

Research Article

Communication in Collaborative Leadership in the Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Forum in Wajo Regency

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Abstract.

This study aims to thoroughly examine the role of communication in building and strengthening collaborative leadership within the Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Forum (TJSPLP) of Wajo Regency. The TJSPLP Forum serves as a strategic platform that brings together stakeholders from government, private sector, and community organizations to collaborate in designing and implementing social and environmental programs. Using a qualitative approach and case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and analysis of official forum documents. The findings indicate that effective, participatory, and transparent communication plays a crucial role in building trust, enhancing stakeholder engagement, and improving the effectiveness of collaborative leadership. Communication within the forum is conducted through open dialogues, deliberations to achieve consensus, and equitable sharing of information and resources. Identified challenges include differences in interests, information asymmetry, and limited communication capacities among actors. Nevertheless, the application of adaptive communication strategies and the strengthening of interpersonal capacities have successfully minimized potential conflicts and fostered mutual understanding. This study asserts that collaborative leadership based on strategic communication is a key factor in supporting the successful implementation of TJSPLP programs at the regional level. The implications of these findings are significant not only for the management of TJSPLP, but also contribute conceptually to the development of collaborative leadership theory in the context of sustainable development governance.

Keywords: strategic communication, collaborative leadership, TJSPLP, multisector, Wajo regency

1. Introduction

Leadership in modern organizations today is no longer sufficiently supported solely by hierarchical power, but is increasingly determined by a leader's capacity to build collaborative, equal, and trust-based relationships with all stakeholders involved in the organization or its work network [7]. In a world that is increasingly interconnected and complex socially, economically, and politically, leadership approaches that emphasize control and command are starting to lose their effectiveness. On the other hand, the ability to listen, align various voices, and facilitate active engagement from various

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Published: 2 September 2025

Publishing services provided by
Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the 2nd Doctoral International Conference Committee.



actors has become the key to organizational success. In this context, effective collaborative leadership not only requires technical skills in directing the team but also high interpersonal abilities.

Effective collaborative leadership is supported by five main dimensions of communicative leadership: participatory, adaptive, reflective, persuasive, and strategic communication. Participatory communication actively involves all stakeholders in decision-making and discussions to create a sense of shared ownership. Next, adaptive communication enables leaders to adjust their communication style according to the audience's characteristics and social context, ensuring that messages are effectively received. Reflective communication encourages critical thinking and joint evaluation of the collaborative process, thereby enhancing collective understanding and learning. Additionally, persuasive communication is used to build commitment and support for a shared vision through logical and emotional arguments. Finally, strategic communication focuses on designing structured and directed interactions to achieve collaborative goals by combining formal and informal communication techniques. By integrating these five dimensions, collaborative leaders are able to create inclusive, adaptive, and productive interactions to achieve common goals. These dimensions ensure that communication is not only informative but also capable of bridging differing perspectives, fostering a sense of ownership, and strengthening collaboration among actors from diverse backgrounds [28].

One tangible example of collaborative leadership implementation at the local level can be found in the practice of the Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Forum (TJSLP) in Wajo Regency. This forum is designed as a collaborative space that brings together actors from three main sectors—local government, private business players, and civil society elements—to jointly design, implement, and evaluate social and environmental programs relevant to the needs of the local community. This forum holds great potential for creating inclusive and sustainable social solutions as it combines resources, knowledge, and networks from various parties. However, collaboration in this forum does not always run smoothly. Differences in strategic interests, perspectives on social issues, and expectations of program outcomes become real challenges. Each actor brings with them a background of values, work norms, and internal policies that may conflict with one another. In such situations, effective mechanisms are needed to harmonize differences and create consensus.

In cross-sector forums like TJSLP, communication plays a vital and irreplaceable role. It is not merely a means of delivering technical information or program agendas, but

becomes a primary instrument in building mutual trust, negotiating values and priorities, and fostering a sense of ownership of the forum itself. Participatory and dialogic communication enables all parties to feel respected and heard, while also opening space for healthy and productive discussions. Furthermore, collaborative communication also serves as a social glue that unites actors with different backgrounds, organizational languages, and work cultures into a collective spirit. This process is crucial for creating strong internal cohesion within the forum and preventing fragmentation or domination by certain groups [12].

Theoretically, the communication approach in collaborative leadership has been strongly developed by Kramer and Crespy. They emphasize that the success of collaborative leadership highly depends on how a leader shapes, facilitates, and maintains open, democratic, and reflective dialogue [19]. In this model, the leader is no longer positioned as the sole center of power or decision source but as a facilitator of collective thinking processes that create a safe space for all members to contribute. The communication applied is not one-way communication that is vertical and authoritative but horizontal communication based on equality, mutual respect, and joint decision-making. Thus, collaborative leadership relies on the leader's ability to design fair and adaptive communication systems that respond to field dynamics.

Field findings from the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency show consistency with this theoretical approach. The communication process in the forum demonstrates real efforts by the forum's leaders and facilitators to reduce power distance between actors, create an atmosphere of equal discussion, and develop a collective sense of ownership toward each program designed. Nonetheless, the forum still faces considerable communication challenges. Some obstacles include domination by certain actors—especially from the private sector—who have greater resources and influence, limited time for discussion processes, and communication capacity gaps among forum actors. These conditions indicate that although the forum operates collaboratively, communication quality remains a crucial point that must be continuously improved so as not to hinder the spirit of equality and participation being promoted [3].

The empirical experience of the TJSLP Forum also highlights the importance of adaptive and contextual communication strategies. The forum leaders do not use a rigid communication style but adjust their approach based on the audience's characteristics and the situation faced. When dealing with business players, communication is carried out professionally, technically, and based on quantitative results or business impacts. Conversely, when interacting with community groups, the communication

approach becomes more empathetic, using grounded language and considering local socio-economic conditions. This approach proves that collaborative communication is a dynamic practice that requires high sensitivity to ever-changing social contexts [15].

Therefore, it can be concluded that communication is the main foundation of effective collaborative leadership practices, especially in multi-stakeholder collaboration spaces such as the TJSLP Forum. The success of the forum is not only determined by institutional structures or available resources but also by the quality of communicative interactions established within it. Merely informative communication is not enough; what is needed is communication capable of building social bridges, navigating conflicting interests, and uniting collective visions [22].

Previous research relevant to this topic includes studies by Crespy and Kramer, which affirm that participatory communication in collaborative leadership can create inclusive and productive work environments [19]. Similar results were found by García-Martínez et al., who stated that the success of cross-sector collaboration is greatly influenced by a leader's ability to build open and trusting dialogue among actors [9]. Meanwhile, Tigre et al. [32] found that effective collaborative leadership is marked by active involvement, clarity of roles, and the presence of regular and transparent communication forums. The study by Santoso et al. highlights the importance of communication dynamics in maintaining collaboration sustainability, particularly in public policy forums [25]. These findings show that communication plays a key role in shaping and sustaining collaborative leadership in various organizational and partnership contexts. The details of previous studies relevant to this research are described in Table 1.

Although previous research has highlighted the importance of communication in collaborative leadership, most studies still focus on the context of business organizations, art institutions, or public policies in developed countries, thus lacking representation of the dynamics of collaborative leadership at the local level in social-environmental partnership forums in Indonesia. There are still few studies that specifically examine how communication patterns shape collaborative leadership practices in corporate social responsibility forums in the regions, particularly with regard to the role of local government as facilitator. Based on this gap, this study aims to examine in depth the role of communication in building and strengthening collaborative leadership in the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency. The results of this study are expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of communication-based collaborative leadership theory as well as practical contributions for stakeholders in designing more effective and contextual collaborative communication strategies.

TABLE 1: Previous Studies.

| No | Research Title | Authors and Year | Method | Research Findings |
|----|--|---|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Communicating Collaborative Leadership | Kramer MW, Crespigny DA (2011) | Literature and Theoretical Study | Participatory communication in collaborative leadership can create an inclusive and productive work environment. |
| 2 | Mapping Teacher Collaboration for School Success | García-Martínez I, Montenegro-Rueda M, Molina-Fernández E, Fernández-Batanero JM (2021) | Qualitative Case Study | The success of cross-sector collaboration is significantly influenced by the leader's ability to build open and trustworthy dialogue between actors. |
| 3 | Transformational Leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Strengthening Employee Engagement through Internal Communication | Santoso NR, Sulistyaningtyas ID, Pratama BP (2022) | Qualitative Study | Communication dynamics play an important role in maintaining collaboration sustainability, especially in the context of public policy. |
| 4 | Digital Leadership: A Bibliometric Analysis | Tigre FB, Curado C, Henriques PL (2023) | Bibliometric Analysis | Effective collaborative leadership is characterized by active involvement, role clarity, and routine as well as transparent communication forums. |

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method, aiming to explore in depth how communication plays a role in shaping and strengthening collaborative leadership in the Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Forum (TJSLP) in Wajo Regency. The case study was chosen because it can provide contextual and holistic understanding of complex social phenomena, especially in collaborative environments involving multiple actors from different backgrounds. This approach allows the researcher to explore the dynamics of communication in leadership in a real and in-depth manner.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, limited participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to capture the experiences, views, and communication strategies used by forum leaders in building collaboration. Observations were conducted during several

forum activities to directly observe patterns of interaction and communication among stakeholders. Meanwhile, documentation involved meeting minutes, forum decrees, and reports on the implemented social-environmental programs.

Informants in this study were selected purposively, namely those who have strategic roles in the structure and dynamics of communication within the forum. Informants consisted of the Head of the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency, the Forum Secretary, and forum members representing the economic sector. These three informants were chosen to illustrate the perspectives of leadership, administration, and thematic sectors in the implementation of collaborative communication. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with an average duration of 60–90 minutes per informant, and all conversations were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques, which involve identifying patterns of meaning (themes) from interview transcripts and field notes relevant to the research focus. This process began by repeatedly rereading the raw data, performing open coding, organizing categories, and formulating key themes that illustrate the communication process within collaborative leadership at the TJSLP Forum. To enhance analytical transparency, this study developed a coding structure in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding was conducted by identifying key phrases and important statements from the interview transcripts. Next, axial coding grouped similar codes into broader categories, such as “Active Participation,” “Open Dialogue,” and “Adaptive Communication.” Finally, selective coding formulated the main themes based on the relationships between categories. The thematic code matrix used in this study is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Example of Thematic Code Matrix.

| Main Code | Subcode | Example Quote | Main Theme |
|------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Active Participation | Stakeholder Involvement | “All forum members are given the opportunity to speak” | Participatory Communication |
| Open Dialogue | Idea Exchange | “We share perspectives and seek consensus” | Dialogic Communication |
| Adaptive Communication | Audience Adjustment | “When dealing with companies, we use concrete data” | Contextual Communication |
| Collective Trust | Information Transparency | “All forum decisions are made public” | Transparent Communication |
| Conflict Resolution | Mediation and Negotiation | “The forum leader acts as a mediator when disagreements arise” | Collaborative Leadership |

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study consistently show that communication is a central element in shaping the dynamics of collaborative leadership in the Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility Forum (TJSLP) of Wajo Regency. From the outset of the forum's establishment, communication has been positioned as the main foundation for organizing, uniting, and directing various actors from different backgrounds into a cohesive working unit. The forum chairperson stated that inclusive, equal, and participatory communication has become a fundamental principle in carrying out the forum's agendas, both during planning and implementation stages. Regular forums, thematic discussions, and informal meetings serve as essential means to build mutual understanding, express aspirations, and create a dynamic space for dialogue. Through these mechanisms, stakeholders from government, private companies, and civil society can openly share their ideas and contribute to formulating social interventions that are relevant to local needs.

Interviews with the forum secretary illustrated how horizontal and open communication patterns have become the main strategy for building trust and ensuring everyone's involvement. The forum secretary does not act as a single center of authority but serves as a manager of communication flow, ensuring information circulates evenly and responsively. He facilitates the development of joint agendas by involving all sector representatives, through both online consultations and coordination meetings. Digital communication media such as WhatsApp groups, official emails, and Google Forms are used to gather aspirations, disseminate decisions, and coordinate tasks quickly. In urgent situations, such as natural disasters or emergency needs in specific areas, this communication mechanism enables the forum to respond quickly and accurately. This shows that an effective communication system is at the heart of the forum's resilience and agility in responding to social dynamics.

A forum member representing the economic sector also highlighted the importance of contextual and trust-oriented communication in the success of local economic programs, such as training for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and financial assistance. He explained that communication within the forum cannot be standardized; the style, language, and channels of communication must be adapted to the audience profile. When dialoguing with corporate parties, forum leaders and members use a professional approach focused on performance indicators and financial reports. On the other hand, when conveying programs to local communities, the communication must

be grounded using easily understood narratives, everyday language, and empathetic approaches. This shows that collaborative leadership not only depends on what is communicated, but also on how it is delivered, to whom, and under what conditions. This adaptive communication strategy strengthens social relationships and facilitates alignment of goals among actors.

Although communication has become the backbone of the forum, this study also found several significant communication challenges. Some of these include delays in responses from certain members, dominance of voices from economically stronger private parties, and limited digital communication capacity among civil society groups unfamiliar with technology. This imbalance poses a risk to the principles of equality and active participation that characterize collaboration. To address these challenges, the forum has developed several strategies, including a facilitator rotation system that allows all sectors to take turns leading discussions, the formation of thematic working groups to distribute coordination tasks, and the provision of digital communication technical assistance for community groups. Through this approach, the forum has managed to maintain effective two-way communication and expand access to engagement for all stakeholders.

Overall, the findings of this study show that communication in the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency has evolved from merely being an informational tool into a strategic instrument that drives the collaborative process as a whole. Communication is not only used to convey orders or reports but serves as a means to build inter-party relationships, create a collective sense of ownership over programs, and align various visions toward a common direction. This practice reflects the principles of collaborative leadership as described in the theory of Kramer and Crespy, where leaders are not only tasked with directing but also with building an equal, democratic, and adaptive space for dialogue. This study affirms that the success of forums like TJSLP does not solely rely on institutional structures or financial resources, but especially on the quality of communication that is built sustainably and contextually among its actors.

3.1. Communication as the Foundation of Collaborative Leadership in the TJSLP Forum

The research findings indicate that communication is the fundamental basis for building collaborative leadership within the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency. Since the formation of the forum, stakeholders have emphasized the importance of open and equal dialogue

spaces, where all parties have the same opportunity to express ideas and critiques freely. Communication is utilized not only as a means of conveying information but also as a mechanism to build mutual trust and strengthen shared commitment. This aligns with the findings of Kramer and Crespy [19], who assert that participatory communication is a key element in fostering inclusive collaboration.

The practice of participatory communication within the TJSLP Forum is evident in routine meetings, group discussions, and the use of digital platforms as coordination media. The forum leader does not dominate the process but acts as a dialogue facilitator, creating space for all members to express their opinions. This pattern reflects the co-creation model in collaborative leadership, as highlighted by Daulay [5], who states that collaborative leadership prioritizes equal dialogue over top-down instructions.

The success of communication within the forum is also supported by adaptive strategies applied by the forum leaders, who adjust their communication style according to the characteristics of collaborative partners, whether from the business sector, government, or local communities. A formal approach is used when coordinating with corporations, while an empathetic approach is applied when interacting with communities. This corresponds with the findings of Kilag & Sasan [14], which emphasize that the effectiveness of collaborative communication relies on the leader's ability to adapt communication strategies to the social context.

Moreover, communication within the forum also serves to align perceptions and strengthen commitment to a shared vision, despite involving actors with differing interests. Through transparent and dialogic communication, differing visions can be bridged to reach a mutual agreement. This supports the view of Lee et al. [20], who emphasize that routine and reflective communication is crucial for maintaining the sustainability of long-term collaboration. Therefore, consistent and strategic communication quality becomes a vital factor in the success of collaborative leadership within the TJSLP Forum.

3.2. The Role of Communication Adaptation in Bridging Differences in Interests

The diversity of actors within the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency, ranging from government, the private sector, to civil society organizations, often leads to differences in interests, values, and expectations regarding the programs being implemented. In this context, communication adaptation becomes a crucial strategy to bridge these gaps. Research findings indicate that forum leaders actively adjust their communication

style according to the parties involved, aiming to maintain social sensitivity and prevent narrative domination by particular actors. This aligns with the findings of Gili et al. [10], who state that the success of collaboration relies on adaptive capacity in creating inclusive and contextual communication.

Communication adaptation is evident in the selection of language and communication channels. When communicating with corporate entities, leaders use formal and data-driven language to demonstrate professionalism, whereas with community groups, the language employed is simpler, narrative, and emotional to facilitate acceptance. This supports the findings of Terkamo-Moisio [31], which state that effective collaborative leaders are those who can adjust their communication style to the audience's needs, thereby enhancing participation and meaningful dialogue.

Besides language differences, the selection of time and communication media also forms part of the adaptation strategy. Meetings with the private sector are typically conducted through formal platforms such as Zoom or office agendas, while discussions with the community are more often conducted directly through town hall forums or field visits. This strategy demonstrates that forum leaders are not only attentive to the content of the message but also to the spatial and temporal context of the interaction. This corresponds with the study by Abidin [1], which emphasizes that the success of collaborative forums is determined by the ability to accommodate contextual variations and power relations among actors.

Therefore, communication adaptation is not merely a technical method for delivering messages but rather a broader collaborative leadership strategy aimed at building emotional connections, social trust, and role equality. When all parties feel valued and understood through appropriate communication, resistance can be minimized, participation can increase, and collaboration can become more effective. This demonstrates that the success of collaborative communication depends on the leader's ability to tailor the approach according to the dynamics of inter-actor relationships.

3.3. Communication Dynamics in Addressing Collaborative Leadership Challenges in the TJSLP Forum

The complexity of multi-stakeholder forums such as the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency inevitably brings a variety of challenges that can hinder the effectiveness of collaborative leadership. These challenges include differences in interests, imbalances in participation, limited communication time, and resistance to change. This study found that these

challenges can be mitigated through strategic, reflective, and adaptive communication practices. The following outlines several major challenges and the communication strategies applied to address them.

a. Differences in Interests Among Actors

One of the most apparent challenges in the TJSLP Forum is the differing priorities among the government, corporations, and the community. The government focuses on sustainable development interests, corporations tend to prioritize image and cost efficiency, while the community emphasizes basic needs and program bias. These differences may trigger potential conflicts if not well managed. The TJSLP Forum addresses this challenge by opening regular and scheduled multi-stakeholder dialogue spaces. In each meeting, all parties are encouraged to openly express their expectations and concerns, with a moderator facilitating constructive discussion. This strategy aligns with the dialogical approach described by Sarofah [26], where communication becomes a tool for negotiating interests to find common ground.

b. Participation Imbalance and Actor Dominance

Imbalances in the forum often arise when certain parties, especially from the private sector, dominate decision-making or discussion direction. This causes community groups or smaller institutions to feel insecure about voicing their opinions. To address this, forum leaders apply a facilitator rotation mechanism, where each group is given the opportunity to lead the forum in turn. In addition, the forum enforces a “speaking time equality” rule that encourages all participants to express their views. This effort aligns with the findings of Sağbaşı, M., & Erdoğan [24], who state that process equality is a key prerequisite for successful cross-sector collaboration.

c. Time Constraints and Members’ Busy Schedules

As a forum with members from various sectors with different schedules, the TJSLP Forum faces challenges in synchronizing meeting times and coordination. To respond to this condition, the forum leverages digital technology such as WhatsApp, Zoom, and Google Docs to facilitate asynchronous communication. Information is shared in the form of infographics and executive summaries to ensure easy understanding in a short time. This technology-based communication strategy aligns with the participatory digital communication practices recommended by Fortheringham [8], where collaboration effectiveness relies heavily on ease of access and interaction flexibility.

d. Resistance to Change and Innovation

Not all forum members are open to new ideas or approaches, especially when they feel that changes may disrupt established work patterns or relationships. To address this resistance, forum leaders apply a persuasive communication approach focusing on long-term benefits and successful experiences from other regions. Inspirational discussions and testimonials from successful program implementers are used as tools to boost members' motivation and confidence. This reflects the importance of transformational communication strategies as emphasized by Egitim [6], in which leaders do not merely convey information but also transform collective attitudes and ways of thinking.

3.4. Communication as a Mechanism for Collaboration Sustainability in the TJSLP Forum

The sustainability of collaboration in multi-stakeholder forums such as the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency is highly determined by the quality and consistency of communication among actors. This study shows that communication is not merely a tool for executing short-term agendas, but becomes the foundation for sustaining relationships, trust, and shared learning. In the context of the TJSLP Forum, continuous, open, and reflective communication practices serve as the main strategy for maintaining long-term stakeholder commitment. This is in line with the study by Alajmi [2], which emphasizes that routine communication strengthens social capital and increases the forum's adaptive capacity.

The TJSLP Forum applies various forms of communication to ensure collaboration continuity, including quarterly plenary forums, online discussion groups, and joint field visits. These practices not only strengthen program coordination but also build a culture of dialogue among parties based on mutual understanding and empathy. One effective form of communication is joint reflection after each program is completed, where actors share both successes and encountered challenges. This approach aligns with the principle of learning communication as stated by Turyadi et al. [33], which refers to communication that is not only informative, but also educational and transformative.

The sustainability of the forum is also supported by informal communication mechanisms that are flexible and fluid. This study found that personal relationships among forum members are often built through informal communication, such as casual conversations outside formal meetings, WhatsApp groups, or brief discussions after meetings. Although informal, this communication plays an important role in strengthening interpersonal trust, which becomes the main adhesive of the forum. This finding reinforces the

conclusion of Swart et al. [30], who show that informal communication often serves as a crucial bridge in building an authentic collaborative climate that is resilient to conflict pressure.

Furthermore, communication also serves as a means to strengthen the forum's collective identity. In the case of TJSLP, the forum is not only seen as a space for technical coordination, but as a collaborative community with shared values, vision, and mission. This collective identity is formed through narratives that are repeatedly communicated in various activities, including program result publications, beneficiary testimonials, and success stories in local media. This strategy supports the claim by Semenets-Orlova [27] that collaboration sustainability requires a shared narrative capable of uniting actors within a collective awareness.

Thus, communication in the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency has gone beyond its function as a technical tool for information exchange. It has evolved into a social and cultural mechanism that supports the forum's overall sustainability—in terms of coordination, trust, learning, and collective identity formation. This shows that communication in collaborative leadership is not an additional activity, but the core of the collaboration process itself. These findings also highlight the importance of designing long-term communication strategies as an integral part of multi-stakeholder forum governance.

3.5. Communication Strategies to Strengthen Collaborative Leadership

To address challenges and enhance the practice of collaborative leadership in the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency, forum leaders apply various effective and adaptive communication strategies. These strategies are designed to overcome differences in perspective, build trust among parties, and create an equal participatory space. The following outlines the main communication strategies implemented by the forum that have been proven to contribute to strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration.

a. Building Inclusive Communication from the Outset (Trust-Building and Facilitation)

The TJSLP Forum emphasizes the principle of inclusiveness from the activity planning process by involving all parties in agenda-setting and role distribution through open discussions. This approach fosters a sense of ownership among forum members and prevents exclusivity in decision-making. This strategy closely relates to trust-building, as equal participation enhances mutual trust among members. Additionally, fair facilitation in managing discussions reflects the principle of facilitation, where leaders act as

intermediaries who ensure equal participation. This aligns with the study by Khoiri et al. [13], which states that inclusiveness in communication fosters legitimacy and strengthens collaborative structures.

b. Providing Diverse Communication Channels (Framing and Accessibility)

The forum does not solely rely on formal meetings but also offers various alternative communication channels such as WhatsApp groups, official emails, and direct interpersonal communication. This strategy facilitates quick and flexible information exchange while expanding communication access for all actors. Providing diverse communication channels not only supports accessibility but also helps leaders in framing information according to the audience context. Haupt [11] emphasizes that communication through various formats and media is better able to reach diverse audiences and strengthen cross-sector coordination.

c. Using Adaptive and Simple Language (Framing and Relational Communication)

In multi-stakeholder forums, the use of language becomes crucial to ensure mutual understanding. TJSLP Forum leaders adjust their language style according to the background of the discussion participants: technical when speaking to corporations, and simple-narrative when addressing the community. This language flexibility not only supports framing that matches the social context but also strengthens relational communication by creating emotional connections and a sense of involvement. This is consistent with the findings of Kobstran [18], who states that effective collaborative leaders must possess the ability to communicate across contexts.

d. Promoting Reflective and Evaluative Communication (Reflective Practice and Learning Facilitation)

After program implementation, the forum consistently holds joint reflection sessions to evaluate the effectiveness of communication and coordination. These sessions serve as a space for collective learning and for improving communication patterns in the future. This reflection process is part of reflective practice, aimed at enhancing interaction quality by evaluating shared experiences. Furthermore, leaders who facilitate reflection embody learning facilitation, where open discussions are used to analyze successes and challenges. This approach aligns with the perspective of Mulyana et al. [21], who argue that collaborative forums need to actively reflect on communication processes to maintain sustainability.

e. Using Communication to Build a Shared Narrative (Narrative Framing and Collective Identity)

The TJSLP Forum also utilizes strategic communication to shape a shared narrative about program success and collective goals. This narrative is disseminated through local media publications and annual reports, helping to establish the forum's identity in the public eye. This strategy is part of narrative framing, where leaders use collective stories to unify members' perspectives. Additionally, building a shared narrative strengthens collective identity, making members feel emotionally attached to the forum's vision and mission. Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou [4] note that collective narratives formed through strategic communication can unite actors with previously differing directions into a cohesive unity.

3.6. The Role of Leaders in Managing Collaborative Communication

Collaborative leadership is not only about sharing responsibilities but also about the ability to strategically manage communication to ensure effective collaboration. In the context of the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency, leaders hold the primary responsibility for creating an atmosphere of equal dialogue, facilitating inter-party communication, and mediating emerging conflicts. This study shows that leaders play an important role in maintaining communication openness, building trust, and guiding the forum toward a collective vision. The following are concrete forms of leadership roles in managing collaborative communication.

a. Facilitator of Dialogue and Equality

The forum chair actively assumes the role of a facilitator, not a controller. He ensures that each party has an equal opportunity to speak in every forum discussion. By organizing the flow of dialogue and preventing domination by certain actors, the leader creates a fair and democratic communication space. This reflects the role of a collaborative leader as explained by Kim & Meganck [17], who do not impose their will but build collaboration through wise facilitation.

b. Guardian of Communication Direction and Collaboration Focus

The forum leader also acts as a guardian to ensure that communication remains aligned with shared goals. In every meeting or discussion, he re-emphasizes the forum's vision and ensures that every argument developed remains within collaborative boundaries. This role is essential to maintain communication efficiency and effectiveness, especially when differences of opinion arise. Rofiudin [23] refers to this role as strategic framing, the ability of a leader to reframe conversations to remain productive.

c. Builder of Inter-Party Trust

Trust is the foundation of collaboration. The forum leader plays a role in building and maintaining trust among forum members through honest, transparent, and consistent communication. He conveys important information openly and encourages all parties to do the same. This commitment to transparency strengthens the forum's cohesion. This finding supports the study by Kasmawati [16], which shows that trust grows from repetitive, open, and manipulation-free communication.

d. Mediator in Communication Conflicts

In a multi-stakeholder forum, communication conflicts are inevitable. The forum leader takes the role of mediator when tensions arise among parties, whether due to differences in perception, language, or interests. He mediates conflicts by opening space for clarification, listening to all parties, and offering mutually acceptable compromises. This role is essential to maintain the continuity of collaborative dialogue, as explained by Suryadi et al. [29], who state that collaborative leadership requires the ability to resolve conflicts constructively.

e. Driver of Collaborative Communication Culture

More than just a facilitator, the forum leader also serves as a role model in shaping a culture of open and inclusive communication. Through his responsive, non-defensive attitude and openness to criticism, the leader provides a concrete example of how collaborative communication should be conducted. This attitude inspires other forum members to adopt the same communication values. This reflects the importance of symbolic leadership, where a leader's communicative actions become the symbol and ethical standard of the forum itself.

3.7. Research Implications

This study provides several important implications, both theoretical and practical, for the development of communication-based collaborative leadership models. The findings on the strategic role of communication in sustaining collaboration, building trust, and bridging differences in interests indicate that communication is not merely a supporting instrument, but the foundation of the collaborative leadership process itself. Therefore, the results of this study are broadly relevant to the development of theory, multi-stakeholder collaboration practices, and social-environmental governance policies.

a. Theoretical Implications: Strengthening the Concept of Contextual Collaborative Leadership

This research enriches the body of collaborative leadership theory by adding a contextual dimension from communication practices at the local level. In the context of the TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency, communication is not only part of the coordination process but also functions as a mechanism for reflection, negotiation, and the formation of collective identity. This shows the importance of integrating strategic communication approaches and sociocultural understanding in the study of collaborative leadership.

b. Practical Implications: Multi-Stakeholder Forum Communication Design

For partnership forums like TJSLP, the findings of this study offer practical guidance on how to design participatory, adaptive, and reflective communication. Strategies such as facilitator rotation, the use of various communication channels (digital and direct), and contextual language approaches have proven to enhance the effectiveness and engagement of all parties. These practices can be replicated by similar forums in other regions to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, particularly in managing complex social and environmental issues.

c. Policy Implications: Strengthening the Role of Local Government as a Collaborative Communication Facilitator

The findings highlight the importance of the local government's role not only as a regulator but also as a communication facilitator that bridges public and private interests. Local governments need to have strong cross-sector communication capacity, including the ability to serve as neutral moderators and effective communicators. Therefore, policies should be formulated to support the strengthening of collaborative communication roles in social partnership governance, such as multi-stakeholder communication training, partnership forum regulations, and dedicated budgets for forum communication management.

d. Social Implications: Building a Collaborative Culture Based on Equal Communication

Socially, this study shows that communication managed in an equal and open manner can serve as a foundation for building a collaborative culture in society. The TJSLP Forum in Wajo Regency is an example that inclusive dialogue can dismantle sectoral boundaries and encourage communities to be actively involved in development. Therefore, a culture of equal communication needs to be continuously fostered in

various public spaces, whether through education, training, or concrete examples from community leaders

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that communication plays a key role in shaping, strengthening, and sustaining collaborative leadership within the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency. Through inclusive, adaptive, and reflective communication, the forum has successfully bridged differences in interests, promoted equal participation, and built trust among stakeholders. Forum leaders play a strategic role as facilitators, guardians of discussion direction, and symbols of a collaborative communication culture. These findings reinforce communication-based collaborative leadership theory and contribute to the development of sustainable social-environmental partnership practices at the local level.

Although this study provides significant insights into the role of communication in collaborative leadership, there are some limitations that should be noted. First, the study is focused on the local context of Wajo Regency, so the findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions with different social characteristics. Second, the qualitative method used primarily explores the perspectives of specific participants, which may not comprehensively capture the views of all stakeholders. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the geographical scope and involve more actors to obtain a more holistic understanding of collaborative leadership practices in various contexts.

Based on the research results, it is recommended that multi-stakeholder forums in other regions adopt a contextual and participatory collaborative communication approach as implemented in the TJSLP Forum of Wajo Regency. Local governments should strengthen communicative facilitation capacity within partnership policy structures, including by providing cross-sector communication training for forum leaders. On the other hand, each actor within the forum needs to build a commitment to open, honest, and reflective communication as a foundation for creating inclusive and sustainable collaborative governance, coordination complexity, public understanding, climate change, and policy updates.

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