

**COMMUNICATION AS A PRACTICE OF HUMANITARIAN
SOLIDARITY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LPBI PBNU LEADERS
AND VOLUNTEERS IN STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE**

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia is one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, making the involvement of multiple stakeholders essential for disaster risk reduction. Alongside government institutions, faith-based civil society organizations play an important role in strengthening community capacity and resilience. However, disaster communication research has largely emphasized information dissemination, risk communication, and institutional strategies, while limited attention has been given to how communication is experienced and interpreted by actors within disaster management organizations. This study explores the meanings of communication as experienced and constructed by leaders and volunteers of the Disaster Management and Climate Change Agency of Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (LPBI PBNU) in fostering community disaster resilience. A qualitative approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members engaged in LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities. The findings show that communication is understood as a practice of humanitarian solidarity, a means of encouraging community participation, and a process of cultivating collective awareness of disaster risks. Rather than functioning merely as a channel for information transmission, communication serves as a social practice through which interpersonal relationships are built and community resilience is strengthened. This study contributes to organizational communication scholarship by conceptualizing communication as a lived social experience within a faith-based disaster management organization.

Keywords: organizational communication; interpretative phenomenology; humanitarian solidarity; LPBI PBNU; community resilience.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is among the countries most vulnerable to natural disasters worldwide. Geographically, the country is situated at the convergence of three major tectonic plates—the Eurasian, Indo-Australian, and Pacific plates—making it highly susceptible to a wide range of natural hazards, including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, and droughts. Beyond its geological setting, increasingly unpredictable climate change has further

intensified the frequency and severity of hydrometeorological disasters, posing significant challenges to communities across the archipelago. These conditions underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to disaster management that extends beyond emergency response to encompass disaster risk reduction and the strengthening of community capacity to cope with disaster threats.

Within the disaster risk reduction (DRR) paradigm, communities are no longer viewed merely as passive recipients of assistance during disasters but as active agents with a central role in fostering preparedness and resilience within their own environments. Accordingly, strengthening community resilience has become a fundamental strategy for minimizing disaster impacts. Community resilience extends beyond physical and economic capacities to include social cohesion, knowledge, awareness, and the ability of communities to understand, anticipate, and respond effectively to the risks they face.

One of the key factors in strengthening community resilience is communication. In the context of disaster management, communication serves a far broader purpose than merely disseminating information about disaster risks. It plays a crucial role in raising public awareness, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, encouraging community participation, and fostering a shared understanding of the actions required before, during, and after disaster events. Through effective communication, communities gain knowledge of disaster mitigation measures, develop a deeper understanding of the risks present in their surroundings, and strengthen their preparedness to respond to emergency situations.

Research on disaster communication has evolved through various theoretical perspectives, including risk communication, crisis communication, and disaster communication management. A growing body of literature has demonstrated the pivotal role of communication in enhancing community preparedness and improving the effectiveness of disaster management efforts. Nevertheless, most existing studies continue to conceptualize communication primarily as an instrument for information dissemination, institutional coordination, or mitigation strategy. Such perspectives tend to emphasize the functional aspects of communication, while paying comparatively limited attention to how communication is experienced, interpreted, and imbued with meaning by those directly engaged in disaster management activities.

However, communication in disaster management extends well beyond the simple transmission of messages. It also represents a social experience through which individuals build relationships, cultivate trust, foster solidarity, and engage with one another in collective action. Within disaster management activities, communication often serves as the bridge that connects volunteers, organizational leaders, and community members around a shared humanitarian purpose. Through sustained interaction, communication facilitates not only the exchange of information but also the construction of shared meanings related to compassion, social responsibility, and community participation in addressing disaster risks.

From the Human Relations perspective, communication is understood not merely as a means of conveying information but as a process of building social relationships that fosters cooperation, engagement, and a sense of belonging within groups (Mayo, 1933). This perspective places people at the center of organizational life, emphasizing that organizational effectiveness depends not only on formal structures and operational procedures but also on the

quality of interpersonal relationships cultivated through communication. Within the context of disaster management organizations, communication functions as a vital medium for nurturing trust, strengthening solidarity, and encouraging community participation in disaster risk management. This perspective becomes particularly relevant when considered in relation to the role of faith-based civil society organizations in disaster management. In Indonesia, religious organizations maintain strong social and cultural ties with local communities, enabling them to engage effectively with grassroots populations. Their contributions extend beyond emergency response, encompassing efforts to promote public awareness, strengthen social solidarity, and enhance community capacity through disaster mitigation initiatives and disaster education programs. These characteristics position faith-based organizations as key actors in advancing community-based disaster risk reduction.

One of the most prominent faith-based organizations engaged in disaster management in Indonesia is the Disaster Management and Climate Change Agency of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (LPBI PBNU). As an institution operating under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama, LPBI PBNU is actively involved in a wide range of disaster management activities, including disaster mitigation, disaster education, volunteer training, community assistance, and post-disaster recovery. Unlike disaster management agencies that primarily operate through formal bureaucratic mechanisms, LPBI PBNU adopts an approach grounded in social networks, religious values, and active community engagement across all phases of disaster management. Supported by an extensive organizational network that extends to regional and local branches, LPBI PBNU is well positioned to establish close and sustained communication with communities through a variety of disaster risk reduction programs.

This close relationship with local communities makes communication an integral component of LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities. Communication is employed not only to disseminate information on disaster mitigation but also to foster social relationships, cultivate collective awareness, and encourage community engagement in disaster-related initiatives. In practice, communication takes place through various forms of interaction, including public outreach, training programs, disaster simulation exercises, community assistance, and ongoing interpersonal communication conducted by organizational leaders and volunteers. Through these continuous interactions, communication becomes inseparable from broader efforts to strengthen community preparedness for disasters.

A growing body of research has highlighted the pivotal role of communication in supporting disaster management activities. Communication contributes to the effectiveness of disaster mitigation, enhances community preparedness, facilitates the dissemination of risk information, and strengthens coordination among disaster management stakeholders (Ulhaq, 2020; Naimah, 2023; Permatasari & Sinduwiatmo, 2024). Other studies have likewise demonstrated that communication serves as a critical mechanism for raising public awareness of disaster threats and encouraging community participation in disaster risk reduction initiatives (Rozak & Restendy, 2021; Tresnanti et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings underscore the strategic importance of communication in advancing disaster management efforts.

Despite the growing body of research on disaster communication, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding communication from the perspective of those who work directly

within disaster management organizations. Existing studies have largely examined communication as a functional process of information exchange, whereas the lived experiences of organizational actors have remained underexplored. Yet, in disaster settings, communication encompasses far more than the transmission of messages. It is embedded in everyday social interactions through which interpersonal relationships are cultivated, mutual trust is established, and humanitarian commitments are enacted. For organizational leaders and volunteers, communication is not simply a means of conveying disaster-related information; it is a relational practice that encourages community participation, nurtures collective responsibility, and strengthens public engagement in disaster preparedness. Examining how these actors experience and interpret communication therefore offers an important opportunity to deepen current understandings of communication as a socially constructed humanitarian practice.

A similar gap can be observed in the institutional contexts examined by previous studies. Most disaster communication research has focused on government agencies, official disaster management authorities, or mitigation programs implemented through formal institutional frameworks. Comparatively little is known about communication practices within faith-based disaster management organizations. This omission is particularly significant given that such organizations operate through a distinctive combination of humanitarian values, religious commitments, social solidarity, and longstanding cultural ties with local communities. Investigating communication from this perspective offers new insights into how organizational leaders and volunteers construct meaning through humanitarian action rooted in both religious and social values.

Building on the foregoing discussion, this study conceptualizes communication not merely as an organizational instrument but as a socially constructed experience through which organizational leaders and volunteers make sense of their engagement in disaster management. The novelty of this research lies in its examination of communication as a practice of humanitarian solidarity within a faith-based disaster management organization. Employing an interpretative phenomenological approach, the study seeks to explore how leaders and volunteers of LPBI PBNU experience and interpret the communication practices they enact throughout disaster management activities, and how these meanings contribute to fostering community engagement in disaster risk reduction and resilience-building.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to explore the meaning of communication as a practice of humanitarian solidarity as experienced by the leaders and volunteers of LPBI PBNU in their efforts to strengthen community resilience to disasters.

2.0 RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). This approach was selected because the study seeks to explore the lived experiences of LPBI PBNU leaders and volunteers and to understand how they construct the meaning of communication through their engagement in disaster management activities. IPA is particularly well suited to examining how individuals make sense of their lived experiences and how these meanings are shaped through social interaction within specific contexts (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2022). Accordingly, the focus of this study is not on communication

patterns as organizational phenomena, but rather on the subjective experiences and meanings that emerge from communication practices in disaster management.

The research was conducted within the Disaster Management and Climate Change Agency of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (LPBI PBNU), focusing on its community resilience-building program in Buleleng Regency, Bali, Indonesia. This research setting was selected because of LPBI PBNU's active involvement in disaster mitigation and disaster education initiatives that directly engage local communities, providing a rich context for exploring the lived experiences of communication among organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, as this technique enables the recruitment of individuals with firsthand experience and knowledge relevant to the research objectives. The study involved five participants: one LPBI PBNU executive member who served as the key informant, two LPBI NU volunteers as supporting informants, and two community members who had participated in LPBI NU's disaster management activities in Buleleng Regency, Bali. The sample size was determined in accordance with the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which prioritizes the depth and richness of individual accounts over the generalizability of findings.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews served as the primary data collection method, enabling participants to articulate their experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of communication within disaster management activities. Participant observation was undertaken to gain contextual insights into the interactions among organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members during disaster-related activities. To complement these data, document analysis was conducted using organizational reports, activity photographs, and other relevant institutional documents that provided additional contextual understanding of the communication practices under investigation.

Data were analyzed using the procedures of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022). The analytical process involved repeated readings of the interview transcripts, initial noting, the identification of emergent themes, the clustering of themes based on conceptual and experiential connections, and the interpretative examination of participants' accounts. Through this iterative process, the study sought to understand how communication is experienced and given meaning by LPBI PBNU leaders and volunteers in the context of disaster management activities.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members, while method triangulation involved cross-checking data derived from interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In addition, the researcher revisited and verified the interpretative findings to ensure that the analysis remained consistent with the experiences and meanings expressed by the participants.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Communication as a Practice of Humanitarian Solidarity

The findings indicate that communication within LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities is understood as far more than a mechanism for disseminating information on disaster mitigation and preparedness. For both organizational leaders and volunteers, communication is experienced as a humanitarian practice through which social relationships are cultivated, mutual care is expressed, and collective engagement in responding to disaster risks is sustained. Participants consistently described communication not simply as a means of conveying technical information, but as a relational process that fosters trust and strengthens connections with community members. Through these interactions, communication creates an environment in which dialogue becomes more open, participation is encouraged, and communities are actively engaged in disaster risk reduction initiatives.

The findings further reveal that communication is enacted through a relational approach grounded in a sense of kinship, togetherness, and emotional connectedness between volunteers and community members. Across a range of disaster management activities, volunteers do not position themselves merely as providers of instructions or disaster education. Rather, they engage with communities as partners who share responsibility for confronting potential disaster risks. This relational mode of communication fosters mutual trust, creating conditions that facilitate the effective exchange of disaster-related knowledge and information.

Participants consistently emphasized that the interpersonal relationships established through communication play a pivotal role in fostering community engagement. The dialogic nature of these interactions enables community members to speak openly about their experiences, needs, and concerns regarding the disaster risks they encounter in their local environments. Consequently, communication functions not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a social process that strengthens the bonds of solidarity between the organization and the communities it serves.

These findings suggest that communication within LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities is experienced as a practice of humanitarian solidarity. This solidarity is reflected in communication practices that foster egalitarian relationships, mutual support, and a shared commitment to collective well-being. From this perspective, communication extends beyond its conventional role as an organizational instrument and instead functions as a relational medium through which individuals are connected by a common humanitarian purpose. These findings are consistent with Human Relations Theory (Mayo, 1933), which conceptualizes communication as a process of building interpersonal relationships that facilitate cooperation, participation, and a sense of belonging within organizations. From this perspective, organizational effectiveness depends not only on formal structures and administrative procedures but also on the quality of social relationships cultivated through communication. The present study reinforces this theoretical perspective by demonstrating that the communication practices enacted by LPBI PBNU leaders and volunteers serve not only to convey disaster-related information but also to nurture social relationships that strengthen solidarity, reinforce mutual care, and deepen community engagement in disaster management.

The findings also extend the existing disaster communication literature, which has predominantly conceptualized communication as a mechanism for information dissemination

and a strategic component of disaster risk mitigation. In contrast, the present study conceptualizes communication as a social practice through which humanitarian solidarity is enacted and sustained through close interpersonal relationships among organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members. Viewed from this perspective, communication contributes not only to the dissemination of disaster-related knowledge but also to the cultivation of social relationships that encourage community engagement and strengthen collective capacity to respond to disaster risks.

3.2 Communication as a Space for Community Participation

The findings indicate that communication within LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities is not conceived as a one-way process of information delivery. Rather, it is experienced as a participatory space that enables community members to engage actively in a wide range of disaster management initiatives. According to the accounts of organizational leaders and volunteers, communities are regarded not merely as recipients of information on disaster mitigation and preparedness but as active participants in learning processes, collaborative discussions, and other activities aimed at reducing disaster risks.

Community participation is fostered through diverse forms of interaction that facilitate the reciprocal exchange of knowledge and experience between volunteers and community members. Within these interactions, communication serves not only to convey information about potential disaster threats but also to create opportunities for dialogue through which community members can share their experiences, express their needs, and contribute their understanding of the environmental conditions in which they live. By promoting such participatory engagement, communication enables communities to become active contributors to the co-construction of disaster-related knowledge.

Participants consistently emphasized that community engagement constitutes a fundamental component of disaster management activities, as it fosters a sense of ownership over disaster risk reduction initiatives. Dialogic communication plays a critical role in cultivating more egalitarian relationships among organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members. Such relationships encourage communities not only to receive information but also to participate actively in initiatives designed to enhance disaster preparedness.

The findings further demonstrate that communication functions as a participatory space that brings together multiple stakeholders in disaster management activities. Through communication, community members are provided with opportunities to engage in collective learning, develop a deeper understanding of the disaster risks within their local environments, and contribute to disaster risk reduction efforts. In this way, communication extends beyond facilitating an understanding of disaster-related issues; it also strengthens community engagement by positioning local communities as active participants in the disaster management process.

These findings are consistent with established perspectives in disaster communication, which emphasize the central role of community participation in disaster risk reduction. Covello (2003) argues that the effectiveness of communication depends not only on the successful dissemination of information but also on the extent to which communities are actively engaged

in interpreting and making sense of the messages they receive. Similarly, Haddow and Haddow (2014) contend that effective disaster communication should foster relationships that promote dialogue, cultivate trust, and encourage meaningful public engagement.

The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that the communication practices adopted by LPBI PBNU are oriented not merely toward disseminating disaster-related information but also toward creating opportunities for meaningful community participation. The findings suggest that communication functions as a participatory mechanism through which communities become actively engaged in disaster risk reduction processes. From this perspective, communication serves as the connective process through which knowledge, lived experience, and collective action are integrated to strengthen communities' capacity to respond to disaster risks.

3.3 Communication as a Catalyst for Collective Disaster Awareness

The findings indicate that the communication practices enacted by LPBI PBNU leaders and volunteers are experienced as a process of fostering collective awareness of the importance of disaster preparedness. Participants described communication as extending beyond the dissemination of information about disaster risks and mitigation measures. Instead, it serves to cultivate a shared understanding that disaster risks constitute a collective concern requiring the active engagement of all members of the community.

Participants further explained that sustained communication through a range of disaster management activities enables community members to develop a more grounded understanding of the risks present within their local environments. Through ongoing face-to-face interactions, communities acquire not only knowledge about disasters but also an appreciation of the importance of prevention, preparedness, and active participation in disaster risk reduction efforts. These experiences suggest that disaster awareness does not emerge solely through the provision of information. Rather, it develops through continuous communicative processes that enable individuals and communities to interpret disaster risks in light of their own lived experiences and local contexts.

The findings further demonstrate that communication plays a transformative role in shaping how communities perceive disaster risks. Participants' accounts suggest that whereas disasters were previously viewed as events largely beyond individual control, the communication practices fostered by LPBI PBNU leaders and volunteers encouraged communities to recognize disaster preparedness as a shared responsibility. From this perspective, communication functions as the process through which knowledge, lived experience, and collective action are brought together, enabling community members not only to understand the risks they face but also to recognize their own capacity and responsibility to respond to them.

Furthermore, communication facilitates the development of collective awareness grounded in a shared sense of responsibility toward the social environment. This awareness is reflected in the growing recognition that disaster preparedness and response cannot be achieved through individual efforts alone but require collaboration and the active participation of the wider community. From this perspective, communication contributes not only to enhancing disaster-

related knowledge but also to shaping a shared understanding of the importance of preparedness and disaster risk reduction as collective endeavors.

These findings resonate with the work of Norris et al. (2008), who argue that community resilience is built upon social capacities that enable communities to understand, organize, and respond to risks collectively. Likewise, Aldrich (2012) emphasizes that social relationships, trust, and civic participation constitute forms of social capital that are fundamental to communities' ability to cope with disasters and other forms of disruption. The present study builds on these perspectives by demonstrating that communication serves as the relational mechanism through which these social capacities are activated and sustained, thereby fostering collective disaster awareness at the community level.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that communication functions not only as a means of disseminating information or facilitating community participation but also as a social process through which collective awareness of disaster preparedness is cultivated. The study reveals that disaster awareness emerges not simply through the transmission of information, but through ongoing interactions that enable communities to interpret disaster risks as a shared responsibility. By highlighting this relational dimension of communication, the present study extends the disaster communication literature, demonstrating that communication contributes to the construction of collective understanding, strengthens community engagement, and supports disaster risk reduction through the social relationships that develop within local communities.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that communication within LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities is experienced by organizational leaders and volunteers as a practice of humanitarian solidarity that extends well beyond the dissemination of information. Rather than serving solely as a means of communicating disaster mitigation and preparedness knowledge, communication functions as a relational process through which social connections are cultivated, community participation is encouraged, and collective awareness of the need to confront disaster risks collaboratively is fostered. Participants' lived experiences further reveal that communication constitutes a social practice that brings together compassion, civic engagement, and shared responsibility within the broader context of disaster management.

The findings contribute to the disaster communication literature by moving beyond the dominant view of communication as an instrument for information dissemination and disaster mitigation. Instead, this study highlights the relational dimension of communication, demonstrating its role in fostering humanitarian solidarity, strengthening community engagement, and cultivating collective awareness of disaster risks. These findings suggest that, within faith-based disaster management organizations, communication should be understood not merely as a medium for exchanging information but as a socially embedded process that enhances community resilience by strengthening interpersonal relationships, collective participation, and shared responsibility in responding to disasters.

This study is limited to the experiences of organizational leaders, volunteers, and community members within the context of LPBI PBNU's disaster management activities. Consequently,

the findings should be interpreted within this organizational and contextual setting. Future research could extend this line of inquiry by examining communication practices across other faith-based disaster management organizations, thereby providing a broader understanding of how communication contributes to community engagement and disaster risk reduction in diverse institutional and sociocultural contexts.

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