism for policy learning, social risk mitigation, and legitimacy building. This distinction is important for the Rebana area because the project involves long-term transformation that will continue to affect local communities. Sustainable industrialization requires sustained public communication.

Nevertheless, this article has limitations. Because the paper is based on proposal-stage analysis and conceptual synthesis, it does not yet present final empirical findings from completed fieldwork. The proposed model therefore requires further validation through interviews, focus groups, observation, and digital sentiment analysis. Future research should test the model by comparing government narratives with community interpretations, examining actual complaint-handling mechanisms, and measuring whether dialogical engagement improves public trust. Quantitative follow-up research may also be conducted to assess the relationship between transparency, participation, responsiveness, and public acceptance of industrial development.

4. CONCLUSION

The development of the Rebana Industrial Development Area represents an important strategic agenda for West Java and Indonesia. However, the success of the project depends not only on infrastructure, investment, and regulatory support, but also on public trust. The proposal underlying this article shows that the Rebana area faces a trust deficit caused by information asymmetry, agrarian conflict residues, environmental concerns, and perceptions of local marginalization. These issues demonstrate that government communication must go beyond one-way socialization and become a dialogical, transparent, and participatory process.

This article proposes a restorative government communication model built around six stages: stakeholder mapping and issue diagnosis, active listening and grievance capture, transparent narrative construction, dialogical engagement, policy feedback and institutional follow-up, and evaluation of adaptive communication. The model emphasizes that public trust is restored when government institutions listen to concerns, explain policy honestly, coordinate messages across levels, respond to complaints, and show visible policy follow-up. In this sense, communication becomes a governance mechanism for mitigating social resistance and strengthening public legitimacy.

Future research should empirically validate the model through fieldwork in the Rebana area. The proposed interviews, observations, focus group discussions, document analysis, and digital media analysis can generate deeper insights into how different stakeholders perceive government communication. The results may support the formulation of a practical policy brief and communication protocol for the West Java Provincial Government, the Rebana Management Agency, local governments, investors, and communities. A more inclusive communication strategy can help ensure that industrial development is not only economically productive but also socially legitimate and locally meaningful.

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