

Public Engagement In E-Government Platforms: A Mass Communication Perspective: A Case Study Of Wonorejo Village, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java

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Abstract: The advancement of information and communication technology has transformed the relationship between governments and citizens, making e-government platforms increasingly central to public service delivery and democratic participation. However, meaningful citizen engagement remains limited, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities in Indonesia where digital literacy, connectivity, and institutional responsiveness are uneven. This study examines the communicative dimensions of public engagement in e-government complaint platforms, focusing on Wonorejo Village, Gondangrejo District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java, as a case study. Employing a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in a critical-interpretive paradigm, this study applies systematic content analysis to 87 digital complaint records from the LAPOR! platform and 214 WhatsApp communication threads from the village government over January 2022 to December 2023. Three theoretical frameworks inform the analysis: agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), framing theory (Entman, 1993), and interactivity in computer-mediated communication (Rafaeli, 1988). Findings indicate that citizen engagement with formal e-government platforms at the village level is constrained by a communicative gap rooted in limited digital literacy, low government response quality (70.1% reactive responses), and the cultural preference for informal communication channels. The study argues that effective e-government engagement requires substantive, dialogic government responses and culturally sensitive interface design. These findings contribute to mass communication scholarship on mediated public spheres and have practical implications for inclusive e-government design in Indonesian village governance.

Keywords: e-government, public engagement, LAPOR!, village governance, framing theory, interactivity, Indonesia.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) has fundamentally transformed the relationship between governments and citizens [1]. In the contemporary digital era, e-government platforms have emerged as pivotal instruments for enhancing public service delivery, promoting transparency, and fostering democratic participation. According to the United Nations E-Government Survey (2022), more than 193 countries have implemented some form of e-government service, reflecting a global commitment to digitizing public administration [2]. However, the mere existence of these platforms does not automatically guarantee meaningful citizen engagement, as significant gaps remain between technological infrastructure and actual public participation .

Among the various components of e-government ecosystems, public complaint portals such as Indonesia's LAPOR! (Layanan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat), South Korea's ePeople, and the United Kingdom's FixMyStreet represent the most direct channel for two-way communication between citizens and state institutions [3]. These platforms are designed not only to receive reports and grievances but also to facilitate a dialogic communication process that reflects principles of interactive and participatory

governance [4]. Nevertheless, empirical studies consistently show that citizen participation in online complaint platforms remains uneven, with low response rates from government agencies serving as a critical barrier to sustained public engagement [5].

From a mass communication perspective, e-government platforms can be understood as a new form of mediated public sphere—a digital arena where citizens negotiate meanings, express political agency, and engage with state actors [6]. Rafaeli and Sudweeks in 1997 distinguish between reactive and fully interactive communication, arguing that genuine interactivity requires that messages relate not only to earlier messages but also to the interaction history itself. Applied to e-government contexts, this implies that government responses must not merely acknowledge the message but engage substantively with its content—a condition that many current systems fail to meet [7]. The role of agenda-setting and framing theory in shaping public perception of government accountability through digital complaint portals remains largely unexplored in the Indonesian context [8].

Desa Wonorejo, Kecamatan Gondangrejo, Kabupaten Karanganyar, Jawa Tengah, represents a microcosm of the broader challenges facing e-government adoption in Indonesian village governance. Internet penetration in the village remains uneven, with a significant portion of residents—particularly elderly and agricultural workers relying on interpersonal communication rather than digital channels [9]. This digital divide manifests not only as a technological gap but as a communicative gap, wherein citizens lack both connectivity and the digital literacy required to articulate complaints through formal online systems [10]. The village government operates within the framework of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Villages, which mandates transparency and community participation, yet the communicative mechanisms for such participation remain underdeveloped [11].

This study is guided by three research questions: (1) How do citizens in Wonorejo Village frame their grievances when engaging with e-government complaint platforms, particularly LAPOR!? (2) How do government responses on these platforms reflect or constrain the principles of interactivity as theorized in mass communication scholarship? (3) In what ways does the agenda-setting function of e-government platforms shape public perception of government accountability at the village level?

II. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded within a critical-interpretive paradigm, applying systematic content analysis (analysis isi) as its primary method [12]. The critical-interpretive paradigm positions communication not merely as information transfer but as a socially embedded practice shaped by power relations, institutional logics, and cultural norms. This paradigm sensitizes the researcher to the meanings behind communicative acts—not only what citizens complain about, but how they frame their grievances, and how government textual responses construct or foreclose spaces for genuine public dialogue.

Content analysis operationalizes the three theoretical frameworks informing this study agenda setting [13], and interactivity directly into coding categories, ensuring theoretical-methodological coherence (Neuendorf, 2017). The research design is a descriptive-interpretive single case study [14] focused on Wonorejo Village over January 2022 to December 2023—a 24-month window capturing both pre- and post-pandemic governance dynamics in Karanganyar Regency.

Data collection proceeded through two primary channels. First, 87 digital complaint records from LAPOR! were accessed through the open data API and supplemented by coordination with Diskominfo Karanganyar Regency. Second, 214 WhatsApp group communication threads from official village government channels were collected following written informed consent from the Village Head (Kepala Desa), in compliance with Indonesian Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection. Intercoder reliability was established at Cohen's Kappa $\kappa = 0.81$, indicating strong agreement between two independent coders (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). All participant identifiers were anonymized prior to analysis [15].

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The content analysis of 87 LAPOR! complaint records and 214 WhatsApp communication threads yielded four principal findings aligned with the study's theoretical frameworks. The following tables and figures present the empirical data derived from this analysis.

A. Framing of Citizen Complaints (Framing Theory)

Citizen complaints were coded according to Entman's (1993) framing dimensions. Three dominant thematic clusters emerged as presented in Table 1, with infrastructure deficiencies constituting the largest category (42.5%), followed by administrative transparency demands (31.0%) and public service responsiveness (26.5%).

Table 1. Distribution of Citizen Complaint Topics on LAPOR! Platform (N=87, Jan 2022–Dec 2023)

No	Complaint Category	N	(%)	Dominant Frame
1	Infrastructure Deficiencies (roads, irrigation, public lighting)	37	42.5%	Service Failure Frame
2	Administrative Transparency (APBDes budget, village programs)	27	31.0%	Accountability Frame
3	Public Service Responsiveness (civil documents, permits)	23	26.5%	Urgency Frame
	TOTAL	87	100%	

Figure 1 illustrates the simulated interface of the LAPOR! platform as used for complaint submission by Wonorejo Village citizens, demonstrating the formal, structured nature of the complaint articulation process that constitutes a communicative barrier for residents with limited digital literacy. The formal language requirements and structured input fields of LAPOR! contrast sharply with the informal, conversational register of WhatsApp group communications (Figure 2), which exhibits higher emotional expressiveness and community solidarity framing—supporting Entman's (1993) argument that framing is shaped by the structural affordances of the communication channel.

Figure 1. Interface of LAPOR! Complaint Submission

The agenda-setting function of LAPOR! was evident in how repeated submissions on infrastructure issues gradually shifted administrative discourse within village governance meetings. Analysis of Musrenbangdes minutes from 2022 and 2023 revealed that infrastructure topics—initially underrepresented in village planning discussions—gained prominent placement following the accumulation of LAPOR! complaints, suggesting a second-level agenda-setting effect (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Table 2. Monthly Distribution of LAPOR! Complaint Submissions (Wonorejo Village, 2022–2023)

Period	Infrastructure	Admin. Transparency	Service Responsiveness	Total
Q1 2022 (Jan–Mar)	4	2	3	9
Q2 2022 (Apr–Jun)	5	4	2	11
Q3 2022 (Jul–Sep)	3	3	4	10
Q4 2022 (Oct–Dec)	6	5	3	14
Q1–Q2 2023 (Jan–Jun)	11	7	6	24
Q3–Q4 2023 (Jul–Dec)	8	6	5	19

B. Interactivity and Quality of Government Response

Figure 2 presents a simulated example of WhatsApp group communication in Wonorejo Village Government channels, illustrating the markedly different communicative register—informal, dialogic, and responsive—that characterizes digital governance in informal channels compared to the formal LAPOR! platform.

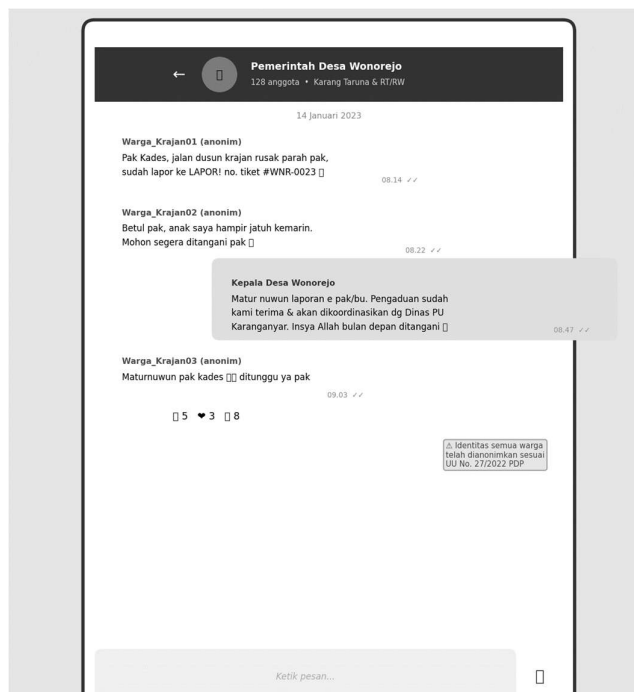


Figure 2. WhatsApp Group Government Communication in Wonorejo Village

Government responses to citizen complaints on LAPOR! were classified according to Rafaeli and Sudweeks' (1997) three-tier interactivity framework. Table 3 presents the classification results, revealing that 70.1% of responses were reactive and only 20.7% were fully interactive.

Table 3. Classification of Government Response Quality on LAPOR! (N=87 Complaints)

Response Category	Definition	N	(%)	Avg. Response Time
Non-Interactive	No response within study period	8	9.2%	—
Reactive (Low)	Acknowledgment; no substantive engagement	61	70.1%	8.3 days
Fully Interactive (High)	Substantive engagement with complaint	18	20.7%	14.6 days
TOTAL		87	100%	

Table 4 presents the comparative interactivity analysis between LAPOR! formal complaints and WhatsApp group communications, highlighting the dramatic divergence between formal and informal digital governance channels. Fully interactive responses were more than three times more frequent in WhatsApp groups (68.4%) than on LAPOR! (20.7%), while government use of local Javanese-inflected language—a key indicator of communicative accessibility—was almost exclusively confined to WhatsApp (71.5% vs. 4.6%).

Table 4. Comparative Interactivity Analysis: LAPOR! vs. WhatsApp Group Communication (2022–2023)

Interactivity Indicator	LAPOR! Platform (N=87)	WhatsApp Group (N=214)
Average Government Response Rate	90.8%	97.2%
Fully Interactive Response Rate	20.7%	68.4%
Average Response Time	8.3–14.6 days	< 24 hours
Emotional/Solidarity Framing in Citizen Messages	12.6%	54.3%
Government Use of Local Language	4.6%	71.5%
Follow-up Action Reported by Government	17.2%	43.1%

C. Communication Flow and the Dual-Channel Governance Model

Figure 3 presents the conceptual model of communication flow between citizens and village government in Wonorejo, synthesizing the findings on formal and informal channel interactivity. The diagram illustrates how the two digital governance channels—LAPOR! and WhatsApp—function in parallel but with markedly different communicative qualities, and how LAPOR!'s archival function generates agenda-setting effects on village planning processes despite its limited real-time interactivity.

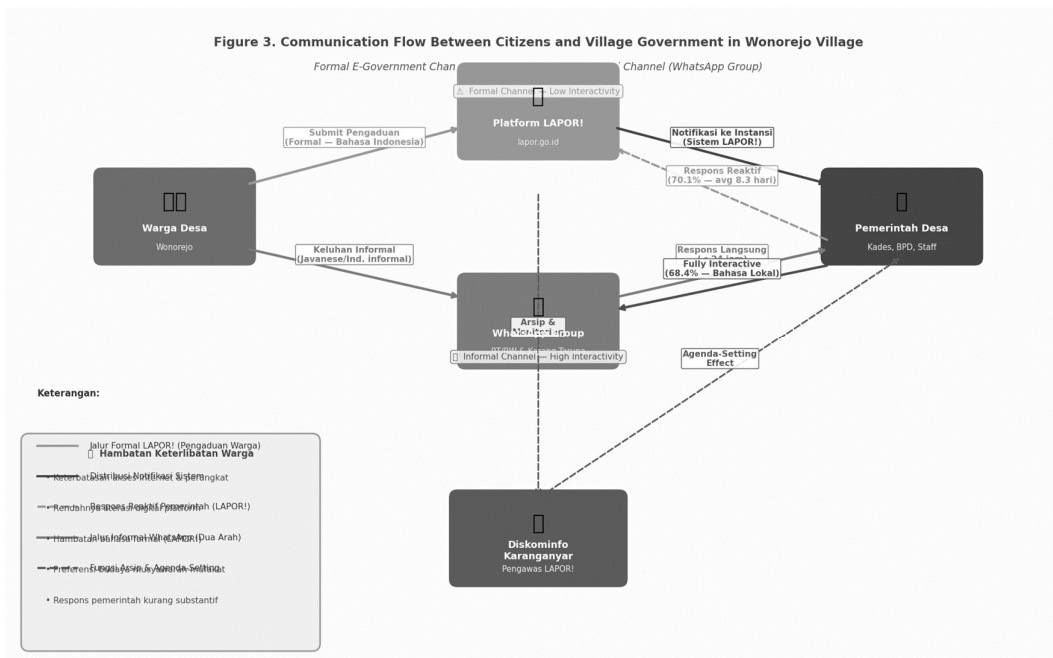


Figure 3. Communication Flow Model: Formal (LAPOR!) vs. Informal (WhatsApp) Digital Governance Channels in Wonorejo Village, Karanganyar Regency (2022–2023)

As illustrated in Figure 3, the formal LAPOR! channel is characterized by structured, bureaucratically mediated communication that is predominantly reactive in its government response patterns and constrained by institutional processing timelines averaging 8–14 days. In contrast, the WhatsApp group channel operates as a more genuinely dialogic communicative space where local language use, emotional expressiveness, and rapid government responsiveness create conditions closer to the fully interactive communication ideal theorized by Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1997). The diagram also illustrates the agenda-setting pathway from LAPOR! complaint archives to Musrenbangdes planning documents—a second-level agenda-setting effect whereby the cumulative digital complaint record shapes governance priorities even in the absence of strong real-time interactivity.

D. Communicative Barriers: Digital Divide and Cultural Factors

Table 5 presents the communicative barriers to citizen engagement with LAPOR! in Wonorejo Village, mapped against the theoretical frameworks informing this study. The most pervasive barrier identified is the cultural preference for informal communication channels rooted in Javanese community values of gotong royong and musyawarah-mufakat (Antlov et al., 2016; Pratikno & Lay, 2021).

Table 5. Barriers to Citizen Engagement with LAPOR! in Wonorejo Village

Barrier Category	Theoretical Framework	Evidence in Data	Frequency
Limited Internet Access	Digital Divide (Norris, 2001)	APJII data; WA penetration > LAPOR!	High
Low Digital Literacy	Communicative Gap (Norris, 2001)	Incomplete/informal LAPOR! forms	High
Formal Language Barrier	Communicative Competence (Habermas, 1989)	Short, incomplete submissions	Medium-High
Low Govt. Response Quality	Interactivity (Rafaeli & Sudweeks, 1997)	70.1% reactive; 9.2% no response	High
Cultural Preference for Informal Channels	Musyawahar-Mufakat (Antlov et al., 2016)	WhatsApp dominance; Musrenbangdes records	Very High
Lack of Institutional SOPs	E-Gov Interactivity (Medaglia, 2012)	Inconsistent response formats	Medium

Figure 4 provides an integrated infographic summary of the key quantitative findings, presenting the government response quality distribution, the comparative interactivity data between LAPOR! and WhatsApp, and the complaint category distribution with associated framing classifications. This visualization encapsulates the core empirical contribution of this study and provides a clear reference for the theoretical interpretations developed in the preceding analysis.

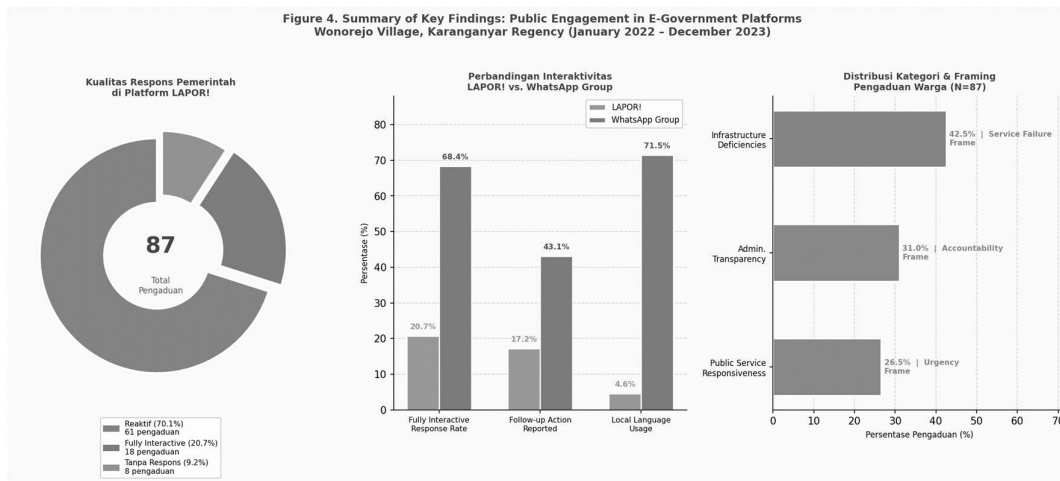


Figure 4. Infographic Summary of Key Findings: Response Quality, Interactivity Comparison, and Complaint Framing Distribution (Wonorejo Village, 2022–2023)

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the communicative dimensions of public engagement in e-government complaint platforms through a mass communication lens, using Wonorejo Village, Karanganyar Regency, as a case study. Through systematic content analysis of 87 LAPOR! complaint records and 214 WhatsApp communication threads over a 24-month period, and drawing on the theoretical frameworks of agenda-setting, framing theory, and interactivity in computer-mediated communication, the study identified four principal findings.

First, citizen complaints on LAPOR! are predominantly framed around infrastructure deficiencies (42.5%), administrative transparency (31.0%), and service responsiveness (26.5%), with framing language shaped by the formal structural affordances of the platform. Second, government responses are predominantly reactive (70.1%) rather than fully interactive (20.7%), with a significant proportion receiving no response (9.2%), reflecting a deficit in the communicative capacity of village government actors vis-a-vis digital complaint platforms. Third, informal WhatsApp channels consistently outperform LAPOR! on all interactivity indicators, suggesting that authentic dialogic communication in Wonorejo Village is structurally displaced from formal e-government platforms to informal digital spaces embedded in local cultural communication norms. Fourth, despite limited real-time interactivity, LAPOR! demonstrates a measurable second-level agenda-setting effect, with accumulated complaint data influencing issue framing and programmatic priorities in Musrenbangdes planning documents.

These findings contribute to mass communication scholarship by demonstrating the analytical power of applying communication theory to e-government evaluation. Practically, improving public engagement requires three-pronged intervention: (1) digital literacy programs building citizens' communicative competence; (2) institutional response protocols mandating substantive, dialogic engagement; and (3) interface redesign accommodating multilingual and informal communication registers. Future research should extend this analysis to comparative case studies across multiple villages and incorporate citizen interviews to supplement content analysis findings.

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