

FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto, Aquarini

^{1,2}Universitas Muhammadiyah Palangka Raya

E-mail: bambangtr04@gmail.com

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Abstract

Community participation is a crucial factor in the success of sustainable forest management, particularly within the framework of social forestry. Forest Farmer Groups (Kelompok Tani Hutan/KTH), as key actors at the site level, require effective facilitation to actively engage in forest management activities. In this context, forestry extension officers play a strategic role as intermediaries between government policies and local communities. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies employed by forestry extension officers to enhance the participation of Forest Farmer Groups at the Forestry Service of Central Kalimantan Province through the Barito Tengah Forest Management Unit (UPT KPHP Barito Tengah) in North Barito Regency. This research adopts a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews with forestry extension officers as research informants. The data were analyzed descriptively through thematic categorization focusing on the role of extension officers, communication methods and media, socio-cultural adaptation, dialogic interaction, and communication barriers in forestry extension activities. The findings indicate that the communication strategies applied by forestry extension officers are persuasive, participatory, and context-based. Interpersonal communication through face-to-face interactions and field-based mentoring is prioritized, while communication styles are adjusted to local social and cultural conditions. Two-way dialogue and discussion facilitate a process of meaning construction between extension officers and Forest Farmer Group members, leading to improved understanding, motivation, and behavioral change in forest management practices. These communication strategies contribute positively to increasing the participation of Forest Farmer Groups and support the implementation of social forestry policies as well as sustainable forest management objectives.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Forestry Extension, Forest Farmer Groups

INTRODUCTION

Forestry development in Indonesia is currently directed not only at the sustainability of forest resources but also at strengthening community participation in sustainable forest management. This paradigm positions communities as the subjects of forestry development, particularly through strengthening the role of Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) as government partners at the grassroots level. The success of sustainable forest management is largely determined by the level of KTH's active participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of forestry activities. The government's commitment to encouraging community involvement is manifested through the Social Forestry policy, as stipulated in Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number 9 of 2021 concerning Social Forestry Management. This policy provides legal access to communities to manage forest areas through various schemes, such as Village Forests, Community Forests, Community Plantation Forests, Forestry Partnerships, and Customary Forests. Within this policy, Forest Farmer Groups are positioned as the primary actors in forest management, expected to improve community welfare while preserving forest resources. This policy direction aligns with the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), which emphasizes sustainable development, poverty reduction, and strengthening the role of communities in natural resource management. Furthermore, the forestry sector plays a strategic role in achieving the greenhouse gas emission reduction target through the FOLU Net Sink 2030 agenda, which targets the forestry sector and other land uses as net carbon sinks. The success of this agenda depends heavily on sustainable and participatory forest management, with the active

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Bambang Rudianto et al

involvement of forest management units (KTH) being a key factor. Although the policy framework has been formulated comprehensively, implementation at the grassroots level still faces various challenges, one of which is the suboptimal participation of Forest Farmer Groups. This low participation indicates that the success of social forestry policies is determined not only by regulations and programs, but also by the communication process between the government and the community. In this context, forestry extension workers have a strategic role as a liaison between policy and the community, as well as facilitators of attitudinal and behavioral change. Theoretically, the forestry extension process can be understood as a form of persuasive communication, namely communication that aims to consciously and voluntarily influence the attitudes, views, and behavior of communicants. According to Hovland, persuasive communication focuses on efforts to change individual attitudes through messages designed with attention to the psychological state of the message recipient. In the context of forestry extension, this approach is relevant because extension workers need to understand the motivations, needs, and perceptions of KTH members so that extension messages can encourage active involvement in forestry activities.

In addition to psychological aspects, the effectiveness of extension communication is also influenced by the social and cultural context of the community. The sociocultural approach views communication as a process inseparable from the values, norms, and social structures that develop within a community. Hall and Gudykunst emphasize that the meaning of a message is strongly influenced by the cultural background and social system of the recipient. In the context of KTH, differences in social background, the role of traditional leaders, the use of local languages, and patterns of social relations are important factors determining the success of extension communication in increasing group participation. Furthermore, the meaning construction approach views communication as a dialogical process, where meaning is not simply transmitted from communicator to recipient but is constructed collaboratively through social interaction. Berger and Luckmann state that social reality is formed through a process of interaction and shared meaning-making. In forestry extension, this approach positions extension as a space for dialogue between extension workers and KTH, where understanding of forest benefits, sustainability, and the role of groups is constructed collectively through discussion, mentoring, and shared experiences in the field. Thus, the communication strategy of forestry extension workers can be understood as a persuasive communication practice that operates through psychological, sociocultural, and meaning-construction approaches simultaneously. Extension workers not only convey policy and technical information but also build individual motivation, adapt messages to the community's sociocultural context, and facilitate a process of shared meaning-making. This participatory, dialogic, and contextual communication strategy has the potential to increase the participation of Forest Farmer Groups in forest management.

Persuasive Communication in Forestry Extension

Persuasive communication is a communication process aimed at influencing the attitudes, views, and behavior of the recipient through planned, non-coercive messaging. In the context of forestry extension, persuasive communication is a relevant approach because extension workers not only convey technical information but also strive to encourage awareness, acceptance, and active participation of Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) in forest resource management. Forestry extension workers act as communicators and facilitators of community behavior change. Through persuasive communication, extension workers are expected to build shared understanding, foster trust, and encourage KTH involvement in every stage of forestry activities. Therefore, the effectiveness of extension is largely determined by the communication strategy used to influence the attitudes and actions of the target community.

Psychodynamic Approach in Persuasive Communication

The psychodynamic approach views persuasive communication as a process that influences an individual's internal aspects, such as attitudes, perceptions, motivations, and psychological needs. Behavioral change is considered to occur when the communication message is able to appropriately address the psychological factors of the communicant. In the context of forestry extension, the psychodynamic approach is used to understand how extension workers' communication strategies influence the motivation of individual KTH members to participate. Extension workers need to adapt messages to the psychological conditions of the community, such as economic needs, expectations regarding forest benefits, and past experiences in participating in forestry programs. By understanding these psychological aspects, extension messages are expected to be received more positively and encourage attitudinal changes towards active participation.

Sociocultural Approach in Extension Communication

The sociocultural approach emphasizes that communication cannot be separated from the social and cultural context of a community. The meaning of a message is influenced by the values, norms, traditions, and social structures that develop within a community. Therefore, the effectiveness of persuasive communication depends heavily on the communicator's ability to understand and adapt to the sociocultural conditions of the recipient. In forestry extension, a sociocultural approach is crucial because Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) are part of a local community with their own value systems and communication patterns. The use of local languages, the involvement of community leaders, and an understanding of local customs and traditions are factors that support the success of extension workers' communication. Communication strategies that align with the sociocultural context of the community will be more easily accepted and can increase KTH participation in forestry activities.

The Meaning Construction Approach in the Extension Process

The meaning construction approach views communication as a dialogic process, where meaning is not simply conveyed by the communicator but is constructed collaboratively between the communicator and the recipient. Understanding of a message is formed through interaction, experience, and shared interpretation. In forestry extension, the meaning construction approach positions extension as a space for dialogue between extension workers and KTH. Through discussions, mentoring, and direct interaction in the field, extension workers and KTH members collectively build an understanding of the importance of sustainable forest management, its economic benefits, and the group's role in maintaining forest sustainability. This shared meaning-making process forms the basis for the growth of awareness and active participation of KTH.

Participation of Forest Farmer Groups

Community participation is the active involvement of individuals or groups in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of an activity. In the forestry context, the participation of Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) is a key indicator of the success of forest extension and management programs. KTH participation is measured not only by attendance at activities but also by involvement in decision-making, contributions of energy and ideas, and commitment to implementing forestry activities. Extension workers' persuasive, dialogical, and contextual communication strategies play a crucial role in encouraging this participation.

Theoretical Framework of Thought

Based on the theoretical review above, it can be understood that forestry extension workers' communication strategies are a form of persuasive communication that works through various approaches. The psychodynamic approach focuses on changing individual attitudes and motivations, the sociocultural approach pays attention to the social and cultural context of society, while the meaning construction approach emphasizes the process of dialogue and shared meaning-making. These three approaches complement each other in explaining how forestry extension workers' communication strategies play a role in increasing the participation of Forest Farmer Groups.

METHOD

The research entitled "Forestry Extension Worker Communication Strategy in Increasing Participation of Forest Farmer Groups (KTH)" was conducted with Betty Right, S.Hut, who serves as the First Forestry Extension Worker at the Central Barito KPHP. The conversation was conducted on November 30, 2025, at 08.00 WIB, using a semi-structured approach so that the informant could explain their experiences, how to interact with KTH members, message delivery patterns, and various steps used in building cooperative relationships with farmer groups. Information exploration was directed at how they deal with field dynamics, the extension methods applied, forms of communication that are considered appropriate to the character of the local community, and various obstacles that arise during the mentoring process. Through an open conversation format, this interview provided space for the informant to describe the daily work process more broadly, including adjustments to communication strategies carried out in different situations so that KTH activities run more actively and sustainably.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Forestry Extension Workers in Encouraging KTH Participation

Based on the results of interviews with Forestry Extension informants, forestry extension workers view their role not only as conveyors of forestry program information, but also as companions and facilitators for Forest

FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto et al

Farmer Groups (KTH). Extension workers strive to build awareness among KTH members regarding the importance of active involvement in forest management, both in terms of resource sustainability and the economic benefits the group can obtain. Extension workers emphasize that KTH member participation cannot be built instantly or through a purely instructive approach. Instead, participation needs to be fostered through a continuous and persuasive communication process, so that KTH members feel they have a role and responsibility in every forestry activity they carry out. This finding is in line with Effendy's (2011) view that persuasive communication aims to consciously and voluntarily influence the attitudes and behavior of communicants. In the context of forestry extension, extension workers act as agents of change who encourage KTH participation through a psychological approach, by fostering awareness and internal motivation among group members.

Extension Communication Methods and Media

Interview results indicate that the communication method most frequently used by forestry extension workers is face-to-face communication through group meetings and direct field mentoring. This method is considered the most effective because it allows for direct interaction, clarification of messages, and the delivery of concrete examples related to forestry activities. In addition to face-to-face communication, extension workers also utilize indirect media such as text messages and digital media to convey specific information. However, the use of digital media remains limited due to differences in access and technological capabilities among KTH members. Extension workers believe that face-to-face communication provides a more positive response than communication through digital media. This finding supports Cangara's (2012) view that communication effectiveness is greatly influenced by the suitability of the media to the characteristics of the communicant. In the context of KTH, interpersonal and face-to-face communication are more effective because they allow for dialogue and emotional connection between extension workers and group members.

Adapting Communication Style to Socio-Cultural Conditions

Forestry extension workers adapt their communication style to the social and cultural characteristics of KTH members. The use of simple, easy-to-understand language is a key strategy in conveying messages. In some situations, extension workers also use local languages to connect with group members. Furthermore, extension workers pay attention to the social structure developing within the group, including the role of informal figures who influence other members. The social environment and economic conditions of the surrounding community are also taken into consideration when determining the timing and methods of extension activities to avoid disrupting the primary activities of KTH members. This approach reflects the sociocultural communication perspective, as stated by Mulyana (2010), which states that communication cannot be separated from the cultural and social context of the community. The success of extension communication depends heavily on the extension workers' ability to adapt messages to the values, norms, and customs prevailing within the KTH environment.

Dialogue, Trust, and Persuasion Techniques

Interview results indicate that two-way dialogue is a crucial element in forestry extension activities. Extension workers provide space for KTH members to express their opinions, experiences, and challenges faced in forest management. Through this dialogue, extension workers and KTH members work together to find solutions to emerging problems. To build trust, extension workers maintain consistent mentoring and strive to be open to input from group members. The persuasive techniques used emphasize providing concrete examples and direct benefits for KTH members, rather than an instructive approach. The practice of dialogue and the involvement of KTH members in discussions demonstrate the process of meaning construction, as explained by Berger and Luckmann (1966), who argue that social understanding is built through interaction and shared meaning. In this context, forestry extension serves as a dialogical space for building collective understanding of forest management and the role of KTH.

Barriers to Communication, Evaluation, and Expectations

Forestry extension workers identified several communication barriers, including low motivation among some KTH members, differences in education levels, and limited communication resources. To overcome these barriers, extension workers employed a personal approach, adjusted extension methods, and involved key figures within the group. The success of extension communication was assessed by increased member attendance at activities, involvement in discussions, and changes in KTH member behavior in forest management. Going forward, extension workers hoped for stronger support from the government and relevant parties, both in the form

FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto et al

of increasing extension worker capacity, providing communication resources, and strengthening KTH institutions. The success indicators used by extension workers indicated that extension communication was measured not only by the delivery of information, but also by changes in community attitudes and behavior. This aligns with Sumardjo's (2010) view, which emphasizes the importance of participatory development communication in encouraging social change and increasing community participation.

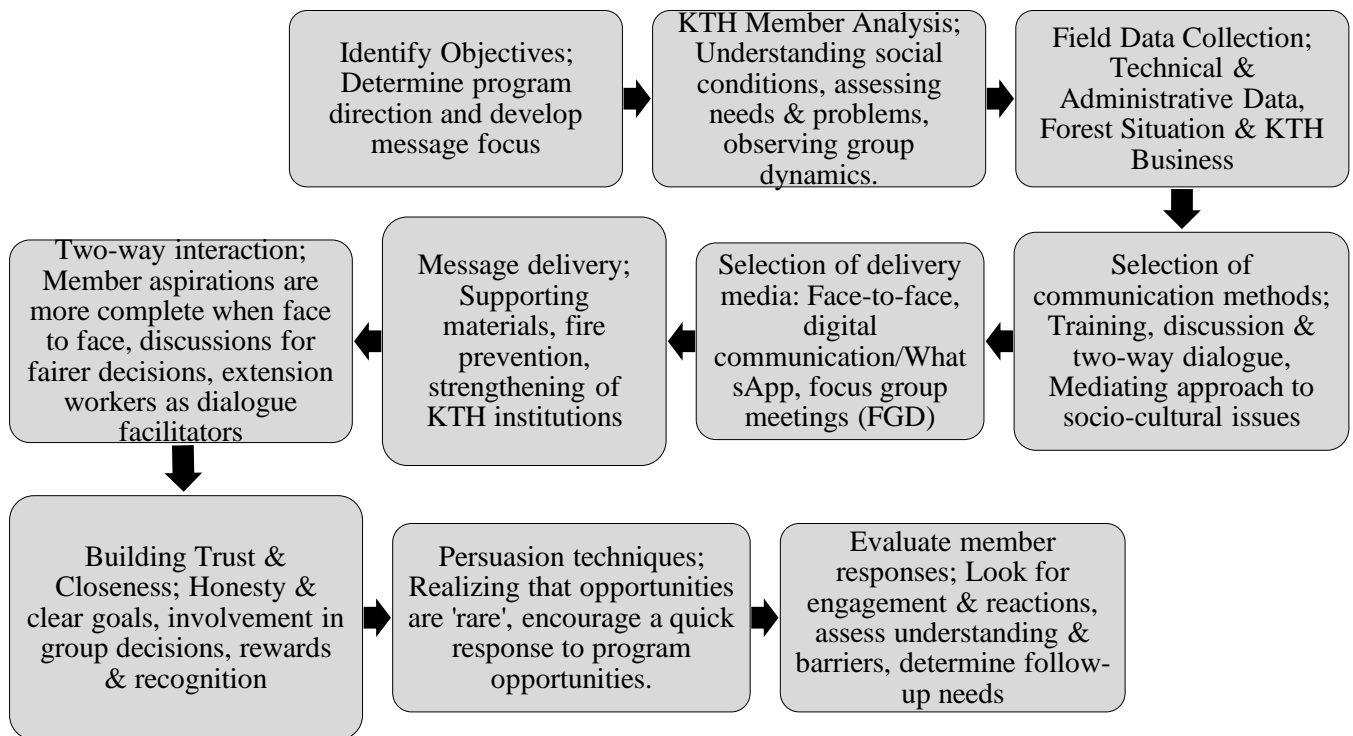
In simple terms, the steps taken for effective counseling are:

No	Strategy Stage	Steps Taken by Extension Workers	Objectives / Expected Results
1.	Audience Mapping	Identifying the background knowledge, experience, age, social values, and psychological conditions of the group.	Extension workers understand the target context so that messages can be tailored without creating distance.
2.	Determining Communication Objectives	Formulate the direction of communication: whether to provide understanding, build awareness, or encourage action.	The interaction takes place in a focused manner and the message delivery does not deviate from the target.
3.	Selection of Methods and Approaches	Using psychodynamic, sociocultural, and meaning-construction approaches; choosing delivery methods such as discussion, demonstration, or informal conversation.	Messages are more easily accepted because they match the emotional character, values, and way of thinking of the audience.
4.	Composing Persuasive Messages	Processing the material to be simple, logical, relevant, and connected to the audience's real experiences; choosing diction that is friendly and easy to understand.	The messages are not only informative but provide encouragement to change ways of thinking and behavior.
5.	Selection of Communication Media	Using visual media, verbal explanations, or written guides according to the literacy level of the group.	The audience receives information gradually, thus reducing misinterpretation.
6.	Building Interpersonal Relationships	Create a warm, friendly atmosphere and open up space for two-way dialogue through questions and discussions.	The audience feels valued, more open, and actively involved in the counseling.
7.	Adaptation to Field Situations	Adjust the flow of the conversation when there are obstacles to understanding, time constraints, or technical conditions.	The communication process continues to run smoothly even though conditions change.
8.	Linking Information to Audience Experience	Using concrete examples and illustrations that are close to the participants' lives.	Messages feel relevant and are easier to understand and remember.
9.	Generating Interest and Engagement	Using a variety of delivery methods, humor, dialogue, or visual illustrations.	The audience actively asks questions, discusses, and responds to the material constructively.
10.	Audience Response Evaluation	Observe the audience's understanding, verbal/nonverbal reactions, and readiness to try new practices.	The extension worker knows what areas need to be strengthened and can adjust the next approach.

A persuasive approach, when used appropriately, can foster a strong internal drive for members to actively participate in each activity. Simply put, the communication process carried out by extension workers at KTH is:

FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto et al



If analyzed based on the concept of effective communication for extension workers which has been discussed in the previous section, the explanation is as follows:

No	Extension Worker Strategy Stage	Strategic Concept (Theoretical)	Extension Worker Practice at KTH (Interview)
1.	Audience Mapping	Identifying background, social values, experiences, group psychology.	Extension workers understand the social conditions of KTH and group development, and observe the increasing involvement of KTH in activities.
2.	Determining Communication Objectives	Formulate the direction of communication: to provide understanding, build awareness, or encourage action.	The extension worker begins the activity by “ <i>identifying the objectives</i> ” before providing the material, ensuring the direction of communication is in accordance with the needs of the KTH.
3.	Selection of Methods & Approaches	Psychodynamic, sociocultural, meaning construction approaches;	Extension workers use “ <i>training and discussion</i> ” as the main method, and act as mediators when social issues arise.
4.	Composing Persuasive Messages	Messages should be simple, logical, relevant, and close to the audience's experience.	The instructor delivers the material using relaxed language, including examples based on the members' experiences, so that members can more easily accept new ideas.
5.	Selection of Communication Media	Using verbal, visual, or written media according to literacy level.	Extension workers use <i>electronic communication media and direct meetings</i> ; face-to-face for detailed explanations, WhatsApp for fast delivery.
6.	Building Interpersonal Relationships	Warm, friendly atmosphere, open two-way dialogue.	Extension workers build trust with “ <i>honesty, clear targets, involving members in decisions, and giving rewards</i> ” .
7.	Adaptation to Field Situations	Adapting communications when there are barriers to	The instructor adjusts his communication style when there are sensitive issues, keeps the

FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto et al

		understanding, time, or technicalities.	atmosphere relaxed, and regulates the flow of conversation according to the social conditions of the KTH.
8.	Linking Information to Audience Experience	Using real examples that are relevant to participants' lives.	The extension worker connects the material with agroforestry and NTFP practices that members have already carried out, making it easier to digest.
9.	Generating Interest and Engagement	Using a variety of methods, humor, visuals, and dialogue.	The extension worker creates a two-way discussion atmosphere so that “ <i>decisions are fairer</i> ”, and provides motivation by conveying that “ <i>the opportunity is rare and must be taken immediately</i> ” .
10.	Audience Response Evaluation	Observe understanding, readiness to act, and obstacles.	The extension worker observes the members' involvement in KTH activities, listens to aspirations during meetings, and assesses whether the material needs to be repeated or deepened.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussion regarding the communication strategies of forestry extension workers in increasing the participation of Forest Farmer Groups (KTH) at the UPT KPHP Barito Tengah in North Barito Regency, it can be concluded that the success of increasing KTH participation is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented by forestry extension workers. The communication strategies used by forestry extension workers are persuasive and participatory, emphasizing an interpersonal communication approach through face-to-face interactions and direct assistance in the field. Extension workers not only act as information providers, but also as facilitators and companions who build awareness, motivation, and a sense of ownership of KTH members towards forest management activities (agroforestry and NTFP processing).

Furthermore, forestry extension workers actively adapt their communication style to the social and cultural conditions of the local community. The use of simple language, the use of local languages, and the involvement of key figures within the group are important factors in increasing communication effectiveness and strengthening the engagement of KTH members. This approach demonstrates the significant role of the sociocultural context in the success of forestry extension. Furthermore, the extension communication process also takes place through dialogue, where extension workers and KTH members jointly build an understanding of forest management and the benefits of forestry programs. This two-way dialogue and discussion process reflects the construction of meaning that contributes to changes in KTH members' attitudes and behaviors regarding forest management. Thus, the communication strategy of forestry extension workers plays a crucial role in supporting the implementation of social forestry policies and achieving sustainable forest management goals.

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FORESTRY EXTENSION WORKERS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN INCREASING FOREST FARMERS' GROUP PARTICIPATION (KTH) IN THE CENTRAL KALIMANTAN PROVINCE FORESTRY SERVICE /UPT KPHP BARITO TENGAH IN NORTH BARITO REGENCY

Bambang Rudianto et al

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