

Communication Network Flow in Public Complaint Management at the Ministry of Social Affairs Command Center

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Communication Network Flow, Communication Process, Information Technology, Control Center, Command Center

Received : 3 April

Revised : 19 May

Accepted: 24 June

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the communication process, the form of communication network flow, and the role of SIKS-CC technology in public complaint management at the Ministry of Social Affairs Command Center. The theory used in this study is the theory of communication network flow by Eriyanto. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method by collecting data through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. The subjects of the study were 9 informants consisting of leaders and operators at the Control Center and the work unit responsible for complaints at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Jakarta. The results of the study show that the communication network flow formed consists of three flows: path, trail, and walk. The communication network flow in the form of a path occurs when information flows in one direction hierarchically without repeating actors; trail is used in formal and non-formal communication that relies on one media repeatedly; while walk describes dynamic, free, and multi-stage communication between various internal actors. These three flows complement each other in supporting the smooth communication process in public complaint management. The Social Welfare Information System-Command Center (SIKS-CC) information technology also plays an important role in integrating various complaint channels into one integrated system, so that each complaint can be responded to more quickly and monitored transparently

INTRODUCTION

Group communication plays an important role in the continuity of an organization, especially in the context of public services that involve coordination between individuals and work units. Group communication in an organization reflects the process of information exchange that occurs between members who have a common goal (Ruliana, 2016). Good group communication will determine the extent to which an organization can carry out its functions optimally. The communication process in public service organizations, especially in handling complaints, requires clear information flow and efficient coordination to ensure that public complaints can be handled quickly and appropriately (Miller, 2015; Ritonga et al., 2024).

Public service is one of the most easily visible indicators for assessing government performance. The public can directly evaluate government performance based on the quality of services received, because public services touch various groups and their impact is felt directly (Mukarom & Laksana, 2015). According to Lestari and Santoso (2022), good public service must meet the quality expected by the community and encourage good governance practices, namely effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, and responsible governance. Public complaint management is a process of activities to accommodate, record, review, channel, confirm, clarify, provide alternative solutions to complainants, document and socialize the results of complaint management to the public (Santoso & Suwitri, 2018).

Organizational communication plays an important role in implementing complaint management. Good organizational communication allows for smooth information flow, effective inter-unit coordination, and responsive decision-making in handling public complaints (Miller, 2015; Ohorella, 2024). The organizational communication process involves sending messages through certain channels or media to message recipients within the organization. According to Morgan, the hierarchical and formal structures within an organization often determine the flow of information and decision-making. Effective communication within an organization depends on a deep understanding of how these structures affect the interactions and flow of information among members of the organization (Humaizi & Zulkarnain, 2024).

According to Eriyanto (2014) organizations can manage information more efficiently through clear and integrated communication channels. The organizational communication network is part of the organizational communication process. The larger the organization, the more complex and complex the communication that occurs within it. The better the flow of organizational communication networks carried out in the organization, the faster the organization will achieve the expected goals, especially in this study to improve the quality of public services. A good communication network flow makes every stage of complaint management from receipt to resolution can be carried out transparently and accountably, thus supporting the achievement of the principles of good governance and increasing public trust in government services.

The 2023 Indonesian Ombudsman Annual Report found overlapping functions between the Family Hope Program (PKH) Companions under the Ministry of Social Affairs and the SIKS-NG Operators under the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendes PDRT). This shows inefficiency in coordination and communication between agencies in dealing with poverty. This shows the need to identify coordination challenges and optimize a more responsive and efficient communication system in managing public complaints at the Ministry of Social Affairs (Ritonga et al., 2024).

The Ministry of Social Affairs responded to this challenge by establishing a Control Center (Command Center) as an integrated service for fast and precise responses to monitoring results, public complaints, and assessments from Social Welfare HR. Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 11 of 2022 concerning the Ministry of Social Affairs Control Center states that in order to carry out the duties of the Ministry of Social Affairs in providing services and information to the community, especially PPKS, it is necessary to implement information technology-based public services in the form of the Ministry of Social Affairs control center.

There are 5,140 handlings that have been carried out from all complaints received, of which 2,031 complaints are the results of identification by the Control Center operator through news, social media and other sources of information. Meanwhile, 3,109 public complaints came in by telephone. Based on these data, the Control Center has achieved positive results in managing public complaints with a resolution rate of more than 60% and the remaining complaints are in the process of being followed up.

This achievement shows a significant contribution from the ongoing good organizational communication in complaint management activities. These results are supported by awards received, including the Government Techno Marketing Awards 2023 Bronze Champion from MarkPlus Corp. 4 and receiving the Award of Compliance Assessment Predicate for Public Service Provision (Public Service Provision Supervision Opinion) in 2023 from the Indonesian Ombudsman.

Based on previous studies, this study has a novelty, namely focusing on the analysis of organizational communication network flow in public complaint management where previous studies emphasized communication network flow in organizational change. This study also fills the gap in previous research where in complaint management activities there are challenges in the use of multichannel communication which will be analyzed in this study through the use of SIKS-CC technology by the Control Center. This study will contribute both theoretically in the study of communication network flow in organizations and practically in improving the quality of public services, especially in the field of social welfare.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Group communication refers to communication between a communicator and a group of more than two people. Group communication is the study of everything that happens when people interact in small groups, but it does not describe how communication should be done or how to do it (Goldberg, 2016). Group communication, on the other hand, is defined by Sasa Djuarsa as face-to-face interaction between three or more people to achieve desired goals or objectives, such as sharing information, self-maintenance, or problem solving so that all members can accurately develop the personal traits of other members (Sendjaja, 2018, p. 33).

The factors that influence group communication include, (1) Social interaction, (2) Behavior, (3) Social structure (4) Individual function in the group (Louisita, 2017). As a result, communication patterns can be understood as a relationship between two or more people who exchange messages (sender and recipient) correctly with the hope that the intended message can be understood (Djamarah, 2018, p. 1). Organizational communication according to Pace and Faules (Pace, 2015) is the process of exchanging and interpreting messages in communication units that are part of an organization. An organizational communication unit is a relationship that occurs between people in positions within an organization.

The communication process in an organization is a description of the flow of information from the communicator to the communicant using communication media that has certain effects in an organization, which is usually more formal and prioritizes the principle of efficiency in carrying out its communication activities (Suryanto, 2015). In organizational communication there are two dimensions, namely the internal communication dimension and the external communication dimension (Ruliana, 2016). According to Aminudin & Agustine (2023), the use of information technology in organizational communication can accelerate the completion of work and facilitate interaction between members of the organization. Information technology not only facilitates internal communication, but also expands the reach of external communication, allowing organizations to interact more effectively with stakeholders outside the organization.

Research on the flow of communication networks in this study departs from the theory of networks in communication networks. Network theory is a theory in the study of organizational communication that is used to observe organizational structure through interaction patterns within the organization to find out who communicates with whom, which will later form the overall organizational network (Morissan, 2013). Networks within groups are relationships between individuals who tend to communicate frequently with other group members. Organizational networks are relationships created from small groups within an organization that are connected together in larger groups. Global networks are relationships of how groups relate to each other in a network (Morissan, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this study is descriptive with a qualitative approach, which has natural characteristics (natural setting) as a direct data source. This study uses a qualitative approach because it aims to analyze the flow of communication networks in public complaint management in organizations, the form and pattern of communication network flows formed and the obstacles experienced by actors in the communication network flow. The technique for determining informants in this qualitative study uses a purposive procedure technique. The purposive procedure technique was chosen by researchers because it is appropriate to describe the analysis of communication network flows that are adjusted to the criteria and social structures when data collection is carried out so that it can describe the analysis of communication network flows as a whole (Bungin, 2015). The data analysis technique used in this study refers to the concept of Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014), namely the interactive model. The source triangulation that researchers do is by interviewing informants who better understand the entire process of public complaint management at the Ministry of Social Affairs and are involved from the beginning of the trial/build up process of the Control Center in 2022. The triangulation technique that researchers do is by looking back at the data obtained from the results of observations and comparing the data with the data from informant interviews. The researcher also observed and compared the interview result documents with other documents related to the interview results such as the SOP for Handling Complaints at the Control Center, Complaint Case Monitoring Report, Complaint Handling Report and Leadership Assignment Letter. The triangulation data obtained was then analyzed for similarities and differences in the data to then draw conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication Process in Public Complaint Management

The communication process in complaint management at the Control Center begins when the complaint is received until the evaluation of its handling. Based on the research results, this process is in line with the four-stage Public Relations model according to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009), namely: fact-finding (gathering facts), planning (action planning), communicating (implementing and communicating actions), and evaluating (evaluating results). This finding shows that these four stages take place sequentially by involving one-way and two-way communication processes and various forms of organizational communication (vertical, horizontal, and diagonal).

Overall, the communication process in public complaint management at the Control Center takes place simultaneously at various levels. This finding is in accordance with the theory of organizational communication which states that communication in public organizations requires a clear flow of information and efficient coordination so that complaints can be handled quickly and appropriately (Suryanto, 2015). During the process, there is an exchange of messages, feedback, and noise (obstacles) that must be managed. For example, obstacles can arise if the initial data is incomplete (noise that is overcome at the fact-finding stage).

The combination of processes and forms of communication in the organization shows that complaint handling involves a broad organizational communication network. This finding is in line with Dini Agustina's opinion (2020) that in the flow of communication networks in public institutions, the communication process includes one-way and two-way communication at once with complete communication elements, while the formal forms of communication that occur can include vertical, horizontal, and diagonal relationships. In other words, all forms and directions of organizational communication play a role in supporting the smooth management of complaints at the Ministry of Social Affairs Control Center. When compared to similar research by Sari (2020) on communication systems in public service agencies in DKI Jakarta, the Control Center shows uniqueness in the implementation of more dynamic and responsive diagonal communication through digital media, such as WhatsApp and SIKS-CC. This reflects the adaptation of the communication structure to the needs of handling complaints in real time.

Communication Network Flow in Public Complaint Management

According to the theory of organizational communication network flow (Eriyanto, 2014), the flow of communication networks in a network can be in the form of a path, trail, or walk. A path is a communication flow that connects one actor to another without any actor repetition along the path. In a path, messages flow linearly and are usually one-way, because no actor reappears to provide feedback. A trail is a communication flow that uses only one channel/media, but actors in the network can appear repeatedly as long as the medium link does not change. This means that trails allow for reciprocal or cyclical communication between the same actors, as long as they communicate through the same channel. A walk is a communication flow that is unlimited, actors and links can appear repeatedly, in other words there is freedom in the use of various channels and unlimited back and forth interactions occur. The walk flow allows messages to be delivered through various channels or media at once, reflecting complex and multi-directional communication.

Based on research findings, the three forms of communication flow above (path, trail, walk) all occur in complaint management at the Control Center, depending on the situation and needs of the case. The findings of in-depth interviews, observations and documentation conducted by the researcher noted that top-down vertical communication greatly colors the flow of this path, for example, case input instructions from the leader to the head of the Control Center working group, then the working group team head forwards it to the operator (A-B-C). Then, official assignments related to case handling through the SIKS-CC system are inputted by the operator. The operator forwarding the complaint is a one-way communication that forms a hierarchical chain. This pattern shows the characteristics of the path: messages flow C-D-E in a chain. The Control Center operator (C) to the PIC of the Directorate in charge (D) then to the PIC of the Center/Office as the case follow-up (E), without returning to C. During this process, the actors do not repeat themselves so that communication tends to be one-way.

Previous study findings from Agustina (2020) showed that the path in an organizational communication network is usually depicted in vertical communication from superiors to subordinates for task instructions. This is in accordance with what happens in the Control Center: when a complaint is formally forwarded through SIKS-CC to the responsible unit, the information flow follows the structural path in one go.

The trail flow is seen in scenarios where there is back and forth communication but through a single channel. In the Control Center, this trail is seen during horizontal communication between operators (C-C), as well as vertical communication between operators (C) and squad leaders (F) or team leaders of the Control Center working group (B) during daily discussions, especially when there is doubt in categorizing cases. The trail flow is also seen when operators (C) and PIC Directorates (D) or Centers/Centers (E) communicate with each other many times in case monitoring, but still use the same media each time. For example, face-to-face communication only or via Whatsapp only. This finding is in accordance with the theory that refers to trails as flows with repeated actors but without repeated communication channels. Thus, the trail network flow in the Control Center helps maintain communication consistency and facilitates smooth iterative coordination.

The Role of Information Technology in Communication Network Flow in Public Complaint Management

The role of information technology, especially the SIKS-CC platform, is important in facilitating the flow of complaint communication networks at the Control Center. Information technology has become the backbone of organizational communication in the digital era. This is very relevant considering the variety of complaint channels that need to be managed in an integrated manner. SIKS-CC is an application system developed by the Ministry of Social Affairs to integrate various public complaint channels into one database and workflow. The Ministry of Social Affairs SOP Number 65 of 2023 emphasizes that public complaint management is carried out one-door through the Control Center with the SIKS-CC information technology platform. This means that SIKS-CC is a single source of truth for all complaint handling, from recording, classifying, assigning to related units, monitoring, to reporting results (Sikumbang et al., 2024).

Research by Bokayev et al. (2023) shows that multichannel communication in receiving complaints creates new challenges, especially regarding the various data formats that hinder the efficiency of complaint management. This finding is in line with the situation at the Ministry of Social Affairs before 2022, where complaints via SP4N-LAPOR were managed by the Public Relations Bureau, complaints via telephone were managed by other departments, and so on. The SIKS-CC innovation answers this challenge by integrating various communication channels into one data format. The documentation results show that the main channels such as SP4N-LAPOR, hotline 171, the “Jaga Bansos” application, official letters, and complaints from the media, all now end up in SIKS-CC through an integration mechanism or complaint input by the Pusast Kendali operator.

This centralization makes communication between units smoother because they access the same platform to get complaint information. PICs in the Directorate do not need to wait for separate letters or emails, once the operator inputs it into SIKS-CC and assigns it, the data can be immediately seen by the follow-up party. As a result, the speed of information flow increases. This shows the acceleration of communication flow thanks to information technology.

SIKS-CC helps organize the flow of communication networks clearly. Every complaint that comes in will automatically be connected to the person in charge in the system, so that who communicates with whom becomes transparent. As an illustration, if there is a complaint in the social assistance category, the system will display that the PIC follow-up is the Directorate General of Social Empowerment, along with the name of the responsible PIC official/employee. The operator only needs to select and assign it to that name. This creates a kind of explicit communication network flow map. Everything is recorded in the system. In other words, technology helps map the organization's communication network flow.

Furthermore, SIKS-CC technology provides monitoring and archiving features that strengthen two-way communication and evaluation. In this system, every case development can be monitored by all related parties. The operator can see whether the response unit has responded in the progress column. Even the leadership can monitor the complaint statistics dashboard provided. This increases transparency and accountability in communication. As the principle of Good Corporate Governance (GCG) put forward by Sitepu (2016), transparency and accountability are important aspects in handling complaints. SIKS-CC helps fulfill this principle by recording all communications and actions in one traceable place

Haswat & Pambudi's (2023) research on the JSS application in Yogyakarta also found that the implementation of the complaint application increased responsiveness, although coordination between units still needed to be improved. A similar thing was found at the Control Center, after SIKS-CC was running, the response time for handling complaints improved, but coordination between units still had to be maintained (that's why WhatsApp was still needed as a support).

Overall, the role of SIKS-CC technology is very important in the flow of communication networks at the Control Center. This technology accelerates the flow of information (from multichannel to single channel to multi-actors), expands the reach of communication (internal-external connected in one platform, and improves the quality of communication (more structured, documented, and transparent). The flow of communication that was previously hampered by bureaucracy becomes smoother because technology cuts long paths to be shorter and more direct. Previous research by Phatak & Nisar (2017) in the Pakistani Ombudsman sector found that the application of ICT was able to significantly increase the efficiency of complaint handling. The Ministry of Social Affairs Control Center also experienced the same thing as SIKS-CC, the percentage of complaint resolution increased and the response time was faster (based on the 2023 Pusdatin Performance Report)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The communication process in public complaint management at the Ministry of Social Affairs Control Center runs intensively and in a structured manner, with vertical, horizontal, and diagonal communication patterns. Communication occurs in one direction and two directions between the main actors such as the Control Center Operator, Head of the Control Center Team, Head of Pusdatin, Director, PIC of the Directorate, Head of Center/Center to PIC of Center/Center. This communication process reflects a responsive organizational communication model and is supported by a clearly integrated system. The communication network flow formed consists of three forms: path, trail, and walk. The communication network flow in the form of a path occurs when information flows in one direction hierarchically without repeating actors; trail is used in formal and non-formal communication that relies on one media repeatedly; while walk describes dynamic, free, and multi-stage communication between various internal actors. These three flows complement each other in supporting the smooth communication process in public complaint management. The Social Welfare Information System-Command Center (SIKS-CC) plays an important role in accelerating, documenting, and integrating flows. SIKS-CC is able to overcome the challenges of multichannel communication into one system. This technology increases response speed, strengthens transparency, and supports real-time connectivity between organizational units.

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