

Implementation of Karawang City Government Communication to the Community Regarding the Tangkar Application

Qinthara Malta Nariswari¹, Teza Yudha¹, Rachmat Ramdani¹

¹Singaperbangsa University, Karawang, Indonesia (Jl. HS. Ronggo Waluyo Puseurjaya, Telukjambe Timur, 641177, Karawang, Indonesia)

*Corresponding author: 2110631180111@student.unsika.ac.id

ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government in utilizing the TANGKAR application as an e-government-based public complaint system. The research employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving ten informants, consisting of officials from the Department of Communication and Informatics (Diskominfo), sub-district and village administrators, and members of the public who use the application. The findings indicate that government communication in the socialization and management of the TANGKAR application has been conducted through various digital channels; however, it still faces challenges related to message consistency, public digital literacy, and inter-agency responsiveness. The novelty of this study lies in positioning strategic communication as the primary variable in analyzing the effectiveness of a digital public complaint system, rather than focusing solely on the technical or policy aspects of e-government implementation. Therefore, this study provides a conceptual contribution by expanding the discourse on local-level e-government through a strategic communication perspective, while also offering empirical recommendations to strengthen public participation and improve the quality of digital-based public services.



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INTRODUCTION

Public service is one of the fundamental functions of government in realizing public welfare and improving the quality of good governance (Qatawneh, 2024; Quintana et al., 2022; Vujković et al., 2022). Along with the development of information and communication technology (ICT), the paradigm of public service has shifted from conventional systems to digital-based services, commonly referred to as e-government. This transformation is viewed as a strategy to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of services to the public (Qatawneh, 2024; Quintana et al., 2022; Vujković et al., 2022). Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) indicate that internet penetration in Indonesia reached more than 66% in 2022 and continues to increase, reflecting the growing potential for utilizing digital technology in public service delivery (Qatawneh, 2024; Quintana et al., 2022; Vujković et al., 2022).

One form of e-government implementation in Indonesia is the development of online-based public complaint systems at both national and regional levels (Rahmatullah et al., 2025; Samudra, 2025; Wardani et al., 2025). The presence of digital public complaint systems serves not only as a two-way communication channel between the government and the community but also as an indicator of governmental openness to public participation. Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services affirms that citizens have the right to submit complaints and obtain responses to the services they receive, making complaint management a crucial element in improving the quality of public services (Tuanaya et al., 2025).

As part of e-government implementation at the regional level, the Government of Karawang Regency/City, through the Department of Communication and Informatics, developed the Tangkar Karawang Application (TANGKAR) (Tuanaya et al., 2025). This application is a public complaint and aspiration platform accessible via Android, web, SMS Gateway, and social media, designed with the principles of simplicity, integration, and completeness. Since its launch on February 22, 2019, the TANGKAR application has been utilized by the community as a primary channel for reporting various public service issues. Statistical data show that in recent years, thousands of public reports have been submitted through various channels, with the number of complaints exceeding 6,000 reports in a single year, reflecting the high public demand for digital communication channels with the local government (Winata & Attala, 2024).

Although the quantitative level of TANGKAR utilization is relatively high, the effectiveness of e-government implementation is not determined solely by the availability of technology but also by how the government communicates the existence, functions, and service mechanisms of the application to the public (Setiyani, 2021). Various studies on digital-based public complaint applications in Indonesia indicate that system success is strongly influenced by the quality of government communication, the level of public outreach, clarity of information, and institutional responsiveness in following up on public reports. Previous research has also revealed that low digital literacy, limited human resources, and a lack of response consistency across agencies remain major challenges in managing e-government-based complaints (Heriyanto et al., 2025; Pratomo et al., 2025; Rusmini et al., 2025). In the perspective of e-government and good governance, strategic communication is a key element in determining the success of public sector digital innovation. International studies demonstrate that the success of governmental digital transformation depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on how governments design messages, select communication channels, build trust, and manage interactions with the public in a planned and integrated manner (Grunig, 2011; Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015). However, in the Indonesian context, studies that explicitly position strategic communication as the primary variable in analyzing public complaint systems remain relatively limited (Heriyanto et al., 2025; Pratomo et al., 2025).

Consequently, there is a lack of clarity regarding the extent to which government communication strategies contribute to the effective utilization of the TANGKAR application, increased public participation, and strengthened public trust in local government. This gap creates both conceptual and empirical issues, as a high rate of application usage does not necessarily reflect successful government communication or the quality of two-way interaction in e-government-based public services. Therefore, research that specifically analyzes the implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government in managing and utilizing the TANGKAR application is necessary to bridge the gap between the potential of digital technology and the quality of public service communication.

Studies on the TANGKAR application have generally focused more on policy implementation and the technical aspects of complaint system management (Setiyani, 2021; Sulaiman & Erowati, 2025). However, research that specifically examines the implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government to the community regarding the TANGKAR application particularly in terms of information dissemination, public understanding, and the effectiveness of two-way communication remains limited. This condition indicates a research gap between the high level of application usage and a deeper understanding of how government communication strategies influence the utilization and effectiveness of the service.

The imbalance between digital technological potential and the quality of government communication has direct implications for public service quality. If communication is not carried out optimally, the complaint application risks becoming merely a one-way reporting medium, failing to encourage sustainable public participation or enhance public trust in local government. Therefore, examining the implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government to the community in utilizing the TANGKAR application is both important and urgent, in order to provide empirical insights and strategic recommendations to strengthen e-government-based public services and to promote more participatory, responsive, and accountable governance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to examine in depth the implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government to the community regarding the TANGKAR application as an e-government-based public complaint platform. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on the processes, strategies, and communication dynamics occurring within the context of digital public services. The research was conducted in a naturalistic setting, with the researcher directly involved in observing government communication phenomena related to the socialization, dissemination of information, and public utilization of the TANGKAR application.

The study involved ten informants selected through purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they possessed knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation or utilization of the TANGKAR application. The informants consisted of four officials from the Department of Communication and Informatics (Diskominfo) of Karawang City who were directly involved in managing or socializing the application and had authority in public communication strategies; two administrators or liaison officers at the sub-district or village level who acted as communication intermediaries and had followed up on reports submitted through TANGKAR; and four community members who had submitted at least one report through the application and were willing to share their experiences and perceptions regarding government communication. The research was conducted over a two-month period, from February 1 to March 24, 2024, in the Karawang Regency/City area, covering the stages of preparation, data collection through interviews and observation, data analysis, and verification of findings.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including officials from the Department of Communication and Informatics of Karawang City as the managers of the TANGKAR application, as well as community users of the application. In addition, observations were conducted on government communication activities, both through digital media and direct socialization events, to examine patterns of message delivery and interaction. Documentation was also used as a data source, including regulations, complaint reports, official social media content, archives, and publications related to the implementation of the TANGKAR application.

Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The collected data were classified according to the research focus and analyzed by linking empirical findings to Anwar Arifin's communication strategy framework. This analytical process aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of government communication implementation in the utilization of the TANGKAR application. The validity of the data was ensured through source and technique triangulation, by comparing information obtained from various informants and different data collection methods. These efforts were undertaken to ensure the consistency, credibility, and accuracy of the research findings so that the results can be scientifically justified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The TANGKAR Application as an E-Government-Based Public Service Communication System

The implementation of the Tanggap Karawang (TANGKAR) application by the Karawang City Government reflects a paradigm shift in public service delivery, moving from a conventional service model toward an e-government-based system (Abulhaija et al., 2026; Riani, 2021; Zook et al., 2026). The TANGKAR application functions not merely as a technical tool for handling public complaints but also represents a digital public communication system that connects the government and the community in a two-way interaction. In this context, TANGKAR serves as a communication medium that enables citizens to directly convey their aspirations and grievances, while simultaneously providing the government with a structured and well-documented mechanism for response.

Organizationally, the operational mechanism of the TANGKAR application demonstrates a hierarchical bureaucratic communication pattern, beginning with the receipt of reports by a central administrator, followed by verification and review processes, and subsequently the distribution of reports to regional administrators and liaison officers of relevant agencies. This pattern reflects the characteristics of formal and hierarchical organizational communication within government bureaucracy. From the perspective of organizational communication theory, such hierarchical structures offer advantages in maintaining clarity of information flow and division of authority; however, they may also create obstacles if inter-unit coordination does not function optimally (DePaula & Hansson, 2025; Judge-Ellis et al., 2025; Savchuk et al., 2025). In practice, the clarity of TANGKAR's workflow has become one of the supporting factors contributing to the relatively high rate of follow-up on public reports.

Empirical data indicate that since its launch in 2019, the TANGKAR application has accommodated thousands of public reports, with a relatively high resolution rate. This achievement suggests that, in terms of system capacity and government responsiveness, TANGKAR has functioned effectively. These findings align with the concept of responsive governance, which emphasizes the government's ability to respond to public needs and complaints in a prompt, measurable, and accountable manner (Lu et al., 2026; Younus et al., 2025). Thus, TANGKAR can be viewed as an instrument that strengthens the responsiveness dimension of digital-based public services at the local level.

Nevertheless, such technical and administrative success does not automatically reflect comprehensive success in public communication. Within the e-government framework, the success of digital services is not measured solely by the number of incoming reports or the percentage of resolved complaints, but also by the extent to which the system is understood, accessed, and widely utilized by the public (Amirova et al., 2026; Wen et al., 2025; Yıldız & Dede, 2025). At this point, the implementation of TANGKAR reveals a tension between service system effectiveness and the effectiveness of government communication with the community.

As a public communication system, TANGKAR still tends to function as a reactive medium responding to submitted reports rather than as a proactive platform that builds widespread public awareness and participation. This is reflected in the relatively low number of application users compared to the total population of Karawang Regency/City, as well as the continued presence of citizens who submit complaints directly due to a lack of awareness about the TANGKAR application. This condition indicates that TANGKAR has operated optimally on the back-end service side namely, in managing and following up on reports but has not yet fully optimized its front-end communication function related to information dissemination and public understanding.

From the perspective of public communication theory, this situation suggests that TANGKAR functions more strongly as an administrative communication channel than as a participatory communication medium. The government has provided a digital channel for interaction; however, the transformation toward dialogic communication and community empowerment still faces various limitations (DANOWSKI, 2025; Jeilani et al., 2025).. This phenomenon reinforces the view that the digitalization of public services often places greater emphasis on technological aspects and bureaucratic performance, while the communicative dimension as a social process has not yet received adequate attention.

Therefore, the TANGKAR application can be understood as a representation of e-government implementation that has successfully enhanced the responsiveness of the Karawang City Government in handling public complaints, yet still faces challenges in building inclusive and equitable public communication. These findings affirm that the success of e-government is determined not only by the sophistication of the system and high complaint resolution rates, but also by the government's ability to strategically manage public communication in order to foster public understanding, participation, and trust.

The Communication Strategy of the Karawang City Government in Socializing the TANGKAR Application

The communication strategy implemented by the Karawang City Government in socializing the TANGKAR application demonstrates a systematic effort to adjust messages, methods, and communication targets to the diverse characteristics of the community. The government recognizes that the people of Karawang are not homogeneous in terms of geography, educational background, or digital literacy. This condition has encouraged the government to design a communication strategy that does not rely solely on digital media but also involves bureaucratic actors at the sub-district and village levels as extensions of the local government's communication network.

Audience identification constitutes a crucial initial stage in this communication strategy. The government identified groups that are relatively easy to reach through digital media particularly urban communities and younger generations as well as communities in rural areas with limited network access and low utilization of information technology (Moon & Shin, 2025; Ren, 2025; Wu, 2025). This awareness is reflected in policies that do not depend entirely on online

socialization but also employ direct approaches through outreach activities and coordination with Sub-district Heads (Camat) and Village Heads. From the perspective of communication strategy theory, understanding the audience is an essential prerequisite to ensure that messages are not uniform and abstract but contextualized to the social conditions of the community.

In the message development stage, the government has attempted to simplify information about the TANGKAR application by emphasizing its ease of use, benefits, and practical relevance for the community. Communication messages are designed to be functional and closely related to citizens' everyday experiences such as the ease of reporting environmental, infrastructure, and public service issues rather than being overly technocratic (Sugiarto et al., 2025; Sulaiman & Erowati, 2025). The use of simple Indonesian as well as Sundanese as a local language reflects linguistic adaptation aimed at enhancing audience comprehension. This strategy aligns with the principles of effective communication, which emphasize the suitability of messages to the cultural and social background of the recipients.

Nevertheless, the findings indicate that message development still tends to reflect the government's perspective emphasizing what the government intends to convey rather than fully addressing what the community wants to know or needs. Communication messages are largely focused on introducing the application as a service innovation, while opportunities for dialogue to explore public needs and perceptions regarding digital complaint services remain limited (Choi et al., 2024; Mora et al., 2022; Yudarwati et al., 2022). From the standpoint of public communication theory, this condition suggests that the communication model remains predominantly informative and educational, but not yet fully transformative and participatory.

The communication methods employed by the Karawang City Government are dominated by an educational approach through outreach and guidance provided to Sub-district Heads and Village Heads. This approach reflects a tiered communication strategy commonly found within bureaucratic structures. Theoretically, educational methods have the advantage of fostering long-term understanding, as they not only disseminate information but also shape knowledge and attitudes (Afifi et al., 2025; Ray et al., 2024; Rehman et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of this method depends heavily on the capacity and commitment of intermediary actors in conveying the message to the community. Field findings indicate that not all areas receive information with the same intensity and quality, potentially creating disparities in understanding across regions.

From a development communication perspective, a strategy that relies on intermediary actors such as Sub-district Heads and Village Heads can be both a strength and a limitation. On the one hand, this approach strengthens message legitimacy, as it is delivered by figures who are close to the community (Jeong & Kim, 2024; Lin, 2024). On the other hand, reliance on structural communication channels may result in message distortion and slow down the dissemination process. This condition suggests that government communication strategies remain strongly influenced by bureaucratic logic and have not yet fully transformed into a more horizontal and dialogic communication model.

Overall, the communication strategy of the Karawang City Government in socializing the TANGKAR application demonstrates adaptive efforts to accommodate community characteristics and local contexts. However, the strategy still faces challenges in shifting from a predominantly top-down communication pattern toward a more participatory approach oriented to community needs. These findings indicate that the success of e-government communication depends not only on the government's ability to disseminate information but also on its capacity to create spaces for dialogue and sustained public engagement.

Communication Media and the Challenges of Information Dissemination Amid the Digital Divide

The selection and use of communication media by the Karawang City Government in socializing the TANGKAR application demonstrate a multichannel strategy that integrates face-to-face communication, outdoor media, and digital platforms. This approach reflects the government's awareness that disseminating information about digital public services cannot rely on a single type of media, given the heterogeneous characteristics of the people of Karawang. In this context, communication media function not only as channels for delivering information but also as determinants of the reach and effectiveness of government communication messages (Johnson, 2023; Matamoros-Fernández et al., 2022; Serafini et al., 2023)..

Face-to-face communication is conducted through outreach and socialization activities targeting Sub-district Heads and Village Heads, who are then expected to convey the information to their respective communities. This medium has the advantage of fostering deeper understanding, as it enables direct interaction, message clarification, and adaptation of materials to local conditions (Alcaide-Muñoz et al., 2025; Tacian et al., 2022; Unkels et al., 2026). From the perspective of interpersonal communication theory, face-to-face communication is considered highly effective because it allows immediate feedback. However, its limitation lies in its relatively narrow reach and dependence on intermediary actors, meaning that its effectiveness is strongly influenced by the intensity and quality of follow-up communication at the village level (Shammut & Imran, 2025; Tanguay et al., 2025).

In addition to face-to-face communication, the government also utilizes outdoor media, such as banners, to disseminate information. These media serve as visual reminders of the existence of the TANGKAR application, particularly for community members who are not active users of digital platforms. Banners have the advantage of passively and repeatedly reaching the public; however, in substance, they are limited to conveying brief and concise messages. In the context of public communication, outdoor media function more as awareness-building tools rather than as instruments for in-depth education (Acharya et al., 2025; Thela et al., 2025)..

Digital media, particularly social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, serve as the government's primary channels for disseminating information about the TANGKAR application to a broader audience. Social media enable rapid, wide, and relatively low-cost information distribution, while also providing opportunities for two-way interaction between the government and the public. From the perspective of digital communication theory, social media have the potential to enhance public participation, as they allow citizens not only to receive information but also to respond directly (Atobishi & Mansur, 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). However, the research findings indicate that in the context of Karawang, the effectiveness of social media tends to be segmentative, reaching primarily urban communities and groups with higher levels of digital literacy.

The limited reach of digital media indicates the presence of a significant digital divide in Karawang Regency/City. Factors such as limited network infrastructure in certain areas, low levels of digital literacy, and patterns of technology use that are primarily entertainment-oriented prevent all segments of society from optimally accessing information about the TANGKAR application. From the perspective of digital divide theory, this condition demonstrates that disparities in access to and the ability to utilize information technology can directly contribute to inequalities in public participation in digital public services (Hummell et al., 2024; Monteiro et al., 2024).

A paradox emerges when digital media, which are theoretically the most effective tools for supporting e-government, become the most exclusive media for certain segments of society (Chohan & Hu, 2022; Cuadrado-Ballesteros et al., 2022; Sugiarto et al., 2025). Meanwhile, non-digital media that are more inclusive have limitations in delivering in-depth information. This condition illustrates that the effectiveness of government communication media is determined not only by technological sophistication but also by the compatibility of the media with the social

and cultural conditions of the community. Therefore, the primary challenge lies not in the availability of media, but in the strategy of integrating various media in order to reach all segments of society equitably.

These findings affirm that the implementation of e-government communication through the TANGKAR application still faces structural challenges in information dissemination. The use of diverse media has not yet fully overcome disparities in public access and understanding. Consequently, the effectiveness of government communication in the context of digital public services requires a more inclusive and sustainable media approach, rather than relying solely on digital platforms as the primary solution.

The Effects of Communication Implementation: Government Responsiveness and Public Awareness

The effects of the Karawang City Government's communication implementation through the TANGKAR application can be observed in changes in the level of government responsiveness, public participation, and behavioral patterns in submitting public service complaints. Empirically, the data indicate that the local government demonstrates a relatively high capacity to follow up on reports submitted through the TANGKAR application. The high percentage of resolved complaints reflects a bureaucratic capacity that is reasonably well-prepared to manage digital-based complaints, while also demonstrating the government's commitment to improving the quality of public services (Alsaad, 2022; Owusu et al., 2022; Sulaiman & Erowati, 2025).

From the perspective of communication effects theory, this achievement can be associated with the conative effect namely, changes in governmental behavior in responding to public reports in a more systematic and structured manner (Reissig et al., 2022; Trček, 2022). The TANGKAR application has encouraged the government to shift from a conventional reactive service pattern toward a system-based service model that is documented and monitored. From the government's standpoint, this represents a significant achievement in e-government implementation, as it indicates a transformation in work mechanisms and public service management.

However, when viewed from the community's perspective, the communication effects generated have not been fully equitable. Although the number of incoming reports is relatively high, the number of TANGKAR application users remains relatively small compared to the total population of Karawang Regency/City. Moreover, the continued presence of citizens who submit complaints directly or through offline channels suggests that the cognitive and affective effects of government communication have not reached all segments of society (Abdulkareem et al., 2022; Mavriki & Karyda, 2022; Oliychenko & Ditkovska, 2022). In other words, not all members of the community are aware of, understand, or trust the TANGKAR application as the primary channel for public complaints.

This condition indicates a disparity between the success of the service system and the success of public communication. Within the framework of public communication theory, communication effectiveness is measured not only by the availability of communication channels but also by the extent to which messages shape public knowledge, attitudes, and trust. In this context, the TANGKAR application has succeeded in strengthening government responsiveness but has not fully succeeded in building widespread public awareness and participation. The communication effects appear to be more dominant on the internal bureaucratic side than on the external public side (Schaeps, 2022).

Furthermore, this phenomenon reflects a distinction between service performance and public perception. A high complaint resolution rate is not necessarily accompanied by improved public perceptions regarding the accessibility and usefulness of the application (Barbosa & Mota,

2022; Linhartova, 2022; Schaebs, 2022). This suggests that public trust in digital government services is shaped not only by technical performance but also by the communication experience perceived by citizens, including ease of access to information, clarity of procedures, and consistency of the messages received (El-Gama et al., 2022).

From a good governance perspective, public participation is a key element in delivering accountable and transparent public services (AlHussainan et al., 2022). The TANGKAR application inherently holds significant potential as a medium for digital public participation. However, this potential has not been fully realized because the communication effects generated remain partial and uneven. High participation among certain groups does not necessarily represent comprehensive public engagement.

These findings emphasize that the primary challenge in the Karawang City Government's communication implementation through the TANGKAR application lies not in the technical aspects of the system, but in the sustainability and inclusiveness of public communication. The effectiveness of e-government should not be measured solely by how quickly reports are handled, but also by the extent to which citizens feel connected, involved, and empowered through the digital platform. Therefore, the TANGKAR application should be understood not merely as a service tool, but as a medium of public communication that requires more adaptive, dialogic, and trust-oriented communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of communication by the Karawang City Government in utilizing the TANGKAR application as an e-government based public complaint system has been carried out through various digital channels and has demonstrated a relatively good level of responsiveness in resolving complaints. Functionally, this application has been able to serve as a medium connecting the government and the community in submitting reports and public service aspirations. However, the communication strategy implemented remains predominantly top-down and segmentative, has not fully reached all segments of society, and faces challenges related to message consistency, digital literacy, and inter-agency coordination. These issues have resulted in the suboptimal realization of dialogical and participatory two-way communication. This study emphasizes that the effectiveness of a digital public complaint system is not solely determined by technological infrastructure readiness and the quantitative achievement of complaint resolution, but also by the quality of communication planning, message clarity, appropriate channel selection, and the government's ability to build inclusive and sustainable interactions with the community. Therefore, strengthening strategic communication becomes an essential prerequisite for increasing public participation, enhancing public trust, and realizing more responsive, accountable, and citizen-oriented digital public services.

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Possible CRediT statements:

Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, writing-original draft, writing-review & editing.

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Competing interest. The authors declare no competing interest.

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