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DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE DYNAMICS OF LAND ACQUISITION FOR THE KUNINGAN DAM NATIONAL STRATEGIC PROJECT, WEST JAVA

KOMUNIKASI PEMBANGUNAN DAN PERUBAHAN SOSIAL DALAM DINAMIKA PENGADAAN LAHAN UNTUK PROYEK STRATEGIS NASIONAL BENDUNGAN KUNINGAN, JAWA BARAT

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ABSTRACT

The communication process between the government and the community in the land acquisition for the Kuningan Dam national strategic project resulted in conflict and injustice, which in turn led to the failure of the development of the welfare of affected communities. This research project aims to examine the development communication and social change in communities affected by the Kuningan Dam project in Kuningan Regency, with a particular focus on the concept of Communication for Development and Social Change as proposed by Wilkins and Mody. This research employs a qualitative methodology with a case study approach, utilising data collection techniques such as interviews, observation, and

documentation in affected villages in Kuningan Regency. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling, with data verified through triangulation. In the aftermath of the development project, the predominantly agricultural communities were compelled to transition to alternative livelihoods due to the loss of cultivable land. However, many encountered difficulties in adapting, resulting in economic setbacks and a deceleration in their socio-economic adaptation process. This research contributes to emphasising the importance of fair, transparent and inclusive development communication in national strategic projects in Indonesia. It does so by highlighting the role of communication in exacerbating social inequalities, compensation inequalities and government unpreparedness in supporting the socio-economic transition of affected communities. The findings of this research demonstrate that the construction of the Kuningan Dam gave rise to social tensions as a consequence of the following factors: the acquisition of land on an unfair basis; the lack of effective communication between the government and the community; the unequal distribution of compensation; and the socio-economic impacts, which served to exacerbate the difficulties faced by affected communities, particularly in relation to changes in their livelihoods.

Keywords: *Development Communication; Land Acquisition; National Strategic Project; Social Change; Social Injustice*

ABSTRAK

Proses komunikasi antara pemerintah dan masyarakat dalam pembebasan lahan proyek strategis nasional Bendungan Kuningan menyebabkan konflik dan ketidakadilan, serta berdampak pada kegagalan pembangunan kesejahteraan masyarakat terdampak. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji komunikasi pembangunan dan perubahan sosial pada masyarakat terdampak proyek Bendungan Kuningan di Kabupaten Kuningan, menggunakan konsep Communication for Development and Social Change dari Wilkins dan Mody. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus, mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi di Desa yang terdampak di Kabupaten Kuningan, dengan teknik purposive dan snowball dalam pemilihan informan serta analisis data berbasis triangulasi dan member checking. Pascapembangunan, masyarakat yang sebagian besar berprofesi sebagai petani terpaksa beralih profesi akibat hilangnya lahan garapan, namun banyak yang kesulitan menyesuaikan diri dan menghadapi kerugian ekonomi, sehingga memperlambat proses adaptasi sosial-ekonomi mereka. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada penekanan pentingnya komunikasi pembangunan yang adil, transparan, dan inklusif dalam proyek strategis nasional di Indonesia, dengan menyoroti peran komunikasi dalam memperburuk kesenjangan sosial, ketidaksetaraan kompensasi, dan ketidaksiapan pemerintah dalam mendukung transisi sosial-ekonomi masyarakat terdampak. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembangunan Bendungan Kuningan menciptakan ketegangan sosial akibat pembebasan lahan yang tidak adil, komunikasi buruk antara pemerintah dan masyarakat, ketidaksetaraan kompensasi, serta dampak sosial-ekonomi yang memperburuk kondisi masyarakat terdampak, terutama dalam hal perubahan mata pencaharian.

Kata Kunci: Ketidakadilan Sosial; Komunikasi Pembangunan; Pembebasan Lahan; Perubahan Sosial; Proyek Strategis Nasional.

1. Introduction

The communication process between the government and the community in the land acquisition process is often the source of conflict, with social, economic, political, and environmental implications. (Kombe 2010), (Moreda 2017), (Rao, Hutchison, and Tiwari 2020), (Kebede, Emanna, and Tesfay 2022), (Duong, Samsura, and van der Krabben 2023). It is not uncommon for land to be acquired in Indonesia, (Obidzinski et al. 2013), (Meckelburg and Wardana 2024) as evidenced by the ongoing Kuningan Dam national strategic project in Kuningan Regency.. Nevertheless, inadequate and ineffective communication between the government, communities, and all parties involved in the land acquisition process for national strategic projects has resulted in the failure of local welfare development (Kombe 2010) and, on occasion, even injustice (Holtslag-Broekhof et al. 2016).

The researchers have conducted an investigation into a number of national strategy projects, which are distributed across a range of locations in Indonesia. A total of 245 National Strategic Projects have been identified, along with two Programmes, (Committee For Acceleration of Priority Infratructure 2024b) of which 56 are classified as dam projects (Committee For Acceleration of Priority Infratructure 2024a). A number of researchers have conducted studies on national strategic projects related to the dam project.

The research conducted by Arifin, Purwana, and Dananjaya (2023), Hermawan, Solikin, and Jumadi (2024) on the Pidekso Dam is a notable example of the type of research being carried out in this field. Study of Tugu Dam was conducted by A P L and Nugraheni (2022), Ansori and Anwar (2022), Prasetyo and Winarno (2023). The research on Teritip Dam was conducted by Kurniawan, Wiguna, and Hartanto (2020). The research on the Keureuto Dam was conducted by Hakim et al. (2023), Variadi et al. (2024). The research on the Lolak, Binang Bano, Rotiklod, and Kuwil Kawangkoan Dams was conducted by Aribowo et al. (2023). The research on Raknamo Dam was conducted by Nait et al. (2022a) and Nait et al. (2022b). The research on the Tanju Dam was conducted by Dinata, Indrawan, and Idrus (2021). The research on the Logung Dam was conducted by Ananda, Budiarto, and Prabowo (2022). The research on the Rukoh Dam was conducted by Harwinda, Wilopo, and Indrawan (2022) (2023), Akbar, Oktaviani, and Mubarak (2024), Irawati, Mubarak, and Fachrurrazi (2024), Darma, Munirwansyah, and Sungkar (2024). The research project concerning the Ciawi and Sukamahi Dams was conducted by Asrafi, Anggraheni, and Sutjiningsih (2019) and Dewi et al. (2022). The research on the Leuwikeris Dam was conducted by Nugraha et al. (2023). The studies on national strategic projects that have been conducted thus far have not addressed the issue of development communication and social change in relation to the Kuningan Dam in Kuningan Regency.

The objective of this article is to provide a complementary perspective on the

role of dams in Indonesia as part of the country's national strategic development projects. This research project focuses on aspects of development communication and social change in communities that have been affected by the Kuningan Dam project. In order to achieve this objective, this research poses the following question. Firstly, this study aims to investigate the impact of development communication on communities affected by the Kuningan Dam national strategic project. Secondly, what are the social changes that occur in the affected communities following the construction of the Kuningan Dam project?

This research employs the concept of communication for development and social change, as outlined by Wilkins and Mody (2001), to address the aforementioned research questions. Wilkins and Mody posit that development is inherently political in nature, necessitating an acknowledgement of the inherent power dynamics at play. It is therefore essential to consider power dynamics in the context of development communication. Furthermore, Wilkins and Mody posit that discourse analysis is a crucial lens through which to assess communication about development. This encompasses an examination of the underlying assumptions that inform institutional texts, speeches, and practices pertaining to the nature of people, problems, and social change, and the manner in which these are addressed through strategic interventions.

This research is predicated on two fundamental arguments. Firstly, the Kuningan Dam project was constructed for the benefit of the local community. However, due to inadequate communication throughout the land acquisition process, the community failed to reap the anticipated benefits. Secondly, the construction of Kuningan Dam serves to provide irrigation facilities, but also gives rise to social changes within the community. The question that this research seeks to answer is how development communication and social change contribute to the dynamics of land acquisition for the Kuningan Dam national strategic project in Kuningan Regency, West Java?

2. Research Methodology

This research employs qualitative methods (Creswell 2017) in a case study approach. In order to gain insight into the communication process and the social changes occurring in the community as a result of the national strategic project land acquisition in Kuningan, West Java, a combination of methods was employed, including interviews, observations and the analysis of relevant documentation. The research was conducted at locations affected by the dam, specifically Sukarapi Village, Kawungsari Village, and Randusari Village, Cibeureum Subdistrict, Kuningan Regency.

The primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews conducted with key informants situated within the first ring of the dam construction site. The selection of informants was conducted using a purposive technique. The process of determining

informants employs a snowball technique based on the accomplishment of specific data-related goals. The validity of the research data was established through the implementation of triangulation and member checking techniques. The process of data analysis commenced with the collection of the raw data. The raw data was then collated and prepared for analysis. All field notes were read and subjected to a comprehensive review. The raw data was subjected to coding based on ethical and emic concepts, and subsequently organised according to the identified themes. The categorisation of the data is conducted with the objective of identifying potential connections. Themes were then interpreted in order to generate propositions that could explain the observed symptoms.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Chronology of Kuningan Dam Land Acquisition

During the tenure of President Joko Widodo, the Kuningan Dam was designated as one of the national strategic projects. Nevertheless, it has been revealed that the construction of this dam has been in the pipeline since 1984, during the tenure of President Suharto. In its inaugural iteration, the dam was designated Cileuweung Dam, a nomenclature derived from its geographical position within Cileuweung, a sub-village of Randusari Village. The dam was renamed Kuningan Dam due to the objections raised by neighbouring villagers. Local residents have indicated that the name Cileuweung is of primordial significance and does not apply to other affected villages. The dam was subsequently renamed Kuningan Dam.

Following its designation as a national strategic project, the construction of the Kuningan Dam was expedited in accordance with the accelerated economic development initiatives outlined in the MP3EI (Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia) framework during the tenure of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The dam is intended to serve as one of the infrastructure components that will facilitate the water requirements delineated in the blueprint. The Kuningan Dam has been constructed with the objective of irrigating an area of 3,000 hectares. This area has been divided into two sections: one comprising 1,000 hectares within Kuningan regency and the other comprising 2,000 hectares within Brebes regency. Furthermore, the dam serves as a flood control project, capable of reducing flood discharge by 429.24 m^3/second (67.83%). Additionally, it fulfils the raw water needs of 300 litres per second and generates energy through a hydropower plant with a capacity of 500 kW.

In accordance with the provisions set forth in Decree of the Regent of Kuningan Number 593/Kpts. 244-Tapem/2019 issued on 29 April 2019 regarding the Determination of the Location of the Kuningan Dam Construction, the dam is built on an area of 302.26 hectares (Bupati Kuningan 2019). The total area is comprised of two distinct types of land ownership: 176.76 hectares of

community-owned land and 125.5 hectares of forest area. The construction site for the dam is situated on the Cikaro river, specifically within Randusari Village. Furthermore, the total storage volume of the dam is estimated to reach approximately 25,955 million m^3.

Following its inauguration, the Kuningan Dam resulted in the inundation of land in six villages: Randusari Village, Sukarapih Village, and Kawungsari Village, all situated within the Cibeureum District; as well as Simpayjaya Village, Tanjungkerta Village, and Cihanjaro Village, which are located within the Karangkancana District. The government has already compensated the affected communities for some of the submerged land that has been acquired. The form of compensation encompasses the replacement of rice fields, yards, and houses. Furthermore, the community was granted permission to occupy a designated residence, known as a ”Rusus”, for residential purposes.

As with other national strategic projects operating within the framework of capitalism, the construction of the Kuningan Dam is not exempt from the consequences of the social-ecological crisis that occurs around it. Since the commencement of construction in 2014, the Kuningan Dam has placed communities at risk of disaster, excluded them from their existing living spaces, and significantly altered the ecosystem landscape. In other words, the construction of the Kuningan Dam is oriented towards the advancement of capitalist interests, while the social-ecological sustainability of the surrounding area is compromised.

3.2. Development Communication and Land Acquisition Dynamics at Kuningan Dam

The news of the dam's construction has been a public knowledge since the presidency of Suharto, but it was finally realised in 2012. Local residents were invited to participate in a socialisation event, which was conducted by government officials. During the socialisation process, the communication between the government and residents exhibited a range of dynamic interactions. The process of land acquisition commenced in 2013 and was conducted in several stages. The timing of each stage is distinct, resulting in discrepancies in the compensation received. This has resulted in feelings of envy among residents, which they perceive as unjust. The process of acquiring the land in question proved to be quite arduous, resulting in a number of hurdles being encountered along each stage of the procedure. It is notable that the land acquisition of those residents who would be affected by the construction project was not fully completed at the commencement of the construction phase. Notwithstanding the aforementioned circumstances, construction has continued since 2014.

The requisite funds for the purchase of the land had not been fully disbursed by the time construction of the dam was completed. As a consequence of this situation, the local community organised a demonstration. It should be noted that the payment of

compensation is not made in a single lump sum, but rather in instalments and stages. The disbursement of funds for the acquisition of land has not been concluded until the year 2022. It is necessary for people to engage in repeated interactions with the government in order to obtain fulfillment of the promises that have been made. This has led to a state of poor communication between the government and the community.

The land designated for the construction of the Kuningan Dam was obtained gradually, over an extended period of time and through the navigation of significant challenges. This indicates that the government has provided financial compensation profit (*Ganti Untung*) to the affected community. The term ”Ganti Untung” is a significant component of this research in the field of development communication.

The term ”*ganti untung*” is a common expression used by both the government and the public. The utilisation of this particular terminology is indicative of the government's assertion to the local community, which is designed to convey the impression that the dam project will not have any adverse effects on them. Conversely, communities have employed this phrase as a means of demanding the fulfilment of promises regarding fair compensation for land acquisition.

The phrase "ganti untung" does not always prove advantageous for the individuals and communities impacted by the Kuningan Dam project. This is due to the fact that a considerable number of residents are discontented with the financial compensation offered for the acquisition of land. For instance, the residents of Randusari perceived the compensation to be inequitable, as the nominal price stipulated was less than that offered to the residents of Kawungsari, despite both groups having undergone land acquisition.

The root cause of this injustice can be attributed to a lack of effective communication between the affected villagers and the government. It should be noted that not all residents affected by the situation were involved in the process of negotiating the compensation price. The price determination meeting was convened unilaterally, thereby circumventing the necessity for a consensus process which would have otherwise required the input of all residents. Once the final price has been determined, other villagers who did not participate in the deliberations are unable to influence the outcome. Consequently, the lack of transparency in the land acquisition process has been a significant source of contention, with many residents expressing dissatisfaction with the outcomes.

In interviews, informants indicated that the compensation price for displaced houses and land had increased significantly in comparison to the pre-dam project price. Prior to the land acquisition in 2012, the price of paddy land in Randusari and its surrounding areas ranged from 3 million to 10 million rupiah per hundred bata. The size of 1 bata represents an area of 14 m2. The compensation received by the Randusari community

following the acquisition of their land in 2014 was approximately 84 million rupiah per 100 bata. Conversely, the compensation amount received by the residents of Kawungsari upon their release was 100 million rupiah per 100 bata. This situation demonstrates a clear injustice to all residents affected by the construction of the dam. It was asserted by residents that the Randusari case represented an inaugural instance of experimental land acquisition. One community leader posited that the relatively low compensation paid to Randusari residents was a consequence of their lack of resistance from the outset, which diminished their bargaining power in price negotiations.

The government's strategy for communicating development initiatives to the community appears to be ineffective, given the prevalence of diverse forms of unrest among residents. The construction of dams is intended to have a beneficial impact on national development and to improve the lives of those who live in the surrounding area. However, the reality is that such projects often have a detrimental effect on the local community. Effective communication between the government and the local population is crucial for the successful implementation of dam construction projects. It can facilitate the attainment of several key objectives, including the enhancement of local prosperity, the guarantee of legal redress, and the prevention of any adverse impacts. When these conditions are met, the construction of dams can yield tangible benefits for all stakeholders.

3.3. Social Changes in the Community Post Construction of the Kuningan Dam

It is a irony that those who are engaged in agricultural activities as a source of income are compelled to alter their livelihoods in a manner that is not directly related to farming. The majority of individuals adversely impacted by the construction of the dam are farmers. The inhabitants of this region are accustomed to deriving income from a variety of sources, including the exploitation of forest resources, agricultural production in fields, and rice paddies. The location where they derive their livelihood has been inundated, rendering it unfeasible for them to generate an income. The residents were compelled to alter their occupational roles in order to meet their daily requirements. The consequence of the construction of the Kuningan dam was the onset of social change within the local community.

For decades, the local community has been reliant on the natural environment, which is now the site of a dam. The individuals in question are experiencing difficulties in adapting to a new way of life. The relocation to a new location did not, in and of itself, result in an immediate restoration of the socio-economic conditions of the relocated population.

The restoration of the economic condition of the community is to regain land as cultivated land. Nevertheless, some of the evicted communities were unable to repurchase new land with the compensation funds they had received. The underlying

causes of this phenomenon can be attributed to the consumptive pattern of the community and the precipitous rise in land prices in the vicinity of the dam. If there is land that is cheaper than the compensation money obtained, it is usually not as fertile as what they used to have. Furthermore, in instances where fertile and inexpensive land is available, it is often situated at a considerable distance from the communities that rely on it, rendering agricultural activities impractical.

The community seems to be waiting to get new land that aligns with their desired specifications. The longer people wait, the longer they are without income. The funds provided for land acquisition compensation are allocated for the fulfilment of daily necessities. Without realising it, the land acquisition compensation money was spent on consumptive needs. Therefore, by the time they find suitable new land, the capital that would have been allocated to the purchase of the new land is instead spent on consumption. Consequently, the acquisition of new land was not pursued, resulting in a loss of income.

In response to the challenges posed by a changing socio-economic landscape, individuals are compelled to adapt their professional trajectories. This phenomenon is evidenced by the transition of farmers into traders, rice farmers into forest farmers, farmers into breeders, farmers into builders, and farmers into factory labourers. The transitionary process was a challenging one for the community to navigate. The challenge they encounter is the alteration in the structure and orientation of their operational approach. It is essential that they engage in the acquisition of new skills prior to the attainment of the desired outcomes. For younger individuals, this transition may not present a significant challenge; however, for those who are more advanced in age, it can be a considerably more arduous undertaking. The process was not entirely devoid of complications. It is only through experiencing failure and loss that individuals can eventually achieve results and success. Nevertheless, on occasion, the financial compensation provided for the loss of land and other assets is insufficient to offset the resulting economic damage, leaving many communities in a state of severe distress and unable to recover. Nevertheless, this represents a process of community adaptation, enabling them to survive amidst the social changes they face.

3.4. Discussion

The Kuningan Dam, which is currently designated as a national strategic project under the administration of President Joko Widodo, was first conceptualised in 1984 during the tenure of President Suharto. The project was expedited during the tenure of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as part of the MP3EI initiative, which aimed to bolster the economy through infrastructure development. The dam has been constructed with the objective of irrigating 3,000 hectares of land, controlling flooding, providing raw water, and generating electricity. The project entails the acquisition of 302.26 hectares of land encompassing six villages situated within two sub-districts. In

order to mitigate the adverse impacts on the affected communities, the project will provide compensation in the form of land replacement and houses, as well as temporary housing. The construction of the Kuningan Dam has resulted in a socio-ecological crisis due to its adverse effects on the local ecosystem and its disregard for the social sustainability of the surrounding communities. This phenomenon has been observed in numerous developing countries, including Ethiopia (Moreda 2017) and Vietnam (Duong, Samsura, and van der Krabben 2023). The project may compromise the long-term ecological sustainability of the area and result in the separation of communities from their traditional living spaces. This could have a detrimental impact on social and environmental well-being in the longer term. (Kebede, Emanna, and Tesfay 2022).

The construction of the Kuningan Dam, which commenced in 2012, has resulted in the emergence of new communication dynamics between the government and local residents, particularly with regard to the acquisition of land. The land acquisition process commenced in 2013 and proceeded through a series of stages that lacked uniformity, resulting in feelings of discontent and envy among residents. The compensation payments were made in stages and were not completed until 2022. This situation gave rise to protests from members of the local community. The term "ganti untung," which was employed to denote compensation, became emblematic of discontent, as individuals perceived that they were not being recompensed equitably. This is evidenced by the disparate levels of compensation received by villagers such as Randusari and Kawungsari, despite both being impacted by the same project. The injustice was further compounded by the one-sided price deliberation process, which excluded some residents. The lack of transparent and effective communication between the government and the people resulted in a pervasive sense of discontent. Despite the anticipated positive outcomes of the dam project, the prevailing issues of inadequate communication and inequitable land acquisition have collectively resulted in a sentiment of marginalisation among the majority of local communities. For this development to be truly beneficial, it is essential that the government implement effective communication strategies and guarantee a fair and transparent process for all stakeholders. As Wilkins and Mody (2001) observe, the development of any political activity must be informed by an awareness of the power dimension. In this case, the presence of the government as the power holder is so important in the communication of development in the Kuningan Dam project.

The construction of the Kuningan Dam has resulted in notable socio-economic transformations within the local community, specifically affecting those dependent on agricultural land, fields, and forests. These locations are now submerged, forcing the inhabitants to seek alternative sources of income. The majority of residents encounter

significant challenges in utilizing the compensation funds to purchase new land, as these funds are often allocated towards meeting their immediate consumption needs. Conversely, the land that is available is more costly or of a lesser quality, while the more fertile land is situated at a considerable distance from the residences of the people who work it. Consequently, they are compelled to pursue alternative careers, such as that of a trader, livestock farmer, or labourer, a transition which is often fraught with challenges. The adaptation of individuals to new skills represents a significant challenge for the older generation. A considerable number of individuals experienced failures and losses prior to ultimately acquiring the capacity to successfully navigate the challenges they faced. It is regrettable that these losses frequently result in the forfeiture of anticipated compensation funds, which would otherwise have been utilized for the purchase of new land. This ultimately leads to a significant deterioration in economic standing. This finding is consistent with the research of Cao, Wang, and Zang (2024), who demonstrated that land relocation had a considerable negative impact on the community. The process of adaptation is inherently gradual, and while not all communities are able to successfully adapt, it represents a vital mechanism for communities to survive and thrive in the face of significant social change.

The construction of the Kuningan Dam exemplifies the significance of efficacious development communication in the management of socio-economic and ecological change, and the avoidance of adverse impacts on affected communities. Despite the project's objective of enhancing infrastructure and bolstering the economy, inadequate communication between the government and the community resulted in pervasive discontent, particularly with regard to the land acquisition process and perceived inequitable compensation. The lack of transparency in the process of price discussions and the discrepancies in compensation between residents serve to exacerbate the situation, foster mistrust, and heighten social tensions. This highlights the necessity to consider the role of power dynamics in addition to the development of physical infrastructure, as proposed by Wilkins and Mody (2001). It is imperative that transparent, inclusive, and fair communication is employed to guarantee social and ecological sustainability, and to avert social-ecological crises that have the potential to devastate the lives of neighbouring communities. It is therefore evident that the success of this project is contingent upon the active involvement of the government in listening to and fulfilling the needs and rights of the affected communities.

The implications of this study demonstrate that ineffective communication strategies for development projects can result in prolonged dissatisfaction and mistrust, which may ultimately impede the achievement of long-term project goals. In the case of the Kuningan Dam, the lack of clarity surrounding the land acquisition process and the unequal

distribution of compensation between residents resulted in social tensions and ultimately led to a social-ecological crisis. These implications underscore the imperative for the government to enhance communication procedures, guarantee active community involvement at each stage of the decision-making process, and uphold the principle of fairness in compensation. Furthermore, the findings of this study corroborate the assertion that the success of a development project is not solely contingent upon tangible or infrastructural outcomes. Instead, it is also contingent upon the capacity to manage open and inclusive social relations. It is therefore incumbent upon the government to accord due attention to the matter of power and to ensure the protection of the rights of affected communities. This is the only way to ensure that adverse social-ecological impacts are kept to a minimum.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

4.1. Conclusion

The research concludes that, despite the construction of the Kuningan Dam being intended to provide economic and infrastructural support to the nation, the process of land acquisition was perceived as unfair by the local population, resulting in the emergence of social tensions. Inadequate communication between the government and communities affected by dam projects has been identified as a contributing factor to misunderstandings between residents, internal conflicts, and a negative impression of the government. The existence of disparate compensation arrangements between affected villages, including discrepancies in the compensation amounts distributed to each village, serves to exacerbate community dissatisfaction. The government's use of the phrase ”ganti untung” to project a positive image has, in fact, become a symbol of discontent for the aggrieved community. Furthermore, the social consequences of this transition, such as the alteration of the livelihoods of farmers who are compelled to alter their professions, particularly affecting the older generation, demonstrate the government's lack of preparedness in providing support for the socio-economic transition. These findings diverge from those of other studies that concentrate more on the physical and economic aspects of projects. Our findings thus highlight the necessity of giving due consideration to communication in order to achieve social justice in large development projects in Indonesia.

4.2. Suggestion

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of development communication by emphasising the importance of fair and inclusive communication in the context of the development of other national strategic projects in Indonesia. This research contributes to the field of development communication theory by elucidating the impact of communication on the exacerbation of social inequality, particularly in the context of land acquisition and compensation disparities between affected villages. The government's utilisation of the phrase ”ganti

untung" to cultivate a favourable impression has become a symbol of discontent, demonstrating that communication that is oblivious to social realities can be a conduit for injustice. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that the government's lack of preparedness in providing support for the socio-economic transition, particularly for individuals who have lost their livelihoods, highlights the significance of communication in facilitating sustainable social change. The findings, therefore, provide a new perspective on development communication, emphasising the necessity for a more equitable, transparent, and participatory communication design that takes into account the socio-economic conditions of the affected communities.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, which should be taken into account when considering further research by other researchers. Firstly, this research is limited in its scope to an examination of the communication and social change aspects of the Kuningan Dam construction project. Consequently, it does not give due attention to other factors that also play a significant role in the success or failure of the construction of other dams in national strategic projects in Indonesia. Secondly, it should be noted that the findings of this study are limited to the Kuningan Dam project, and may not be fully representative of conditions at other dam construction sites. It is therefore not possible to generalise the results of this study to all dam projects in Indonesia. Thirdly, the methodology employed, namely a qualitative case study approach reliant on interviews and observations, is insufficient for fully describing the objective conditions related to other impacts of the project. Furthermore, there has been no comprehensive examination of the wider government policies pertaining to land acquisition management.

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