
GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN COMBATING ONLINE GAMBLING IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Online gambling has become one of the biggest challenges faced by the Indonesian government in recent decades. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze the government's communication strategy in combating online gambling in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with online gambling victims, conducted directly and via the Zoom and Google Meet platforms. Thematic analysis techniques were used to analyze data. The results show that the communication strategies of the government in tackling online gambling have not been fully effective, mainly due to limitations in message delivery, use of communication channels, and enforcement of regulations. It is hoped that through this collaborative approach, the prevalence of online gambling can be significantly reduced, and the community can be better protected from its negative impacts. This research is expected to serve as a reference for future studies in the fields of communication, law, and public policy related to online gambling.

Keywords: Government Communication Strategy, Online Gambling, Regulatory Enforcement

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of online gambling has become one of the biggest challenges faced by the Indonesian government in recent decades. With the rapid development of information and communication technology, public access to gambling activities via the internet has become increasingly easy and widespread. This condition has led to various significant negative impacts, both economically, socially, and legally. Therefore, the government's communication strategies to combat online gambling are crucial and require a well-planned and effective approach. The development of online gambling in Indonesia can be traced back to the late 1990s when the internet began to gain popularity among the public (Rusmanto, 2024). Initially, access to online gambling sites was limited and could only be accessed by a small number of people. However, with the increase in internet penetration and technological advancements, access to these sites has become easier and more widespread. Online gambling then grew rapidly, attracting many people due to its convenience and the promise of financial gains.

The negative impacts of online gambling are diverse and widespread. Economically, online gambling can cause significant financial losses for individuals and their families. Many individuals are trapped in a vicious cycle of gambling, spending money that should be used for daily needs or future savings. This condition can trigger financial crises within households and potentially increase poverty levels. Many online gambling victims feel that government campaign messages are not persuasive or relevant enough to their experiences (Mastarida et al., 2022). For example, a victim from West Java, a region with the highest number of victims, stated that the information received from government campaigns felt far from the reality they faced. From a social perspective, online gambling can cause various social problems such as family conflicts, divorce, and even criminal acts. Many cases involve online gambling perpetrators engaging in other criminal acts such as theft, fraud, or even violence due to the pressure to obtain money to continue their gambling habits (Hasibuan, 2017). Furthermore, online gambling can also serve as a gateway to other illegal activities,

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such as money laundering and drug trafficking. These social impacts not only harm the individuals involved but also place a burden on society as a whole.

From a legal perspective, online gambling is an illegal activity in Indonesia based on Law No. 7 of 1974 concerning Gambling Control. Perpetrators and operators of online gambling can be subject to criminal sanctions. However, law enforcement against online gambling still faces various obstacles, including technical and jurisdictional aspects. Many online gambling sites are based abroad, making it difficult for the law enforcement process. In addition, the use of increasingly sophisticated technology by online gambling operators, such as VPNs (Virtual Private Network) and encryption technology, makes online gambling activities increasingly difficult to track and monitor (Yurizal, 2018). In an effort to overcome the problem of online gambling, the Indonesian government has issued various policies. Law enforcement is carried out through control operations by the police and other related agencies. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kominfo*) also plays an active role in blocking online gambling sites. However, these efforts are often insufficient because they can easily change addresses or use more advanced technology to avoid blocking. In addition to law enforcement, the government also implements stricter regulations related to online activities, including regulations regarding internet service providers to block access to online gambling sites.

From a legal perspective, online gambling is an illegal activity in Indonesia based on Law No. 7 of 1974 concerning the Regulation of Gambling. Perpetrators and organizers of online gambling can face criminal sanctions. However, the enforcement of laws against online gambling still faces various challenges, including technical and jurisdictional aspects. Many online gambling sites are based abroad, making the enforcement process difficult. Additionally, the increasingly sophisticated technology used by online gambling operators, such as VPNs (Virtual Private Networks) and encryption technology, makes online gambling activities harder to track and monitor (Yurizal, 2018). In an effort to address the issue of online gambling, the Indonesian government has implemented various policies. Law enforcement is carried out through crackdowns by the police and other relevant agencies. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kominfo*) also plays an active role in blocking online gambling sites. However, these efforts are often insufficient as these sites can easily change addresses or use more advanced technology to evade blocking. Besides law enforcement, the government also implements stricter regulations related to online activities, including regulations for internet service providers to block access to online gambling sites. The level of public awareness about the dangers of online gambling is still low. Many people are lured by the promise of financial gain without realizing the associated risks.

Based on interviews with online gambling victims, many revealed that the information they received more often came from personal experiences or their social circles rather than from government campaigns. This indicates that the government's communication strategies need to be designed more carefully and effectively. The government needs to intensify educational campaigns and public awareness about the dangers of online gambling. These campaigns should be continuous and comprehensive, involving various relevant parties, including internet service providers, mass media, educational institutions, and community organizations. Collaboration with the private sector and the community is also crucial in combating online gambling. The government can work with internet service providers to block access to online gambling sites. Additionally, cooperation with non-governmental organizations and community groups can strengthen educational efforts and awareness campaigns (Asfahani et al., 2024). Active participation from the public has also proven to be important in reporting online gambling activities, which can assist the government in law enforcement. This research found that cooperation with internet service providers to block

access to online gambling sites is an effective step, but there are still many loopholes that online gambling operators can exploit

The use of technology and innovation is also crucial in the government's communication strategies. The government can leverage big data technology and artificial intelligence to detect and block online gambling sites. Additionally, the government can develop applications and digital platforms for reporting online gambling activities anonymously. The use of this technology can help the government more effectively track and halt online gambling activities (Sinaga, 2015). A stronger legal and regulatory approach is also necessary to combat online gambling. The government needs to review existing regulations and strengthen sanctions against online gambling operators and participants. Harsher and more severe penalties are needed to create a more significant deterrent effect. The current punishments are often insufficient to prevent offenders from repeating their actions. By imposing stricter penalties, including higher fines and longer prison sentences, it is hoped that online gambling operators will think twice before continuing their illegal activities.

Furthermore, enhancing international cooperation in law enforcement is crucial for dealing with online gambling operators based abroad. Many online gambling sites operate from outside the country, making law enforcement more difficult (Putranto & Hartanto, 2023). By increasing cooperation with other countries, especially those that host the operations of online gambling sites, Indonesia can be more effective in prosecuting and shutting down these sites. International cooperation can also include the exchange of information and technology to track and block online gambling sites, as well as to address financial transactions related to online gambling activities (Arisetyanto, 2023). In the context of Indonesia, the government's communication strategies to combat online gambling require a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Public education and awareness campaigns, collaboration with the private sector and community, the use of technology and innovation, a stronger legal and regulatory approach, as well as involving influencers and public figures, are some of the strategies that can be applied. With proper and effective implementation, the Indonesian government can reduce the negative impact of online gambling and protect the public from the dangers it poses

To develop effective communication strategies, it is important to study best practices from other countries that have successfully tackled online gambling. Some countries, such as Singapore and Norway, have implemented comprehensive strategies and have significantly reduced the levels of online gambling (Nurdin, 2023). Singapore has adopted a very strict approach in combating online gambling, including blocking gambling sites and enforcing strict laws. In addition, the Singaporean government has conducted intensive educational campaigns to raise public awareness about the dangers of online gambling. Meanwhile, Norway has adopted a prevention-focused approach through strict regulations and educational campaigns. The Norwegian government also collaborates with banks to block financial transactions related to online gambling.

The study aims analyze government communication strategies in dealing with online gambling. Through this research, it is hoped that concrete and applicable recommendations can be provided to the Indonesian government in formulating effective communication strategies to combat online gambling. This research is also expected to serve as a reference for future studies in the fields of communication, law, and public policy related to online gambling. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of communication science but also to the government's efforts in creating a safer and healthier digital environment for the Indonesian public.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze the government's communication strategy in tackling online gambling in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with online gambling victims, conducted directly and via the Zoom and Google Meet platforms. In addition, document analysis of related policies and regulations, official reports, academic literature, and media news was also conducted. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. Validity and reliability were maintained through data triangulation, member checking, and audit trails, while paying attention to research ethics through written consent from participants and maintaining the confidentiality of their identities. This study is expected to provide an in-depth picture of the effectiveness of government communication strategies for better policy formulation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Campaign Messages in Conveying the Dangers of Online Gambling

This study reveals that the campaign messages delivered by the government in tackling the dangers of online gambling have not been fully effective. Based on in-depth interviews with a number of online gambling victims, it was found that although some victims had realized the risks after getting involved, many felt that the messages delivered by the government were not persuasive enough or relevant to their experiences.

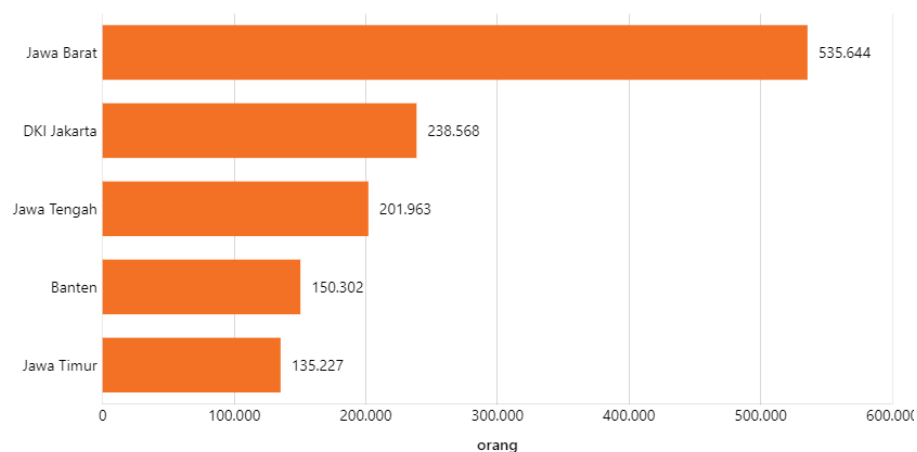


Figure 1. Provinces with the Largest Number of Online Gambling Players in Indonesia (June 2024)

Source: *databoks.katadata.co.id*

A victim from West Java, which is the region with the highest number of victims at 535,644 people, said, "The message I received from the government campaign felt far from the reality I face. Information about the dangers of online gambling is too general and does not describe how serious the impacts can be."

This suggests that the communication strategy used in government campaigns needs to be refocused on creating more emotional and relevant messages. More emotional messages can arouse individuals' feelings and move them to truly understand and avoid the dangers of online gambling. An approach that only focuses on delivering technical information about the risks and penalties without touching on the emotional aspects of people's daily lives tends to be less effective (Koesomowidjojo, 2020). For example, in West Java, which has the highest number of victims, government campaigns need to convey real stories that can arouse public empathy and awareness. A victim in DKI Jakarta, which has 238,568 victims, said, "I never really felt affected by the existing campaigns. They do not describe how online gambling can

destroy someone's life." This data suggests that there is an urgent need to improve communication approaches, especially in areas with high victim numbers such as West Java and DKI Jakarta.

Furthermore, interviews with victims in Central Java, which had 201,963 victims, showed that many individuals did not find the campaign messages relevant enough. "The messages were very general, there was nothing specific about how I can get help or support if I get involved in online gambling," said one victim. This underscores the importance of delivering messages that are not only informative but also relevant to people's real situations and needs. Furthermore, in Banten and East Java, with 150,302 and 135,227 victims respectively, victims complained that the government campaign did not address the emotional aspects of their experiences. One victim in Banten said, "I see ads about the dangers of online gambling, but they never mention the emotional or social impacts that can occur." This statement suggests that to increase the effectiveness of the campaign, the government should focus on the emotional and social impacts of online gambling, rather than just the financial impacts or legal penalties.

In order to improve this communication strategy, the government needs to consider using a wider and more interactive range of media and communication channels. For example, more intensive use of social media platforms involving local influencers or influential public figures can be one effective way. A communication expert in Jakarta asserted, "Using social media and involving influencers can make campaign messages more interesting and more likely to be accepted by the wider community." In addition, it is important to develop campaign content that describes the real experiences of online gambling victims, which can generate empathy and awareness. Campaigns that focus on real stories and testimonies from victims can provide a clearer picture of the dangers of online gambling (Sitanggang et al., 2023). For example, the use of short videos or documentaries that tell the life journey of online gambling victims can be a powerful tool to convey more emotional and touching messages.

Efforts to improve the effectiveness of government campaigns in combating online gambling require a more targeted communication strategy that is relevant to the real experiences of the community. A more emotional and interactive approach, as well as the use of media that is appropriate to the culture and characteristics of the community in each region, can help educate the community more effectively and prevent them from falling into the dangers of online gambling. Thus, it is hoped that with a better communication strategy, the negative impacts of online gambling can be significantly reduced in Indonesia.

Limitations of Communication Channels Used by the Government

The limitations of communication channels used by the government in efforts to eradicate gambling are complex issues and require serious attention from a communication science perspective. Ineffective communication channels can hinder the main objective of the policy, which is to reduce illegal gambling practices and have a negative impact on society. In this context, some of the main limitations in communication channels used by the government can be explained as follows. The limitations of traditional and digital communication channels play a significant role in the effectiveness of the delivery of government messages (Olifia et al., 2024). Traditional media, such as newspapers and radio, have limited reach compared to digital media. This is due to uneven distribution and limited access in remote areas. In addition, traditional media tends to be one-way, meaning communication is linear and does not allow direct feedback from the public. As a result, the government may have difficulty in understanding the responses and needs of the public regarding gambling eradication policies.

On the other hand, although digital channels offer wider reach and higher interactivity, they also face their own challenges. Not all communities have adequate access to the internet or digital devices, especially in rural areas or among low-income communities. This digital disparity creates a significant information gap. Furthermore, in an era of information overload, government messages about gambling eradication can be drowned out by the various other information that people receive every day. The high volume of information circulating on social media and other digital platforms often makes important messages difficult to pay attention to and remember. The credibility and public trust in the government greatly affect the effectiveness of communication. Public skepticism towards the government can cause messages about gambling eradication to be not taken seriously or even ignored (Wibowo et al., 2012). The credibility of the message source is a key element in effective communication; if the public does not trust the source of information, they are likely to ignore or doubt the truth of the message being conveyed. Furthermore, the spread of incorrect information or hoaxes about gambling and government policies can also obscure the real message. This can cause confusion among the public, which ultimately reduces the effectiveness of government communication campaigns.

Government messages are often ineffective for a variety of reasons. Messages that are too technical or complex can make it difficult for the public to understand the intent and purpose of anti-gambling policies (Tanzuna, 2023). Effective messages must be clear, concise, and easy to understand for all groups, including those with varying levels of education and understanding. In addition, inconsistencies in messages delivered by different government departments or officials can cause confusion. If the messages delivered are not coherent, the public will feel confused and less trusting of the information provided. Cultural factors and social values also play an important role in the effectiveness of government communication (Trisiana et al., 2019). In some communities, gambling may have become part of the culture or be considered a common activity. Changing public perceptions and behaviors towards gambling requires a communication approach that is sensitive to local culture and values. The government needs to understand and respect the social norms that apply in the community when designing their communication messages.

Lack of evaluation and feedback in the government's communication process is also a significant constraint. Without proper evaluation, the government will not know how effective the communication channels used in the anti-gambling campaign are. Continuous evaluation is needed to measure the impact and improve communication strategies. Active participation from the public in providing feedback is also a key element in assessing the effectiveness of communication. Without feedback from the public, the government may miss opportunities to improve its messages and communication methods. To overcome these limitations, the government needs to adopt a more inclusive, adaptive, and evidence-based communication strategy. Using a combination of traditional and digital communication channels tailored to the target audience can increase the reach and effectiveness of the message. In addition, the message delivered must be clear, concise, and consistent. Efforts to build public trust through transparency and openness are also very important. The government needs to ensure that the information delivered is reliable and comes from credible sources. The limitations of the communication channels used by the government in the eradication of gambling include various aspects, ranging from technical and accessibility limitations to challenges in credibility, ineffective messages, cultural and social factors, and lack of evaluation and feedback. To overcome these limitations, the government needs to develop a more inclusive, adaptive, and evidence-based communication strategy, and actively involve the community in the communication process. Thus, it is hoped that efforts to eradicate gambling can run more effectively and achieve the desired goals.

The Role of Interpersonal Communication in Preventing Online Gambling

This study found that collaboration with the private sector and the community is essential in combating online gambling. Collaboration with internet service providers to block access to online gambling sites is an effective step, but there are still many loopholes that can be exploited by online gambling operators (Sinaga, 2015). These blocking efforts are often overcome by operators through the use of new domains or VPN technology that allows them to continue operating even though their main sites have been blocked. In addition, collaboration with non-governmental organizations and community groups in awareness campaigns can strengthen education and prevention efforts. Non-governmental organizations often have better networks and access to local communities and can play an important role in disseminating information and education about the dangers of online gambling. Through seminars, workshops, and other educational activities, these organizations can help raise public awareness of the risks and negative impacts of online gambling. Active participation from the community has also proven important in reporting online gambling activities, which can help the government in law enforcement (Kusumayadi et al., 2022). A conscious and concerned public will be more likely to report online gambling sites they encounter, making it easier for authorities to identify and take action against these sites. By increasing public awareness and participation, efforts to combat online gambling can be more effective and comprehensive. The government also needs to build stronger partnerships with other private sectors, such as technology companies and payment services, to monitor and block transactions related to online gambling (Sinaga, 2015). Fintech companies and banks can play an important role in detecting and stopping the flow of funds related to gambling activities. By monitoring and blocking suspicious transactions, these companies can help reduce online gambling activities significantly.

Furthermore, a joint initiative between the government, private sector, and the community in developing a comprehensive and sustainable education campaign is needed. This campaign should be designed not only to raise awareness but also to provide practical solutions and support for those already involved in online gambling. Using social media and other digital platforms strategically, with relevant and engaging content, can help spread the message more effectively. Thus, close collaboration between the government, private sector, and the community is crucial in tackling online gambling. This integrated effort will not only increase the effectiveness of awareness campaigns but also strengthen law enforcement and prevention at the grassroots level. It is hoped that through this collaborative approach, the prevalence of online gambling in Indonesia can be significantly reduced, and the community can be better protected from its negative impacts.

Challenges in Conveying Messages Through Social Media

Analysis of policy and regulatory documents shows that regulations related to online gambling in Indonesia still need strengthening. Sanctions against perpetrators and organizers of online gambling have not been sufficient to provide a deterrent effect, so that online gambling activities are still widely carried out. Many perpetrators feel that the legal risks faced are not commensurate with the potential benefits obtained. This condition shows the need for the government to review existing regulations and strengthen sanctions against online gambling perpetrators. Stricter and more severe sanctions are needed to create a more significant deterrent effect (Hasibuan, 2017). The penalties currently given are often inadequate to stop perpetrators from repeating their actions. By increasing the penalties, including higher fines and longer prison sentences, it is hoped that online gambling perpetrators will think twice before continuing their illegal activities. In addition, increasing international cooperation in law enforcement is essential to dealing with online gambling operators based abroad. Many online gambling sites operate from abroad, making law

enforcement more difficult (Kesuma, 2023). By increasing cooperation with other countries, especially those that are the operational bases of online gambling sites, Indonesia can be more effective in prosecuting and closing these sites. International cooperation could also include the exchange of information and technology to track and block online gambling sites, as well as to handle financial transactions related to online gambling activities. This requires close coordination between international law enforcement agencies and global internet service providers.

With stronger regulations and stricter sanctions, as well as increased international cooperation, it is hoped that online gambling activities in Indonesia can be reduced significantly. Strict regulations and effective law enforcement will reduce the incentives for perpetrators to continue online gambling activities, while protecting the public from the negative impacts they cause. This study recommends that the government immediately take these steps to create a safer and more gambling-free environment.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights that the government's communication strategy in combating online gambling in Indonesia has been ineffective due to limitations in message delivery, the use of communication channels, and regulatory enforcement. Improvements are needed in the emotional relevance of campaign messages, diversification of communication platforms, collaboration with private sectors and communities, and strengthening of regulations. Suggestions for future research include exploring audience perceptions of anti-gambling campaigns, assessing the effectiveness of digital platforms and influencers, examining international cooperation to block foreign-based gambling sites, and analyzing the impact of regulatory changes and emotional messaging strategies on public behavior.

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