

ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS OF THE SOUTH TAPANULI REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN DISTRIBUTING FLOOD DISASTER INFORMATION IN 2025

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the digital communication of the South Tapanuli Regional Government in distributing flood disaster information in 2025 through the official Instagram account @kominfortapsel. The research employed a qualitative design using content analysis of four selected Instagram uploads representing major disaster communication categories, namely early warning, aid distribution, government field response, and post-disaster recovery. The findings show that the government's digital communication was organized around four dominant message patterns: disaster education, institutional image building, activity documentation, and recovery information. Among these, early warning and educational content generated the highest public engagement, as indicated by 124 likes, 45 shares, and 6 reposts, suggesting that safety-oriented messages were the most relevant to audience needs during the crisis. However, the communication pattern remained largely one-way and centered on information dissemination rather than dialogic public interaction. The study argues that Instagram functioned not only as an information channel but also as an agenda-setting instrument through which the local government prioritized particular disaster issues in the public sphere. This research contributes to the development of local government disaster communication studies by showing that digital effectiveness in crisis contexts depends not only on message speed and clarity, but also on interactivity, consistency, and public-oriented communication design

Keywords: Digital Communication, Flood Disaster, Instagram Social Media, Local Government.

1. INTRODUCTION

Floods are one of the most frequent disasters in Indonesia and cause multidimensional impacts, ranging from physical damage and disruption to economic activity to disruption of social stability. In this context, public communication can no longer be understood merely as a complement to disaster management, but rather as a strategic instrument for delivering early warnings, building awareness, and guiding public action in emergency situations. Effective communication becomes increasingly crucial when the government is

required to provide fast, accurate, and easily understood information to vulnerable communities. Therefore, disaster communication management needs to be positioned as an integral part of responsive disaster management governance that is oriented toward public safety (Baldah et al., 2023).

The urgency of this issue was evident in the floods in South Tapanuli Regency in 2025. National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) data shows that this disaster had a serious impact, with 93 people killed, four missing, and approximately 4,200 residents displaced. These figures demonstrate that the floods in South Tapanuli are not merely seasonal events, but rather a humanitarian crisis that demands the presence of the state through a rapid, standardized, and verifiable information system. In situations like this, disaster information distribution is not simply about production and publication; it must also reach a wide audience, be properly understood, and encourage appropriate mitigation measures. When field data changes rapidly, local governments are required to have adaptive digital communication mechanisms to avoid causing confusion, panic, or a decline in public trust (BNPB, 2025; BNPB, n.d.).

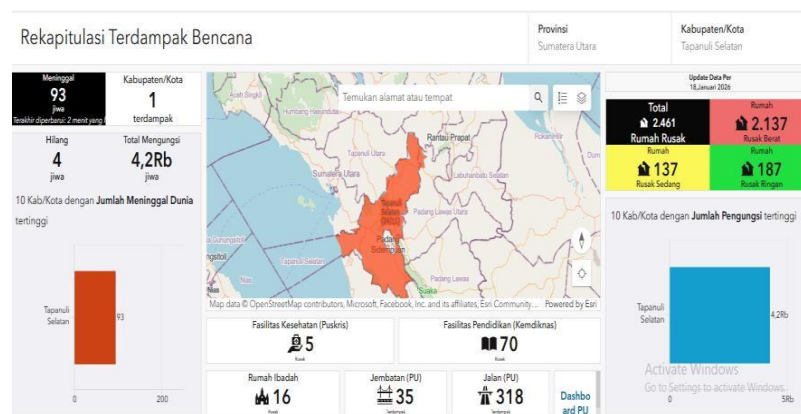


Figure 1. Recapitulation of Disaster Impacts

According to dashboard data, the death toll has reached 93, making South Tapanuli the district with the highest recorded death toll from flooding. Furthermore, four people are listed as missing, indicating the ongoing impact of uncertainty surrounding the fate of the victims. In terms of evacuations, approximately 4,200 people have been displaced, indicating that the floods have disrupted social life and forced thousands of residents to flee their homes (BNBP, 2025).

In the digital era, social media has become a primary channel for government communication with the public, including during crises. Instagram, for example, offers speed of message distribution, visual power, and potential for broad reach, making it widely utilized by local governments as a medium for conveying public information. Several studies have shown that government social media can strengthen the function of digital information, expand communication access, and build positive public perception when managed strategically (Fardiah et al., 2024; Apriyansa et al., 2025). In the context of disasters, Instagram can also function as a source of flood information, an educational platform, and a medium for showcasing the government's response to the crisis (Wahyuna et al., 2025). However, other studies confirm that government social media often operates in a one-way fashion, prioritizing institutional publications over participatory

interactions, thus suboptimal communication effectiveness (Kusuma et al., 2024; Zuhra & Sartika, 2025).

Conceptually, this issue can be explained through the perspectives of crisis communication, risk communication, and agenda setting. In risk communication, message effectiveness is largely determined by the clarity of information, consistency between actors, timeliness, and the institution's ability to respond to audience needs in critical situations (Montejano-Castillo et al., 2022). Meanwhile, agenda-setting theory explains that media not only conveys information but also shapes public attention by highlighting certain issues as social priorities (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the context of government social media, the choice of post themes, publication frequency, and message presentation format can influence how the public perceives disaster threats and assesses government performance. This means that local government digital communication in flood situations involves more than just the technical aspects of information distribution, but also the formation of meaning, risk perception, and public trust.

However, gaps remain in previous studies. Most previous research has focused primarily on government social media in general, the technical aspects of disaster management, or public responses to digital information, without specifically examining how local governments in non-metropolitan areas strategically manage digital disaster communications (Arkania et al., 2025). Yet, regions like South Tapanuli have distinct geographic characteristics, settlement distribution, and communication infrastructure challenges compared to large urban areas. Another gap is evident in the limited research that positions government social media accounts not merely as publication channels but as arenas for agenda setting and risk communication in disaster situations. Therefore, more specific research is needed to examine how the South Tapanuli Regional Government, through its official Instagram account, constructs, prioritizes, and distributes information about the 2025 flood to the public.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the South Tapanuli Regional Government's digital communications in distributing information about the 2025 flood disaster via Instagram, by examining message patterns, content types, and trends in the communication agenda. This research is significant because it provides theoretical contributions to strengthening the study of local government disaster communication, particularly through the integration of agenda-setting and risk communication perspectives into institutional social media analysis. Practically, this research is also expected to serve as a basis for evaluation for local governments in designing digital communications that are not only fast and informative, but also more interactive, consistent, and oriented towards the needs of the affected public. Thus, this study not only discusses the existence of social media as an information channel but also emphasizes its role as a strategic instrument in strengthening community preparedness and crisis communication governance at the local level.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis design. This approach was chosen because the research focused on interpreting the meaning, message patterns, and communication strategies developed by the South

Tapanuli Regional Government through its official Instagram account, @kominfortapsel, in disseminating information about the 2025 floods. Qualitative content analysis was deemed relevant because the research objects, including text, visuals, captions, and symbolic elements in social media posts, cannot be read quantitatively but rather need to be interpreted within the context of government disaster communication. With this design, the research aimed to identify how the flood issue was framed, what themes were prioritized, and how these messages were constructed to shape public awareness of the disaster situation.

The research location was the South Tapanuli Regency Communication and Informatics Office (Diskominfo), the institution responsible for managing the local government's public communications. The unit of analysis in this study is the official Instagram posts from @kominfortapsel directly related to the 2025 South Tapanuli flood. The primary data consists of four selected posts representing a variety of disaster communication messages: early warnings for extreme weather, aid distribution, disaster site reviews, and post-disaster infrastructure recovery. These four posts were purposively selected based on the following criteria: (1) published in the context of the South Tapanuli flood, (2) originating from official local government accounts, (3) containing disaster messages relevant to the research focus, and (4) representing a variety of forms of government digital communication. To maintain the consistency of the research's temporal focus, the primary analysis focused on posts directly related to the 2025 flood event sequence.

In addition to the post data, this study also utilized supporting data in the form of in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants: the public relations officer of the Communications and Informatics Office and the manager of the local government Instagram account directly involved in the planning, production, and distribution of digital content. The selection of informants was based on their substantive knowledge of message strategies, publication timing, content formats, and institutional considerations in disseminating flood information. Data collection techniques included documentary observation of Instagram posts, digital documentation in the form of screenshots and content archives, and in-depth interviews to confirm the institutional communication management process. Thus, this research not only examines the content of messages displayed on social media but also explores the underlying logic behind their production.

Data analysis was conducted in two interrelated stages. The first stage was content coding, which grouped posts based on emerging message categories. In this study, the operational categories used included: educational/early warning content, government image content, activity documentation content, and post-disaster recovery content. Each post was then assigned an analytical code to interpret the message's meaning, communication objectives, and the form of issue emphasis. The second stage was interactive analysis, referring to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In this stage, data from content observations, digital documentation, and interviews were continuously compared to identify patterns in government digital communication, trends in message agendas, and the degree to which communication practices aligned with public information needs in disaster situations.

Data validity was maintained through source and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing data from Instagram posts with informant interviews, while technical triangulation was conducted by combining content

observations, digital documentation, and in-depth interviews. Furthermore, researchers also applied diligent observation by re-examining the analyzed posts to ensure consistency of themes, symbols, and message direction. This step is crucial so that the resulting interpretations do not stop at superficial descriptions, but truly reflect the digital communication practices of the South Tapanuli Regional Government in distributing information about the 2025 flood systematically, purposefully, and relevantly, within the theoretical framework used.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Based on observations from the period of 2025 which has been running until now, the following pattern was found, namely posting flood disaster warning appeals to the public to provide information but also direct the actions that the public must take.



Figure 2 Flood warning and aid distribution

The post, uploaded on December 10, 2025, by the Instagram account @kominfotapsel, is a digital communication content providing an early warning regarding the potential for extreme weather in the South Tapanuli region. Visually, the post features the main headline "WARNING FOR EXTREME WEATHER" printed in large size and a striking red color, thereby attracting the audience's attention. Furthermore, the logos of official agencies such as the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) and the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) indicate that the information provided is sourced from trusted institutions, thus enhancing the credibility of the message. The @kominfotapsel Instagram post, uploaded on March 18, 2026, demonstrates a form of government digital communication focused on information on disaster relief assistance. The content depicts the distribution of aid to disaster victims and includes a narrative

expressing gratitude to the President and relevant parties, affirming the support of the central and regional governments.

In terms of content, the message conveyed emphasized the documentation of activities and appreciation. Visually, the use of images of aid distribution reinforced the impression of empathy and government concern. From the perspective of agenda setting theory, the South Tapanuli Regional Government attempted to shape a positive public perception by highlighting the government's role and performance in disaster management. The communication carried out showed a structured, informative pattern, in which the government played an active role in conveying important information to the public regarding extreme weather and disaster preparedness. Although public interaction was not yet the main focus, this approach was effective in ensuring the message was conveyed clearly and quickly. From the perspective of agenda setting theory, the content succeeded in increasing public awareness by placing disaster issues as a primary concern, as well as gradually encouraging community preparedness in facing potential disaster risks.



Figure 2: Inspection of the Flood Disaster Area & Bridge Inauguration

This Instagram post from @kominfortapsel, dated December 31, 2025, is a form of digital communication focused on documenting government activities in disaster management. The post showcases the activities of the Regent of South Tapanuli, who directly inspected locations affected by floods and landslides. The message conveyed is informative and demonstrates the government's response to the disaster situation. This Instagram post from @kominfortapsel demonstrates a form of digital communication focused on documenting government activities and post-disaster infrastructure development. The content highlights the presence of regional officials, including the Regent and Governor, at the inauguration of a bridge related to public access, which is indirectly relevant to post-disaster mitigation and recovery efforts.

Content-wise, the message conveyed is both informative and narrative, highlighting the condition of infrastructure and recalling past disasters. Visually, images of field activities reinforce the impression of direct government involvement. From the perspective of agenda-setting theory, this post highlights the government's role in infrastructure development and improvement as part of disaster risk management efforts, thus shaping

public perception of the government's commitment, even though it has not yet directly provided disaster education to the community.

From the analysis of these four posts, they were then coded based on the content uploaded by the South Tapanuli Regional Government with the aim of identifying digital communication patterns used in conveying disaster information. The coding process was carried out by grouping each post into specific categories, such as educational content, government image content, activity documentation content, and post-disaster recovery content. The content engagement was classified based on the number of likes, comments, shares, and reposts. The following table shows the content analysis data.

Table.1 Content Analysis Data Table

No	Content Type	Category	Code	Meaning of the Message	Communication Objectives
1.	Weather Warning	Education	ED01	Disaster Alert	Increasing public awareness
2.	Delivery of Assistance	Image	CT01	Government Concern	Building trust
3.	Site Inspection	Documentation	DK01	Government Presence	Building public trust
4.	Bridge Construction	Recovery	PM01	Infrastructure	Development information

The coding process revealed that each Instagram post and video reel content published by the South Tapanuli Regional Government conveyed a clear message and communication objective, ranging from disaster education, conveying concern, documenting government presence, to post-disaster recovery information. This demonstrates that the government has structured posts and content in a targeted manner to meet the public's information needs while building public trust.

In the agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), these findings demonstrate that the government plays a role in determining issues of public concern through the emphasis on specific content. The emphasis on disaster education and recovery content demonstrates the government's efforts to direct public focus on safety and development issues. Thus, government social media serves not only as an information platform but also as a tool for shaping public priorities regarding strategic issues.

Table 2. Content Engagement Classification

No	Content Type	Like	Comen	Share	Repost	Popular Categories
1.	Weather Alerts	124	3	45	6	Very popular
2.	Help	28	0	0	1	Quite popular
3.	Reviews	202	2	0	0	Quite popular
4.	Infrastructure	96	2	6	0	Quite popular

Based on the engagement classification table, it was found that the content that received the most public response was disaster warning (educational) content, which had a high level of likes, shares, and reposts. The content published by the South Tapanuli Regional Government generated a public response, albeit at varying levels.

This indicates that the government has succeeded in providing relevant and needed information to the public, particularly in situations related to safety and disaster preparedness. Furthermore, infrastructure content also demonstrated a fairly good level

of interaction, indicating public interest in regional development information. Meanwhile, aid and review content, although having lower engagement levels, still plays a role in conveying transparency and accountability of government activities to the public.

This finding aligns with the agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which states that the media has the ability to influence what the public deems important by highlighting certain issues. In this context, the South Tapanuli Regional Government, through its social media, has carried out an agenda-setting function by prioritizing disaster issues, particularly weather warnings, which subsequently garner greater public attention. The high engagement rate on this content demonstrates that the public is responding to the government's agenda.

This diversity of content formats demonstrates the government's efforts to adapt its information delivery to make it more engaging, easier to understand, and in line with the visual-based characteristics of Instagram. Furthermore, digital communication management also considers the timing of content publication. The timing of uploads is based on an analysis of public social media usage through analytics (meta) features, ensuring that content is published at the most effective time, namely between 7:00 PM and 9:00 PM. This demonstrates that the government is not only focusing on message content but also on information distribution strategies to ensure the message reaches the maximum audience.

In line with the agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the media has the ability to influence what the public deems important through the frequency and prominence of certain issues. In this context, the implemented digital communication strategy demonstrates that the South Tapanuli Regional Government has been able to utilize social media not only as a means of conveying information but also as a strategic instrument in shaping public attention and awareness.

Thus, the results of this study reflect that the digital communication management carried out has been carried out effectively, planned, and adaptive to audience behavior, thus being able to strengthen public engagement and support the delivery of more impactful information.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that the South Tapanuli Regional Government's digital communication through the Instagram account @kominfotapsel has played a significant role in distributing information about the 2025 flood disaster, particularly through early warning content, disaster condition information, documentation of government activities, aid distribution, and post-disaster recovery. The study findings show that educational content and disaster warnings received the highest public response because they directly relate to the safety and preparedness needs of the community. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of local government disaster communication studies, particularly in understanding how social media is used as an instrument for agenda setting, risk communication, and generating public attention in crisis situations. Practically, the results of this study emphasize the importance of managing messages that are fast, clear, consistent, verified, and based on the needs of affected communities so that disaster communication is not only informative but also able to encourage mitigation actions. However, this study has limitations because it only

focuses on Instagram content analysis and limited interviews with communication managers, so it does not fully describe the experiences, understanding, and responses of the community receiving information. Therefore, further research is recommended to involve the perspectives of affected residents, compare several government digital communication channels, and measure the effectiveness of two-way communication in improving disaster literacy, public participation, and community resilience in the face of disasters.

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