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# ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN URBAN WASTE MANAGEMENT: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BANJARMASIN GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY

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## ABSTRACT

The waste crisis in Banjarmasin City, triggered by the closure of the Basirih Final Disposal Site in February 2025 has posed significant challenges in environmental management and public communication. The Government, through various statements and media, has communicated its crisis communication strategy to solve this problem and has invited the public for their active participation. The purpose of this research is to analyze the environmental crisis communication strategy used by the Banjarmasin city government and to study how discourse is formed in conveying public messages. Using a qualitative approach with discourse critical analysis method by Norman Fairclough, data is obtained by media documentation, official statement, and interview with related parties. Result of this research shows that the government framed the crisis as a collective responsibility, using collaborative narrative and moral calls to raise public awareness. This strategy serves as a form of legitimacy for emergency policy as well as a means of building public trust. This research has contributed in understanding environmental crisis communication practice and the importance of discourse construction in forming opinion and public participation.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Environmental Communication, Waste Crisis, Banjarmasin City

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have become an unavoidable global concern, and cities in Indonesia are no exception to its impacts. One of the most pressing environmental crises emerging to the forefront is the issue of waste. Banjarmasin City, known as the 'City of a Thousand Rivers,' is now facing increasingly complex ecological pressures as the volume of waste generated by its residents continues to rise. In the daily lives of residents, the sight of piles of waste along riverbanks, waterways, and residential areas is no longer uncommon. This phenomenon not only disrupts the city's aesthetic appeal but also poses serious threats to public health and environmental sustainability.

Waste management issues in Indonesia's major cities have become increasingly complex challenges, not only from a technical management perspective but also in terms of communication between the government and the public. Banjarmasin, as the capital of South Kalimantan Province, is currently facing a serious environmental crisis following the closure of the Basirih Final Waste Processing Site (TPAS) by the Ministry of Environment in early February 2025. The closure has led to waste accumulation at various points across the city, causing health and social impacts, as well as disrupting community activities.

The waste problem in Banjarmasin cannot be viewed solely as a technical management issue; rather, waste reflects the social, cultural, political, and even ideological dynamics of urban development. In this context, the government's response to the waste

crisis serves as a crucial starting point for understanding how environmental discourse is shaped, communicated, and negotiated with the public. The city government does not only act as a policy maker but also as a crisis communicator that must be able to convey the environmental emergency situation to the public in an accurate, open, and trust-building manner.

According to data from the Banjarmasin City Environmental Agency, Banjarmasin faces a serious waste problem, with daily waste production exceeding 600 tonnes. The closure of the Basirih Final Disposal Site (TPA) due to open dumping practices has exacerbated the situation, causing waste to pile up on several roads. The Banjarmasin City Government is seeking solutions to address this issue, including the use of waste shredders and increasing public awareness of waste sorting.

In this emergency situation, the government's communication strategy is crucial. The Banjarmasin City Government, under the leadership of Mayor H. Muhammad Yamin HR, is striving to build an emergency response narrative through various communication channels, including press statements, social media, and collaboration with the media. This communication strategy aims not only to convey information but also to encourage the public and the business sector to actively participate in finding solutions.

Within this framework, environmental crisis communication plays a central role. Communication in crisis situations requires sensitivity, well-thought-out strategies, and convincing narratives. When crises are not managed effectively through clear communication, the risk of policy failure increases. The public may misinterpret policies or even reject them. Conversely, effective communication can serve as a bridge between the government and citizens in seeking joint solutions to environmental crises.

This study stems from concerns about how the Banjarmasin city government articulates the waste crisis and how its communication strategies are perceived by the community. Behind various programmes such as the ban on plastic bags in shopping centres, river clean-up campaigns, and the construction of Integrated Waste Management Facilities (TPST), there is a narrative that has been constructed. This narrative not only conveys policy but also shapes the public's perspective on the crisis being faced.

Banjarmasin's unique geographical conditions, surrounded by major rivers, make the waste crisis an issue inseparable from local culture. Rivers, once the centre of community life, are now slowly transforming into informal final disposal sites. This transformation did not occur overnight but was influenced by the socialisation of values, weak regulations, and communication patterns that have not fully addressed the ecological awareness of the community. Here, crisis communication plays a key role in reshaping collective awareness of the importance of preserving the environment.

Through this research, the researcher attempts to unravel the layers of meaning in the communication strategies of the Banjarmasin City Government. Using a discourse analysis approach, the researcher examines how texts, symbols, and language are used across various communication channels—both formal and informal—to convey crises, encourage participation, and shape public opinion. The primary focus is not merely on the content of the message but on how the message is produced, disseminated, and interpreted within the social context of the community.

Using a qualitative approach, the researcher seeks to delve deeper into how these discourses are constructed. What is emphasised by the government and how language is used to persuade and shape public opinion. These questions are important to examine not

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only to understand the content of the message but also the power structures and ideologies at play behind the crisis communication.

This research also seeks to understand the communicative dimensions of the environmental crisis management process. In reality, many policies fail not because their substance is flawed, but because the way they are communicated does not resonate with the social context and reality of society through discourse analysis.

The effectiveness of this communication strategy cannot be separated from how discourse is formed and conveyed. Through discourse analysis, it can be examined how the government constructs the image of the crisis, builds legitimacy for its actions, and frames the role of society in waste emergency management. This research is important for understanding how environmental crisis communication is carried out by the city government in an emergency context that requires public trust and participation.

By examining the communication strategies of the Banjarmasin City Government from a discourse analysis perspective, this study aims to reveal the dynamics of environmental communication in crises and its contribution to the success or challenges of waste management in the city.

This research also serves as a space for reflection on efforts to build more participatory, inclusive, and contextual public communication. In crisis communication, the speed and accuracy of information are indeed important, but equally important is the government's ability to understand the cultural context, listen to the voices of the community, and build equal relationships in policy rationality. Therefore, this study does not only focus on the technical aspects of communication but also on the ethical, relational, and sociological dimensions that accompany it.

Thus, this study is expected to not only contribute to theoretical understanding of environmental crisis communication but also offer practical insights for formulating public policy communication strategies that are more rooted in the social reality of Banjarmasin society.

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan. This city was chosen because it faces unique environmental challenges, particularly related to its river system and prominent waste issues. Data collection locations included the Banjarmasin City Environmental Agency office, traditional market areas (as the main waste producers), waste banks, and several temporary waste disposal sites (TPS). Additionally, data collection was conducted online, primarily to trace digital communication through social media and online news.

This study employs a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis, aiming to deeply understand how the Banjarmasin City Government frames environmental crisis issues within the context of urban waste management through its public communication strategies. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to examine communication practices not only as the transmission of messages but also as the construction of meaning laden with ideology, power, and the social relationships surrounding it.

This study is interpretative-descriptive in nature, as it aims to explain how social reality is constructed through language, symbols, and narratives in government

communication regarding waste management issues. This study also touches on an interdisciplinary approach, as it combines communication, environmental, and public policy studies simultaneously.

The main materials in this study are documents, texts, and public communication narratives produced by the Banjarmasin City Government, especially those related to waste management programmes, policies, or campaigns. These include: press releases, speeches by the mayor or department officials, official social media posts, brochures, pamphlets, and official publications from relevant government agencies. Additionally, the researcher collected secondary data from media reports, both print and online, discussing waste issues and environmental policies in Banjarmasin.

To strengthen the textual data, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a number of key informants, including officials from the Environmental Agency (DLH), representatives of environmental communities such as waste banks or waste management volunteers, as well as community members who had been involved in environmental education or campaign programmes. Thus, the data obtained did not only come from official government discourse, but also from the responses, interpretations, and experiences of the community.

This study utilised several data collection techniques, namely:

1. **Documentation**, conducted by collecting various official documents and texts issued by the Banjarmasin City Government. These included public officials' speeches, policy documents (mayoral regulations, local regulations, waste management SOPs), and environmental communication campaign materials. Additionally, documentation includes local and national media reports containing information about waste management strategies in Banjarmasin.
2. **Semi-structured interviews**, conducted with key informants to explore their interpretations and perspectives on government communication strategies and their impact on the community. The semi-structured format allows researchers to explore data flexibly while maintaining focus on the main topic.
3. **Participatory and non-participatory observation**, conducted by directly observing socialisation activities, public campaigns, and waste management community activities. This provides a social context for the discourse being studied and enriches the data with nuances of communication behaviour in the field.

Data analysis in this study uses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach developed by Norman Fairclough. Critical discourse analysis is used to identify the elements of discourse that shape community responses and frame the issue of waste as a shared problem.

This technique is used to identify and examine how discourse formed in crisis communication regarding waste management can influence public understanding and attitudes towards the issue. The CDA approach consists of three main stages, namely:

1. Text Analysis Examining linguistic elements such as diction, metaphors, sentence structure, and the way messages are conveyed in communication texts. The aim is to understand how the environmental crisis is framed in official narratives.
2. Discourse Practice Analysis: Examining how these texts are produced, disseminated, and received by the public. In this case, the researcher pays attention to the communication media used, the communication style of officials, and the rhetorical strategies chosen.

3. Social Practice Analysis Connecting discourse with broader social, economic, and political contexts. This includes the role of ideology, political interests, and power relations between the government and society in managing environmental issues.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Banjarmasin City Government framed the waste crisis as an emergency that required the active participation of the entire community. In various communication campaigns, the government used narratives that emphasised shared responsibility between the government and citizens. The discourse focused more on moral appeals and collaboration, and placed little emphasis on the urgency of policies or technical measures. The research results show that the crisis communication strategy used by the Banjarmasin City Government prioritises narratives of collective responsibility and a clean culture. However, in practice, there is a disparity between the official narrative and the social reality of the community. The government tends to use a top-down approach with little room for citizen participation. For example, in the plastic bag ban campaign, many small business owners admitted that they did not understand the purpose of the policy due to a lack of direct and educational communication.

The discourse also shows a strong image of regional leadership, with an emphasis on achievements and innovation, but minimal evaluation of the real impact of policies. This indicates that crisis communication in Banjarmasin is still symbolic and has not yet fully led to community empowerment. In Fairclough's approach, the analysis is conducted in three dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice.

### A. Textual Analysis:

- The policy texts and speeches of the mayor of Banjarmasin often use diction that emphasises 'discipline', "innovation", and 'cleanliness as a shared responsibility'.
- Sentences are declarative and authoritative, such as 'the community must comply' and 'the city government will take firm action.' This indicates that communication is instructional, not dialogic.
- The lack of community voice representation in the text indicates the dominance of the state narrative.

### B. Discourse Practice Dimension:

- Text production is carried out through official channels such as government media, billboards, and social media, which are controlled by the relevant agencies.
- Message distribution is one-way and top-down, with minimal community involvement in message formulation.
- The plastic bag ban campaign, for example, was not accompanied by community involvement or a contextual educational approach.

### C. Dimension of Social Practice:

- Environmental discourse is shaped in the context of neoliberalism and political image-building. The government emphasises efficiency and modernity in waste management, but ignores the economic realities of informal actors (such as scavengers and market traders).
- Local values such as mutual cooperation have not been fully mobilised in policy narratives.

- The power relations between the government and the community tend to be hierarchical and hegemonic.

### **Communication Strategies of the Banjarmasin City Government**

To address the increasingly complex challenges of waste management, the Banjarmasin City Government has implemented a range of public communication strategies. Since the enactment of the 2019 plastic bag prohibition under Mayor Regulation No. 18 of 2016 concerning the Reduction of Plastic Bag Usage, public communication initiatives have been oriented toward fostering ecological awareness among the populace. These strategies include leveraging social media platforms, displaying banners, broadcasting public service announcements, conducting educational activities in schools, and engaging local community groups.

Official communication channels, such as the Banjarmasin City Government's Instagram and Facebook accounts, have been utilized to disseminate narratives emphasizing the importance of reducing plastic waste, preserving rivers as a hallmark of the city's identity, and promoting household waste segregation. Persuasive messaging techniques have been employed, highlighting the active participation of residents through slogans such as "Banjarmasin Baiman Tanpa Plastik" or "Jangan Tunggu Darurat Sampah, Ayo Kurangi dari Sekarang"

An additional strategy, executed by the Environmental Agency (DLH), involved the closure of the Basirih landfill (TPA) in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan Province. This decision was driven by the landfill's non-compliance with established waste management standards, particularly its reliance on open dumping practices. The closure of Basirih, the largest landfill in South Kalimantan, necessitated the declaration of a waste emergency by the Mayor of Banjarmasin. According to Alive Yusfa, the Head of the Environmental Agency, "The closure of the Basirih landfill has significantly disrupted the overall waste management process in Banjarmasin City."

Following the landfill's closure, which was mandated by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in early February, the city government initiated emergency waste management measures. These included the involvement of stakeholders such as the Central Waste Bank and various environmental advocacy groups.

Despite these efforts, the communication strategies employed often remain predominantly unidirectional, emphasizing the dissemination of information without providing sufficient avenues for dialogue or public engagement in policy formulation. This limitation represents a critical challenge in establishing inclusive and responsive crisis communication frameworks.

### **Dominant Discourse: The Environment as a Shared Responsibility**

An analysis of documents, social media posts, and interviews reveals that the government has constructed a narrative framing the environmental crisis caused by waste as a collective responsibility. The government emphasizes the importance of behavioral changes at the individual and household levels, as well as community involvement in waste management.

The emerging discourse positions society as the primary actor in driving change, with the government serving merely as a facilitator and guide. This is reflected in official

statements from the Instagram account @pemkot\_bjm in 2025, such as: *"If not starting at home, where else can we begin? The government cannot work alone."*

This narrative subtly shifts structural responsibility onto the community, without sufficiently addressing systemic limitations in urban waste collection, processing, or uneven infrastructure development.

### **Emotional and Ethical Strategies: Persuasive and Symbolic Language**

The Banjarmasin City Government employs emotional strategies in framing waste issues by emphasizing the city's identity as a river-based community. In various campaign materials, rivers are depicted as symbols of life that must be preserved, with the threat of waste linked to the degradation of cultural heritage.

Visual representations, such as children playing in rivers, fishermen catching fish, and homemakers disposing of waste along riverbanks, serve as powerful tools to evoke empathy. The language used frequently incorporates religious and moral undertones, as seen in messages like:

*"Protecting the environment is part of faith."*

*"Rivers are a legacy for our future generations."*

This discourse aims to establish a collective norm that environmental stewardship is not only a legal obligation but also a moral and spiritual duty. While this strategy effectively mobilizes public support, it does not fully address structural issues such as weak regulation and oversight of industrial actors or the proliferation of illegal waste disposal sites.

### **Communication Barriers and Public Criticism**

Interviews with environmental community representatives and residents reveal that, despite the structured and positive narrative from the government, a disconnect remains between symbolic communication and on-the-ground realities. Common criticisms include:

1. Insufficient recycling facilities and integrated waste disposal sites.
2. Limited direct education efforts targeting lower-income communities.
3. Unequal access to information, with many residents not reached by digital campaigns.
4. Lack of clarity regarding waste management processes after waste sorting by households.

An activist from an environmental community remarked:

*"The campaign to sort waste is good, but after we sort it, the garbage trucks mix it back together. This erodes trust."*

This statement underscores a crisis of trust in the system, which cannot be resolved solely through persuasive communication. Instead, it necessitates strengthening public service systems to align with and support the communicated narratives.

### **Power Dynamics in Discourse: Between Regulation and Participation**

An analysis of social practices reveals that the government's communication strategies reflect asymmetric power relations. The government positions itself as the

central creator of narratives, while the public is often treated as an object of persuasion rather than a subject of dialogue.

Although the government claims that environmental programs are conducted participatively, observations and interviews suggest that participation is largely symbolic. Public hearings tend to be formalities, with community input having minimal impact on technical policy decisions.

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, this indicates that environmental communication discourse also functions as a hegemonic tool. State power is cloaked in moral, persuasive, and ethical narratives that appear neutral and universal but, in reality, maintain structural dominance.

### **Reflection on the Effectiveness of Crisis Communication**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the crisis communication developed by the Banjarmasin City Government has established a solid narrative foundation. This includes emotional appeals, framing the crisis as a shared responsibility, and emphasizing local identity. However, the effectiveness of this communication remains constrained by:

1. The reliance on digital media as the primary channel for message dissemination.
2. The limited opportunities for meaningful public participation.
3. The gap between symbolic communication and structural realities on the ground.

Moving forward, communication strategies should adopt a more dialogical and participatory approach. This includes collaborating with grassroots communities, enhancing public service capacity, and ensuring transparency in urban waste management.

The closure of the Basirih landfill (TPA) in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan Province, due to non-compliance with waste management standards—particularly its reliance on open dumping—has further highlighted the urgency for systemic improvements. The closure of the largest landfill in South Kalimantan led to the declaration of a waste emergency status by the Mayor of Banjarmasin.

In an interview, the Head of the Environmental Agency, Alive Yusfa, stated: *“The closure of the Basirih landfill has significantly disrupted the overall waste management process in Banjarmasin City.”* Following the closure mandated by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in early February, the Banjarmasin City Government has undertaken emergency waste management measures, involving stakeholders such as the Central Waste Bank and environmental advocacy groups.

### **CONCLUSION**

The communication strategies of the Banjarmasin City Government in addressing urban waste management primarily rely on persuasive and symbolic approaches, emphasizing individual and collective awareness of environmental preservation. The narrative focuses on shared responsibility, the city’s local identity as a river-centered community, and moral and religious values. The dominant discourse frames the environmental crisis as a result of public behavior, with solutions predominantly targeting changes in individual and community actions.

Structural factors, such as waste management infrastructure, policy oversight, and industrial regulations, receive less narrative emphasis. A gap exists between symbolic communication strategies and on-the-ground realities, where communities face challenges such as inadequate waste processing facilities, inconsistent public services, and limited

opportunities for dialogue in policymaking. Consequently, parts of the public express fatigue or distrust in the effectiveness of the government's programs.

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, the communication strategies of the Banjarmasin City Government reflect a power dynamic inclined toward hegemonizing meaning. The government, as the dominant actor, defines the crisis and its solutions, while the public is positioned more as recipients of messages rather than co-creators of meaning or partners in decision-making processes. Overall, while the city's environmental crisis communication has significantly progressed in terms of narrative and media use, it does not yet fully embody the principles of participatory, transparent, and responsive crisis communication.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Enhance Two-Way Communication: The government should strengthen its approach to two-way communication by not only delivering campaigns but also creating participatory dialogue spaces with the public, especially at the community level. This is essential to build trust and a sense of ownership over environmental policies.
2. Integrate Symbolic Communication with Structural Actions: Effective public communication must be supported by concrete structural measures, such as improving recycling systems, increasing integrated waste disposal sites, and enhancing the capacity of field staff. Consistent and accountable public services are crucial to reinforcing communication narratives.
3. Empower Local Communities and Civil Society Organizations: Local communities and civil society organizations should be empowered not merely as implementing partners but as strategic actors in producing alternative discourses. The government should establish equal collaborations with environmental groups to create more inclusive and contextual narratives.
4. Conduct Regular Evaluations and Monitoring: Periodic evaluations and monitoring of crisis communication effectiveness are necessary to adapt strategies to social dynamics and on-the-ground needs. This can be achieved through perception surveys, public discussion forums, or environmental communication audits.

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