

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN INTER-PROVINCIAL BORDER AREAS

(A Case Study of Cibingbin Village, West Java Province, Indonesia)

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Abstrak

This study was motivated by the achievement of Cibingbin Village, West Java Province, Indonesia, in maintaining its status as an independent village for four consecutive years (2020–2023), reflecting effective development management based on community participation and local wisdom in an inter-provincial border area. The article aims to describe how the development communication process is formulated and implemented by the village head and local actors to build and strengthen the community's social capital. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Key informants included the village head, village officials, community leaders, and residents involved in development initiatives. Data were analyzed thematically using a reflective-dialogical approach, grounded in diffusion of innovation theory, social construction of reality, and social action theory. The findings reveal that development communication is carried out through formal and informal forums, utilizing both digital and traditional media, and emphasizing the legitimizing role of religious and community leaders. Communication practices are participatory and adaptive, fostering trust, solidarity, and active citizen engagement. Social capital is strengthened through the continuity of social norms, local leadership roles, and inter-regional collaboration, all of which contribute to the village's independent status. This study contributes to the theoretical development of locally grounded development communication and offers a participatory model adaptable to other rural border areas facing similar socio-institutional challenges.

Keywords: development communication, community empowerment, social capital, inter-provincial border areas.

Introduction

Rural border areas occupy a distinctive position in national development discourse due to their geographical marginality, socio-cultural diversity, and strategic significance in cross-regional interaction (Makkonen & Williams, 2016; Svobodová et al., 2018). These areas frequently face structural disadvantages such as limited infrastructure, low access to essential services, and economic disparities, which constrain their development trajectories (Budianta, 2010; Soares et al., 2017). At the same time, border communities often maintain dense social networks and adaptive cultural practices that enable them to navigate resource scarcity through collaboration and mutual support. Such socio-cultural

capital, if strategically mobilized, can become a decisive factor in achieving sustainable rural development (Putnam, 2000; Fathy, 2019).

In Indonesia, border villages present a complex development landscape where administrative boundaries intersect with socio-cultural territories. The West Java–Central Java border, for instance, connects communities with distinct linguistic and cultural identities, yet are bound by long-standing inter-village relationships through kinship, trade, and shared traditions. Within this setting, development communication, the strategic use of communication processes to facilitate participatory planning, decision-making, and action, plays a crucial role in mediating between formal governance structures and local socio-cultural systems (Quebral, 2006; Cangara, 2020). However, existing policy frameworks and academic studies have rarely addressed how communication processes are adapted in border contexts where inter-regional cultural plurality and governance overlaps influence community engagement.

Cibingbin Village in Kuningan Regency, West Java, represents a compelling case for exploring this gap. Geographically located on the administrative boundary with Brebes Regency, Central Java, the village is culturally Sundanese but maintains frequent interactions with neighboring Javanese-speaking communities. Despite potential socio-cultural frictions and resource limitations typical of border regions, Cibingbin has achieved and maintained Independent Village (Desa Mandiri) status for four consecutive years (2020–2023). This achievement is notable given that in the same subdistrict, several villages with similar economic and geographical conditions have not reached equivalent development levels.

Table 1. Status of the Independent Village Index (IDM) in Cibingbin District, Kuningan Regency, which borders Central Java Province, 2018-2023.

No.	Desa	Status IDM					
		2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Cipondok	Berkembang	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju	Maju	Maju
2	Ciangir	Berkembang	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju	Maju	Maju
3	Cibingbin	Maju	Maju	Mandiri	Mandiri	Mandiri	Mandiri
4	Citenjo	Berkembang	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju	Maju	Maju
5	Dukuhbadag	Tertinggal	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju	Maju	Mandiri
6	Bantarpanjang	Tertinggal	Tertinggal	Tertinggal	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju
7	Sukaharja	Berkembang	Berkembang	Maju	Maju	Mandiri	Mandiri

Source: West Java Province Village Community Empowerment Service (2023).

The village's development trajectory is closely tied to its participatory governance practices and culturally rooted communication strategies. The Village Head and local leaders have effectively utilized a blend of formal and informal communication forums, including deliberation meetings (*musyawarah*), religious gatherings, and everyday social interactions, to align development programs with community values and priorities. These interactions not only disseminate information but also reinforce trust, solidarity, and cooperation, core elements of social capital (Putnam, 2000). The integration of digital platforms alongside traditional media further enhances the inclusivity and reach of development messages, particularly among younger residents.

Yet, while the Cibingbin case demonstrates how participatory development communication can strengthen social capital and drive sustained empowerment, there is limited empirical research documenting such processes in border village contexts. Most existing studies on rural development communication in Indonesia focus on the dissemination of agrarian innovation, urban–rural linkages, or general village governance (Mahmud, 2007; Wahyuni et al., 2020), without accounting for the specific socio-cultural negotiations and inter-regional collaborations characteristic of border areas. This omission represents both a theoretical and practical gap.

Therefore, this article seeks to answer two central questions: How is the development communication process implemented in Cibingbin Village to build and reinforce social capital? The research employs a qualitative case study approach, integrating theories of diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 2003), social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and social action (Weber, 1978) to analyze the interplay between communication strategies and social capital formation.

The novelty of this research lies in its formulation of a locally grounded participatory development communication model that integrates multi-channel communication (formal–informal, digital–traditional) with the legitimizing influence of religious and community leaders. This model advances theoretical understanding by situating development communication within border socio-cultural systems and provides actionable guidance for policymakers and practitioners seeking to replicate effective empowerment strategies in rural border settings.

Literature Review

Development Communication in Rural Contexts

Development communication has evolved as a multidisciplinary field integrating principles of communication science, sociology, anthropology, and development studies. At its core, it is the strategic application of communication processes to facilitate social change and improve the quality of life for communities, particularly those in marginalized or resource-constrained settings (Quebral, 2006; Cangara, 2020). The concept encompasses not only the dissemination of information but also the creation of dialogical spaces where stakeholders can negotiate meanings, make collective decisions, and co-create solutions tailored to their socio-cultural realities.

Historically, development communication emerged during the post-World War II modernization era, characterized by linear, top-down models of information transfer. Influenced by Lerner (1949), Schramm (1953), and Rogers (1962), early interventions emphasized mass media as the primary driver of modernization, often assuming that exposure to new information would automatically lead to behavioral change. This "diffusionist" approach positioned rural communities as passive recipients of expert-driven knowledge and external innovations. Critics, notably Freire (1970), challenged these assumptions by highlighting the importance of consciousness-raising (*conscientização*) and empowerment through dialogue. This shifted the paradigm towards participatory development communication, where the process is as important as the content, and where communication serves as a two-way, iterative exchange. Beltrán (2005) and Cadiz (2005) further reinforced the notion that development outcomes are more sustainable when communities actively engage in decision-making and program implementation, rather than merely adopting externally prescribed solutions.

In rural contexts, the effectiveness of development communication hinges on several interrelated factors: 1) **Leadership and Local Champions.** Effective communication in rural areas often depends on trusted local leaders who can interpret and contextualize information for their communities (Mahmud, 2007; Wahyuni et al., 2020). 2) **Media Ecology.** The coexistence of traditional media (e.g., face-to-face meetings, community radio, folk performances) and modern platforms (e.g., social media, messaging apps) offers both opportunities and challenges in message delivery and reception (Dagron, 2001). 3) **Cultural Resonance.** Communication strategies must align with local values, languages, and cultural practices to ensure message acceptance and internalization (Servaes, 2008). 4) **Feedback Mechanisms.** Two-way feedback loops enable continuous adaptation of messages and strategies, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for outcomes.

Rural development communication faces unique challenges, including infrastructural limitations, low digital literacy, and social stratification. In border regions, additional complexities arise from administrative duality (overlapping governance systems), cultural plurality (multiple ethnic and linguistic identities), and inter-regional dependencies (cross-border trade and social networks). These factors necessitate adaptive communication models that can bridge institutional and cultural divides.

In inter-provincial border villages like Cibingbin, development communication cannot rely solely on standardized governmental channels. Instead, it must leverage a hybrid system that blends formal governance forums (e.g., village deliberations) with informal cultural spaces (e.g., religious gatherings, kinship networks). Moreover, the presence of multiple cultural reference points, such as Sundanese and Javanese traditions, requires communicators to act as cultural brokers, mediating meanings across groups while reinforcing shared community identity.

This study situates Cibingbin's success within this broader theoretical and operational landscape. By combining formal and informal communication channels, digital and traditional media, and the legitimizing influence of religious and community leaders, Cibingbin exemplifies a locally grounded participatory development communication model. This approach not only facilitates information flow but also nurtures trust, solidarity, and collective agency, key ingredients for sustaining social capital and achieving long-term development goals.

Social Capital and Community Empowerment

Social capital has emerged as a critical analytical lens in development studies, particularly in understanding how community networks, shared norms, and trust enable collective action (Putnam, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1990). Unlike physical or financial capital, social capital resides in the relationships among individuals and groups, making it both an intangible asset and a measurable determinant of development outcomes.

From a sociological perspective, Bourdieu (1986) defined social capital as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of relationships," emphasizing its embeddedness in social structures and the potential for resource mobilization. Coleman (1990) approached it as a functional resource, highlighting its role in facilitating coordinated actions through obligations, expectations, and shared norms. Putnam (1993; 2000), in turn, popularized the concept in the context of governance, linking high social capital to effective civic engagement and democratic performance.

Three widely recognized forms of social capital are: 1) Bonding Social Capital, Strong ties within homogeneous groups, reinforcing internal solidarity and mutual support. 2) Bridging Social Capital, Horizontal connections across heterogeneous groups, facilitating the exchange of information and resources beyond one's immediate network. 3) Linking Social Capital, Vertical connections between communities and institutions, enabling access to external resources, policy influence, and institutional support (Woolcock, 2001; Cofré-Bravo et al., 2019). In rural development contexts, these forms are often interdependent. Bonding capital ensures trust and reciprocity within the community, bridging capital connects communities to external networks (e.g., NGOs, neighboring villages), and linking capital integrates them into broader governance and economic systems.

Community empowerment is defined as the process by which individuals and groups gain control over decisions and resources affecting their lives, thereby increasing their capacity to act collectively (Chambers, 1984; Zimmerman, 2000). Social capital enhances this process in several ways: 1) Trust and Reciprocity. High levels of interpersonal trust reduce transaction costs in collective action, enabling faster and more cohesive responses to development challenges (Fukuyama, 1995). 2) Norms and Shared Values, Agreed-upon norms foster cooperation and discourage opportunistic behavior, ensuring the sustainability of community-led initiatives. 3) Information Flows, Dense networks facilitate timely and relevant information exchange, crucial for decision-making in dynamic socio-economic environments. 4) Collective Efficacy, The belief in the community's collective ability to achieve desired outcomes strengthens participation and resilience. Empirical evidence shows that communities with high social capital tend to be more successful in implementing participatory development programs, managing natural resources, and sustaining livelihood initiatives beyond initial donor or government involvement (Markowska-Przybyla & Ramsey, 2018; Fathy, 2019).

While social capital offers substantial benefits, its distribution and impact are not always equitable. Excessive bonding capital, for example, may lead to exclusivity or resistance to change, while insufficient bridging capital may isolate communities from valuable external resources. Furthermore,

linking capital often depends on the accessibility and responsiveness of institutions, which in marginalized rural or border areas can be weak or absent. These challenges underscore the need for intentional strategies, often mediated through communication processes to balance and strengthen all three forms of social capital.

In inter-provincial border settings like Cibingbin, social capital functions not only within the community but also across administrative and cultural boundaries. Bonding capital is reinforced through shared language, kinship, and local traditions, while bridging capital is cultivated through social and economic interactions with neighboring villages in different provinces. Linking capital is strengthened through the village's connections with both provincial governments, enabling access to broader development programs.

The Cibingbin case demonstrates how participatory development communication acts as both a catalyst and a conduit for building social capital. Formal forums (e.g., village meetings) and informal spaces (e.g., religious gatherings) create opportunities for trust-building, norm reinforcement, and cross-boundary cooperation. The integration of digital platforms further enhances linking capital by expanding communication reach to external stakeholders. This synergy between communication processes and social capital formation has been central to Cibingbin's sustained *Desa Mandiri* status, making it an instructive model for other rural border communities.

Border Villages as Development Contexts

Border villages constitute a distinctive category within rural development discourse due to their peripheral geographical position, complex socio-cultural configurations, and strategic significance in inter-regional interaction. Their location at the interface of administrative boundaries often creates a duality of governance, where policies, resource allocation, and development initiatives are influenced by more than one political-administrative authority (Makkonen & Williams, 2016). This duality can generate both opportunities and challenges: while access to multiple administrative systems may increase potential resource flows, it can also lead to overlapping responsibilities, inconsistent policy implementation, and competition for jurisdictional authority.

In the Indonesian context, inter-provincial border villages frequently face the compounded effects of spatial marginalization and socio-economic inequality. These areas are often characterized by limited infrastructure, reduced access to public services, and constrained economic opportunities, which in turn contribute to persistent development gaps compared to urban or centrally located rural areas (Budianta, 2010; Soares et al., 2017). Despite these constraints, border villages are rarely passive peripheries. Instead, they are dynamic socio-spatial nodes where mobility, trade, and cultural exchange occur across administrative lines, fostering patterns of interdependence that influence local development trajectories (Svobodová et al., 2018).

Cultural diversity is a defining feature of many Indonesian border villages, as seen in Cibingbin Village in West Java, which shares a boundary with Pananggapan Village in Central Java. While the two communities differ in ethnic-linguistic heritage—Sundanese and Javanese—they maintain a shared communicative repertoire in the Sundanese language, facilitating everyday social interaction without significant linguistic barriers. This cultural interpenetration, coupled with historical kinship ties through inter-village marriages, has resulted in enduring patterns of cooperation and conflict avoidance, producing what Paramita and Sari (2016) identify as an associative interaction model. Such conditions suggest that border villages are not merely sites of potential cultural friction but can also function as spaces of socio-cultural convergence and negotiation.

Geographic factors also play a critical role in shaping development possibilities in these areas. In regions where border demarcations coincide with natural features such as rivers, mountains, or forests, mobility may be physically constrained, limiting access to markets, educational facilities, and healthcare services (Soares et al., 2017). In the case of Cibingbin, its position along the West Java–Central Java boundary is mitigated by accessible inter-provincial road infrastructure, which enables a relatively high degree of social and economic interaction with adjacent territories. This accessibility, combined

with the village's integration into provincial development programs such as the Desa Laboratorium Sinergitas Menuju Desa Emas (DLS to DE), has contributed to its upward development trajectory.

However, the literature indicates that despite their strategic position, border villages often receive insufficient targeted policy attention in national development agendas, with most research on border regions focusing on macro-level issues such as national security, migration flows, and cross-border trade (Makkonen & Williams, 2016; Németh et al., 2013). Consequently, the micro-level governance mechanisms, community participation patterns, and communication strategies that underpin successful local development in border settings remain underexplored. This gap is particularly evident in the Indonesian case, where empirical evidence on how border villages navigate their socio-cultural diversity and dual governance systems to achieve sustained community empowerment is scarce.

Understanding border villages as development contexts, therefore, requires a multidimensional analytical approach that integrates spatial, cultural, economic, and governance perspectives. It also demands recognition of the agency of local actors who, through participatory governance and adaptive communication strategies, can transform the structural constraints of peripheral geography into opportunities for innovation and resilience. The case of Cibingbin illustrates how the interplay between local leadership, participatory communication, and cross-boundary social capital can redefine the developmental possibilities of a border village, challenging prevailing narratives of marginality and dependency.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine the formulation and implementation of development communication strategies and their role in strengthening social capital in Cibingbin Village, Kuningan Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The case study design was deemed appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex social phenomena within their real-life context, allowing for the integration of multiple data sources to produce a comprehensive understanding of community dynamics (Yin, 2014). Cibingbin Village was purposefully selected as the research site due to its sustained achievement of Desa Mandiri status from 2020 to 2023, its location on the administrative boundary with Central Java, and its distinctive socio-cultural configuration shaped by Sundanese and Javanese interactions.

Data collection was conducted over several months through a triangulation of methods, namely in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were carried out with key informants, including the village head, village officials, religious leaders, neighborhood and hamlet leaders, and community members actively involved in development activities. These informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their knowledge, leadership roles, and involvement in decision-making processes. Interviews explored themes related to communication practices, community participation, and the mechanisms through which social capital is built and maintained.

Participatory observation was undertaken to capture naturally occurring communication processes in both formal and informal settings, such as village deliberation meetings (*musyawarah desa*), religious gatherings, and community-based development initiatives. This approach allowed the researcher to document interaction patterns, leadership dynamics, and the role of local cultural norms in shaping communicative exchanges. Complementary to interviews and observations, document analysis was conducted on village development plans, progress reports, and archival records related to development programs such as the Desa Laboratorium Sinergitas Menuju Desa Emas (DLS to DE), which has been instrumental in supporting Cibingbin's empowerment initiatives.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach, combining inductive coding with theoretical sensitization drawn from the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003), the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and social action theory (Weber, 1978). This analytical framework facilitated the identification of recurring patterns, meanings, and relationships between communication strategies, community engagement, and the strengthening of social capital. The reflective-dialogical

method was applied to ensure that emerging interpretations remained grounded in the perspectives of community members, thereby preserving the authenticity and contextual relevance of the findings.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, methodological rigor was ensured through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of data sources and methods, and member checking, whereby preliminary findings were shared with selected informants to verify their accuracy and resonance with lived experiences. Ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting local cultural protocols throughout the research process. This methodological design not only provides a robust empirical basis for understanding Cibingbin's development communication model but also allows for the formulation of a contextually grounded theoretical framework that can inform policy and practice in other rural border settings.

Participants

The primary participants in this study consisted of individuals directly involved in the governance and development of Cibingbin Village, Kuningan Regency, West Java. These included the village head, village secretary, heads of administrative divisions, and hamlet leaders. Their participation was essential in providing institutional perspectives on the formulation and implementation of development communication strategies. They were selected based on their formal roles in village administration, their decision-making authority, and their direct involvement in the planning, execution, and evaluation of community development programs, particularly those related to the Desa Laboratorium Sinergitas Menuju Desa Emas (DLS to DE) initiative. Their insights offered an authoritative understanding of how policies and communication channels were structured to engage the community effectively.

The secondary participants comprised influential community figures and residents who actively engaged in various stages of development activities. These included religious leaders, neighborhood and hamlet coordinators, youth representatives, women's group leaders, and long-term residents recognized for their involvement in communal initiatives. Religious leaders, in particular, played a legitimizing role in the communication process, often serving as cultural brokers between formal governance structures and grassroots community members. Ordinary residents were also included to capture diverse perspectives on message reception, participation levels, and trust-building processes within the community. The inclusion of both elite and grassroots participants ensured that the study captured the multidimensional nature of development communication and its relationship to the formation and reinforcement of social capital in a border village context.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected over an extended fieldwork period to ensure a comprehensive understanding of development communication practices and their relationship to social capital formation in Cibingbin Village. Multiple qualitative methods were employed to achieve methodological triangulation and enhance the depth and credibility of the findings. The primary method was in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants, including the village head, village officials, religious leaders, community organization representatives, and residents who were actively involved in development initiatives. Interview questions were designed to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of communication strategies, participation mechanisms, and the processes through which trust and cooperation were built within the community.

In addition to interviews, participatory observation was carried out in both formal and informal settings. The researcher attended village deliberation meetings, religious gatherings, community planning sessions, and social activities to observe communication flows, leadership styles, and community engagement dynamics in natural contexts. This approach allowed for the identification of tacit norms, unspoken rules, and culturally embedded practices that shaped the communication

process. The observations were systematically recorded in field notes immediately after each session to preserve contextual accuracy.

Document analysis complemented the primary data collection methods by providing historical and administrative perspectives on the village's development trajectory. Official documents, such as the Village Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Desa), annual activity reports, policy guidelines, and records of the Desa Laboratorium Sinergitas Menuju Desa Emas (DLS to DE) program, were examined to trace the evolution of communication strategies and community participation patterns over time. The combination of these data sources allowed the researcher to cross-validate findings, detect consistencies and discrepancies, and construct a rich, contextually grounded account of development communication in a border village setting.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was conducted concurrently with data collection to allow for iterative refinement of emerging themes and to ensure that subsequent interviews and observations could explore relevant issues in greater depth. All interviews were transcribed verbatim in the original language, and observational field notes were compiled in a systematic manner immediately following each field activity. These raw data sources were then subjected to a thematic analysis process, guided by both inductive and deductive reasoning. The inductive approach allowed themes to emerge naturally from participants' narratives and observed interactions, while the deductive approach was informed by established theoretical frameworks, including the diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003), the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), and social action theory (Weber, 1978).

Initial coding involved a close reading of all transcripts and notes to identify significant statements, recurring patterns, and meaningful concepts related to communication strategies, participation dynamics, and social capital formation. These codes were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories that captured the relationships between communication practices, trust-building mechanisms, and collective action. NVivo software was utilized to assist in organizing the coded data, ensuring systematic retrieval and comparison across different data sources and participant groups.

To maintain the authenticity of interpretations, the analysis process incorporated a reflective-dialogical approach in which the researcher revisited preliminary findings with selected participants for validation. This member-checking process ensured that interpretations were both accurate and contextually grounded, reducing the risk of researcher bias. Triangulation was achieved by comparing themes derived from interviews, observations, and document analysis, thereby reinforcing the credibility and dependability of the findings.

The analytical process culminated in the development of a conceptual model of participatory development communication specific to a border village context. This model integrates formal and informal communication channels, traditional and digital media, and the legitimizing influence of cultural and religious leadership. By situating the findings within the broader theoretical discourse on rural development communication and social capital, the study offers both a nuanced empirical account and a transferable framework for application in similar socio-institutional settings.

Results and Discussion

Integrative Communication Channels in Cibingbin Village

The findings reveal that development communication in Cibingbin Village operates through an integrated system that combines formal and informal channels, blending digital and traditional media to reach diverse segments of the community. Formal channels, such as *musyawarah desa* (village deliberation meetings) and scheduled planning forums, serve as institutionalized spaces for decision-making, enabling structured participation and transparent information dissemination. These are complemented by informal interactions occurring in religious gatherings, neighborhood discussions,

and everyday social exchanges, which serve to reinforce messages and ensure alignment with community values.

The coexistence of these channels reflects Rogers' (2003) assertion that innovation diffusion is most effective when interpersonal networks are leveraged alongside formal communication. In the Cibingbin case, the integration of WhatsApp groups, social media announcements, and community radio with face-to-face deliberations ensures both reach and cultural resonance, bridging generational and literacy divides. This hybrid model challenges earlier critiques of rural development communication as overly dependent on top-down media (Freire, 1970), illustrating that multi-channel approaches can create inclusive and participatory communication ecosystems in rural border contexts.

Leadership Legitimacy and Trust-Building Mechanisms

Leadership legitimacy emerged as a critical factor in sustaining community engagement and participation. The Village Head's active involvement in grassroots-level discussions and his consistent communication with residents through both formal and informal means has fostered a sense of accessibility and trust. Religious leaders play an equally important role, functioning as cultural brokers who legitimize development initiatives by framing them in terms aligned with local moral and spiritual values.

This dynamic aligns with Putnam's (2000) notion of bonding and linking social capital, where trust within the community is reinforced by trusted intermediaries who connect residents to institutional processes. The strategic involvement of religious figures also resonates with Servaes' (2008) culturally grounded communication framework, which emphasizes the importance of embedding messages within local belief systems to enhance acceptance and cooperation.

Strengthening Social Capital Through Participatory Communication

The study demonstrates that participatory communication processes in Cibingbin have directly contributed to the strengthening of all three dimensions of social capital. Bonding capital is nurtured through culturally embedded practices of mutual assistance (gotong royong) and regular communal activities, reinforcing intra-community solidarity. Bridging capital is fostered through interactions with neighboring villages in both West Java and Central Java, facilitated by shared cultural heritage and mutual economic interests. Linking capital is enhanced by the village's active engagement with provincial government programs, such as the Desa Laboratorium Sinergitas Menuju Desa Emas (DLS to DE), and by leveraging relationships with non-governmental development partners.

This pattern supports Woolcock's (2001) assertion that balanced forms of social capital provide communities with resilience, adaptability, and access to external resources. The Cibingbin experience adds to the literature by showing how participatory communication can function as a structural mechanism to develop all three forms simultaneously, rather than sequentially.

Border Contexts and the Dynamics of Communication

Cibingbin's location on the West Java–Central Java border introduces unique dynamics into its communication processes. The absence of significant language barriers—despite the presence of Sundanese and Javanese ethnic-linguistic identities—facilitates fluid interaction and cooperation across provincial lines. Historical kinship ties, reinforced by inter-village marriages, have created a social environment conducive to collaborative development efforts and conflict avoidance.

This finding aligns with Paramita and Sari's (2016) concept of associative interaction, where border communities utilize shared cultural capital to mitigate potential conflict and enhance cooperation. It also challenges dominant narratives in the literature that portray border regions primarily as spaces of contestation or marginality (Makkonen & Williams, 2016), instead presenting them as sites of opportunity for innovative governance and participatory development.

Theoretical and Practical Implications The results have significant implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the Cibingbin case expands the understanding of participatory

development communication by situating it within a border socio-cultural system, illustrating how communication channels, leadership legitimacy, and social capital are mutually reinforcing. Practically, the study offers a replicable model for rural border villages that integrates formal–informal and digital–traditional communication strategies, grounded in local cultural norms and mediated by trusted leaders. This model provides actionable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and community leaders seeking to replicate Cibingbin’s success in other peripheral and socio-culturally complex contexts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has examined the formulation and implementation of participatory development communication strategies in Cibingbin Village, a rural border community situated between West Java and Central Java, and their role in strengthening social capital for sustainable community empowerment. The findings demonstrate that the village’s sustained achievement of Desa Mandiri status over four consecutive years is closely linked to its ability to integrate formal and informal communication channels, blend digital and traditional media, and mobilize the legitimizing influence of both political and religious leadership. These strategies have effectively nurtured bonding, bridging, and linking social capital, enabling the community to access resources, foster trust, and maintain cohesion across diverse socio-cultural and administrative contexts.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the development communication literature by situating participatory approaches within the socio-cultural systems of rural border areas. It shows that participatory communication in such settings is not merely a mechanism for information dissemination but a dynamic process of negotiation, trust-building, and shared meaning-making that transforms the structural constraints of peripheral geography into opportunities for innovation and resilience. Practically, the research offers a locally grounded communication model that can be adapted to other rural border contexts, emphasizing cultural resonance, leadership legitimacy, and multi-channel integration as core principles.

Based on the findings, several recommendations emerge. First, policymakers and development agencies should design communication strategies that recognize and leverage the cultural and social capital of border communities, rather than imposing uniform top-down models. Second, the integration of digital tools with traditional communication platforms should be prioritized to ensure inclusivity across generations and literacy levels. Third, leadership development programs for both formal and informal community leaders should be supported, with an emphasis on skills for participatory facilitation, cultural mediation, and conflict resolution. Finally, further research should explore the adaptability of the Cibingbin model in other border settings with different cultural compositions and governance structures, to refine its applicability and scalability.

In conclusion, the Cibingbin experience demonstrates that peripheral location does not predetermine marginality. With contextually attuned communication strategies, strong leadership, and an intentional focus on social capital, rural border villages can achieve sustained empowerment and serve as exemplars of participatory development in complex socio-institutional environments.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All stages of the research, analysis, and manuscript preparation were conducted independently, without any influence from external parties that could compromise the objectivity or integrity of the findings.

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