



POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN BUDGET DECISION-MAKING: EVIDENCE FROM THE SUPERVISORY FUNCTION OF COMMISSION D OF THE NORTH SUMATRA PROVINCIAL DPRD

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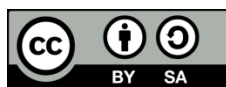
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ABSTRACT

Budget decision-making in regional legislative institutions is not merely administrative in nature, but is also influenced by the dynamics of political communication, such as informal communication, negotiation, and political lobbying. This phenomenon highlights the urgency of understanding the decision-making process more deeply, considering its impact on public accountability and development effectiveness. This study aims to analyze the role of political communication in budget decision-making within the oversight function of Commission D of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of North Sumatra Province. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of a political communication perspective into budgetary analysis and the development of a thematic model that explains the relationship between communication, actor interaction, and decision-making. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design based on an interpretive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of the study show that informal communication plays a strategic role in building mutual understanding, while budget decisions are the result of social construction influenced by interaction and negotiation among actors.

Keywords: Political Communication, Budget Decision-Making, DPRD Oversight Function.

1. INTRODUCTION

Budget decision-making in regional legislative institutions is not merely an administrative and technocratic process, but also a political arena shaped by communication, negotiation, and contestation among actors (Purba et al., 2025; Rambe

et al., 2023). In the context of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), budget oversight involves interaction between legislative members, executive agencies, bureaucratic actors, and other stakeholders whose interests are embedded in the formulation, deliberation, and approval of regional development priorities. Therefore, budget decisions cannot be understood only through formal procedures, regulatory compliance, or administrative stages of the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). They must also be examined as communicative processes in which actors exchange arguments, negotiate interests, build consensus, and construct shared meanings regarding public priorities and development needs. This shows that political communication has a strategic role in shaping the direction, legitimacy, and outcomes of budget decision-making in regional governance (Emmanuel & Ewoh, 2025; Saragih et al., 2025).

This study focuses on Commission D of the DPRD of North Sumatra Province as a specific case of legislative budget oversight. Commission D is relevant because it is institutionally associated with the development sector, which includes strategic issues related to infrastructure, public works, transportation, housing and settlements, environmental affairs, and other development-oriented programs. These sectors are closely linked to regional budget allocations because they involve large public expenditures, visible development projects, and direct implications for public welfare. In the North Sumatra context, development-related budgeting often requires intensive communication between the legislature and executive agencies, particularly when discussing program priorities, budget efficiency, project feasibility, regional equity, and public accountability. Commission D was chosen as the case study because its oversight function is directly connected to development programs that are politically salient, financially significant, and socially consequential. Thus, this case provides an important empirical setting for understanding how political communication operates within the supervisory function of regional legislatures.

Previous studies on budget decision-making and legislative oversight have provided important contributions, but they still reveal several limitations. Studies on public budgeting have generally emphasized formal mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, and procedural compliance in the preparation and approval of regional budgets (Dalimunthe et al., 2024; Ritonga et al., 2023). Other studies on legislative

oversight have focused on institutional authority, checks and balances, and the formal relationship between the legislative and executive branches (He et al., 2024a; Suhendar et al., 2023). Meanwhile, research on public accountability has highlighted transparency, participation, and the quality of governance in budget implementation (Dalimunthe et al., 2020; Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025). Although these studies are useful, they tend to treat communication as a supporting factor rather than as a central process in decision-making. As a result, the ways in which actors use formal debate, informal lobbying, persuasive argumentation, political bargaining, and symbolic claims of public interest to influence budget outcomes remain insufficiently explored.

Furthermore, literature on informal governance and political negotiation has shown that informal communication can shape public decision-making beyond official institutional procedures (Moldaliev, 2021; Ritonga, Dalimunthe, et al., 2024). However, these studies have not sufficiently explained how informal communication interacts with formal legislative mechanisms in the specific context of regional budget oversight. In many cases, budget deliberation takes place not only in official meetings, hearings, and committee discussions, but also through informal encounters, personal networks, inter-party negotiations, and political compromises outside formal forums. This condition creates a complex communication environment in which formal accountability and informal negotiation coexist. Therefore, a more focused analysis is needed to understand how political communication shapes actor interaction, meaning construction, and the final direction of budget decisions within the supervisory function of Commission D.

The urgency of this study lies in the fact that the quality of regional budget decisions has a direct impact on development effectiveness, public service delivery, and social welfare. Ineffective political communication may lead to conflicts of interest, weak coordination between the legislative and executive branches, limited transparency, and budget decisions that do not fully reflect public needs (Ritonga et al., 2024; Suazo-Galdames et al., 2025). In addition, poorly managed informal communication can create space for political compromise that is not accountable to the public (Imperiale & Vanclay, 2021; Indainanto et al., 2023). In the context of development budgeting, this problem becomes more serious because infrastructure and development programs often involve large allocations and affect many communities. Therefore, strengthening political communication in budget oversight is

necessary to ensure that legislative deliberation is transparent, accountable, evidence-based, and oriented toward public interest.

Based on this background, this study is guided by the following research question: How does political communication shape budget decision-making within the supervisory function of Commission D of the North Sumatra Provincial DPRD? This question directs the analysis toward the communicative processes that occur in budget oversight, including formal deliberation, informal negotiation, actor interaction, interest articulation, and the construction of shared meaning. By focusing on this question, the study seeks to move beyond a purely procedural understanding of budget decision-making and instead examine the political communication dynamics that influence how budget decisions are discussed, negotiated, and legitimized.

As a response to the identified problem, this study argues that political communication governance must be strengthened in the budget decision-making process. Several strategic measures are needed, including increasing transparency in budget deliberation, improving the communication capacity of DPRD members in carrying out their oversight function, strengthening evidence-based dialogue between legislative and executive actors, and developing more open and participatory communication mechanisms (Ríos et al., 2016; Suhendar et al., 2024). In addition, a balance between formal and informal communication must be established so that negotiation remains within the framework of public accountability (Dalimunthe et al., 2025; Sikumbang et al., 2024). In this sense, political communication should not merely function as an instrument for negotiating interests, but also as a mechanism for ensuring that budget decisions are responsive to community needs and consistent with the principles of democratic governance.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of a political communication perspective into the analysis of regional budget decision-making through the supervisory function of the DPRD. Unlike previous studies that have primarily emphasized procedural, legal, and institutional aspects of budgeting, this study positions political communication as the main analytical lens for explaining how actors interact, negotiate, and construct meaning in budget oversight. In addition, this study offers a thematic model that links political communication, actor interaction, interest negotiation, meaning construction, and budget decision outcomes. Therefore, the study

contributes theoretically to the development of political communication and public policy studies, and empirically to a deeper understanding of commission-level budget oversight in regional legislative institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHODE

This study employs a qualitative research approach with an exploratory and in-depth case study design, grounded in an interpretive approach. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on understanding the meanings, processes, and dynamics of political communication in budget decision-making within the oversight function (Sahara & Salomoa, 2025). Within this framework, social reality is viewed as a subjective construction formed through interactions among actors. Therefore, the analysis is directed toward revealing how DPRD members, executive officials, and other stakeholders interpret the processes of communication, negotiation, and the interests that emerge during budget deliberations. Referring to the concept of *Verstehen*, this study does not merely describe the phenomenon but also interprets social actions based on the perspectives of actors within the institutional and political context surrounding them (Ormerod et al., 2023).

The informants in this study consist of members of Commission D of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) of North Sumatra Province, commission leaders, secretariat staff, and representatives of the executive branch involved in the budgeting process. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their involvement and knowledge of the budget decision-making process. The number of informants in this study ranged from 6 to 8 individuals, which was considered sufficient to meet the principle of data saturation. In the process, snowball sampling was also used to obtain additional informants based on recommendations from previous informants (Bouncken et al., 2026).

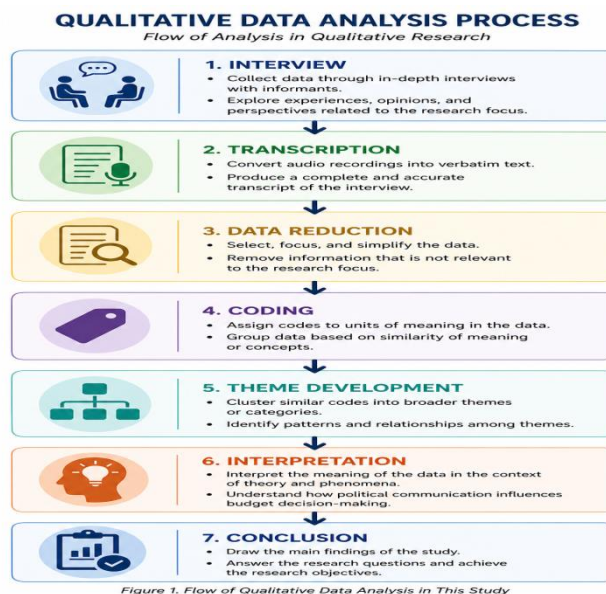


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Process Model

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Interviews were used to obtain in-depth information from key informants, while observation was conducted to capture the dynamics of interaction and communication practices in both formal and informal forums. Documentation was used to analyze official documents such as the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD), meeting minutes, and oversight reports (Creswell, 2021). The data obtained were then analyzed using thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, coding, categorization, and conclusion drawing (Artisa et al., 2026). To maintain the validity and credibility of the findings, this study applied source and method triangulation, allowing the analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of political communication in the budget decision-making process (Cantarelli et al., 2023; Kholil et al., 2024).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The results of the study show that the budget decision-making process within the oversight function of the DPRD does not occur in a linear manner, but rather through complex stages of interaction. Based on the data analysis, the following process model was obtained:

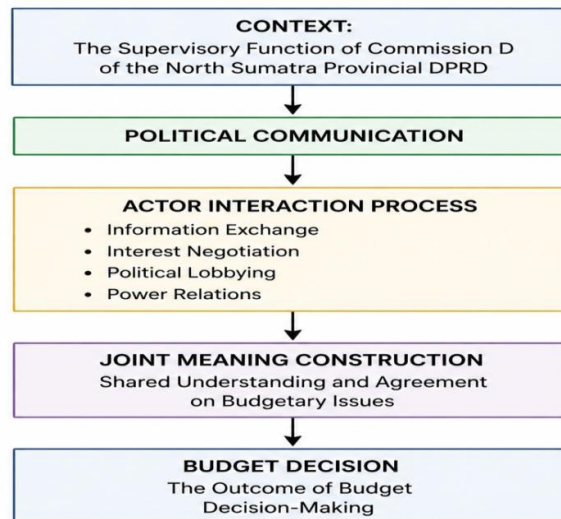


Figure 2. Process Model of Political Communication in Legislative Budgeting

This model shows that political communication serves as the core element connecting actor interaction with budget decision outcomes. Decisions are not merely determined by formal procedures, but are the result of social construction formed through communication (Peda & Vinnari, 2022).

Communication Dynamics and Decision Making

Table 1. Interview Results

Aspect	Key Findings
Context of Supervision	Commission D plays an active role in overseeing budget implementation
Involvement	High level of engagement in the Draft Regional Budget (RAPBD) discussion
Communication Patterns	Two-way communication (formal and informal)
Communication Media	Formal meetings and personal communication
Nature of Communication	Informal communication is more effective in building mutual understanding
Information Exchange	OPDs deliver, DPRD responds
Negotiation	Occurs in budget priorities
Political Lobbying	For the benefit of the region
Dominant Actors	Commission and faction leaders
Power Relations	Relatively balanced
Conflict	Resolved through compromise
Meaning of Supervision	For the benefit of the community
Agreement	Through lengthy discussions
Determining Factors	Politics, needs, fiscal matters

Decisions	Plenary meeting
Orientation	Generally public
Constraints	Interests, transparency, pressure
Solutions	Transparency and open communication

This finding indicates that political communication does not only take place in formal forums, but also through more flexible informal communication, which is effective in building initial mutual understanding (Shin et al., 2024). This reinforces the view that the budget decision-making process is relational in nature and not entirely procedural.

Table 2. Coding and Data Quotation

Code	Description	Quote
KP	Two-way communication	"Two-way communication..."
KI	Informal is more effective	"More effective in building mutual understanding..."
NK	Budget negotiations	"Negotiations often occur..."
LP	Political lobbying	"For the benefit of the region..."
RK	Balanced relationships	"The executive has the data, the DPRD has the agreement..."
KK	Conflicts of interest	"Resolved through deliberation..."
KM	The meaning of oversight	"For the benefit of the community..."
KB	Agreements	"Through compromise..."
KA	Final decisions	"Through plenary sessions..."
HB	Obstacles	"Differences in interests..."

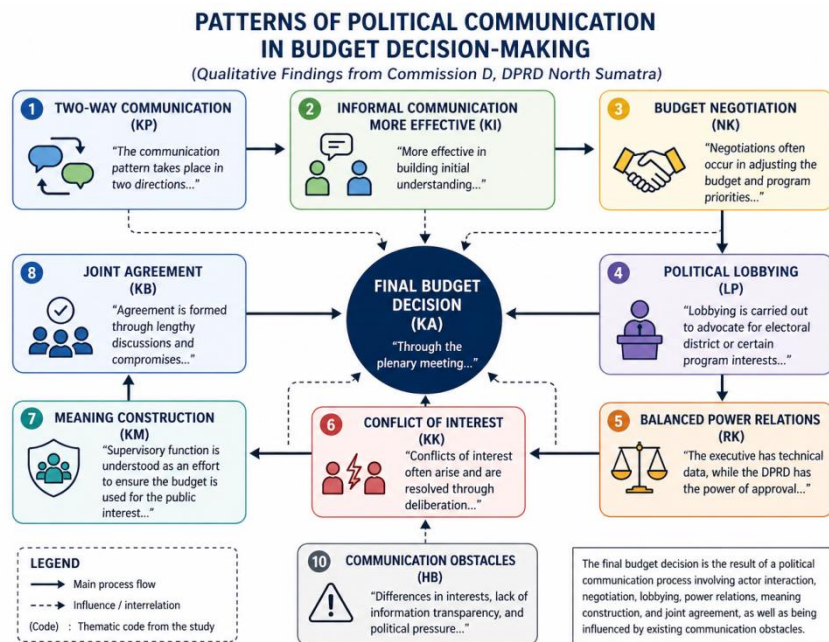


Figure 3. Thematic Model of Political Communication in Legislative Budget Decision-Making

Figure 3 presents the Thematic Model of Political Communication in Legislative Budget Decision-Making, which illustrates patterns of political communication based on the qualitative findings of this study. The model takes the form of an integrated circular flow, with the final budget decision at the center, indicating that budget decisions are the result of interactions among various elements of political communication (Shin et al., 2024).

At the initial stage, the model shows that the process begins with two-way communication (KP), which emphasizes reciprocal communication between the legislative and executive branches (Jorge et al., 2026). Furthermore, informal communication (KI) emerges as an important factor that is more effective in building initial mutual understanding than formal communication. This process then continues to budget negotiation (NK), which reflects a bargaining process in determining budget priorities and allocations (Scharnigg, 2024).

In the next stage, political lobbying (LP) functions as a mechanism for advocating certain interests, particularly those of electoral constituencies. This is then related to balanced power relations (RK), which indicate a balance of power between the DPRD and the executive, where each party possesses different sources of power. Within this dynamic, conflict of interest (KK) becomes an unavoidable phenomenon; however, such conflict is managed through communication and deliberation (Kurniawati et al., 2025; MAHDALENA et al., 2022).

The process then moves toward meaning construction (KM), in which actors build a shared understanding of the oversight function and public interest. From this process, a joint agreement (KB) is formed as the result of compromise among actors. The entire process culminates in the final budget decision (KA), which is made through formal mechanisms such as plenary meetings (Rantamäki et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the model also shows the presence of inhibiting factors, namely communication obstacles (HB), such as differences in interests, lack of transparency, and political pressure, which influence the overall communication process.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that political communication in budget decision-making does not only take place in formal forums, but also through informal communication, which plays a strategic role in building initial mutual understanding (Scharnigg, 2024). This finding confirms that political communication is relational in nature and not merely procedural. Informal communication becomes an initial space for negotiation that enables actors to align their interests before bringing them into official forums. Within the framework of the interpretive approach, communication is understood as a process of meaning-making through social interaction; therefore, its effectiveness is determined not only by institutional structures but also by the quality of relationships, trust, and communication strategies among actors (Cairney et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the budget decision-making process is significantly influenced by the dynamics of actor interaction, which include information exchange, negotiation, and political lobbying. This indicates that budget decisions are not merely the result of a technocratic process, but rather the outcome of complex interactions among interests. From the perspective of public policy, public policy is understood as a product of a political process involving various actors with different interests. Negotiation becomes the main mechanism for determining budget priorities, while political lobbying functions as a strategy for advocating certain interests. Thus, political communication serves as the primary medium for articulating, accommodating, and aligning these diverse interests (Adolph et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the power relations between the DPRD and the executive show a relatively balanced condition, in which each possesses different resources: the executive has an advantage in controlling technical data, while the DPRD has authority in budget approval. This condition creates a relationship that is both interdependent and competitive. Within this dynamic, conflict of interest becomes an unavoidable phenomenon, although it is not always destructive. Instead, from an interpretive perspective, conflict functions as a mechanism for reaching consensus through communication and compromise. This confirms that political communication

plays an important role as a tool for managing conflict and building agreement among actors with different interests (Jorge et al., 2026).

Furthermore, budget decisions are understood as the result of collective meaning construction formed through social interaction. Actors do not only function as decision-makers but also as interpreters of meaning regarding the oversight function and public interest (Cantarelli et al., 2023). Within the framework of *Verstehen*, this process reflects how shared understanding is built through intensive and continuous communication. Thus, the resulting agreement is not merely the outcome of formal compromise, but rather the result of a meaning-making process involving various perspectives and interests, so that budget decisions can be understood as contextual social products.

The implications of these findings show that the quality of budget decisions is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of political communication. Although, in general, decisions have reflected the public interest, political interests still influence certain cases, alongside constraints such as differences in interests, lack of transparency, and political pressure. This condition has the potential to reduce the accountability and quality of the resulting decisions (He et al., 2024). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen political communication governance through increased transparency, the development of actors' communication capacity, and the implementation of more open and participatory communication mechanisms. In this way, political communication functions not only as a negotiation tool but also as an instrument to ensure that budget decisions become more accountable, inclusive, and oriented toward the public interest.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that political communication is a key factor in budget decision-making within the oversight function of the DPRD. The process is not merely procedural, but is formed through complex interactions involving formal and informal communication, negotiation, political lobbying, and power relations among actors. Informal communication plays a strategic role in building initial mutual understanding and aligning interests, while emerging conflicts serve as mechanisms for consensus-

building through compromise. From the perspective of *Verstehen*, budget decisions are the result of collective meaning construction formed through social interaction. However, the effectiveness of political communication still faces several obstacles, such as differences in interests, lack of transparency, and political pressure. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen communication governance in a more open, participatory, and accountable manner so that budget decisions better reflect the public interest.

This study also emphasizes the importance of strengthening the quality of political communication in the budget decision-making process through increased transparency in deliberations, the development of the communication capacity of legislative members, and the institutionalization of more open, participatory, and accountable communication mechanisms between the DPRD and the executive branch. In addition, informal communication needs to be managed more systematically so that it remains within the framework of good governance and does not create distortions of interest. For the advancement of scholarship, future research is expected to broaden the scope of analysis to different institutional contexts and integrate more diverse theoretical perspectives in order to enrich the analysis and deepen understanding of the dynamics of political communication in public policy decision-making.

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