The Role of Influencers In Promoting Transparency and Public Participation in Flood Management Through The #Wargabantuwarga Hashtag Movement

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Influencers; Transparency; Public Participation; Flood Management; WargaBantuWarga.	Flood disasters constitute a major public issue that demands rapid, transparent, and participatory responses. The development of social media has introduced new actors in disaster governance, one of which is digital influencers who function as information intermediaries between the government and the public. This study aims to analyze the role of influencers in promoting transparency and public engagement in flood management through the hashtag movement #WargaBantuWarga from a public administration perspective. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through social media observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that influencers play a significant role in accelerating the dissemination of disaster-related information, enhancing transparency in aid distribution, and mobilizing public participation through donations, volunteerism, and public oversight. The #WargaBantuWarga movement has proven to be an effective medium for collaboration among communities, influencers, and the government in flood response. This study concludes that influencers serve as strategic non-state actors who strengthen the principles of transparency and public participation in disaster governance within the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Floods are one of the most frequent natural disasters in Indonesia and have widespread social, economic, and humanitarian impacts (Deng et al., 2022; Ding et al., 2021; Panahi et al., 2010). High rainfall, changes in land use, and weak environmental awareness have made flooding a recurring public problem, particularly in areas such as North Sumatra, Aceh, and West Sumatra. Each flood not only causes material losses but also disrupts access to public services, hampers economic activity, and creates high levels of social vulnerability.

On the other hand, developments in information technology and social media have transformed patterns of public participation in responding to various public issues, including natural disasters (Alamäki et al., 2021; Barus et al., 2024; Kamboh et al., 2024; Malak et al., 2022; Siska et al., 2022). Social media is no longer simply a means of communication; it has also evolved into a space for public participation, social mobilization, and oversight of various

humanitarian activities. In this context, the public plays a role not only as recipients of information but also as producers of information, drivers of social action, and guardians of aid transparency.

One prominent phenomenon in flood disaster management in Indonesia is the emergence of a social media-based movement with the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga. This movement grew organically from the community as a form of social solidarity to help fellow citizens affected by disasters (Chen, Zhang, Cao, et al., 2024; Chen, Zhang, Wang, et al., 2024; Islam et al., 2016; Mohamed et al., 2024; Muzamil et al., 2022). Through this movement, residents independently raised funds, distributed aid, disseminated information about affected locations, and openly reported the conditions of flood victims through social media.

In subsequent developments, the role of influencers has become increasingly significant in expanding the reach of the #WargaBantuWarga movement. Influencers, as individuals with social influence in the digital space, are able to accelerate the flow of information, mobilize public participation, and build public trust in the process of raising and distributing aid (Abdollahzadeh & Sharif Sharifzadeh, 2023; Albrecht, 2016; Soomro et al., 2024; Tambal et al., 2024). Their presence has enabled disaster-related issues to reach a broader audience, not just a niche group.

From a public administration perspective, this phenomenon demonstrates a shift in governance patterns from a state-centric approach to participatory governance involving non-state actors, particularly civil society and digital actors. Transparency and public participation are crucial principles in disaster management governance, as they directly relate to accountability, public trust, and the effectiveness of aid distribution.

However, despite the apparent dominance of influencers and the public in the #WargaBantuWarga movement in the digital space, academic studies specifically examining the role of influencers in promoting transparency and public participation in flood management from a public administration perspective are still relatively limited. Most studies still position the state as the primary actor, while the dynamics of digital communities as non-state actors have not been thoroughly explored.

Based on these conditions, this research is crucial to comprehensively analyze the role of influencers in promoting transparency and public participation in flood management through the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga from a public administration perspective. The results are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the development of more participatory, transparent, and socially collaborative disaster management.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth the social phenomenon of the role of influencers in promoting transparency and public participation in flood management through the hashtag movement #WargaBantuWarga from a public administration perspective. A case study design was used because this research focuses on a specific phenomenon: the #WargaBantuWarga digital social movement, which has developed in Indonesian society as a form of citizen solidarity in flood disaster management. Case studies allow researchers to

examine this phenomenon contextually, in depth, and holistically, based on data available in the digital space.

This research was conducted in flood-affected areas where residents' activities were widely publicized through the #WargaBantuWarga movement, particularly in North Sumatra, Aceh, and West Sumatra. However, because this research was based on digital activities, the platform selection was based on: 1) high usage by Indonesian people; 2) the dominance of influencers in the dissemination of disaster information; and 3) the intensive use of the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga in handling floods in the regions of North Sumatra, Aceh, and West Sumatra. The scope of the research includes content created by: 1) national and local influencers, 2) public accounts, and 3) non-governmental social communities. No government institutions were made subjects.

The research subjects were influencer accounts and Indonesian citizens (netizens, digital volunteers, social communities) who actively uploaded content related to flood management through the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga on social media. The object of the research is the role of influencers in encouraging transparency and public participation in flood management through the hashtag movement #WargaBantuWarga from a public administration perspective. This research explicitly does not involve official government accounts as research subjects, because the focus of the study is directed at the public and influencers as non-state actors.

The primary data in this study consist of publicly available digital content related to the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga in the context of flooding in North Sumatra, Aceh, and West Sumatra. These data include posts, short videos (Reels/TikTok), documented stories, captions, and public comments shared on social media platforms. As the study did not involve interviews, all primary data were obtained exclusively from open-access content published on Instagram, TikTok, and X during periods of major flood disasters (with the specific year adjusted to the availability of empirical data). Secondary data were collected to support the analysis and included journal articles on influencers and public participation, public administration literature, digital communication theory, online news coverage of the floods, as well as reports from community or social organizations.

Data collection was carried out by systematically searching the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga across the selected platforms and identifying relevant posts that shared information on the needs of flood victims, conducted fundraising, reported aid distribution, or invited public participation. Identified content was documented through screenshots or upload links, and relevant digital metrics—such as the number of likes, comments, shares, forms of public response, and emerging narrative patterns—were recorded. The data were then analyzed using qualitative content analysis through three stages: data reduction by selecting uploads that met specific relevance criteria; categorization and codification into themes such as transparency, community participation, citizen solidarity, social accountability, and influencer communication; and interpretation based on message content, visual presentation, public response, and the intensity and frequency of information dissemination.

To ensure data validity, this study applied digital source triangulation by comparing posts from multiple influencers, examining narratives within comment sections, cross-checking information with online news and community reports, and utilizing more than one social media platform. A digital audit trail was maintained by recording all links, upload dates, and analytical

notes to ensure traceability. Ethical considerations were addressed by using only public content, anonymizing account identities when necessary, preserving the original meaning of uploads, and upholding fairness and integrity in digital data use. Nevertheless, the study is limited by the absence of interviews, reliance on the availability of documented public content, and interpretative constraints inherent in analyzing digital text and visuals without incorporating first-hand experiences from influencers or flood victims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview of the #WargaBantuWarga Hashtag Movement in Flood Management

WargaBantuWarga movement is a form of digital solidarity among Indonesians that emerged in response to the increasing intensity of flooding in various regions, including North Sumatra, Aceh, and West Sumatra. This hashtag is used by the public, volunteers, influencers, and social media communities to share information, raise funds, and report on the condition of flood victims directly from the field.

Based on the results of the researcher's observations on social media such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok during the observation period, content with the hashtag #WargaBantuWarga was dominated by: 1) Information on the condition of flood victims. 2) Call for donations and logistical assistance. 3) Documentation of aid distribution. 4) Disaster education. 5) Report on the urgent needs of affected residents

This movement is not coordinated by the government, but rather grows organically from the digital community as a form of non-formal public participation in disaster management.

Characteristics of Influencer Content in the #WargaBantuWarga Movement

Based on monitoring several social influencer accounts with large followings, it was found that influencers act as message amplifiers. They don't act directly as aid administrators, but rather as a means of expanding the reach of information to communities in affected areas.

Table 1. General Characteristics of Influencer Content

Content Type	Content Form	Objective
Disaster information	Flood photos & videos	Providing information on field conditions
Call for donations	Digital posters & stories	Raising funds
Transparency of aid	Proof of transfer & documentation	Building trust
Public education	Infographics	Raising disaster awareness

Influencers act as intermediaries between affected residents and the wider community through the power of their digital networks.

The Role of Influencers in Encouraging Transparency in Flood Management

Transparency is a key principle in public administration, particularly in disaster relief management. In the context of the #WargaBantuWarga movement, transparency is reflected through: 1) Publication of the fundraising process. 2) Open reporting of donation amounts. 3) Documentation of aid distribution. 4) Reporting on community continued needs

Based on digital content observations, it was found that most influencers: 1) Upload proof of donation transfer. 2) Showing the aid distribution process. 3) Reporting distribution results

in the form of photos and videos. This builds public trust and encourages continued participation from the community.

The Role of Influencers in Increasing Public Participation

Public participation in the #WargaBantuWarga movement is not only in the form of donations, but also in the form of: 1) Field volunteers. 2) Logistics provider. 3) Digital volunteers. 4) Re-dissemination of information (repost & share)

Tabel 2. Forms of Public Participation

Forms of Participation	Information
Donation	Transfer funds & goods
Volunteers	Go directly to the location
Digital volunteers	Managing info and distribution
Digital advocacy	Repost & campaign

Influencers act as drivers of mass participation , because they have credibility and a wide network of followers.

Regional Distribution of #CitizensHelpCitizens Content

Based on researchers' observations of location narratives in uploads, the flood-affected areas that most frequently appear in content include:

Table 3. Frequently Reported Areas

Region	Dominant Content Form
North Sumatra	Evacuation of residents & distribution of basic necessities
Aceh	Refugee post & medicine
West Sumatra	Flash floods & house damage

Overall, the findings show that the #WargaBantuWarga movement has a cross-regional reach and positions influencers, from a public administration perspective, as non-state actors who function as public information bridges, instruments of digital social control, and drivers of civic participation. This role reinforces the principles of public transparency, social accountability, community collaboration, and citizen involvement in disaster management. At the same time, the movement illustrates that contemporary public governance is no longer carried out solely by the state but also by a digitally empowered civil society. Nevertheless, several challenges remain, including incomplete information verification, the potential spread of disaster-related hoaxes, spontaneous and uncoordinated volunteer actions, and the absence of a centralized reporting system. Despite these limitations, the study demonstrates that influencers play a significant role in accelerating information dissemination, enhancing transparency in aid distribution, and expanding public participation—indicating a shift in disaster management from a conventional, state-centric model toward a more collaborative and networked approach facilitated by social media.

CONCLUSION

The research on the role of influencers in encouraging transparency and public participation in flood management through the #WargaBantuWarga hashtag movement concludes that influencers play a strategic role as non-state actors in disaster management, using social media to bridge flood-affected communities and the wider public. The movement promotes transparency by publishing donation data, documenting aid distribution, and openly reporting the needs of affected residents, thereby building public trust in community-based relief efforts. It also increases public participation by engaging people as donors, volunteers, and information disseminators, fostering social solidarity. From a public administration perspective, the movement reflects a shift toward collaborative governance, where disaster management involves active civil society and digital actors. However, challenges such as the lack of a standardized information verification system, spontaneous volunteer coordination, and uncontrolled information dissemination remain. Despite these limitations, influencers and social media have proven vital in strengthening transparency and public participation in disaster management through #WargaBantuWarga.

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