

The Role of Village Websites in Increasing Community Participation: A Case Study of Batur Village, Semarang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of village websites in enhancing community participation in Batur Village, Getasan District, Semarang Regency. With a total population of 7,600, the research employed a simple random sampling method to select 100 respondents. Data were collected through a questionnaire that included questions regarding the level of access and use of the village website and participation in village activities. Data analysis was conducted using statistical tests, including Pearson Correlation Test and T-Test, to determine the relationship between website usage and community participation. The results showed a positive and significant relationship between the frequency of accessing the village website and the level of community participation, where respondents who actively used the website tended to be more involved in village activities, such as consultations and development programs. Comparative analysis also revealed significant differences between active users and non-active users of the website. Although the village website has significant potential to enhance participation, challenges such as a lack of community awareness and technological accessibility hinder its utilization. The study recommends that village officials be more proactive in educating the community about the importance of the website and providing relevant information to increase participation. Thus, the village website can serve as an effective means to enhance transparency and community engagement in the village development process.

Keywords : village website, community participation, digital village

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, websites have become a common necessity for every organization, whether in the government sector, business, or community. Websites not only serve as an official profile introducing the identity and activities of organizations to the public but also act as tools to enhance data management efficiency (Rozi, Listiawan, & Hasyim, 2017). With a website, crucial information regarding programs, activities, or services can be easily accessed by anyone at any time. Additionally, websites serve as a two-way communication medium, allowing the community or relevant parties to provide feedback, ask questions, or access certain services without having to visit the organization in person. This certainly facilitates interaction and accelerates information dissemination, making the organization's performance more effective and responsive to public needs (Dewi & Widnyani, 2024).

The benefits of websites extend beyond data management and communication; they also promote transparency and accountability (Annisa, Azizah, & Tambunan, 2021). Through websites, organizations can publish reports, announcements, or updates, simplifying public monitoring and increasing community trust in their management.

The Role of Village Websites in Increasing Community Participation: A Case Study of Batur Village, Semarang Regency

Moreover, modern features such as social media integration, online forms, and content management systems allow internal processes to become more structured and controlled. Websites also serve as marketing and branding strategies, enabling organizations to expand their reach globally without geographic limits. Therefore, having a website is not merely a formality but also an essential step to support professionalism and the organization's adaptation to technological changes and societal needs (Fadhil et al., 2021).

According to Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, particularly Article 86 paragraph 2, it is explicitly stated that "the Government and Local Government are obliged to develop village information systems and rural area development." This regulation emphasizes the importance of each village to have and develop adequate information systems to support village management and expedite information dissemination to the community (Titipan, Virgono, & Hasibuan, 2023). Village information systems serve as data and communication centers that not only contain administrative information but also cover developments in construction and public services at the village level. One concrete manifestation of implementing village information systems is the existence of village websites, which function as a medium for swiftly and accurately disseminating information to residents and external stakeholders. Village websites enable the public to access important information such as work programs, announcements, financial reports, and administrative services online without having to visit the village office. Additionally, village websites act as transparency and accountability tools, allowing the community to easily monitor development and government performance in the village. Therefore, the development of village websites is not just a legal requirement but also an essential step in enhancing community participation, encouraging information openness, and accelerating development in rural areas (Permana & Dewi, 2023).

The presence of a village website has become an increasingly pressing need. This is due to the demands on village governments to disseminate information more quickly and efficiently to the community (Sibarani, 2021). The internet serves as the primary solution to this need, capable of reaching diverse groups swiftly and practically (Sutisna, 2018). Moreover, an increasing number of communities rely on the internet as a source of information, making it necessary for village governments to leverage this resource to remain relevant in providing up-to-date information services. Before the advent of the current technology, information about villages was generally disseminated through print media such as newspapers and magazines or electronic media such as radio and television. Although these media still play an important role, both have limitations in effectively reaching the community. Information often fails to reach the necessary parties or is not regularly updated. Furthermore, disseminating information via traditional media takes longer, making it unable to always meet the community's needs for current news (Meylin, Djinar, Murjana, & Igede, 2019).

The rapid development of digital technology has reshaped how communities interact with their local governments. However, many rural areas, such as Batur Village, face challenges in fully utilizing digital platforms for community engagement (Rochman et al., 2023). Addressing this gap is essential, as empowering rural communities with effective digital tools like village websites can bridge information disparities, enhance transparency, and foster participatory development. Without these interventions, rural areas risk being left behind in an increasingly digitalized world, limiting their growth and socio-economic potential (Maryunani, 2023).

Despite existing research affirming the benefits of village websites, few studies explore their direct impact on community participation, particularly in rural Indonesian contexts (Arifa, 2019). While earlier works have focused on technical implementation or isolated benefits, there remains a lack of empirical analysis linking website usage to specific participation metrics such as engagement in development programs or decision-making processes. This gap highlights the need for a nuanced investigation into how digital platforms influence rural community dynamics (Arismayantiab & Suwenaa, 2022).

This study offers a novel perspective by combining statistical analysis with qualitative insights to assess the relationship between the frequency of village website usage and levels of community participation. Unlike previous studies, this research not only identifies general benefits but also measures tangible outcomes, such as increased involvement in village governance and transparency. By focusing on Batur Village, a representative rural area, the findings contribute unique insights into optimizing digital platforms for participatory rural development.

With the existence of village websites, various limitations of print and electronic media can be addressed. This website can contain a variety of local information comprehensively and in detail, such as news about village activities, important announcements, and even online administrative services (Rahim, Syufa'atus, & Triska, 2019). Additionally, the community can access information at any time without being bound by time or place. The village website also serves as an official information center, thus becoming a reference for both village residents and external parties wishing to know the village's developments. Therefore, village websites are not merely communication platforms but also critical tools in supporting transparency and active community participation in village development.

One of the villages that has participated in building a village information system is Batur Village, located in Semarang Regency. This village now has an official website that can be utilized maximally for information dissemination, promoting village potential, and supporting local SMEs, as community members can actively promote their products. Consequently, the Batur village website serves to bridge the community in marketing their products. This achievement represents a significant milestone, supporting the village government in beginning its digital village program and encouraging other villages to establish their official websites.

The role of village websites in fostering community participation has been acknowledged in various studies; however, a significant research gap remains in understanding the measurable impact of these digital platforms on rural engagement, particularly in the Indonesian context. While existing literature often emphasizes technical implementation or isolated benefits, there is limited empirical evidence that links the frequency of website usage to concrete metrics of participation, such as involvement in development programs, consultations, or decision-making processes. This gap calls for a deeper exploration of how digital tools can bridge existing disparities in rural governance and contribute to sustainable development.

The urgency of this study lies in the rapid digital transformation that has reshaped governance practices worldwide. Without strategic integration of digital platforms in rural settings, communities like Batur Village risk being left behind in an increasingly connected world. Village websites not only serve as tools for information dissemination but also as mediums for fostering transparency, accountability, and active community involvement. Addressing challenges such as technological accessibility and community

The Role of Village Websites in Increasing Community Participation: A Case Study of Batur Village, Semarang Regency

awareness is critical to ensuring that these digital initiatives effectively enhance participation and do not exacerbate existing inequalities in rural areas.

This study's novelty lies in its approach to combining quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative insights to assess the relationship between village website usage and community participation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on technical functionalities, this research measures tangible outcomes, including increased involvement in village governance and transparency. By studying Batur Village as a representative rural area, this research offers unique contributions to optimizing digital platforms for participatory development in similar settings.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the role of village websites in enhancing community participation in Batur Village, Semarang Regency. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate the relationship between website usage frequency and community involvement, identify barriers to effective utilization, and provide actionable recommendations for improving digital governance in rural settings.

This research offers several practical and theoretical benefits. Practically, it equips village officials with strategies to optimize digital platforms, thereby improving governance and fostering community engagement. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on e-governance and digital rural development, serving as a reference for policymakers and researchers seeking to address challenges in rural community participation.

RESEARCH METHOD

According to Sugiyono (2013), population refers to the generalization area that includes objects or subjects with certain characteristics and qualities determined by the researcher. This population becomes the focus of research for in-depth study to draw relevant conclusions based on analysis results concerning the existing characteristics. The population in this study encompasses the entire community of Batur Village, Getasan District, Semarang Regency, which originates from various classes and social strata. This village population includes diverse professions such as farmers, traders, private workers, students, and housewives, covering a wide range of ages. Based on recent data, the population of Batur Village reaches approximately 7,600 individuals. This socio-economic diversity is expected to provide a comprehensive perspective on understanding the role of village websites regarding community participation in development and decision-making at the village level.

A sample is part of the population that possesses particular characteristics according to the research needs. Additionally, the sample also serves as a representative of the entire population. According to Sugiyono (Sugiyono, 2013), the use of samples in research aims to obtain information or a general overview of the population more efficiently, thus not requiring the involvement of all population members in the data collection process. In this study, the sample was selected using Simple Random Sampling, a sampling method where each individual in the population has an equal chance of being chosen as a respondent. From the total population of Batur Village, which is 7,600 individuals, 100 respondents were designated as the research sample. This method's simplicity and effectiveness allow the researcher to obtain data randomly and free from certain biases. Moreover, this method ensures that all layers of society, regardless of age, gender, or type of occupation, have an equal opportunity to participate in the study. This method also helps identify constraints or driving factors affecting the utilization of village websites,

providing insights for evaluation and improvement in future village information management.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the validity test on the questionnaire, which consists of 10 questions, indicate that all item questions meet the validity criteria. Validity testing was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation to determine how significantly each question is related to the total score of the variables. Based on the analysis results, each question results in a correlation value (r) higher than the R Table value at a significance level of 5% (0.05). This indicates that all question items have a strong and relevant relationship with the construct being measured, namely the use of the village website and community participation. Thus, all questions in the questionnaire are considered valid and can be used to collect data. Moreover, no questions need to be eliminated or revised, as the correlation value for each item falls within an adequate and consistent range. The validity of this questionnaire ensures that the research instrument can accurately measure the aspects intended to be studied, making the data collected reliable for further analysis in evaluating the role of the village website in community participation in Batur Village.

After the validity test yielded that the 10 items are valid, the reliability test is conducted to see how reliable this research questionnaire is. The results of the reliability test on the questionnaire used in this study indicate that the instrument, consisting of 10 questions, has a good consistency level. Reliability testing is performed using Cronbach's Alpha, which is a common method for measuring the consistency of the item questions in the questionnaire. Based on the test results, the obtained Cronbach's Alpha value is 0.82, which indicates that this questionnaire has high reliability as its value exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.70. This value demonstrates that each question in the questionnaire has a strong correlation with one another and is capable of measuring the same aspect, which is community participation concerning the utilization of the village website.

The results of statistical tests in this research provide an overview of the relationship between the intensity of using the village website and the level of community participation in Batur Village. Based on the Pearson Correlation Test, there is a positive and significant relationship between the frequency of accessing the website and community involvement in village activities such as consultations, mutual assistance, and participation in development programs. This is indicated by the correlation coefficient found in the positive range, suggesting that the more frequently residents access the village website, the higher their participation level in village activities. If the data are not normally distributed, results from the Spearman correlation test show a similar trend, with a significant correlation, although its strength may be slightly lower.

Additionally, the results of the T-test reveal a significant difference between resident participation who actively use the website and those who rarely or never access it. The group of respondents who are more active in accessing the website tend to be more engaged in village decision-making processes and are more responsive to announcements or new programs informed through the platform. The significance value (p -value) from the comparative tests indicates a figure below 0.05, suggesting that this difference does not occur by chance. These findings affirm that the village website contributes significantly to enhancing citizen engagement, especially by providing quick and transparent access to information. This also indicates that optimizing the village website

The Role of Village Websites in Increasing Community Participation: A Case Study of Batur Village, Semarang Regency

has the potential to broaden community participation, particularly if village officials continue to update content and encourage residents to utilize the platform actively.

Throughout this research, several significant challenges arose that impacted data collection and analysis. One major constraint is a lack of public awareness regarding the importance of the village website, which led some residents to be reluctant to use the platform, complicating the researchers' efforts to obtain suitable respondents. Additionally, technological accessibility issues pose challenges as not all residents possess adequate devices or internet connections, especially in areas with underdeveloped infrastructure. Difficulties in completing the questionnaire were also encountered, as some respondents felt confused by the questions posed. Finally, the limited time frame of two months for data collection and analysis presented constraints, requiring researchers to manage time efficiently to meet the established targets. Despite these challenges, they provide valuable lessons about the necessity of a more effective approach in boosting community participation and the utilization of information technology at the village level.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the use of the village website significantly affects community participation levels in Batur Village. Analysis results indicate that the more frequently residents access the website, the higher their involvement in village activities such as consultations, development programs, and administrative services. The statistical tests carried out, including correlation tests and T-tests, indicate a positive relationship between website access frequency and community participation, as well as significant differences between groups that actively use the website and those that do not. This highlights the importance of the website as a medium for disseminating information and enhancing transparency in village governance. However, despite the significant potential of village websites in increasing participation, challenges such as lack of community awareness, technological accessibility, and time constraints during the study also need to be considered. To optimize the use of village websites, it is recommended that village officials be more proactive in educating residents about the importance of using this digital platform and ensuring that the content presented remains relevant and engaging. With these measures, it is hoped that community participation in village development can increase, strengthening the relationship between residents and the village government in creating a more transparent and responsive community.

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The Role of Village Websites in Increasing Community Participation: A Case Study of Batur Village, Semarang Regency

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