

Civil society's communicative agency in strengthening community participation for environmental care in Cisayong

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ABSTRACT

Background: The value of environmental awareness in rural communities has increased in recent years, particularly in areas where traditional customs intersect with contemporary ecological concerns. It is evident in the Indonesian village of Cisayong, located in southern West Java. **Purpose:** This article employed Giddens' framework to show how civil society promoted environmental awareness in the village. **Methods:** This research was conducted through observation, FGDs, and in-depth interviews with local leaders in Cisayong Village. **Results:** The research indicated that civil society emerges from community, religious, and youth leaders who collectively embrace the environment. Moreover, each of these civil societies has effectively communicated messages about environmental awareness and garnered recognition from the village government for their efforts. **Conclusion:** The village community exhibits distinctive socio-cultural and economic characteristics that limit its ability to address environmental challenges effectively. However, through the initiative of local leaders, these limitations have become opportunities for developing community-based environmental awareness rooted in religion and culture. **Implication:** This finding suggested the empowerment of local actors as agents of change to build environmentally conscious social structures. Strengthening these initiatives can improve long-term environmental resilience in similar rural contexts.

Keywords: Civil society; environmental awareness; agency; structure; environmental communication

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INTRODUCTION

The environment and natural resources are typically of great importance to developing countries. Natural resources and the environment of developing countries have, in turn, helped industrialized countries (Smith et al., 2003; Sunderlin et al., 2005). Unfortunately, numerous statistics have demonstrated that the environment and natural resources are frequently neglected. Government regulations are not the only reason for this; the community also has a comparatively low level of awareness, necessitating active efforts to promote environmental empowerment.

The importance of civil society or activists in empowering communities and raising environmental consciousness has been the subject of numerous studies. According to a study by Kamil et al. (2021), civil society can maintain the role of natural resources in many locations in Indonesia. This study examines how Indonesian environmental activists, part of civil society, communicate about conservation areas. They oppose government plans to convert natural resources into tourism parks. The government-designed decision-making process involving activists demonstrates that the community's participatory value is very high. In addition to value, this signals that stakeholders, activists, and non-governmental actors must participate in discussions to resolve issues. In the context of this research, particularly in Indonesia, the role of civil society at the local level is often held by a small number

of individuals or community leaders. This is because they are considered the best informed about the culture and environmental conditions within their communities.

Numerous studies have shown that understanding the local community context is essential for successful collaboration with the government (Rusnali et al., 2024). Several studies indicate that environmental awareness at lower levels, such as villages, has been increasingly promoted in recent years (Du et al., 2018; Norouzi & Yadollahi, 2022), particularly in areas where environmental conditions conflict with local traditions (Ogisi & Okumagba, 2022).

Cisayong is one of 13 villages in the Cisayong District, Tasikmalaya Regency, which is about 200 km from the capital of the West Java province (Pemerintah Desa Cisayong, 2022: 4). Geographically, Cisayong Village stretches 1.5 km from north to south and 2 km from east to west of the district, with a total area of 243.05 Ha. Meanwhile, topographically, the village area is at an altitude of between 600-900 meters above sea level, where most of the natural landscape of Cisayong Village is dominated by flat to sloping surfaces (Pemerintah Desa Cisayong, 2022: 5). In terms of socioeconomic aspects, most of the livelihoods of the Cisayong Village population are farmers with relatively low incomes so generally they are still classified as a society that is still not prosperous (Pemerintah Desa Cisayong, 2022: 8).

The diverse topography of Cisayong Village ranges from lowlands and hills to highlands exceeding 900 meters above sea level. It has

led to the adoption of various adaptive farming practices among the Cisayong community, depending on the surrounding environmental conditions. Many farmers use rainwater for rice-field irrigation, whereas others rely on waterways or rivers as alternative sources, especially during the dry season. Unfortunately, local rivers are often clogged with both natural and domestic waste, making it difficult to control the water flow. According to a report from the Tasikmalaya Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD), the Cisayong area is prone to flooding and landslides. Over the past year, there have been at least six landslides and three floods, resulting in total losses of approximately IDR 200 million, a significant amount at the sub-district level. The local community's habit of disposing of household waste into waterways further exacerbates this condition. Unsurprisingly, when the rainy season arrives, many farmers in Cisayong experience crop failures due to the community's limited awareness of environmental protection. This situation shows that the problems in Cisayong are caused not only by natural factors but also by the habits of the local community, who still treat rivers as giant trash cans. This highlights the need for a civil society that can act as a catalyst to encourage the community to care for nature.

Civil society has long been an essential part of these processes, and they are supported by a variety of local government initiatives (Atkinson & Kim, 2015; Moser, 2015). They serve as a link between community practice and

scientific understanding within the community. They can enhance environmental literacy and enable rural people to take an active role in conservation efforts by enlisting local resources and promoting participatory methods of environmental communication. According to Abdulla & Serikbayeva (2025), civil society contributes to improved environmental performance among enterprises. It also entails fostering a culture of environmental management and sustainable behavior through collaborative efforts to raise public awareness of environmental issues.

Effective communication is essential for raising environmental awareness (Carbonell-Alcocer et al., 2025; Rotar, 2024; Tang & Azman, 2024), particularly among rural traditional communities (Burgess et al., 1998). In addition to recognizing the importance of communication strategies tailored to local conditions and cultural values, integrating traditional knowledge with modern discoveries can help advance a more comprehensive understanding of environmental challenges (Atkinson & Kim, 2015; Moser, 2015). It might also motivate them to actively participate in forums to voice their concerns and encourage sustainable practices.

The government has acted as a policymaker to encourage cooperation with civil society, private institutions, community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious leaders, thereby allowing awareness to develop naturally (Gómez, 2018; Van Wessel et al., 2020; Waddell, 2017). Given the diversity of

cultures and regional values within Indonesian society, it is reasonable to involve civil society, as Giddens (1984) explains, which functions as an agency. Within a certain framework, which includes institutions, laws, and social norms that govern behavior, they are described as the capacity of multiple individuals to act and make decisions independently.

The concept of environmental communication encompasses communication, one of the most important aspects of the environmental awareness process. Environmental communication intersects with numerous subfields within communication studies, including risk communication, journalism studies, sociology, social movements, and public health. For instance, scholars examined how environmental activist organizations and the news media interacted in Europe in the early 1990s (Anderson, 1997; Burgess et al., 1998).

In environmental communication, there are at least three well-known models: the deficit, dialogic, and participatory models (Bucchi, 2008). According to Metcalfe and Riedlinger (2019), this model aims to address problems and critically reflect on information. The debut of the participatory model signifies a shift from the configuration of the public and experts in the first two models to one in which citizens, civil society, and the government can establish themselves as legitimate sources of information. These models collectively chart the primary methods for examining how knowledge is communicated to society.

Accordingly, research on environmental communication is frequently included in environmental education, which is further divided into three viewpoints: behavioral, social, and personal changes (Chaichana et al., 2019). First, to encourage environmentally conscious conduct, the behavioral change approach emphasizes the development of scientific thinking. Second, social change emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills to alter social structures and values, thereby promoting sustainability and environmental justice. Lastly, the individual change viewpoint highlights the intimate relationship between ecological and individual awareness.

This suggests that a variety of cultural techniques are required in the environmental communication process, including local wisdom. According to various studies, local wisdom is knowledge accumulated by local or indigenous people over many generations of living in a given place and refined by each generation to guide interactions with their environment. The significance of environmental communication in relation to local wisdom has been examined in several studies, particularly with respect to indigenous cultures' forest and ecological conservation methods. Numerous studies have shown the need for communication based on local wisdom in forest conservation for environmental sustainability (Bakti et al., 2023; Yasir et al., 2021)

Another study on the relationship between environmental communication and local wisdom is Yasir et al. (2021), which

found that environmental communication related to forest conservation was carried out by traditional leaders using the term Rimbo Larangan (forbidden forest). In practice, this kind of environmental communication pattern is even more potent than formal government institutions. In addition, the community seeks to preserve customary values integral to protecting its natural environment. Through traditional and religious leaders, the community is invited to participate in improving communication, maintenance, regulation-making, and forest management for conservation areas, together with the indigenous community. On a larger scale, however, another study compared how various public, private, and volunteer representatives in two European cities, Eindhoven, Netherlands, and Nottingham, England, reacted to the difficulty of conducting successful environmental communication with the public regarding sustainability issues (Burgess et al., 1998).

Furthermore, Hansen surveys environmental communication research over the past four decades. He describes major trends and approaches in the field that examine the role of media and communication processes in the public and political definition, elaboration, and contestation of environmental issues and problems. He outlines the existing research into two categories. First, there is a need to reconnect the three main areas of traditional communication research on media and environmental issues: (1) the production/construction of media and public communication messages, (2) the content/

messages of media communication, and (3) the impact of media and public communication on public/political understanding and action in relation to the environment. Second, there is a need for media and communication research on environmental issues/controversies to reconnect with traditional sociological concerns about power and inequality in the public spaces. In particular, this involves showing how economic, political, and cultural forces significantly affect the ability to participate in and influence the nature of ‘mediated’ public communication about the environment.

From a broader social science standpoint, community involvement that is supported by these actors is an illustration of what Giddens called “structuration”, which is the ability of several people to act and make choices on their own. This study examines how civil society in the Cisayong Village area can leverage communication to increase environmental awareness. To understand the interdependent relationship between structure and agency that shapes both individual and collective decisions, Giddens’ structuration theory is highly relevant. Structuration theory helps explain how civil society operates as an agent (Abdelnour et al., 2017; Canary & Tarin, 2017), both individually and institutionally, by highlighting the role of human agency in institutional dynamics (Turner et al., 2019).

Anthony Giddens developed the theory of structuration, which centers on two primary concepts: agency and structure. In this theoretical framework, agency is defined as the

capacity of individuals to act independently and make decisions. In contrast, structure is defined as the institutions, laws, and social norms that govern and guide conduct (Giddens, 1984). According to this theory, social structure is both a medium and a product of social practice (Anam, 2025; Englund et al., 2020), meaning that while it influences individual behavior, people can also use their behavior to alter and rebuild the structure. The duality of structure is the name given to this occurrence. According to Giddens, people actively contribute to and shape the structure around them rather than passively accepting social pressure. Nevertheless, the motivations and values of people will significantly affect those with the power to change this social structure.

This article examines how these local figures, as agents, support environmental communication, thereby promoting community empowerment and local engagement concerning environmental sustainability in Cisayong Village, and how they regulate environmental awareness behavior, using Giddens' framework. These civil societies become active agents that can encourage and drive behavioral change, particularly with respect to environmental awareness.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted through observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and in-depth interviews with community leaders in Cisayong Village. Cisayong Village

was selected as the research site because it represents a rural community that requires strong social awareness of environmental issues. The informants included religious and youth leaders, as well as several village officials who were actively involved in environmental activities at the community level or beyond.

With the aim of obtaining an overview of the environmental communication patterns that have been implemented so far, observations were conducted in parallel from May to June 2024. In addition, to obtain more in-depth information, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were also conducted, involving seventeen participants from various backgrounds. This data collection model was designed to obtain information about the strategies, efforts, and obstacles experienced by the community in general, and the interviewees in particular. This combination was able to produce comprehensive data in terms of recording social dynamics and communication strategies at the communication level. Through this approach, the study successfully described how environmental communication is practised in daily life, while also influencing public awareness and participation in environmental management.

The interview process was conducted using the local language of Cisayong, namely Sundanese. This was done to obtain more specific, detailed, and contextual information. The researcher realised that using everyday language was able to elicit more information. It should be noted that the researcher is a native

speaker of the local language used in Cisayong, so the translation in this article was done carefully.

To maintain the privacy and comfort of the informants, all informant identities were disguised as informant numbers, for example, informant 1, informant 2, etc. This is also done to comply with research ethics and ensure that ethical standards are maintained throughout the research process. All informants and participants involved in this research were explained the research objectives and voluntarily agreed to participate in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cisayong is a subdistrict with diverse geographical characteristics that significantly influence how the local community lives, particularly in relation to their environment. Furthermore, initial observations indicate that certain community groups have taken informal initiatives to support environmental management. The combination of ecological conditions and social structures makes Cisayong an ideal subject for research on how environmental communication is implemented at the grassroots level. Therefore, this study focuses on how civil society actors engage in collective activities to promote environmental communication and encourage community participation in environmental management.

Based on observations and interviews, several environmental issues in Cisayong

Village were associated with a lack of public awareness on how to respect their environment and surroundings. This can be seen from the following interview excerpt,

“So far, thank God our village has been relatively safe. There was once a severe landslide, but there were no fatalities. The disaster that had quite an impact was drought because most of the residents here are traditional farmers, so when a drought occurs, the impact is quite significant.” (Interview with Informant 1, June 8, 2024).

As stated above by the informant, an official of Cisayong Village, in the last decade, one of the natural disasters experienced by the villagers was a landslide. It did not cause any fatalities. However, they experienced more frequent disasters, including drought, which had implications for food insecurity. This was further exacerbated by the village’s location in a valley, which made access from outside relatively isolated and therefore challenging to manage. These less favorable natural conditions led farmers to rely more on rain-fed rice fields or on traditional irrigation systems using river water that flowed through their fields. Similar statements were also expressed by other informants,

“The drought was caused not only by the river water not being sufficient, but also by the river, which had changed and had a lot of waste. This made the water insufficient to irrigate the rice fields...” (Interview with Informant 2, June 8, 2024).

“I think people may simply accept the natural conditions as taken-for-granted, even though, in my opinion, this condition is also caused by their behavior, which

is less aware behavior of maintaining the environment. For example, throwing garbage into the river or letting the river flow to a less productive place, as a result, the river water, which is the main source for irrigating the rice fields, is reduced...” (Interview with Informant 4, June 22, 2024).

The above informants believe that the drought experienced by farmers in Cisayong Village is also caused by the community's lack of discipline in maintaining environmental balance. Thus, it is unsurprising that drought occurs every dry season.

These informants explained that the drought in Cisayong was not solely due to high rainfall but also was influenced by the availability of river water, as the irrigation system remained conventional. However, the irrigation methods used by residents are closely related to economic conditions. Residents with low incomes usually do not use modern agricultural technology due to budget constraints. This is in line with what several informants said, that when a disaster occurs, the community does not think about the causes and effects; most of them simply accept the situation. This mindset has been prevalent among the community for years; they believe that everything comes from God and must be accepted as it is.

“The majority of farmers still use traditional farming systems, such as rainwater harvesting or simple river irrigation. It is not yet possible to use the latest technology because it is not feasible given the unstable economic conditions...” (interview with informant 3, 15 June 2024)

Based on various interviews, it appears that

environmental issues have a significant impact on agricultural land and, of course, on the community's crop yields. However, in addition to these issues, other conditions also have an impact, such as the topography of Cisayong, which tends to be sloping and therefore difficult to develop. This affects the agricultural system used by the community, particularly in terms of irrigation. The economic conditions and environmental awareness of the community are also key factors in the use of this agricultural technology. In fact, environmental awareness is the most crucial factor, so there needs to be a specific strategy to increase residents' understanding, especially regarding good environmental management, particularly because their livelihoods are inextricably linked to the surrounding environment. Based on field observations, there are at least three groups that play a key role in environmental communication in Cisayong Subdistrict, namely community leaders, religious leaders, and youth leaders. Thus, civil society in this village is not only made up of academics, but also local leaders who have a direct influence on residents. The communication pattern itself tends to be one-way and not reciprocal, indicating that the environmental communication that occurs is part of environmental education (Chaichana et al, 2019).

The pattern of environmental communication that occurs among the Cisayong community is not only evident in how conversations take place, but also in the various community activities related to the environment,

such as community service. These activities are held regularly every month, involving the government, residents and other parties such as the army and police. Not to mention, nowadays social media has become widespread among the community, which has encouraged easier and faster environmental communication. These conditions support the community's involvement in environmental communication, so that their role in their social sphere is not only as spectators but also as agents of information. From this point, environmental communication gradually takes shape and begins to influence the community's awareness of the environment. In the context of Cisayong, which is prone to disasters, this two-way communication pattern is very much needed, especially based on Giddens' theory that each agent influences one another.

Therefore, civil society actors engaged in environmental communication in Cisayong Village can be categorized as community, religious, and youth leaders. In practice, these community leaders hold positions of social or cultural authority and are regarded as having authority to direct decisions in the community's socio-cultural life. In this village, this group is dominated by senior members who are perceived as having a deeper understanding of the community's history and traditions. Most people consider this group to be individuals who are valued, whose words and actions are often cited as references for ideal behavior.

The second group comes from religious figures. As with traditional communities in West

Java in general, religious figures play a strategic role in the daily lives of the community. This is especially true in Cisayong, where most residents are devout members of religious communities, making religion the main guide for social norms. These religious figures are usually people who have a higher level of religious knowledge than most people. These figures usually have a high level of religious education, both formal and non-formal. In religious activities, these figures are the main actors, giving them a special place in the Cisayong community, including in terms of influencing the behaviour of residents.

Furthermore, the youth leaders, who constitute the third group in this study, are mostly young people with a higher educational background than the general community, giving them a dominant social role. This figure is active in forums that are quite popular among the community, one of which is 'Karang Taruna'. 'Karang Taruna' is a forum that involves various groups, not only young people, but also the local government. This position makes the group's position strategic because it is able to open up wider access. Compared to the two previous groups, this youth group is usually more responsive and open to new things.

Efforts to encourage change through environmental communication in Cisayong are interesting to observe, especially because of the roles played by central figures. Each actor has a different level of closeness to the surrounding community. Figures who have social influence due to their life experiences usually come from community groups. Leaders who convey

messages through moral approaches and local values usually come from religious leaders. Meanwhile, leaders who usually use social media as their main communication channel come from youth leaders.

These findings are reinforced by the results of interviews, in which the actors admitted that their involvement in communication with the community was not only driven by their duties, but also by moral considerations within themselves. To provide a more significant picture, the following table shows the communication patterns of each actor and their impact on participation among the community.

From the perspective of Giddens' theory, these actors function as agents who not only follow existing rules but also help shape new structures. In this context, support from the village government provides a framework that strengthens civil society action.

"I am not the only one who is involved in providing understanding to them, but also many friends from various community groups, youth, and the government, who together raise awareness among them. For me, this is a humanitarian obligation; we must protect our own environment for our own interests and the interests of the people around us." (Interview with Informant 4, June 22, 2024).

This aligned with what other informants conveyed: the importance of caring for the environment was an effort to remind the community to minimize recurring risks. This is as seen in the following statement,

"I don't think that the people here understand. It's just that maybe their habits about how to use the surrounding nature in

an unbalanced way are still hard to get rid of... maybe it is a habit. Therefore, what I do is just remind them of the risks. I also invite young people to work together to find solutions to these kinds of problems." (Interview with Informant 3, June 15, 2024).

These two informants do not consider the community a party that lacks understanding of the importance of environmental protection; rather, they believe it simply needs greater awareness. To raise this awareness, one of the communicative efforts made, besides being involved in socialization, is that they also carry out practical actions, such as using various media to raise public awareness, as seen in the following interview excerpt,

"It is very unfortunate that there are still members of our community who throw garbage into the river, even though the river is a source of water for irrigating rice fields. My friends and I, the youth in each part of the village, usually put up warning signs to promote more disciplined waste disposal. The warning signs are usually installed at several points that are usually filled with garbage..." (Interview with Informant 5, June 29, 2024).

The statement above illustrates the actual actions of youth figures in conveying environmental messages through specific media. To be more coordinated, they also use WhatsApp groups in running the program, as stated below,

"Although the media we use are not very varied, recently, all activists and youth have a WhatsApp group to coordinate and exchange ideas and to update information, especially in emergencies." (Interview with Informant 5, June 29, 2024).

Table 1 Roles of Civil Society Actors in Environmental Communication and Their Relation to the Structure in Cisayong Village

Actors (Agency)	Forms of Communication/ Concrete Actions	Community Participation that Emerges	Relation to Structure (Giddens’s Theory)
Community leaders	Delivering messages through village meetings, informal discussions, and modeling pro-environment behaviors in daily life	Residents participate in clean-ups, reduce littering, and start paying attention to river conditions.	Their social influence drives behavioral change, while village regulations and programs provide structural support to sustain it.
Religious figures	Integrating environmental messages into religious sermons and activities, framing environmental care as a moral and spiritual duty.	Increased awareness that protecting nature is part of religious fulfillment, leading to higher compliance with environmental norms.	Religious values reinforce agency, while their actions reshape the meaning of environmental ethics within the existing cultural structure.
Youth leaders	Using social media (WhatsApp groups) to coordinate environmental actions, promote collective clean-ups, and document activities	Faster response to environmental issues, youth involvement increases, and information flows more efficiently.	Digital tools and village support act as structural enablers, while youth shape new communication norms and collective practices

Source: Research Results, 2025

In certain situations, as the informant above stated, they coordinate via WhatsApp to exchange information and ideas, including with government officials. These groups realize that what they are doing is an effort to support government programs, as described by the following informant,

“What we are doing is also part of an effort to support the village government program, including in the field of nature tourism in our area. We are involved in the management of several natural tourist attractions, such as waterfalls. This can

encourage other young people to seek more useful activities. In addition, when this area is visited by many tourists, they will take better care of their environment to keep it clean and sustainable.” (Interview with Informant 6, June 29, 2024).

The statement above illustrates the synergy between the government and civil society in the development of government programs. The informant’s statement, as a youth figure, also implies that such participation can direct young people toward positive activities that benefit all members of society. This demonstrates that

the existence of civil society is significant in efforts to raise public awareness. This was acknowledged by the officials, as shown in this statement,

“So far, the village government has made various positive efforts to build awareness, but it is still limited due to other development priorities. Therefore, the participation of community leaders is very helpful so that the entire community here can be better.” (Interview with Informant 1, June 8, 2024).

“For us, community leaders are the front line that helps all programs to be realized at the community level. Therefore, we always try to build communication with them, be it youth leaders, religious leaders, or other figures who are considered important in the community.” (Interview with Informant 2, June 8, 2024).

Some of the informants' statements above imply a proactive attitude toward building public awareness, thereby confirming their role as an agency engaged in environmental communication. As an agency, they also collaborate with village officials who represent the structure. Given their respective socio-cultural positions, they use these positions to direct community behavior toward environmental awareness. It is used to establish new norms and rules and expand operational practices. This exemplifies the central idea of structuration theory, namely, reflexive agents (Giddens, 1984). They are individuals who are aware of their capacity to create the social world actively. Their behaviors and attitudes demonstrate their ability to make independent choices regarding social issues and their awareness of the many repercussions of those

choices.

As an agency, as stated by Chaichana et al. (2019), these civil societies are part of environmental education that seeks change at the behavioral, social, and personal levels. At the behavioral level, they focus on developing community knowledge and behavior regarding the importance of maintaining a balanced environment. Meanwhile, at the social level, they strive to change the mindset of the community regarding resource use in the surrounding environment toward more sustainable values. At the individual level, they emphasize that natural and environmental conditions are closely related to individual awareness.

In structuration theory, the agency-structure relationship is absolute, with both elements operating in complementary and coexisting ways. If the agency refers to individuals or communities in society, the structure refers to the system that shapes behavior and is regulated by government policies, religious and cultural norms, and other norms. In the context of the Cisayong Village community, the majority of whom are Muslim, religion is one of the structures that form their behavior in everyday life. In addition to religion, their outlook on life is influenced by local culture, which shapes their behavior and perspectives on everything, including the environment. In the cases of Cisayong Village, religious and cultural values are often stronger than formal government regulations. These two elements are dominant factors in ensuring that people can participate in their initiatives, as evidenced by how religion

or culture relates to formal regulations. This is shown through the statement of one of the informants, who is a religious figure in Cisayong Village, below,

“Basically, people already understand that protecting the environment is part of what religion teaches. So, as someone considered a religious figure, I only convey and remind them. I often try to insert religious messages to emphasize so that they have a deeper sensitivity in preserving the environment.” (Interview with Informant 6, July 6, 2024).

The informant above believes that the community already knows the importance of protecting the environment, as taught by Islam, and that, as the majority, they already know this. He then reminded the community that preserving the environment is part of the basic teachings of Islam, while expecting greater sensitivity and discipline. This informant usually conveys this on formal and informal occasions in everyday interactions, as stated below,

“Specifically, I usually deliver it during Friday sermons or religious occasions held at the mosque, especially in drought situations that not only require patience but also an attitude to be more careful and sensitive to the various risks of environmental damage. In addition to formal religious activities, I also sometimes deliver it in informal talks, such as on other occasions...” (Interview with Informant 6, July 6, 2024).

Their social role as religious figures is reflected in their efforts to strengthen environmental awareness within the community by framing it as a religious teaching. Even these environmental communication messages are present as religious messages delivered in communal worship rituals, namely Friday

prayers, one of the most basic prayers in Islamic teachings. These environmental communication messages are associated with a careful attitude and responsibility to maintain the sustainability of nature.

This statement illustrates how the agency is also influenced by religion as a structure of behavioral norms. He recast environmental communication as religious communication, thereby implying that it is a structural product, not entirely centered on figures as agents but also on religious values as a structure that shapes behavior. In addition, informants who are also community leaders demonstrate that the environmental communication they practice intersects with local wisdom, particularly in river maintenance. Culturally, traditional communities in Cisayong regard rivers as part of their ancestral heritage. This is as stated in the following interview,

“This river has long been believed to be a place that is a legacy of our ancestors that must be preserved and passed on to the next generation. We know the term ‘pamali’ (taboo), which is associated with the sacredness of the river, which can pose a threat if not treated properly. Our ancestors avoided polluting the river and its surroundings. I often tell the story that the drought experienced by this village is an expression of the spirits of the ancestors who do not approve of behavior that disturbs this river...” (Interview with Informant 7, July 6, 2024).

The informant above describes using a local wisdom approach to foster environmental awareness. However, he also complained that this local wisdom is no longer considered

important by some residents, who already hold different mindsets. This is as stated below,

“The previous generation still held fast to this ‘pamali’... they were terrified of the threat... but the younger generations seem to no longer believe in this ‘pamali’, so it needs to be strengthened again...” (Interview with Informant 7, July 6, 2024).

From the informant above, it can be inferred that, historically, the people of Cisayong Village have undergone a cultural transformation in their values, such that they no longer view the drought disaster as retribution from their ancestors for failing to properly maintain the environment. This informant again emphasized the potential for substantial waste in the river due to household consumption. This is as stated below,

“This river used to be so clean, maybe there wasn’t much household waste because people in the past didn’t use much plastic packaging for their consumption, which then became waste...” (Interview with Informant 7, July 6, 2024).

Therefore, community leaders who are dominated by seniors recognize that local wisdom is essential to rekindle this awareness. This view, which still seems mythical, is no longer accepted by some; at the same time, they hold more religious beliefs. However, beyond the impression of this ideological dualism, this has strengthened Giddens’ theoretical assumption that agencies will be influenced by the values they hold. In other words, the communication approach of religious leaders differs from that of cultural community leaders. Likewise, young community leaders view various environmental

problems as contemporary issues shared by other community groups.

As previously mentioned, the substance of environmental communication is to convey environmental messages in the context of communication (Atkinson & Kim, 2015; Moser, 2015). Also, Chaicana (2019) views environmental communication as part of education aimed at behavioral change. However, in the context of Cisayong Village, this effort is not only educational but also part of the process of ideologization. It involves several ideologies, both doctrinal, carried out by religious figures, and cultural, practiced by community leaders with cultural nuances.

Thus, environmental communication actions undertaken by civil society in Cisayong Village aim to effect changes at the behavioral, social, and personal levels with different approaches. At the behavioral level, they focus on developing community knowledge and behaviors related to maintaining a balanced environment. At the social level, they seek to change the community’s mindset regarding resource use in the surrounding environment toward more sustainable values. At the individual level, they emphasize that natural and environmental conditions are closely related to individual awareness. In general, these community leaders employ a deficit model of communication, making greater efforts to transfer knowledge to increase their interest and understanding of environmental importance.

CONCLUSION

This study found that environmental communication in Cisayong occurs through social proximity between civil society figures and everyday residents. Rather than relying on formal government outreach, environmental messages flow more naturally through social activities: from conversations during community clean-ups, invitations via WhatsApp groups, to reminders in religious gatherings. Three main groups – community, religious, and youth leaders – bridge the environmental messages and the daily realities of residents. Their approaches feel reasonable and relatable to the community, encouraging active participation in protecting rivers.

Viewed through Giddens' structure–agency lens, the relationship between individual roles and social order in the village is not one-way. On one hand, the support of religious norms, shared habits, and village government regulations reinforces the actions of these figures. On the other hand, the initiatives they take gradually shape new perspectives on appropriate environmental behavior. This change is still in its early stages, but it is already evident in residents' reassignment of meaning to simple actions, such as refraining from littering.

These findings indicate that community-based communication can be an effective approach to strengthening environmental resilience in villages. Moving forward, continued support from the village government is essential, including the improvement

of waste management facilities and the maintenance of consistent river-cleaning activities. Additionally, messages delivered by religious and youth leaders should be integrated into official village programs so they do not rely solely on personal initiatives. The use of communication technology should also be expanded, particularly to assist community responses during the dry season. Future research could observe these behavioral changes over a longer period to assess the extent to which new structures of environmental awareness become deeply rooted in Cisayong's social life.

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