

The Communication Strategies of Village Officials in Preserving the Ojhung Tradition in Bugeman Village, Situbondo

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Abstract: Communication efforts are essential in preserving a culture so that messages about the culture can be conveyed effectively and in accordance with the goals set by the communicator. This study aims to understand the communication efforts carried out by the government officials of Bugeman Village in preserving the Ojhung tradition among the people of Bugeman Village, Situ-bondo. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that in their efforts to preserve the Ojhung tradition, the village government officials of Bugeman collaborate with cultural figures in the village to continuously maintain the tradition. The findings also indicate that the village officials and cultural figures apply communication efforts based on Cutlip and Center's theory. These communication efforts, aligned with Cutlip and Center's theory, are considered successful by the village government officials as they have effectively influenced the community to continue preserving the Ojhung tradition.

Keywords: Women's Role, Empowerment, Family Econom

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in unique and diverse cultures and traditions. Each region in Indonesia has its own cultural uniqueness and diversity that serve as its identity and characteristic of the local community. This cultural diversity includes various aspects such as art, language, religious systems, technology, and more. Culture in Indonesia is not only present in each district or province but also in villages, which have preserved their own traditions or cultures from generation to generation. The existence of culture helps shape individuals who are aware and appreciative of cultural values. It can be concluded that customs, norms, and values embedded in a culture—especially local culture—play a role in shaping human behavior based on humanitarian values [1].

Although a village is the smallest administrative unit of a country, there are several villages in Indonesia that possess very unique traditions reflecting the identity and character of the local community. This uniqueness becomes a distinct attraction for visitors. In some regions or villages, village government officials have the responsibility to preserve the existing culture that has been handed down from their ancestors. Therefore, it is essential for village officials to implement effective communication strategies so that cultural preservation efforts can be well received and supported by the community.

The digital era has led to a decline in public awareness of local culture. Nowadays, people—especially the younger generation—are more interested in foreign cultures than their own. Not only

that, with the rise of digitalization, the younger generation has begun to neglect the traditions of their own regions and instead spend more time on gadgets. In today's era of globalization, young people tend to be more eager to learn about foreign cultures rather than preserving and maintaining their local heritage. They often imitate foreign trends in fashion—both positive and negative—as well as adopt foreign foods, arts, and lifestyles [2].

Digitalization has both positive and negative impacts on the sustainability of a culture. One of the positive impacts we can experience in this digital era is the ease of delivering messages or information related to culture. In addition, we can easily access and learn about cultures outside our own region. The advancement of information technology also has a positive impact by helping to reduce the information gap between urban and rural areas [1]. However, this also presents challenges and obstacles in preserving existing cultures. One of the negative impacts of the digital era on cultural sustainability is that the younger generation tends to be more interested in foreign cultures than in their own local traditions. This poses a threat to cultural continuity, as the younger generation plays a crucial role in preserving culture. The digital era has also contributed to the erosion of national pride, as foreign cultures easily enter and influence the mindset of society—especially the youth [3].

Situbondo Regency covers an area of approximately 1,638.50 km² and has a population of over 650,000 people, with around 400,000 of them being in the productive age group or the younger generation. Situbondo is located on the northeastern coast of East Java Province (Situbondo Regency Government, 2018). The regency is known for its pristine and beautiful tourist destinations, ranging from the white sand beaches to the scenic Mount Rongggit. In addition to its diverse and attractive tourist spots, Situbondo also has a rich variety of cultural and artistic traditions that are still preserved today. For instance, the *Landhung* dance, which has become an icon of Situbondo Regency. Moreover, Situbondo is also home to the *Remo Trisnawati* dance, *Pa'beng* music, *Topeng Kerte* (Kerte mask), and the traditional performance of *Ojhung*.

The *Ojhung* tradition has existed since the time of ancestors and continues to be preserved by the residents of Bugeman Village, Situbondo. The responsibility for organizing the annual *Ojhung* tradition lies with the village government officials. This tradition is believed to ward off disasters or misfortunes (*tolak bala*) and serves as a symbol of gratitude to God. *Ojhung* is performed by two individuals who take turns striking each other. The main tool used in the tradition is a rattan stick, usually provided by the organizing committee. Participants typically wear traditional attire such as *sarong* and *kopiah* (traditional caps). The performance is accompanied by traditional musical instruments such as drums, *gamelan*, and gongs. In addition to its spiritual and cultural significance, *Ojhung* also serves as a form of entertainment for the local community and as a means to strengthen social ties among villagers. Through this tradition, values such as courage, unity, sportsmanship, and cultural awareness—especially among the younger generation—can be nurtured and passed down.

However, along with the advancement of time and technology, the *Ojhung* tradition faces various threats. This is evident from the declining public interest in the tradition itself, as participation is limited to the same group of people, most of whom are older community members rather than the younger generation. Modernization and globalization have brought significant changes in shaping people's mindsets and lifestyles. As a result, there are increasing challenges in preserving regional cultural heritage. With the rapid development of technology and globalization, many traditional art forms are now considered irrelevant and are becoming less appreciated by society. This happens without careful consideration of the long-term sustainability of these art forms and whether they may

deteriorate or change over time [4]. Many young people are more interested in foreign cultures than in the traditions of their own village—or even their own country. Therefore, the role of the government and local cultural preservationists is crucial in this matter. In facing this challenge, village government officials play a vital role in ensuring the continuity of culture. As local leaders, they have the responsibility to preserve and protect existing cultural traditions. Customary institutions, as the leaders of traditional practices, also play an essential role in safeguarding and maintaining local wisdom in a region, so that it is not eroded or replaced by incoming foreign cultures. As part of the social structure, these customary institutions function to regulate various aspects related to customs and traditions in the areas where they operate [5]. The preservation of longstanding cultural traditions is crucial to ensure their continuity and recognition across generations.

It is important for village government officials to determine effective communication strategies in preserving the Ojhung tradition within the community. With the implementation of appropriate communication efforts, the Ojhung tradition can continue to be preserved by society, especially by the younger generation. In this research, the researcher uses the Cutlip and Center theory as the theoretical foundation and reference, focusing on the stages outlined in the theory. The Cutlip and Center theory was introduced by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center in their book *Effective Public Relations* (2009). The stages in the Cutlip and Center model include:

1. Defining the problem,
2. Planning and programming,
3. Taking action and communicating,
4. Evaluating the program.

Based on the background described above, this study formulates the following research question: What are the effective communication efforts undertaken by village government officials in preserving the Ojhung tradition in Bugeman Village, Situbondo?

The objective of this research is to explore and analyze the communication strategies implemented by the village government of Bugeman in their efforts to preserve the Ojhung cultural tradition.

METHOD

Based on the approach and type of data used, this study applies a qualitative method, resulting in descriptive data. Qualitative research aims to analyze and explain events, phenomena, social dynamics, and the perceptions of individuals or groups toward a particular issue. According to Sugiyono (2013), qualitative research is grounded in post-positivist philosophy and is applied to analyze phenomena in natural conditions, which distinguishes it from experimental methods. In this study, sampling was conducted using a triangulation (combination) technique involving key instruments and inductive or qualitative data analysis. The results of the research focus more on meaning than on generalization. Through qualitative research using a descriptive method, it is expected that a clear picture can be obtained regarding the communication efforts implemented by village government officials in preserving the Ojhung tradition in the community of Bugeman Village, Situbondo. This study utilizes primary data obtained directly from research subjects through various procedures and data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation allows the researcher to directly observe the phenomena under study, thus providing deeper understanding of the research object (Sugiyono, 2017). Interviews are defined as interactions between two individuals aimed at exchanging information and ideas (Sugiyono, 2017). In research, documentation plays

an important role as supporting evidence for the findings. The data collection technique used in this research is purposive sampling, which is a technique of selecting informants based on specific criteria to ensure that the data collected is relevant and aligned with the research objectives. Purposive sampling facilitates the researcher in gathering information because the researcher has already determined and considered the criteria for selecting informants. This method ensures that the obtained information is as expected and highly relevant to the goals of the study. Purposive sampling is commonly used in scientific research, particularly in qualitative studies, as it enables researchers to choose informants who are believed to have knowledge or experience relevant to the research topic. In this study, the selected informants include village government officials of Bugeman, village elders, and the owner of the *Kembang Molja* dance studio in Bugeman Village.

The data analysis technique in qualitative research consists of several key stages, namely the process of data collection, data reduction or simplification, and the drawing of conclusions to derive meanings aligned with the objectives of the study.

The data collection process is conducted through interviews and field notes, resulting in descriptive data in the form of statements or responses from informants, as well as observations of behaviors that are seen, heard, and directly experienced by the researcher. The collected data is presented objectively, without subjective interpretation or personal opinions regarding the observed phenomena. In this study, data collection was carried out through interviews with individuals considered to have relevant information regarding the preservation of the Ojhung cultural tradition. Data reduction is an analytical process aimed at summarizing, sorting, and selecting information that is considered important and relevant to the research objectives. In this research, data reduction was conducted by filtering, simplifying, and selecting data that aligns with the focus of the study. This process includes organizing raw data, categorizing it based on specific themes, and eliminating less significant information, thereby facilitating further analysis and enabling more targeted conclusions. The final stage in data analysis is drawing conclusions, where the grouped data is then organized into certain patterns or frameworks in order to generate conclusions. The conclusions derived are then presented as findings that support the overall results of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In preserving the Ojhung tradition, it is essential to implement effective communication efforts to ensure that the preservation process aligns with the guidelines and expectations established by the village government officials, who serve as both the organizers and responsible parties. In this context, the village government collaborates with local cultural figures in Bugeman Village, Situbondo. The cultural stakeholders involved include local cultural observers, village elders, and the owner of the *Kembang Molja* art studio in Bugeman Village. The role of local art groups is crucial for the community, as they serve as small platforms or spaces where local residents can learn and engage with the traditional culture of their region [6]. Through this collaboration, it is expected that village government officials will be better facilitated in preserving the Ojhung tradition.

The communication efforts carried out by the Bugeman village government officials and cultural figures are highly relevant to the Cutlip and Center theory. The Cutlip and Center theory is a framework that outlines the stages in the public relations management process [7]. In this study, the Bugeman village government officials act as public relations officers.

The following are the steps taken by the village government officials in their efforts to preserve the Ojhung tradition:

1. Identifying the Problem

Problem identification or problem analysis is conducted to understand the issues and threats faced by the village government officials. In this initial stage, the officials analyze the obstacles that hinder the preservation of the Ojhung tradition. Based on their analysis, one of the main challenges comes from the local community, particularly the younger generation. Many young people in Bugeman Village show little interest in preserving the Ojhung tradition. This is evident during Ojhung performances, where only a few youths participate or even attend the event. Yet, the role of the younger generation is vital to the continuity of cultural traditions. Without their involvement, the preservation of culture and local wisdom inherited from ancestors may cease and eventually disappear as time progresses. Consequently, these traditions cannot be passed on to future generations [8]. In addition, there is a problem related to the use of media in disseminating information. The Bugeman village government officials have not yet been able to optimize the use of social media effectively to spread information about the Ojhung tradition. Furthermore, the limited understanding of social media usage also hinders effective message delivery. So far, the officials have only used their personal social media accounts to share information regarding the Ojhung tradition. This approach is clearly less effective, as the reach of the message is very limited, resulting in low public awareness of the Ojhung tradition, especially among communities outside Situbondo Regency.

2. Communication Planning

After identifying the existing problems that are considered to threaten the sustainability of the Ojhung tradition, the village government of Bugeman designed a strategic communication plan. A new finding revealed through this research is that the village officials formulated their plans by collaborating with the owner of the *Kembang Molja* art studio and the local elders of Bugeman village. They built good interpersonal communication and conducted regular evaluations of the programs together with cultural figures involved in the preservation of the Ojhung tradition. In response to the issue of social media use and information dissemination, the village government partnered with local reporters in Situbondo Regency. This collaboration aims to maximize the preservation efforts of the Ojhung tradition and ensure that the messages intended for the public can be more effectively received and understood. Both the village officials and cultural figures had different planning strategies. However, the plans initiated by the cultural figures were continuously monitored by the village government. The village officials themselves developed a plan that mandates the Ojhung tradition to be held at least once a year. They also officially designated the date of the Ojhung performance, which is now listed in the Situbondo Regency calendar. Meanwhile, the owner of the art studio integrated the Ojhung tradition into the *P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila)* curriculum for junior high school students in Bugeman village. The local elders, on the other hand, focused on maintaining the traditional procedures and ensuring the availability of materials and instruments needed for the Ojhung performance.

3. Implementation and Communication

Following the two previous stages, the next step involves the implementation of actions and communication strategies. In this phase, the village government of Bugeman established strong interpersonal communication with local cultural figures. One of the actions taken by the village officials was organizing the annual Ojhung cultural performance. To provide the community with a deeper

understanding and knowledge, the village authorities presented a synopsis explaining the Ojhung tradition, its historical background, and its cultural significance to the people of Bugeman. The intended communication effect from delivering this synopsis was to increase public awareness and foster an open mindset toward the Ojhung tradition, thus encouraging active participation in its preservation. Additionally, the village government implemented a specific tactic where the first match in the Ojhung performance must involve native residents of Bugeman. This strategy indirectly ensured community engagement in the event. To further disseminate information about the Ojhung tradition, the village government invited local reporters from Situbondo Regency to cover the event and publish news articles about it. This initiative has significantly contributed to promoting the Ojhung tradition to a broader audience beyond the village. Meanwhile, the actions taken by the owner of the *Kembang Molja* art studio included integrating the Ojhung tradition into the *P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila)* curriculum for students at SMP Negeri 2 Kendit. The studio owner also created a new dance inspired by Ojhung, aimed at increasing young people's interest and engagement in preserving local culture. These findings are consistent with previous research conducted by untari [9]. The role of teachers is essential in guiding their students during the implementation of the *P5 local wisdom* theme in preserving cultural traditions. Teachers are not only expected to act as facilitators or to accompany students during celebratory events, but also to provide support during the preparation phase of the *P5 local wisdom* activities in the classroom. As for the actions taken by the village elders in Bugeman, they ensure that each stage of the Ojhung tradition is carried out in accordance with the customary procedures passed down from previous generations. This effort is intended to preserve the authenticity and continuity of the tradition, ensuring that it remains unchanged over time. Consequently, the local community regards the Ojhung tradition as a sacred and meaningful cultural heritage.

4. Evaluation

At the evaluation stage, it is possible to determine whether the steps taken have been successful and implemented effectively. Evaluation is an ongoing process of assessing the outcomes of the implemented program, the effectiveness of its management, and the communication strategies used. It serves as a benchmark for both planning and executing future activities [10]. This evaluation stage is crucial because it allows for the identification of both the strengths and weaknesses experienced during the implementation of actions and communication strategies. In this phase, the village government of Bugeman considered that their actions and communication efforts—particularly the presentation of a synopsis about the Ojhung tradition and the establishment of an official date for its performance—have been successful in preserving the tradition. In fact, the synopsis presentation has led many members of the community to realize the importance of the Ojhung tradition for the village of Bugeman. This outcome aligns with the communication goals set by the village government. The owner of Sanggar Kembang Molja also stated that the measures taken to preserve the Ojhung tradition—by integrating it into the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) curriculum and by creating the Ojhung dance—have proven effective. Through the P5 learning program, many students of SMP Negeri 2 Kendit have shown strong interest in preserving the Ojhung tradition. This is evident in the number of students who visit the studio to practice the Ojhung dance and explore the tradition more deeply—studying its history, stages, and the dance itself created by the studio owner. However, during dance practice sessions, students are often still distracted by their gadgets, which

results in less productive training sessions. This has become both a challenge and an obstacle for the studio owner in efforts to preserve the Ojhung tradition.

In an effort to preserve the Ojhung tradition, village authorities consistently monitor and maintain effective interpersonal communication with cultural practitioners who are directly involved in its preservation. This approach aims to ensure that the efforts to safeguard the Ojhung tradition proceed efficiently and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the challenges faced within the community in efforts to preserve the Ojhung tradition, as undertaken by the village government, include a lack of public awareness regarding the importance of cultural preservation. The digital era also influences the preservation of the Ojhung tradition, as exposure to foreign cultures has made the community more interested in external traditions, often neglecting their own local heritage. In response to these issues, the village government has developed communication strategies to ensure that the Ojhung tradition is preserved and does not disappear over time with the progress of modern developments.

The step taken by the village government apparatus in this case is to carry out communication planning, in which they establish interpersonal communication with cultural figures in Bugeman Village to facilitate the preservation of the Ojhung tradition within the community. Each party involved in the effort to preserve the Ojhung tradition plays a specific role. For instance, the village government employs the tactic of reading a synopsis at the beginning of the Ojhung performance. This is done to help the community gain an understanding of the Ojhung tradition and develop an awareness of its importance for both the people and the village of Bugeman. Meanwhile, the action taken by the owner of the *Sanggar Kembang Molja* is to incorporate the Ojhung tradition into the P5 (Strengthening Pancasila Student Profile Project) learning material for students of SMP Negeri 2 Kendit, which is located in Bugeman Village.

The steps taken by the village government apparatus have certainly been carefully considered and adjusted to the problems encountered, which are seen as obstacles or threats to the future preservation of the Ojhung tradition. The actions taken by the Bugeman village government are also in accordance with the application of the Cutlip and Center theory, as proposed by Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center in their book *Effective Public Relations* (2009). Based on the implementation of the Cutlip and Center theory, the village government apparatus considers that the communication strategy employed has been successful in preserving the Ojhung tradition within the community.

In fact, the steps taken by both the village government apparatus and the cultural figures have succeeded in changing the community's mindset regarding the importance of preserving the Ojhung tradition. As a result of these efforts, many members of the community have actively participated during the Ojhung performance events. This outcome aligns with the communication effect expected by the village government apparatus as the party responsible for the preservation of the Ojhung tradition. However, behind the success of the village government in preserving the Ojhung tradition, there are also obstacles—particularly in disseminating information about Ojhung culture. The main barrier lies in the limited use of communication media, caused by the village government's limited ability to utilize social media platforms effectively. This has led to suboptimal message delivery through digital media channels.

This study suggests that the village government apparatus should also collaborate with the younger generation in managing social media, so that message delivery through these platforms can be more effective and reach a wider audience who can become familiar with the Ojhung tradition. Indirectly, this approach may also increase youth participation in the preservation of the Ojhung tradition.

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