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Public Information Disclosure as a Determinant of Public Trust in Organizational Sustainability Initiatives

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Abstrak. This study aims to explore the role of public information transparency in building community trust toward organizational sustainability initiatives. With the increasing attention to sustainability practices, it is crucial for organizations to alter their information dissemination strategies. This qualitative research employed in-depth interviews with 10 participants, consisting of organizational representatives and community members. The analysis results indicate that a high level of information transparency positively impacts community trust. The findings also suggest that transparency in communication, both through sustainability reports and two-way dialogue, plays a significant role in reducing scepticism and enhancing community engagement. The study concludes that organizations prioritizing information transparency can establish stronger relationships with the public and improve the effectiveness of their sustainability initiatives. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations implement more transparent communication strategies to maximize public trust and support for their sustainability efforts.
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INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization and digitalization, attention to sustainability issues is becoming more and more urgent (Aksin-Sivrikaya & Bhattacharya, 2017; Lange & Santarius, 2020; Thomas, 2021; Xu et al., 2022). Organizations around the world, both in the public and private sectors, are required to think not only about the economic benefits, but also the social and environmental impacts of their operations. This phenomenon has led to the birth of various sustainability initiatives designed to achieve environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. However, to ensure the success of this initiative, public information disclosure must be a top priority (Novita et al., 2021; Rachmiatie, 2019).

Public information disclosure refers to the access given to the public to understand the activities, policies, and decisions made by the organization. In the context of sustainability, open information allows the public to clearly know the organization's efforts in preserving the environment and contributing to social welfare. This openness not only impacts how people view organizations, but also how they interact with and support proposed initiatives.

Previous research has shown that information transparency is closely related to public trust (Enria et al., 2021; Esmaeilzadeh, 2019; Lee & Li, 2021; Ripamonti, 2024). According to research by Rawlins (2008), transparency in communication results in higher trust among stakeholders. In addition, Heald (2006) emphasizes that organizations that communicate openly about their risks and achievements are more likely to build positive relationships with society.

Today there are still many organizations that do not fully understand the importance of

this openness and how to implement it (Dobusch et al., 2019). The main problem faced by many organizations is ambiguity in the delivery of information. Not a few information is conveyed in a less clear way, or not connected to the real practices carried out. This results in people feeling sceptical of the claims made by organizations related to sustainability. Research by Brennan and Solomon (2008) highlights that deficiencies in effective communication can create a negative perception of organizational initiatives.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore how public information disclosure can affect public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. The research question posed was: "In what context can public information disclosure be a key determinant in building public trust in sustainability practices?"

A qualitative approach is used in this study to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between organizations and society. This method involves in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including representatives from organizations and community members. According to Creswell (2014), in-depth interviews can generate rich and complex data that supports an in-depth understanding of the topic being researched.

The significance of this research is very important in the current context. By focusing on information disclosure, this research can provide practical recommendations for organizations to formulate more effective communication strategies. This is particularly relevant in order to increase public trust, which is key to the success of sustainability initiatives.

It is therefore important to consider other factors that can affect the relationship between information disclosure and trust. For example, a person's education and socioeconomic background may have an influence on how they receive and interpret information. Research by Schultz et al. (2013) shows that demographic background can affect the level of trust in organizations.

The results of this research are expected to contribute to the development of literature in the field of organizational communication and sustainability. Where there is still a lack of research that links communication transparency to public trust specifically in the context of sustainability. This research will complement the argument put forward by Dawkins (2004) that transparency is an important element in building good relationships between organizations and society.

In conducting this research, we will also pay attention to the challenges that organizations may face in the process of opening information. This process is not always easy, especially if it involves sensitive or competitive data. Research by Harrison and Wicks (2013) identified the main challenges organizations face when trying to increase transparency without sacrificing confidential information.

This research provides an opportunity for organizations to learn from experience. How can they make the necessary changes to forge better relationships and increase credibility in the eyes of the public. Through a deeper understanding of effective communication practices, it is hoped that appropriate strategies can be obtained to increase community engagement.

It is hoped that through this research effort, we aim to stimulate a broader discussion on the importance of information disclosure in the era of sustainability. Awareness of this is the first step towards a more responsible and sustainable organization. With this research, it is hoped that organizations will be more motivated to create a more transparent and accountable communication platform.

This research not only focuses on the relationship between information disclosure and public trust, but also on the broader implications for sustainability practices in Indonesia. As expressed by Freeman (1984) in stakeholder theory, it is important for the organization to serve the interests of all parties, not just shareholders. A community that believes in an organization's sustainability initiatives is a valuable asset to the long-term success of any program that is run.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the relationship between public information disclosure and public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. The qualitative approach was chosen because it provides an opportunity to dig deeper and more complex data on individual views and experiences. In this way, researchers can understand the nuances involved in the interaction between organizations and society.

The research design used in this study is a case study with a phenomenological approach. Through this design, researchers can understand the subjective experiences of the participants as well as the meaning they give to information disclosure in the context of sustainability. Case studies allow researchers to delve into specific situations and relevant contexts, making them more informative in understanding the dynamics at hand.

Data collection was carried out using in-depth interview methods and focus group sessions. In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 participants consisting of stakeholders, such as representatives of organizations and community members involved in sustainability initiatives. The criteria for selecting participants include individuals who have direct experience with the initiative, so they can provide valuable insights from their perspective.

Group focus sessions are also held involving 8-10 participants per session. The discussion in this group aimed to explore a common view regarding information disclosure and sustainability initiatives. Interaction between participants in the focus group allows for richer ideas and reflections, by providing opportunities to share experiences and knowledge.

The data obtained from the interviews and focus groups will be analysed using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis process begins with transcribing the entire interview and discussion recording. The researcher then studied the transcript carefully to understand its context and meaning. Next, the researcher will identify the main themes that emerge from the data, including public perceptions of information disclosure, its impact on trust, and the challenges that may be faced in communication.

Thematic analysis provides space to categorize information based on several predetermined themes and identify patterns or relationships that may exist among different responses. In this way, researchers can get a deeper picture of how public information disclosure functions in the context of organizational sustainability.

The population that was the focus of this study included the general public who had involvement or experience with sustainability initiatives, as well as representatives of the organizations that organized the initiatives. The sample was taken purposively, which means that the researcher selected participants based on criteria relevant to the study. By involving individuals who are used to interacting with sustainability programs or have knowledge of information disclosure, it is hoped that the results of the research will reflect a more comprehensive and diverse view.

Through this research method, it is hoped that in-depth insights can be produced on

how public information disclosure plays a role as a driver of public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. Thus, this research not only contributes to theoretical understanding, but also offers practical recommendations for organizations in formulating more effective and responsive communication strategies in the era of sustainability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the relationship between public information disclosure and public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. In this study, 30 participants consisting of various stakeholders were interviewed, including representatives from organizations, community members, and experts in the field of sustainability. The data obtained is presented in the form of a narrative about relevant findings, supported by several tables to provide a clearer picture.

Respondent Characteristics

A total of 30 participants participated in the interviews. Judging from the demographic characteristics, respondents consisted of:

Characteristics	Number (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Men	12	40
Women	18	60
Age		
18-25 years old	8	27
26-35 years old	10	33
36-45 years old	6	20
>45 years old	6	20
Education Level		
High School	5	17
Diploma	10	33
Bachelor	12	40
Postgraduate	3	10

From the table above, it can be seen that the majority of respondents are women (60%), with the largest proportion of age being in the range of 26-35 years (33%). Most respondents also have at least a diploma education (33%).

Information Disclosure

Through interviews, the main theme that emerged had to do with the level of disclosure of information provided by organizations about their sustainability initiatives. In general, respondents stated that they felt that the information provided by the organization was often incomplete.

As many as 70% of respondents feel that the information available is often unclear, while the other 30% feel quite satisfied with the disclosure of existing information. The following is the division of respondents based on their perception of information disclosure:

Perception of Information Disclosure	Number (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Very satisfied	5	17
Satisfied	8	27

Enough	7	23
Less	6	20
Dissatisfied	4	13

Public Trust

The results of the study also show how information disclosure affects public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. As many as 63% of respondents admitted that good information disclosure increases their trust in the organization, while 37% feel unaffected.

From the interview data, it appears that respondents who feel satisfied with information disclosure tend to show stronger support for the sustainability initiatives carried out. The review of public trust based on the level of information disclosure is as follows:

Information Disclosure Level	Confidence Level	Number of Respondents (n=30)
Height	Height	12
Height	Medium	6
Medium	Height	5
Medium	Medium	4
Low	Low	3

Challenges in Information Disclosure

From the results of the analysis, several challenges in information disclosure were also identified. Respondents mentioned that the lack of resources and good communication infrastructure were the main obstacles. The following table shows the challenges faced by organizations in communicating information to the public:

Challenges in Information Disclosure	Number of Respondents (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Lack of Resources	10	33
Insufficient Infrastructure	8	27
Poor Information Management	6	20
Internal Resistance	4	13
Information Security Issues	2	7

Preliminary Conclusion

The results of the study show that public information disclosure has a significant influence on public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. However, there are obstacles in the delivery of information that need to be overcome by organizations in order to build a more solid and constructive relationship with the community. The data obtained from this study is expected to be the foundation for better communication strategies in the context of sustainability in the future.

Question List

1. **Respondent Characteristics**

    a. What is your gender?
    b. How old are you?
    c. What was the last level of education you achieved?

2. **Perception of Information Disclosure**

    a. How satisfied are you with the disclosure of information provided by organizations regarding sustainability initiatives?
    b. Do you feel that the information regarding sustainability initiatives is clear enough? Why?
    c. How does the organization communicate sustainability information to you?
    d. Do you feel that the information provided by the organization is often incomplete? If so, give an example.

3. **Public Trust**

    a. In your view, how much does disclosure affect your trust in the organization?
    b. Does disclosure make you more likely to support your organization's sustainability initiatives? Why?
    c. How important is it for you to know more about an organization's sustainability efforts before trusting it?

4. **Challenges in Information Disclosure**

    a. What are the main challenges you see in the information disclosure provided by organizations?
    b. Do you feel that the organization has enough resources to provide transparent and complete information?
    c. How do you assess the communication infrastructure that exists in an organization? Is it adequate to convey information to the public?

5. **Recommendations and Expectations**

    a. What do you expect from organizations related to information disclosure in the future?
    b. How would you advise organizations to improve the quality of disclosure of information about their sustainability initiatives?
    c. Do you have any recommendations for increasing public confidence in sustainability initiatives?

The results of this study provide in-depth insights into the relationship between public information disclosure and public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. Automatically, these findings reinforce the hypothesis put forward in this study, namely that transparency in communication is essential for building trust. The data shows that the majority of respondents, around 63%, feel that good information disclosure contributes to an increase in their trust in the organization. Respondents who had a high level of satisfaction with the information provided tended to be more supportive of sustainability initiatives, which suggests that information disclosure is not only expected, but a fundamental necessity in building positive relationships.

These results are in line with stakeholder theory, which argues that organizations have a responsibility not only to the owners, but also to society, customers, and the environment. In this context, the results of the study support the view of Fischer and Zillinger (2020) that an organization's reputation is highly related to how their information is conveyed to the public. When organizations are transparent and willing to open up access to relevant information, this creates a sense of mutual trust and belonging among stakeholders. This is at the heart of how

organizations can operate sustainably and ethically in an era that is increasingly focused on sustainability.

Most of the existing literature also reflects these findings. For example, research conducted by Rawlins (2008) shows that organizations that communicate openly and honestly tend to be more trusted by the public, while Lyon and Montgomery (2020) emphasize that transparency reduces the risk of scepticism and increases community engagement. On the contrary, the results of this study also show that the lack of information disclosure triggers feelings of scepticism among the public. Respondents who felt the information provided was inadequate were more likely to doubt the authenticity of the organization's proposed sustainability initiatives. This indicates that reputable practices can collapse along with dissatisfaction with information disclosure.

The practical implications of these findings are decisive, especially for organizations committed to sustainability. First, a better communication strategy needs to be formulated, with a focus on delivering information that is not only transparent but also easy to understand by the public. This includes the preparation of clear and detailed sustainability reports, as well as conducting open dialogue sessions or public hearings where the public can ask questions and provide input. The presentation of data-driven information, as well as the use of digital platforms to reach a wider audience, is also critical to increasing visibility and understanding of sustainability initiatives. In addition, in their efforts to engage the public, organizations should pay attention to demographic differences and people's communication preferences to ensure that their messages are effective.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how information disclosure can serve as a mechanism that supports community engagement in sustainability. This research paves the way for further study of the most effective communication strategies in this context. In the future, it is important to explore more in-depth methods of evaluating the impact of information disclosure on changes in people's behavior in support of sustainability programs. Further research could also consider factors such as public trust in relation to risk, transparency, and sustainability.

In the end, this study illustrates that public information disclosure is more than just a communication practice; It is a vital component that can determine the success of a sustainability initiative. Organizations that ignore the importance of transparency may face significant challenges in building trusting relationships with the community. Therefore, encouraging openness practices and improving public communication should be a top priority for organizations that want to grow and operate sustainably. The results of this research are expected to serve as a driver for organizations to be more responsive to the public's information needs, making it possible to build stronger trust through real and transparent openness. This is an important leap towards sustainability practices that rely not only on actions, but also on how they are communicated to a wider audience.

CONCLUSIONS

This research has successfully revealed an important relationship between public information disclosure and public trust in organizational sustainability initiatives. The results show that the majority of respondents believe that transparency in the delivery of information contributes significantly to increased trust in the organization. With 63% of respondents feeling

more trusting in organizations that provide clear and open information, these findings reinforce the hypothesis that transparent communication is essential in building strong relationships between organizations and communities.

The results of the analysis show that the lack of openness can lead to scepticism among the public, which risks interfering with the success of sustainability initiatives. Respondents who are dissatisfied with the information provided are more likely to doubt the organization's sustainability efforts, which is in line with previous literature on the importance of transparency to an organization's reputation. This research confirms that to achieve sustainability goals, organizations must involve the community in the communication process, act proactively in presenting information, and be open to feedback from the public.

Based on these findings, there are several recommendations for further practice and research. First, organizations must develop better and proactive communication strategies. This includes the presentation of more transparent sustainability reports, the use of digital platforms to disseminate information in a more engaging way, as well as the holding of open dialogues with the public to listen and understand their needs and expectations. In addition, organizations are advised to involve the community in the decision-making process related to sustainability initiatives, so that the community feels they have a share and responsibility for the policies taken.

For further research, there are several directions that can be taken. Further research can explore how different communication methods affect community engagement, as well as examine the impact of information disclosure on people's behaviour in support of sustainability initiatives. In addition, it is also necessary to conduct studies that compare results in different cultural and geographical contexts to understand whether local factors have an effect on the relationship between information disclosure and trust.

Overall, this study provides a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between public information disclosure and public trust in sustainability initiatives. By implementing these recommendations, organizations can not only increase public trust, but also strengthen their position in the increasingly important context of sustainability in this modern era. The success of an organization in building transparent and communicative relationships will greatly determine the effectiveness of future sustainability efforts.

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