

PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS: A CASE STUDY OF THE BENTANI INITIATIVE

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Abstract: Environmental sustainability increasingly depends on effective communication that encourages community participation, collaborative decision-making, and collective environmental action. However, previous studies have predominantly emphasized digital environmental communication, social media campaigns, and public engagement outcomes, while relatively limited attention has been devoted to understanding participatory environmental communication within community-based sustainability initiatives. This study examines how participatory environmental communication is implemented through the Brewing Change: Women's Empowerment in Coffee Origin Communities in Indonesia (BENTANI) Initiative. Employing a qualitative research design, the study uses qualitative document analysis to examine official program documents produced by Mercy Corps Indonesia and supporting national media coverage. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify communication processes, community participation, environmental stewardship, and sustainability practices embedded within the initiative. The findings demonstrate that participatory environmental communication is implemented through dialogue, collaborative learning, mentoring, knowledge sharing, and shared decision-making involving women coffee farmers, coffee farmers' wives, young women, facilitators, and community stakeholders. These communication processes strengthen women's empowerment, environmental stewardship, community participation, and long-term community resilience while integrating environmental conservation with sustainable livelihoods. The study further demonstrates that the effectiveness of participatory environmental communication lies not merely in disseminating environmental information but in fostering community ownership and sustained interpersonal engagement. By providing empirical evidence from a community-based sustainability initiative in Indonesia, this study advances the understanding of participatory environmental communication and offers practical insights for governments, non-governmental organizations, development agencies, and community organizations in designing more participatory, inclusive, and sustainable environmental communication programs.

Keywords: BENTANI Initiative, community-based sustainability, community participation, environmental stewardship, participatory environmental communication, women's empowerment

Introduction

Environmental degradation has become one of the most pressing global challenges, threatening ecological sustainability, social well-being, and economic resilience through climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and the depletion of natural resources. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires not only scientific knowledge, technological innovation, and

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environmental policies but also effective communication processes that shape public understanding, encourage collective action, and facilitate collaboration among diverse stakeholders. In this context, environmental communication extends beyond the dissemination of environmental information, functioning as a pragmatic and constitutive process through which society constructs meanings about nature, negotiates environmental interests, and influences environmental decision-making within the public sphere (Cox, 2010).

Consequently, environmental communication plays a critical role in fostering environmental awareness, strengthening public participation, and supporting collaborative environmental governance. Complementing this perspective, participatory communication emphasizes dialogue, local knowledge, community empowerment, and shared decision-making as essential elements of sustainable development. Rather than relying on one-way information dissemination, participatory communication promotes horizontal interaction and mutual learning that enable communities to identify problems, co-create solutions, and implement collective environmental actions (Servaes, 2020). Therefore, integrating environmental communication with participatory communication provides a comprehensive theoretical foundation for understanding how collaborative communication practices strengthen community engagement and contribute to environmental sustainability.

Building upon these theoretical perspectives, recent international studies have demonstrated that participatory and community-centered communication plays a central role in advancing environmental sustainability. Recent international research suggests that environmental communication is most effective when it encourages active public participation and collaborative engagement in sustainability initiatives through diverse communication strategies and stakeholder involvement (Briandana & Saleh, 2022; Oratmangun et al., 2025). Furthermore, participatory communication has been recognized as a fundamental element of sustainable environmental governance by enabling communities to contribute local knowledge, co-create environmental solutions, and strengthen collective responsibility for environmental conservation (Jaskulska et al., 2022; Oratmangun et al., 2025). These participatory approaches are further reinforced by the need for inclusive environmental governance that actively involves youth, women, and marginalized communities in environmental decision-making, ensuring that sustainability initiatives reflect local needs and promote long-term environmental resilience (Adom et al., 2025). Collectively, international studies indicate that successful environmental sustainability depends not only on effective communication strategies but also on participatory, inclusive, and community-centered communication processes.

Indonesian studies have predominantly examined environmental communication from three complementary perspectives. First, research has emphasized the growing role of digital communication, including social media campaigns, Instagram-based environmental activism, and new media platforms, in promoting environmental awareness and encouraging public participation (Febriana & Rosmilawati, 2024; Rinda, 2025; Zulfikar et al., 2026). Second, several studies have highlighted participatory communication and community engagement as important approaches for strengthening collaboration among stakeholders, encouraging community involvement in environmental conservation, and supporting sustainable development initiatives (Rahman et al., 2025; Siregar & Chen, 2025). Third, bibliometric, narrative review, and systematic review studies have mapped the development of environmental communication research in Indonesia, demonstrating increasing scholarly attention while simultaneously identifying opportunities for broader theoretical and methodological advancement (Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2023; Syakirah et al., 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2024).

Overall, these findings suggest that environmental communication has become an increasingly important research area in Indonesia, although the dominant focus remains on digital communication,

public participation, and conceptual analyses of environmental issues. Collectively, previous studies have substantially enriched the understanding of environmental communication at both the international and Indonesian levels. International research has emphasized the importance of participatory, inclusive, and community-centered communication in promoting environmental sustainability, whereas Indonesian scholarship has predominantly focused on digital environmental communication, environmental campaigns, social media engagement, and conceptual discussions of public participation. Although these studies provide valuable theoretical and practical insights, relatively limited empirical attention has been devoted to examining how participatory environmental communication operates within community-based sustainability initiatives that integrate environmental conservation, community empowerment, and collaborative decision-making. Existing research has largely emphasized communication strategies, media platforms, or public engagement outcomes, while the communicative processes through which participation is fostered, negotiated, and sustained within local communities remain underexplored. Addressing this gap is therefore essential for advancing a more comprehensive understanding of how participatory environmental communication supports grassroots sustainability initiatives and strengthens community-based environmental governance.

To address this research gap, the present study investigates participatory environmental communication within the Brewing Change: Women's Empowerment in Coffee Origin Communities in Indonesia (BENTANI) Initiative, a community-based sustainability program implemented through a collaboration between Mercy Corps Indonesia and the Starbucks Foundation. The initiative integrates environmental conservation, women's empowerment, environmental health through water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), financial literacy, and sustainable livelihoods by strengthening the capacity of women coffee farmers, coffee farmers' wives, and young women in coffee-producing communities in West Java (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021). The significance of the program has also received national recognition, with Kompas highlighting BENTANI as an initiative that enhances women's participation in sustainable coffee production through environmental education, waste management, financial literacy, and community-based economic empowerment (Ashri & Berindra, 2025). Against this background, this study aims to examine how participatory environmental communication is implemented within the BENTANI Initiative by exploring how communication processes facilitate community participation, collaborative decision-making, environmental stewardship, and women's empowerment in supporting community-based sustainability.

Unlike previous studies that have predominantly emphasized digital environmental communication, communication strategies, or public participation outcomes, this research provides an empirical examination of participatory communication practices within a grassroots sustainability initiative. Accordingly, the findings are expected to contribute to both theory and practice by advancing the understanding of participatory environmental communication within community-based sustainability initiatives, enriching empirical evidence from the Indonesian context, and providing practical insights for governments, non-governmental organizations, development agencies, and community-based organizations in designing more participatory, inclusive, and sustainable environmental communication programs.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design using qualitative document analysis (QDA) to examine participatory environmental communication within the Brewing Change: Women's Empowerment in Coffee Origin Communities in Indonesia (BENTANI) Initiative. Qualitative document analysis enables researchers to systematically examine and interpret documentary sources to generate meaningful insights into social phenomena (Bowen, 2009). This approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how participatory environmental communication is represented and implemented within a community-based sustainability initiative rather than to measure causal relationships or test hypotheses. Guided by an interpretive qualitative perspective, the analysis focused on communication processes, meanings, and contextual relationships embedded in documentary evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research specifically examined the BENTANI Initiative, implemented by Mercy Corps Indonesia in collaboration with the Starbucks Foundation, with particular attention to communication practices related to environmental conservation, women's empowerment, community participation, collaborative decision-making, environmental stewardship, and community-based sustainability.

The study relied exclusively on secondary documentary sources. The primary data consisted of official publications, reports, and program documents produced by Mercy Corps Indonesia concerning the BENTANI Initiative, complemented by national media coverage published by Kompas to provide additional contextual information regarding the implementation and public recognition of the program. Documentary sources were selected because they provide rich contextual evidence for examining organizational practices, policies, and communication processes within their natural settings (Bowen, 2009). The collected documents were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), including familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, identification of themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and interpretation of the findings. This analytical process enabled the identification of recurring patterns related to participatory environmental communication, community engagement, environmental stewardship, women's empowerment, and sustainability practices within the BENTANI Initiative.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, this study adopted the qualitative quality criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), encompassing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through the use of multiple documentary sources that enabled triangulation between organizational documents and national media reports. Dependability and confirmability were supported by applying a transparent and systematic analytical procedure throughout the coding and theme development processes, while transferability was enhanced through detailed descriptions of the research context, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar community-based sustainability initiatives.

Results and Discussion

The BENTANI Initiative as a Community-Based Sustainability Program

The object of this study is the Brewing Change: Women's Empowerment in Coffee Origin Communities in Indonesia (BENTANI) Initiative, a community-based sustainability program implemented through a collaboration between Mercy Corps Indonesia and the Starbucks Foundation. The initiative was established to strengthen women's roles in coffee-producing communities in West Java by integrating environmental sustainability, public health, women's empowerment, and economic development. Specifically, the program seeks to improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene

(WASH), enhance financial literacy through training and mentoring, and support non-farm business development for women coffee farmers, coffee farmers' wives, and young women. Initially implemented in Bandung and Garut Regencies, the program targeted approximately 2,000 women from coffee-producing households as its primary beneficiaries (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

The BENTANI Initiative was selected as the focus of this study because it represents a community-based sustainability initiative in which environmental conservation is pursued through participatory communication rather than through one-way information dissemination. The program combines environmental education, community capacity building, women's leadership development, entrepreneurship, and collaborative learning within local coffee communities. Its relevance is further reflected in the growing public attention it has received, including national media coverage highlighting how the initiative has strengthened women's participation in sustainable coffee production, environmental management, financial literacy, and household economic resilience in West Java (Ashri & Berindra, 2025; Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

Participatory Environmental Communication in the BENTANI Initiative

The analysis of the BENTANI Initiative demonstrates that participatory environmental communication is implemented through interactive communication processes that actively engage multiple stakeholders rather than relying on one-way dissemination of environmental information. The program involves Mercy Corps Indonesia, local facilitators, women coffee farmers, coffee farmers' wives, young women, community groups, and local partners in a series of participatory activities, including environmental education, technical training, mentoring, financial literacy programs, entrepreneurship development, and collaborative learning sessions. These activities create opportunities for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and mutual learning, allowing participants not only to receive information but also to exchange experiences, discuss local environmental challenges, and collectively develop practical solutions relevant to their communities. Continuous mentoring further strengthens this communication process by encouraging sustained interaction between facilitators and participants, enabling environmental knowledge to be translated into everyday practices and collective community action (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

These findings indicate that communication within the BENTANI Initiative functions as a participatory process through which environmental meanings are negotiated collectively and transformed into collaborative action. Rather than positioning local communities as passive recipients of environmental messages, the initiative encourages active participation in identifying local problems, sharing knowledge, and implementing sustainability practices. This finding is consistent with Cox's (2010) perspective that environmental communication is both pragmatic and constitutive, serving not only to disseminate environmental information but also to construct shared understandings and facilitate public participation in environmental decision-making. Likewise, the communication practices identified in BENTANI reflect Servaes' (2020) conception of participatory communication, which emphasizes dialogue, horizontal interaction, mutual learning, and shared decision-making as essential foundations for sustainable development.

The findings also reinforce previous empirical research on participatory environmental communication. Jaskulska et al. (2022) demonstrate that participatory environmental initiatives become more effective when citizens are actively engaged through participatory workshops, collaborative activities, and knowledge co-creation, enabling communities to develop stronger ownership of environmental actions. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2025) argue that contextual, horizontal, and dialogic communication strengthens ecological awareness, social solidarity, and community capacity by integrating local experiences into environmental adaptation processes. The BENTANI

Initiative extends these findings by illustrating how participatory environmental communication can simultaneously promote environmental stewardship, women's empowerment, and community capacity building through continuous dialogue, training, mentoring, and collaborative knowledge-sharing within community-based sustainability initiatives.

Community Participation and Women's Empowerment

The findings indicate that community participation in the BENTANI Initiative is closely intertwined with women's empowerment as the central mechanism for promoting environmental sustainability at the local level. Rather than positioning women solely as beneficiaries, the initiative actively engages women coffee farmers, coffee farmers' wives, and young women as key actors in environmental conservation, household well-being, and community development. Through leadership development, financial literacy training, entrepreneurship support, environmental education, and continuous mentoring, participants are encouraged to contribute to community discussions, strengthen household decision-making, and participate in collective actions related to environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods. The involvement of multiple community groups further demonstrates that participatory environmental communication within BENTANI extends beyond individual capacity building to foster collaborative decision-making and shared responsibility among community members for addressing environmental and socio-economic challenges. These findings suggest that community participation is embedded within an inclusive communication process that empowers local actors to become active contributors to sustainability initiatives rather than passive recipients of development interventions (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

This finding is consistent with Adom et al. (2025), who argue that environmental sustainability can be strengthened when women, youth, and marginalized groups are meaningfully involved in environmental governance and decision-making, as their participation contributes diverse knowledge, local perspectives, and greater community resilience. Similarly, Siregar and Chen (2025) emphasize that active community participation enhances environmental stewardship, strengthens local ownership, and improves the long-term sustainability of conservation initiatives through collaborative engagement and institutional support. The findings also reinforce the sustainability communication framework proposed by Oratmangun et al. (2025), which highlights that community engagement is most effective when communication builds trust, cooperation, social capital, and collective responsibility among stakeholders. In the context of the BENTANI Initiative, participatory environmental communication not only facilitates environmental learning but also empowers women and local communities to jointly negotiate decisions, strengthen social collaboration, and integrate environmental conservation with socio-economic empowerment, thereby illustrating how inclusive communication practices can generate sustainable community-based environmental governance.

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability Outcomes

The findings further demonstrate that participatory environmental communication within the BENTANI Initiative extends beyond dialogue and community participation by fostering concrete environmental stewardship practices. Environmental sustainability is promoted through integrated activities that include improving access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), environmental and health education related to stunting prevention and family nutrition, sustainable coffee farming practices, entrepreneurship training, and community mentoring. Rather than treating environmental conservation as an isolated objective, the initiative embeds environmental awareness within everyday community activities by encouraging participants to adopt healthier sanitation practices, improve environmental hygiene, strengthen sustainable agricultural practices, and develop

environmentally responsible livelihoods. These integrated communication processes enable environmental knowledge to be translated into practical actions that support both community well-being and long-term environmental sustainability (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

These findings reinforce the argument that environmental communication becomes more effective when communication strategies encourage behavioral change and collective environmental responsibility. Briandana and Mohamad Saleh (2022) similarly demonstrate that environmental communication initiatives are most successful when they combine environmental education with active public engagement capable of encouraging pro-environmental behavior rather than merely disseminating environmental information. Likewise, Febriana and Rosmilawati (2024) show that environmental communication can mobilize collective environmental action by transforming environmental awareness into community participation through persuasive communication and compelling environmental narratives. Although their study emphasizes digital activism, the present findings indicate that comparable outcomes can also be achieved through community-based participatory communication supported by continuous training, mentoring, and face-to-face engagement. Furthermore, Zulfikar et al. (2026) argue that environmental participation develops most effectively when communication functions as a collaborative ecosystem that facilitates knowledge exchange, strengthens environmental awareness, and encourages collective action among multiple stakeholders.

In the BENTANI Initiative, these collaborative communication processes are reflected in the integration of WASH education, sustainable coffee cultivation, environmental learning, and community mentoring, illustrating how participatory environmental communication can simultaneously strengthen environmental stewardship and support sustainable community development. This finding supports Briandana and Mohamad Saleh (2022), who argue that environmental communication is most effective when communication strategies move beyond information dissemination to encourage environmental awareness and behavioral change through active public engagement. The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that sustained face-to-face mentoring and community participation can also facilitate long-term environmental stewardship within rural communities.

The findings also resonate with Febriana and Rosmilawati (2024), who emphasize that environmental communication becomes more influential when it mobilizes collective participation and transforms environmental awareness into concrete environmental action. While their study focuses on digital environmental activism through Instagram Reels, the BENTANI Initiative illustrates that similar collective engagement can be achieved through community-based participatory communication supported by continuous dialogue, environmental education, and collaborative learning. Furthermore, the present findings are consistent with Zulfikar et al. (2026), who describe environmental communication as a collaborative communication ecosystem that promotes knowledge exchange, strengthens environmental awareness, and encourages collective environmental participation. The BENTANI Initiative provides empirical evidence that these collaborative communication processes can be operationalized through integrated sustainability programs that combine environmental education, WASH practices, sustainable coffee cultivation, and women's empowerment, thereby strengthening both community participation and environmental stewardship.

The findings suggest that the sustainability outcomes of the BENTANI Initiative should not be understood merely in terms of program implementation, but rather as the development of long-term community capacity to sustain environmental action. Through continuous mentoring, environmental education, financial literacy, and leadership development, the initiative encourages participants to gradually strengthen their environmental awareness, improve their confidence in participating in

community activities, and adopt more sustainable practices in both household and livelihood contexts. Rather than producing short-term behavioral change alone, participatory environmental communication within BENTANI appears to cultivate a learning process through which environmental knowledge is internalized, shared among community members, and translated into collective responsibility for environmental stewardship. This process indicates that sustainability is embedded in the capacity of local communities to maintain environmental initiatives beyond the duration of external interventions (Mercy Corps Indonesia, 2021).

These findings are consistent with Oratmangun et al. (2025), who argue that sustainability communication becomes more effective when it strengthens social capital, trust, cooperation, and community ownership rather than focusing solely on environmental messages. Their study demonstrates that long-term sustainability depends on communication processes that encourage communities to participate actively in decision-making and collaborative environmental management. Similarly, the BENTANI Initiative illustrates that sustained mentoring, environmental learning, and community collaboration can strengthen local ownership of sustainability practices beyond the implementation period.

The present findings also support Adom et al. (2025), who emphasize that environmental sustainability requires continuous capacity building and the meaningful inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized communities in environmental governance. According to their study, community resilience develops when local people are empowered to contribute knowledge, participate in environmental decision-making, and build adaptive capacities for future environmental challenges. In the BENTANI Initiative, these principles are reflected through leadership development, women's empowerment, and participatory learning processes that strengthen the community's ability to sustain environmental stewardship over time.

Furthermore, the sustainability outcomes identified in this study complement the broader perspective presented by Syakirah et al. (2025). Although their bibliometric analysis focuses primarily on environmental communication in social media, they conclude that effective environmental communication ultimately seeks to increase public engagement, environmental awareness, and collective environmental action. The present study extends this discussion by demonstrating that these outcomes can also be achieved through face-to-face participatory communication within community-based sustainability initiatives. Rather than relying on digital interaction, the BENTANI Initiative shows that continuous dialogue, mentoring, collaborative learning, and local participation can generate lasting behavioral change, strengthen community resilience, and foster long-term environmental sustainability.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of participatory environmental communication in the BENTANI Initiative lies not merely in the delivery of environmental information but in the creation of communication processes that enable communities to actively construct environmental knowledge, negotiate shared meanings, and translate collective understanding into collaborative action. This interpretation is consistent with Cox (2010), who conceptualizes environmental communication as both a pragmatic and constitutive process through which environmental meanings are socially constructed and public engagement is facilitated. Within the BENTANI Initiative, environmental issues are not presented simply as technical problems requiring behavioral compliance; instead, they become shared community concerns addressed through dialogue, continuous interaction, mentoring, and collaborative learning. As a result, communication functions not only to increase environmental awareness but also to cultivate collective responsibility for environmental stewardship.

Building upon this perspective, the present findings further support Servaes' (2020) participatory communication framework, which argues that sustainable development is achieved when communication promotes dialogue, horizontal interaction, local knowledge, and shared decision-making rather than top-down information transfer. The BENTANI Initiative demonstrates that participatory communication creates opportunities for women, youth, and local communities to exchange experiences, contribute local knowledge, strengthen social relationships, and participate actively in sustainability initiatives. Such communication processes generate trust, community ownership, and long-term commitment, enabling environmental sustainability to emerge as a collectively negotiated social practice rather than an externally imposed development agenda.

This interpretation is also supported by the broader body of empirical literature reviewed in this study. International research has consistently shown that participatory communication, inclusive governance, and collaborative engagement strengthen environmental stewardship, community resilience, and sustainable development (Adom et al., 2025; Jaskulska et al., 2022; Oratmangun et al., 2025). Likewise, Indonesian studies have demonstrated that environmental communication can enhance public engagement through digital platforms, participatory communication, environmental education, and collaborative communication processes (Briandana & Mohamad Saleh, 2022; Rahman et al., 2025; Febriana & Rosmilawati, 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2024; Syakirah et al., 2025; Siregar & Chen, 2025; Rinda, 2025; Zulfikar et al., 2026; Rochyadi-Reetz & Wolling, 2023). However, the present study extends these findings by demonstrating that the effectiveness of participatory environmental communication depends not solely on communication media or environmental campaigns but on sustained interpersonal interaction, continuous mentoring, collaborative learning, and shared decision-making embedded within community-based sustainability initiatives. These elements collectively explain why participatory communication in the BENTANI Initiative is capable of fostering environmental stewardship, women's empowerment, community resilience, and long-term sustainability.

Previous studies have made important contributions to the development of environmental communication research by demonstrating the roles of digital communication, social media campaigns, environmental advocacy, participatory communication, and community engagement in promoting environmental awareness and public participation (Briandana & Mohamad Saleh, 2022; Febriana & Rosmilawati, 2024; Zainuddin et al., 2024; Syakirah et al., 2025). Other studies have further emphasized the importance of inclusive governance, women's participation, and collaborative communication in supporting sustainable environmental management (Adom et al., 2025; Oratmangun et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025; Siregar & Chen, 2025; Zulfikar et al., 2026). Nevertheless, these studies have predominantly examined environmental communication through digital platforms, environmental campaigns, conceptual discussions, or broader governance frameworks, while relatively limited empirical attention has been devoted to understanding how participatory environmental communication operates within community-based sustainability initiatives.

The present study advances this body of knowledge by demonstrating that participatory environmental communication functions as an integrative communication process that connects environmental conservation, women's empowerment, environmental stewardship, and community participation through continuous dialogue, collaborative learning, mentoring, and shared decision-making. Rather than emphasizing communication media or campaign effectiveness alone, this study highlights the importance of sustained interpersonal communication in fostering community ownership, strengthening local capacity, and supporting long-term sustainability. These findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of participatory environmental communication by illustrating how

community-based sustainability initiatives can simultaneously promote environmental stewardship, women's empowerment, and sustainable community development within the Indonesian context.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for environmental sustainability initiatives. For non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development agencies, the results highlight the importance of designing environmental programs that prioritize participatory communication, continuous mentoring, and collaborative learning rather than relying solely on information dissemination or short-term environmental campaigns. Strengthening local dialogue and community ownership can enhance the sustainability of environmental interventions while fostering greater engagement among women, youth, and other community members. For governments, the findings suggest that environmental policies and community empowerment programs should integrate participatory communication as a core strategy for promoting environmental stewardship, inclusive decision-making, and long-term community resilience. Furthermore, community-based organizations and local communities may benefit from adopting communication approaches that encourage knowledge sharing, collective learning, and collaborative action, enabling environmental sustainability to emerge from locally driven participation rather than externally imposed interventions. Collectively, these implications demonstrate that participatory environmental communication can serve as a strategic foundation for developing more inclusive, community-centered, and sustainable environmental governance in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that participatory environmental communication plays a fundamental role in supporting community-based sustainability by fostering dialogue, collaborative learning, shared decision-making, and community ownership within the BENTANI Initiative. Rather than functioning solely as a mechanism for disseminating environmental information, participatory communication facilitates the integration of environmental conservation, women's empowerment, environmental stewardship, and community participation into a sustainable community development process. The findings highlight that continuous mentoring, knowledge sharing, and inclusive communication practices contribute to strengthening environmental awareness, local capacity, and long-term community resilience.

These findings extend the current understanding of participatory environmental communication by providing empirical evidence from a community-based sustainability initiative in Indonesia, where environmental communication is implemented through sustained interpersonal engagement rather than primarily through digital platforms or environmental campaigns. Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on qualitative document analysis of a single community-based initiative, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other environmental contexts. Future research is therefore encouraged to incorporate field observations, interviews with program participants, or comparative case studies to provide a broader understanding of participatory environmental communication across different sustainability initiatives. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for governments, non-governmental organizations, development agencies, and community-based organizations in designing more participatory, inclusive, and sustainable environmental communication programs that strengthen community engagement and environmental governance.

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