



## Grapevine Study on the Free Discussion Forum on Intranet Portal Ministry of Communications and Informatics – portal.kominfo.go.id

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### Abstract

The development of technology and information has a significant effect on the way we all communicate within organizations. In addition to using the internet in communicating with the public, organizations began using the internet in a closed network to communicate in its internal environment. The internet network is called an intranet. The most commonly used intranet by an organization is in the form of a web portal. In addition to private organizations, organizations that uses the intranet portal in their internal communications is government organizations. One of them is Kominfo which builds portal kominfo to accommodate their internal communication. In the portal Kominfo as an organization provides a forum where all members of the organization can communicate openly and interactively which they named as free discussion forum. This research seeks to discover the existence of grapevine in this free discussion forum and how the pattern of its spread. This study uses the approach of organizational communication theory especially grapevine on internal communication organization. This research uses post positivist paradigm with qualitative approach. This research is a descriptive research by using documentation study and literature study in the method of data retrieval. The result of this research is grapevine happening at free discussion forum of kominfo portal with pattern of gossip pattern distribution.

Keywords: Grapevine; Discussion Forum; Intranet portal

### Introduction



Internal communication has a very important role in the existence and development of an organization. Romli (2014, pp. 6) states that there are two dimensions in organizational life, internal and external. Internal communication is the process of delivering messages between members of the organization that occur for the benefit of the organization, such as communication between the leadership and subordinates, interpersonal communications or group communication. Ningrum (2013, pp. 6) reveals that good communication within internal organisation can enhance mutual understanding, cooperation and job satisfaction. Conversely, when bad communication occurs within the organization, it will have a negative impact, one of which is the conflict between employees.

Furthermore, internal communications also play an important role in improving employee performance. Fatmala (2017, pp. 103-107) in her research finds that organizational internal communication when collaborating with work environment and teamwork can significantly improve employee performance. The better the internal communication that occurs within the organization, then the effectiveness of employee performance will increase. Then Udayanto, Bagia and Yulianthini (2015, pp. 7-8) find that internal communication can affect employee performance, especially when collaborated with work discipline. Internal communication can be improved through a series of activities with teamwork and involves effective communication between members of the organization.

In the era of rapid development of information technology, the Internet also affect the life of the organization. Organizations other than using the technology to develop their business side, they also use it to communicate, including internal communication. The organization builds a closed network that is facilitated by the use of information technology and the internet. We know it as an intranet. Horton, et al. (2001, pp. 1) explains that the intranet is a network based on the organization's internal protocol control / protocol (TCP / IP) transport protocol, located within its firewall and accessible only to members of the organization. The definition also includes e-mail in most cases the intranet term is only used to refer to storage systems and access data via the World Wide Web Browser (WWW). One form of intranet that is commonly used for internal organizational communication needs is through an intranet portal. Kautsarina (2012, pp. 70) defines the internet portal as a web-based tool that allows users to create a dynamic site in their desired Internet activity and desired content on a single page. Furthermore, Kautsarina also stated that the Intranet Portal can assist employees in making better decisions based on information that they had, which is also a result of increased knowledge. Kautsarina added that the presence of an intranet portal has several other advantages: help to reduce costs, save more time, increase the collaboration, enhanced productivity and also effectiveness.

In another study on the utilization of the internet portal, Sasongko (2017, pp. 205-209) who conducted his study on the intranet portal of PT Telkom in Pt. Telkom DCS



Regional Semarang found that the internet portal can be used as a source of information to meet the information needs of employees regarding its organization. Furthermore, Sasongko explained that one of the causes of high intranet portal usage level in organization is its interactive nature. Interactive is meant is a reciprocal relationship between one user with other users although not meet in person. In another study, Pasaribu (205, pp. 61) found in his research at PT Dirgantara Indonesia that the use of Internet portal as an internal communication media has a significant effect on the organization's image. With the increasing exposure of information about the organization he's an intranet portal to his organization members, the higher and positive views employees have on the organization's image in their perception.

Along with the increasing usage of internet in Indonesia in accordance with the report of penetration & behaviour of internet user of Indonesia year 2017 by APJII counted 143,26 million inhabitant, we that assumed intranet usage as one of channel of internal communications of organization also increase. One of the proof is, the internet service which many accessed by Indonesia is email usage with 33.58% on accessed service category. In addition to utilizing the Internet for the field of economy, education, lifestyle, socio-political & health, APJII also revealed the Indonesian people use the internet to get public services. Positive trends began to expand with the widespread implementation of e-government in Indonesia in order to reach and serve all Indonesian people quickly, precisely and efficiently. There are currently 564 go.id domains and 295 central and local government sites. Some successful examples are how the local government of Surabaya, DKI Jakarta & Kota Bandung implement smart city. They had an open transparent information about the procurement of goods and services even until the budgeting process using e-budgeting that can be monitored together by the community. Then at the level of public service centres such as online licensing registration, online passport creation, online SKCK up to the registration of visits to the Regional and Central Public Hospitals that can be done online. This shows that the use of the Internet is not only done by private organizations, but also government organizations.

One of the government organizations that also serve the community online is the Ministry of Communications and Informatics or Kominfo. Kominfo is a ministry within the Government of Indonesia in charge of communication and informatics affairs. Kominfo has a strategic role as a manager of public communications in the Republic of Indonesia. Kominfo has the responsibility in coordinating, planning, preparing and implementing public communications related to government programs to the community. Based on Presidential Instruction No. 9 of 2015 on Public Communication Management in the management of public communications, Kominfo also undertakes: (1) Study of data and information submitted by ministries and non-ministerial government institutions, (2) Media monitoring, and (3) Analyze media content related to government policies and programs. Kominfo has several public services online including the list service of



verification, licensing and testing in the field of telecommunications, communications and informatics as well as public information services through various social media channels. In carrying out its duties and functions, Kominfo as an organization also applies information technology in the form of an intranet portal as its internal communication media. Kautsarina (2012, pp. 59) explains that the head of the Kominfo organization issued a policy to create an intranet portal as a support for knowledge management, where the application of knowledge management to government organizations is intended to facilitate the process of creating, collecting, storing and sharing knowledge, closing the gap knowledge of one employee with other employees and enhance the organization's ability to manage intellectual assets, knowledge and experience (Bappenas, 2011). The Portal known as [portal.kominfo.go.id](http://portal.kominfo.go.id). This portal is managed by Data Center and Informatics Facilities as hub or information centre for all employees of Kominfo through private log in system. Information and services provided in the communications portal include email communications domain for employees for electronic correspondence, electronic preservation monitoring, *simaya* as an electronic assignment or disposition document to electronic libraries and also channels and internal discussion services.

In the channel service and internal discussions there are several sub services, including: Channels, Administration, Functional, News, Network, Spiritual, Free Discussion, Electronic Presentation, and Procurement of Services. An interesting sub-channel for further scrutiny on the communications portal is free discussion. In the free discussion section, Kominfo provides space for all employees of Kominfo without exception from the Minister to the staff of Civil Servant Candidates (CPNS) to discuss freely. Free discussions can begin with an employee of Kominfo making a discussion thread or discussing existing discussions made by other employees. Various types of discussions that occur in the free discussion room is done with a formal style and also non-formal. Almost all employees are involved from the staff level to some structural and functional officials who are actively involved in responding to the dynamics of discussion in a thread. In its journey since 2011, of course free discussions that occur in the portal kominfo will not always run smoothly. Within about 7 years there may be a conflict in the dynamics of the discussion in the discussion room. Sulistyarini (2011, pp. 9) finds that one of the negative effects of discussions on online forums is the possibility of inter-user disputes. The possibility sometimes arises because of misunderstandings in response to misinformation, hoaxes, rumours or gossip.

In the study of organizational communication, we know rumors, grapevines, or gossip with the term grapevine. Davis, 1953 and Lewis, 1980 in Papa (2008) explain that grapevine is a metaphor for mentioning the spreading of obscure news and content. Informal communication networks are classified as grapevine because this informal / personal information arises from interactions among people, where the information appears to flow in an unpredictable direction. From the explanation above, the authors



are interested to examine further whether grapevine occurs on the free discussion on the portal kominfo and if it happens, what a grapevine pattern occurs.

## **Literature Review**

### *Organizational Communication*

Pace and Faules in Mitra (2016, pp. 32) explains that studying the organization is learning organizational behavior, and the core of that behavior is communication. Then Mulyana further explained that organizational communication often involves also dyadic communication, interpersonal communication and sometimes public communication.

Zelko and Dance in Romli (2014, pp. 11) perceive that organizational communication is an interdependent system that includes internal and external communication. While Redding and Sandborn perceive organizational communication is sending and receiving in complex organizations. Included in this area are internal communication, human relations, unity of managers, downward communication or communication from superiors to subordinates, upward communication communication from subordinates to superiors, horizontal communication or communication from persons of equal level in organization, communication and speaking, listening, writing, and communication program evaluation.

### *Internal Communication Within Organization*

More about internal communication within the organization, Romli (2014, pp. 6) states that there are two dimensions in organizational life, internal and external. Internal communication is the process of delivering messages between members of the organization that occur for the benefit of the organization, such as communication between the leadership and subordinates, interpersonal communications or group communication. Internal communication is generally divided into two, vertical communication, which is a communication from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Communication from the leadership to subordinates and from subordinates to the leadership. In vertical communication, the leader gives instructions, instructions, and information to his subordinates. While subordinates provide reports, suggestions, complaints and complaints to the leadership. The other one is horizontal or lateral communication, which is a peer communication such as employees to employees, managers to managers, messages in this section can flow in the same section within the organization or flow between the parts. This lateral communication facilitates the exchange of knowledge, experiences, methods and problems. It helps the organization to avoid some problems and solve others, and to build morale and job satisfaction.

In the perspective of information channels, internal communication of organizations recognizes the structure of formal and informal communication. Mulyana in Mitra (2016, pp. 32) explains that formal communication is communication by organizational structure, ie downward communication, upward communication, and horizontal



communication. While informal communication does not depend on the organizational structure, such as peer-to-peer communication, also includes the grapevine and gossip Communications. Formal organizations generally have a hierarchy where there are three directions of communication: downward, upward and horizontal. Then Hardjana (2016) adds the direction of diagonal communication, ie communication that occurs between two different people of rank in the hierarchical structure and different divisions or function paths. For example, staff of HR division communicate with sales manager. Then informal communication is defined as a system built on the social association of members of the organization (Barnard, 1938, Simon, 1950). Informal communication systems were originally referred to as informal organizations. Barnard (1938) describes the notion of informal organization as the number of contacts and personal interactions or groups of associates that occur continuously or repeatedly that are not driven by a conscious common goal. While Davis (1989) argues that informal organizations are a personal network and social relationships that are not established or demanded by formal organizations, but appear spontaneously as a social group of people. Furthermore, informal organizations can affect the effectiveness of formal organizations, because they have the following roles such as can form group cohesiveness and personal identity, relational channels in the formation of reference groups, its influence is very strong, especially in the provision of identity, pride and shame accompanied by fear of deviation, the power of opinion formers on important issues in the organization, the power of the formation of social leadership, especially opinion leadership, channels of socialization of organizational cultural values. Informal communication networks are also called cultural networks (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) that disseminate and reinforce cultural values and behavioural norms to form a strong culture.

#### *Grapevine*

In the communication study the organization of the informal communication system is known as 'grapevine' (a grapevine) which is a metaphor for mentioning the spreading of obscure news content or source (Davis, 1953; Lewis, 1980). Grapevine is characterized as follows (W.L. Davis & O'Connor, 1977) that grapevine runs primarily through word of mouth interaction, disseminates information quickly, the network is described as a 'chain of groups' because everyone who is conveying information tends to preach it to a group rather than just to one person only, participants in the grapevine network tend to run one of three roles among others: liaison, loner or end-of-enders, it tends to be the product / outcome of a situation rather than the products of people in the organization.

Hardjana (2016, pp. 172) describes Davis's research on the pattern of grapevine deployment. Grapevine spreads contribute to four dispersal patterns: single-strand chain, gossip, probability chain and cluster chain. The pattern is further elaborated,

#### a. Single-Strand Patterns



The spread of messages goes from one person to another in order. This pattern is easy to use to explain that everyone distorts messages because they are located far apart and this pattern is similar to a sequential pattern on formal communication networks.

b. Gossip Patterns

The spread of messages done by one person is intended for all those around him. The messenger spreads into a star in the group and this pattern resembles a wheel pattern in a formal communication network.

c. Pattern Probability

The messenger conveys the message in a limited way only to those who are deemed to be close or trusted and then those who receive the message tell the people who are also considered close by them.

d. Cluster Patterns

The message spreader conveys a message to his close friends, one of the recipients then tells his close friends and so on.

*Intranet Portal*

Horton, et al. (2001, pp. 1) explains that the intranet is a network based on the organization's internal protocol control / protocol (TCP / IP) transport protocol, located within its firewall and accessible only to members of the organization. The definition also includes e-mail in most cases the intranet term is only used to refer to storage systems and access data via the World Wide Web Browser (WWW). One form of intranet that is commonly used for internal organizational communication needs is through an intranet portal. Tung in Imran (2011, pp. 8) explains that the Intranet is a computer network within a company that uses standard data communications such as on the Internet. Tung further explains some differences between the Intranet and the Internet from the perspective of the scope and scope of its use, namely: (1) Access scope and range; (2) The mode of technology used to communicate; (3) The purpose of the communication.

In the need for communication and information management, the intranet organization is then packaged in a portal. Kautsarina (2012, pp. 70) defines an internet portal as a web-based tool that allows users to create a dynamic site in their desired Internet activity and desired content on a single page. Furthermore, Kautsarina also stated that the Intranet Portal can assist employees in making better decisions based on information held, which is also a result of increased knowledge. Kautsarina added that the presence of an intranet portal has other advantages: helping to reduce costs, save time, increase collaboration, and increase productivity and effectiveness.

**Research Methodology**



This research uses post-positivist paradigm, where this paradigm according to Emzir, (2008: 9) is based on careful observation and objective reality measurement. Hennink et al (2011: 8) reveals that research with a qualitative approach is a study that allows a researcher to see a person's experience in more detail, using certain pre-designed research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, content analysis, observation, and history of life or biography. This research is descriptive, where Neuman (2000: 22) describes that descriptive research generally departs from a study that has been arranged or well-planned so that expectations can find a good and precise description of what he wants to look for. The definition of descriptive research is a detailed description of a phenomenon under study. Neuman further explained that descriptive research focuses on the question of "how" and "who" (how this phenomenon can occur? And who is involved in this phenomenon?).

Researcher use documentation studies and literature studies in the method of data retrieval. Documentation is one of the data collection techniques in which the researcher will focus on the documented data to try to gain insight on the phenomenon or subject under study. Meanwhile, Moleong (2001) describes that Documentation is a data collection technique by observing the symptoms or objects studied and researching documents that have long been used in research as a source of data because in many cases, the document as a source of data can be used to test and interpret. In this study, the observed documentation is the threads of discussion recorded in the free discussion on the portal kominfo. Due to the large number of threaded discussion entries in the free discussion portal kominfo, which is 726 threads, the researcher limits the number of entries studied further by only the entry in the period of 2018. Researcher review the discussion threads that have a large number of responses, assuming the number of responses and discussions which occurs on the thread, the possibility of grapevine occurs larger. Then study the literature by doing literature review which includes books, thesis, thesis, research results, journals, papers and other related sources that support.

## **Result**

From the results of data collection conducted, within a period of nearly 7 years of free discussion on the portal kominfo recorded there are 726 discussion threads. The first recorded thread of discussion was entitled discussion "Has been enacted Candidate of Kominfo 2012" on Wednesday, October 17, 2012 - 16:08. The thread of this discussion was made by an officer of Kominfo who served in the Legal Bureau which contained information about the rules related to duties and functions promulgated by the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights. There were 6 discussion responses on this thread.

The last discussed discussion was on the discussion thread "Cooperative News: Additional Important Info on Handling Cooperative Losses". The thread of this discussion discusses about the management of Kominfo employee cooperatives. There are 18



responses in this thread, where the last discussion response was made Wednesday, June 06, 2018 - 12:00, a few days before the break with Idul Fitri 2018.

The discussions that took place in the free discussion of the portal kominfo were discussions on human resources or human resources issues, internal communications policy issues, government issues, discussions on laws and regulations, data needed on job completion, discussion on hobbies & health, on internal and external events of kominfo, discussions on facilities & infrastructure, discussion on internet connection and portal management, correspondence and discussion on electronic presences. This is interesting, because on the issue of electronic presences has been made a special sub-forum. However, some communications officers continue to initiate new discussions & respond to electronic presences in free discussions. In the period of 2018, the new discussion thread recorded was 41 pieces. The total discussion of the 41 threads was 162 discussion responses, with the fewest responses being 0 or none responding to the new threads of 16 threads. The thread with the most responses is 1 thread with 21 responses. The next sequence is 1 thread with 18 responses. With the average discussion on threads in the period of 2018 is 3,951, the Researcher further reviewed two threads with the highest number of discussion responses.

Most threads with 21 responses with the title of the thread "Forum Interaktif Pimpinan Kominfo" made on Friday, 07 April 2017 at 01:04 and active until Thursday 08 February 2018 at 09:36. This thread is a thread created in 2017 and active until 2018. The discussion in this thread contains an invitation from the thread maker as part of the Forum Lintas Kominfo to participate in the forum. In this thread, besides the creator of the thread, there are 4 other people who are actively discussing. In this discussion the dominant uterus made a response of 15 responses.

The second thread with 18 responses with the headline "Berita Koperasi: Tambahan Info Penting Penanganan Kerugian Koperasi" made on the day of April 10, 2018 at 16:24 and active until Wednesday, June 06, 2018 at 12:00. Discussion in this thread contains the latest news delivery about the condition of problems that occurred in the Cooperative PNS Kominfo. In this thread, besides the creator of the thread, there are 7 other people who are actively discussing. In this discussion the dominant thread maker made a response of 7 responses. The discussion in this thread is followed not only by the level of staff, but also some officials at the middle level.

### **Discussion**

Based on the data obtained, the researcher found that grapevine occurred at a forum of discussion on the intranet portal of Kominfo, in post period 2018. It is indicated in the discussion thread titled "Berita Koperasi: Tambahan Info Penting Penanganan Kerugian Koperasi" made on day Sealasa10 April 2018 at 16:24. Grapevine happens because the initial builder of the discussion builds the initial discussion by directly entering a private or group conversation in a short message app. The message is not



known who created and addressed to whom, but called sensitive issues concerning the number and named some names of Kominfo employees. It meets the definition and characteristics of Grapevine as described by Davis, 1953; Lewis, 1980 also W.L. Davis & O'Connor, 1977 on the above theoretical studies.

Discussions that occur in the thread are diverse. One of the pros and cons that arose was the response of another employee who questioned the reason of the discussion maker about why he was posting a conversation from an unknown source application. The complainant states it is inappropriate to use the data to be distributed on official forums such as on the communications portal. The thread maker replied to the response with the saying that no other containers were available to reveal such sensitive matters. According to him in this free discussion is the most appropriate forum to open or reveal a data related to the growing issue of internal organization.

From that thread, the grapevine that occurs is categorized as grapevine with gossip patterns, according to the opinion of Hardjana (2016) based on Davis's research, that the gossip pattern of spreading the message is done by one person intended for all those around him. The messenger spreads into a star in the group and this pattern resembles a wheel pattern in a formal communication network. This can be seen from the number of posts that most are owned by the maker of threads and he is also the most active or dominant response to the discussion that occurred.

Another interesting finding is that there are 16 discussion threads created, but it does not trigger further discussion or get 0 responses. From the observation of the Researcher, the threads are actually quite interesting to be addressed further. Yet there are indeed some threads that relate to the theme of leadership policy even to the highest leaders of the organization, which appear to be unattractive or may lead to doubts by members of the organization to participate in the response. Then also the same topics or themes that are made repeatedly, in example one topic about Koperasi PNS Kominfo.

## **Conclusion**

From the results of the discussions conducted, the authors can conclude that there is grapevine that occurs in internal communications in the organization Kominfo through the utilization of information technology, namely on a free discussion forum on the portal kominfo. Basically, grapevine is a rumour, an insignificant or an unknown source. However, grapevine has two potentials, negative and also positive.

On the negative side, uncontrolled and protracted internal communications will certainly have an unfavourable impact on the performance of employees or members of the organization. Grapevine that continues to grow in time can also affect the trust of organization members to the leaders of the organization. Grapevine existing in the media of information technology will be longer circulating because the form of digital data that will continue to exist unless removed by the administrator.



On the plus side, the grapevine that develops in the free ports of this cominfo portal can be seen by all members of the organization. All All members of the organization can get up-to-date information about the internal state of their organization, even to the highest command. Members of the organization can comfortably express their expression of the policies or issues that are developing within the organization. Become a container of social criticism. On the other hand, organizational leaders can monitor and analyze the dynamics of internal communication that occurs in the organization. It is expected that leaders can use the data as a matter of consideration when it comes to making policies.

The input that Researcher can provide is for the manager of the communications portal to be able to conduct a comprehensive communication audit and details of the discussions that occurred in this forum. With a thorough communication audit as well as details, the organization can gain more insight and data that is rich in the dynamics of internal communications within its internal organization. Then also technical stuff like can give more specific statistic like, how many people have seen this thread. So it can also see what issues are seen or monitored progress by members of the organization even though they are not actively discussing.

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