



Managing Communication Between Intelligence and Security Unit Personnel and Informants in the Prevention of Public Order Disturbances: Developing a Trust-Based Communication Model

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Abstract

Effective communication between intelligence and security unit personnel (Intelkam) and informants is fundamental to preventing public order disturbances, yet limited research has examined how interpersonal trust shapes this process within intelligence operations. This study investigates the communication patterns used by intelligence personnel to develop and sustain trust-based relationships with informants and proposes a conceptual communication model to enhance preventive security efforts. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews and field observations and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings demonstrate that direct face-to-face interaction, supported by informal and relational communication, constitutes the most effective strategy for establishing credibility and encouraging voluntary information sharing. Consistent with interpersonal communication theory, communication effectiveness is reinforced through openness, empathy, supportiveness, and mutual respect, which collectively strengthen trust between intelligence personnel and informants. The study further identifies three principal trust-building strategies: personalized engagement based on informants' characteristics, strict protection of informant confidentiality, and continuous interpersonal contact. Conversely, initial distrust, fear of exposure, and security concerns remain significant communication barriers. Based on these findings, this study develops a Trust-Based Intelligence Communication Model that illustrates how communication channels and interpersonal competencies generate trust, thereby improving information quality and strengthening the prevention of public order disturbances. The study contributes theoretically by extending interpersonal communication theory to intelligence and security contexts while providing practical guidance for strengthening communication competencies and trust-oriented intelligence practices.

Keywords: Intelligence communication; interpersonal trust; informants; public order prevention

1. Introduction

Public order and security constitute fundamental prerequisites for social stability, democratic governance, and sustainable national development.¹ Within contemporary policing systems, intelligence-led policing has become a central strategy for anticipating and preventing security threats before they escalate into public disturbances. Rather than relying solely on reactive law enforcement, intelligence operations emphasize early detection, risk assessment, and preventive intervention through systematic information gathering. In Indonesia, the Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) of the Indonesian National Police (Polri) performs this strategic function by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence to support decision-making and maintain public order. The effectiveness of these intelligence activities depends not only on analytical capability but also on the quality of communication established between intelligence personnel and human information sources. Consequently, interpersonal communication has become an indispensable component of intelligence operations because reliable information frequently emerges from relationships characterized by mutual trust rather than formal institutional authority.

Human informants remain one of the most valuable intelligence assets despite rapid developments in surveillance technologies, artificial intelligence, and digital intelligence systems. Informants provide contextual, localized, and often exclusive information that cannot be obtained solely through technological means, particularly regarding hidden criminal activities, emerging social tensions, and potential public order disturbances. Previous studies demonstrate that human intelligence (HUMINT) continues to outperform purely technological approaches in detecting subtle behavioral patterns and emerging threats within communities.² However, the relationship between intelligence officers and informants is inherently sensitive, marked by confidentiality, asymmetric information, security risks, and potential conflicts of interest. Informants often face legal, social, and personal consequences if their identities are exposed, making trust a decisive factor influencing their willingness to disclose accurate and timely information.

Existing intelligence literature consistently recognizes trust as a critical determinant of successful intelligence operations. Studies have shown that effective handler–informant relationships depend on confidence, perceived credibility, and the assurance that sensitive information will remain confidential. Informants are generally more willing to cooperate when they believe that intelligence personnel are competent, ethical, and committed to protecting their identities. Conversely, distrust, fear of retaliation, and uncertainty about intelligence officers' intentions frequently discourage information sharing and reduce intelligence effectiveness. Although previous studies have examined ethical dilemmas, informant recruitment, and operational procedures, comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how interpersonal communication itself functions as the mechanism through which trust is created, maintained, and strengthened throughout intelligence interactions.

This gap is particularly evident in Indonesian policing. Research on intelligence within the Indonesian National Police has predominantly focused on organizational performance, intelligence strategies, legal authority, and operational effectiveness. In contrast, communication processes between intelligence personnel and informants remain largely unexplored. Existing studies generally

¹ A JOHN, "Personality and Interpersonal Communication," *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, 2002, 133.

² Edward Maguire and Devon Johnson, "The Structure of Public Opinion on Crime Policy: Evidence from Seven Caribbean Nations," *Punishment & Society* 17, no. 4 (October 30, 2015): 502–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474515604385>.

conceptualize intelligence work from organizational, criminological, or security perspectives, without integrating established communication theories that explain the development of interpersonal relationships. Consequently, there remains limited theoretical understanding of how communication behaviors shape informants' trust, influence information quality, and ultimately contribute to preventing public order disturbances. Addressing this gap is increasingly important because successful intelligence gathering depends as much on communication competence as on investigative capability.

Interpersonal communication theory offers a valuable framework for explaining how trust develops between intelligence personnel and informants. According to DeVito (2003, 2019), effective interpersonal communication is characterized by five essential dimensions: openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. These qualities foster reciprocal understanding, reduce psychological distance, and facilitate meaningful interpersonal relationships. Within intelligence settings, openness encourages reciprocal information exchange, empathy enables officers to understand informants' circumstances, supportiveness strengthens psychological safety, positivity promotes constructive interaction, and equality minimizes hierarchical barriers despite institutional power differences. Collectively, these communication characteristics create conditions in which informants are more willing to disclose sensitive information essential for preventive intelligence activities.

Beyond DeVito's framework, several complementary communication theories offer explanatory perspectives on trust formation in intelligence relationships. Social Penetration Theory explains that interpersonal relationships evolve through gradual self-disclosure³, progressing from superficial exchanges toward deeper personal interaction. In intelligence contexts, officers frequently begin with informal conversations before gradually establishing stronger interpersonal bonds that encourage voluntary information sharing. Similarly, Uncertainty Reduction Theory suggests that individuals seek to reduce uncertainty during initial interactions through communication, observation, and adaptive behavior⁴. This process is highly relevant to intelligence operations because both intelligence personnel and informants initially experience uncertainty regarding each other's intentions, reliability, and commitment.

Communication Privacy Management Theory⁵ further explains how individuals regulate the disclosure of sensitive information by establishing privacy boundaries. For intelligence informants, confidentiality is the primary condition for continued cooperation, as disclosure of their identity may expose them to legal consequences, social exclusion, or physical threats. Consequently, maintaining strict confidentiality is not merely an operational requirement but also a communicative process that reinforces trust. Likewise, Trust Development Theory proposed by Lewicki and Bunker⁶ conceptualizes trust as a dynamic process evolving from calculative trust, based on rational assessment of risks and benefits, toward knowledge-based trust and ultimately identification-based trust, where relationships are sustained through shared values and mutual understanding. This

³ Irwin Altman and Dalmas A Taylor, *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*. (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973).

⁴ Stacey Peterson, "Uncertainty Reduction Theory—Charles Berger, Richard Calabrese," *Introduction to Communication Inquiry & Theory*, 1975.

⁵ Sandra Petronio and Jeffrey T Child, "Conceptualization and Operationalization: Utility of Communication Privacy Management Theory," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 31 (2020): 76–82.

⁶ Roy J Lewicki and Barbara Benedict Bunker, "Developing and Maintaining," *Trust in Organizations: Frontiers of Theory and Research* 114 (1996).

theoretical progression closely reflects the evolving relationships observed between intelligence handlers and long-term informants.

Balance Theory⁷ also provides valuable insights into interpersonal dynamics within intelligence communication. The theory argues that individuals strive for cognitive consistency in their interpersonal relationships by aligning attitudes and perceptions toward common objectives. In intelligence operations, informants are more likely to develop trust when they perceive intelligence personnel as sharing similar commitments to maintaining community security and public order. Such perceptual alignment reduces interpersonal tension, reinforces cooperative behavior, and strengthens the long-term sustainability of intelligence relationships. Together, these theoretical perspectives demonstrate that trust should be understood not merely as an outcome of intelligence operations but as a communicative process shaped by repeated interpersonal interactions.

Empirical studies further support the importance of communication in intelligence and policing contexts. Nunan et al. (2022)⁸ found that rapport, coordination, and effective conversational techniques significantly improve intelligence outcomes during interactions between handlers and informants. Dobson, Dittmann, and Yeager (2025)⁹ demonstrated that transparent communication regarding officers' intentions substantially enhances public trust and cooperation with law enforcement agencies. Meanwhile, Loftus et al. (2022)¹⁰ emphasized the emotional vulnerability and moral complexity experienced by informants, highlighting the necessity of empathetic and ethically responsible communication. Collectively, these studies indicate that interpersonal communication is not merely a supporting element of intelligence work but a strategic capability that directly influences intelligence quality, operational effectiveness, and community cooperation. Nevertheless, previous research has generally examined these variables separately rather than integrating them into a comprehensive communication model applicable to intelligence operations.

Despite these important contributions, existing scholarship has not adequately explained how various interpersonal communication behaviors collectively generate trust that enhances preventive intelligence performance. Previous studies tend to investigate communication techniques, trust, confidentiality, and intelligence effectiveness independently, leaving the interrelationships among these variables under-theorized. Furthermore, few studies have developed an integrated conceptual framework specifically addressing communication between intelligence personnel and informants within public order management. This theoretical limitation limits intelligence organizations' ability to develop communication competencies that can strengthen trust-based intelligence practices systematically.

This study aims to develop a Trust-Based Communication Model to manage communication between Security Intelligence Unit personnel and informants to prevent public order disturbances. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the interpersonal communication patterns employed by intelligence personnel, examine the strategies used to establish and maintain informant trust, analyze the communication barriers encountered during intelligence interactions, and integrate these

⁷ Arch G Woodside and Jean-Charles Chebat, "Updating Heider's Balance Theory in Consumer Behavior: A Jewish Couple Buys a German Car and Additional Buying-Consuming Transformation Stories," *Psychology & Marketing* 18, no. 5 (2001): 475-95.

⁸ Emily Nunan et al., "Obesity as a Premature Aging Phenotype—Implications for Sarcopenic Obesity," *Geroscience* 44, no. 3 (2022): 1393-1405.

⁹ Kyle S H Dobson, Andrea G Dittmann, and David S Yeager, "A Transparency Statement Improves Trust in Community-Police Interactions," *Nature Communications* 16, no. 1 (2025): 2285.

¹⁰ Tyler J Loftus et al., "Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Decision Support in Nephrology," *Nature Reviews Nephrology* 18, no. 7 (2022): 452-65.

findings into a comprehensive conceptual model grounded in interpersonal communication theory. The principal contribution of this research lies in extending interpersonal communication theory into the domain of intelligence and security studies by positioning trust as the central mechanism linking communication practices with intelligence effectiveness. Practically, the proposed model provides a theoretical foundation for strengthening communication training, improving intelligence management, and enhancing preventive policing strategies through sustainable, trust-based relationships between intelligence personnel and informants.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a descriptive–interpretive approach to explore interpersonal communication practices between Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) personnel and informants in the prevention of public order disturbances.¹¹ A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to understand communication experiences, trust-building processes, and interpersonal interactions that cannot be adequately measured quantitatively. The primary data source consisted of empirical materials documented in the researcher’s thesis, including in-depth interviews with Intelkam personnel at the Kejobong Police Sector (Polsek Kejobong) and the Banyumas Regional Police, complemented by field observations conducted during intelligence activities. Interview excerpts were used to illustrate participants’ perspectives regarding communication strategies, trust development, and operational challenges. Data collection focused on obtaining rich contextual information concerning communication behaviors, relationship dynamics, and the practical mechanisms through which intelligence personnel establish and maintain cooperation with informants in confidential operational settings. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006)¹² and supported by the interactive analytical framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014).¹³ The analysis began with open coding to identify recurring communication patterns, trust-building strategies, and communication barriers emerging from the interview transcripts and observation notes. These initial codes were subsequently refined through axial coding, enabling the integration of empirical findings with relevant theoretical perspectives, including interpersonal communication theory, Social Penetration Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Communication Privacy Management Theory, Trust Development Theory, and Balance Theory. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with field observations, while peer debriefing and internal researcher discussions were employed to ensure consistency in coding and interpretation. These procedures are consistent with established qualitative research standards and contribute to the rigor, dependability, and analytical validity of the proposed Trust-Based Communication Model.¹⁴

¹¹ John Creswell and J David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

¹² Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, “Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology,” *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

¹³ Matthew B Miles, A Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (sage, 2014).

¹⁴ John W Creswell and Cheryl N Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

3. Result and Discussion

Interpersonal Communication Patterns in Intelligence–Informant Relationships

The findings reveal that interpersonal communication constitutes the primary mechanism through which Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) personnel establish and maintain relationships with informants.¹⁵ Unlike conventional law enforcement interactions that often emphasize formal procedures and institutional authority, intelligence communication is inherently relational, confidential, and continuous. The empirical evidence indicates that communication between intelligence personnel and informants is characterized by a combination of face-to-face meetings, informal conversations, and technology-mediated interactions, each serving distinct operational purposes. However, among these communication channels, direct interpersonal interaction emerged as the most influential medium for fostering trust and encouraging voluntary information disclosure. This finding suggests that intelligence effectiveness depends not only on access to information but also on the quality of interpersonal relationships established throughout the intelligence process.

Face-to-face communication was consistently identified as the dominant interaction pattern employed by Intelkam personnel. Participants emphasized that direct meetings allow officers to establish personal rapport, observe nonverbal cues, and create a communication atmosphere that encourages openness. Rather than immediately requesting intelligence information, officers generally initiate conversations with casual discussions concerning daily life, community conditions, or shared experiences. This gradual conversational approach reduces psychological distance between the parties and creates an environment in which informants feel respected rather than interrogated. Consequently, face-to-face interaction functions not merely as a communication channel but as a relational strategy that facilitates long-term cooperation.¹⁶

The predominance of direct communication can be interpreted through DeVito's theory of interpersonal communication, which argues that effective interpersonal relationships are built upon openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. These five interpersonal qualities are clearly reflected in the communication practices observed in this study. Intelligence personnel intentionally avoid authoritative communication styles and instead adopt conversational approaches that encourage mutual respect and reciprocal dialogue. By positioning informants as partners rather than merely intelligence sources, officers cultivate a supportive communication climate that enhances willingness to exchange sensitive information.¹⁷ Such communication practices demonstrate that interpersonal competence represents an essential professional skill within intelligence operations rather than a supplementary social ability.

Among DeVito's five dimensions, openness appears to be particularly significant in intelligence communication. Openness does not imply unrestricted disclosure of confidential operational information but rather the willingness of intelligence personnel to communicate honestly regarding the purpose of interactions and demonstrate genuine interest in informants' perspectives. Informants

¹⁵ Buela Davies, "Interpersonal Skills and the Intelligence Role: A Practitioner's Perspective," *Journal of the Australian Institute of Professional Intelligence Officers* 26, no. 3 (January 1, 2018): 32–38, <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.437675566700446>.

¹⁶ Jordan Nunan et al., "The Impact of Rapport on Intelligence Yield: Police Source Handler Telephone Interactions with Covert Human Intelligence Sources," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 29, no. 1 (January 2, 2022): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2020.1784807>.

¹⁷ Victoria M Bryan, "Knowing Me, Knowing You: The Role of Personal Intelligence in Romantic Relationship Conflict Communication" (University of New Hampshire, 2023).

reported that they became increasingly comfortable sharing information when conversations developed naturally rather than following rigid investigative procedures. This reciprocal openness gradually transformed cautious interactions into collaborative relationships characterized by greater trust and mutual understanding. Consequently, openness functions as both a communication behavior and a trust-building mechanism within intelligence operations.¹⁸

Empathy also emerged as an indispensable component of successful intelligence communication. Rather than focusing exclusively on obtaining intelligence, officers demonstrated sensitivity toward informants' personal circumstances, concerns, and motivations. This empathetic approach enabled intelligence personnel to understand the social realities influencing informants' willingness to cooperate. Informants perceived such behavior as evidence that officers valued them as individuals rather than merely as providers of information. In intelligence environments characterized by confidentiality and potential personal risk, empathy significantly reduces emotional barriers that might otherwise hinder communication.¹⁹

Supportiveness further strengthened interpersonal relationships by creating psychological safety throughout the communication process. The findings indicate that intelligence personnel consistently encouraged informants without exerting excessive pressure or coercion. Instead of demanding immediate information, officers maintained patient and respectful interactions that acknowledged the voluntary nature of informant cooperation. This supportive communication style reinforced informants' confidence that their contributions would be appreciated and that their concerns would be respected.²⁰ Such findings support DeVito's proposition that supportive communication enhances relational stability and facilitates more meaningful interpersonal exchanges.

The informal nature of communication represents another distinctive characteristic of intelligence-informant relationships. Casual conversations conducted in relaxed settings were found to be considerably more effective than formal interviews in establishing interpersonal closeness. Informants frequently described interactions with Intelkam personnel as resembling conversations between acquaintances or trusted friends rather than official police interviews. Informal communication reduced perceptions of institutional hierarchy and encouraged spontaneous information sharing. This finding illustrates that communication effectiveness within intelligence operations is strongly influenced by relational context rather than solely by message content.²¹

These findings are further explained by Social Penetration Theory, which proposes that interpersonal relationships develop through gradual processes of self-disclosure. According to the theory, meaningful relationships evolve from superficial communication toward increasingly intimate exchanges as trust develops over time. The communication practices observed in this study closely reflect this progression. Intelligence personnel initially engage informants through ordinary social interactions before gradually discussing more sensitive security-related issues. This layered communication process enables both parties to evaluate one another's reliability while progressively

¹⁸ Dann William Barger, "Interpersonal Communication among Students in a State School for Delinquent Girls," 2022.

¹⁹ JOHN, "Personality and Interpersonal Communication."

²⁰ Paul Donald Peterson, "Interpersonal Communication Patterns among Delinquent Boys in a State School," 1973.

²¹ Priti Hiltania Zebua and Dwi Kartikawati, "Communication Patterns in Distant Relationship Couples Dating in Maintaining Commitment Through Whatsapp," *IJESS International Journal of Education and Social Science* 4, no. 1 (April 30, 2023): 37–45, <https://doi.org/10.56371/ijess.v4i1.127>. namely WhatsApp. This research is based on the theory of Relational Dialectics and is supported by Computer Mediated Communication (CMC)

strengthening interpersonal trust. Consequently, intelligence communication should be understood as a dynamic relational process rather than a series of isolated information exchanges.²²

Uncertainty Reduction Theory also provides important insights into the effectiveness of face-to-face communication during the early stages of intelligence relationships. Initial interactions between intelligence personnel and prospective informants are characterized by considerable uncertainty regarding intentions, credibility, and potential risks. Direct interpersonal communication enables both parties to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues, clarify expectations, and reduce ambiguity more effectively than technology-mediated communication. Facial expressions, tone of voice, and immediate feedback collectively contribute to building confidence during these early encounters. As uncertainty decreases, willingness to cooperate correspondingly increases, thereby facilitating more productive intelligence exchanges.

Although face-to-face interaction remained the preferred communication mode, electronic communication through telephone calls and messaging applications such as WhatsApp also played an important supporting role. These communication channels were primarily utilized for urgent information exchange, operational coordination, and verification of previously obtained intelligence. Participants acknowledged the efficiency and convenience of electronic media, particularly when immediate responses were required. Nevertheless, informants generally preferred discussing sensitive intelligence in person because electronic communication lacks the interpersonal richness needed to build deeper trust. Consequently, technology-mediated communication functions as a complementary rather than primary mechanism within intelligence communication.²³

The comparative analysis with previous studies further reinforces the significance of interpersonal communication in intelligence settings. Nunan et al. (2022)²⁴ demonstrated that rapport-based interviewing substantially improves intelligence outcomes by encouraging more comprehensive information disclosure. Similarly, Dobson et al. (2025)²⁵ reported that transparent and respectful communication enhances public trust in law enforcement institutions. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that rapport, transparency, and interpersonal sensitivity remain equally important within confidential intelligence relationships involving informants. Unlike previous studies that primarily examined individual communication techniques, this research illustrates how multiple interpersonal communication dimensions operate simultaneously to sustain long-term intelligence cooperation.

The findings indicate that interpersonal communication should be regarded as a strategic capability rather than merely an operational instrument in intelligence work. Face-to-face interaction, informal communication, and complementary electronic communication collectively form an integrated communication system through which trust is progressively established and maintained. By integrating DeVito's interpersonal communication theory with Social Penetration Theory and Uncertainty Reduction Theory, this study demonstrates that successful intelligence gathering is fundamentally a relational process grounded in communication competence. These findings provide empirical evidence that effective intelligence operations depend not only on institutional authority

²² David C. Funder, David C. Kolar, and Melinda C. Blackman, "Agreement among Judges of Personality: Interpersonal Relations, Similarity, and Acquaintanceship," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, no. 4 (1995): 656–72, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.69.4.656>.

²³ Rizca Haquq and Salwa Nur Rohmah, "Interaction Process between Humans and ChatGPT in the Context of Interpersonal Communication," *Jurnal Ilmiah LISKI (Lingkar Studi Komunikasi)* 10, no. 1 (2024): 23–35.

²⁴ Nunan et al., "Obesity as a Premature Aging Phenotype—Implications for Sarcopenic Obesity."

²⁵ Juliet Dobson, "Act Now to Protect Future Generations' Health" (British Medical Journal Publishing Group, 2025).

and investigative techniques but also on intelligence personnel's ability to cultivate authentic, trustworthy, and sustainable interpersonal relationships with informants.

Trust Development as the Core Mechanism of Intelligence Communication

The findings demonstrate that trust constitutes the central mechanism underpinning effective communication between Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) personnel and informants.²⁶ While various communication channels facilitate information exchange, the empirical evidence indicates that communication becomes operationally valuable only when supported by a strong foundation of interpersonal trust. Informants consistently emphasized that their willingness to disclose sensitive information depended less on institutional authority than on their confidence in the integrity, professionalism, and reliability of intelligence personnel. Accordingly, trust should be understood not merely as an outcome of successful communication but as the primary condition that enables effective intelligence communication. This finding positions trust as the core explanatory variable linking interpersonal communication with intelligence effectiveness.

One of the principal strategies for cultivating trust identified in this study is personal engagement through a relational communication approach. Rather than treating informants solely as intelligence assets, Intelkam personnel invest considerable effort in understanding their individual backgrounds, motivations, personalities, and social circumstances. This personalized approach allows officers to adapt their communication style according to each informant's characteristics, thereby creating interactions that are perceived as authentic rather than instrumental. Informants reported feeling respected and appreciated when intelligence personnel demonstrated genuine concern for their well-being rather than focusing solely on intelligence collection. Such relational engagement strengthens emotional bonds that facilitate sustained cooperation.²⁷

The effectiveness of this personalized communication strategy can be interpreted through DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory. DeVito argues that effective interpersonal relationships are characterized by openness, supportiveness, empathy, positivity, and equality. These dimensions, taken together, encourage reciprocal communication by reducing social distance and fostering mutual respect. In the present study, intelligence personnel consistently demonstrated supportiveness by acknowledging informants as collaborative partners rather than subordinate information providers. Likewise, empathy enabled officers to recognize the social and personal risks informants faced, while openness encouraged reciprocal dialogue that strengthened interpersonal trust.²⁸ Consequently, the relational approach reflects the practical application of DeVito's interpersonal communication principles within intelligence operations.

Equality also emerged as an essential component of trust development. Despite the institutional authority intelligence personnel wielded, communication rarely reflected rigid hierarchical structures. Instead, officers deliberately minimized status differences by engaging informants through informal conversations and respectful dialogue. Such interactions reinforced perceptions that both parties shared a common objective of maintaining public security rather than occupying unequal positions

²⁶ Miftachul Huda, "Trust as a Key Element for Quality Communication and Information Management: Insights into Developing Safe Cyber-Organisational Sustainability," *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 32, no. 8 (August 15, 2024): 1539–58, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-12-2022-3532>.

²⁷ Massimo Regona et al., "Building Trust in Artificial Intelligence: A Systematic Review through the Lens of Trust Theory," *ACM Computing Surveys* 58, no. 9 (July 31, 2026): 1–39, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3789256>.

²⁸ Terry Flew, "Mediated Trust, the Internet and Artificial Intelligence: Ideas, Interests, Institutions and Futures," *Policy & Internet* 16, no. 2 (June 23, 2024): 443–57, <https://doi.org/10.1002/poi3.390>.

of authority and subordination. This communicative equality significantly enhanced informants' willingness to cooperate because they perceived themselves as trusted partners rather than merely operational resources.²⁹

Beyond relational engagement, the protection of informant confidentiality emerged as the most critical ethical dimension of intelligence communication. Every participant emphasized that assurance regarding the confidentiality of personal identity directly influenced their willingness to provide information. Informants expressed confidence in continuing cooperation because intelligence personnel consistently maintained strict confidentiality concerning their identities and the information they provided. Within intelligence operations, confidentiality therefore extends beyond procedural security requirements to become an ethical communication practice that reinforces interpersonal trust.³⁰

These findings are strongly supported by Communication Privacy Management (CPM) Theory proposed by Petronio. CPM argues that individuals establish privacy boundaries governing the disclosure of personal information and are willing to share sensitive information only when those boundaries are respected. In the context of intelligence communication, informants effectively designate Intelkam personnel as trusted co-owners of confidential information. The consistent protection of informant identity demonstrates appropriate management of these privacy boundaries, thereby reinforcing confidence that personal risks will remain controlled. Consequently, confidentiality serves both as an ethical obligation and as a communicative strategy for sustaining long-term intelligence cooperation.³¹

The empirical findings further indicate that trust develops gradually through repeated interpersonal interactions rather than emerging immediately during initial encounters. Informants explained that confidence in intelligence personnel increased as communication became more frequent and consistent over time. Importantly, officers maintained regular contact even in the absence of urgent intelligence requirements, demonstrating that the relationship extended beyond transactional information exchange. This continuity of communication conveyed genuine commitment, strengthened relational familiarity, and reduced perceptions that interactions occurred solely for operational purposes. As a result, continuous communication became a significant predictor of enduring trust.

The gradual nature of trust formation closely corresponds to Trust Development Theory, proposed by Lewicki and Bunker. According to this framework, interpersonal trust evolves through three progressive stages: calculative, knowledge-based, and identification-based. During the initial stage, informants evaluate the potential risks and benefits associated with cooperating with intelligence personnel. As interactions become more frequent and positive experiences accumulate, trust shifts toward knowledge-based trust, where confidence derives from familiarity and predictability. Ultimately, long-term communication fosters identification-based trust, characterized by shared

²⁹ Esin Yucel and Burcu Arsan, "The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Building Trust Within Human-AI Collaboration for Strategic Decision-Making," 2026, 251-80, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-5816-1.ch009>.

³⁰ Md. Kawsar Uddin, "Strategic Communication in Post-Truth Societies: Introducing the Identity-Trust-Emotion (ITE) Framework," *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, April 13, 2026, 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2026.2657602>.

³¹ Pepijn Tuinier, Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, and Sebastiaan Rietjens, "The Social Ties That Bind: Unraveling the Role of Trust in International Intelligence Cooperation," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 36, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): 386-422, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08850607.2022.2079161>.

values, mutual understanding, and sustained commitment to common objectives. The communication patterns identified in this study closely mirror this theoretical progression.³²

Balance Theory also provides valuable insight into the relational dynamics observed between Intelkam personnel and informants. According to Heider, individuals seek cognitive consistency by maintaining harmonious relationships with others who share similar attitudes and goals. The findings indicate that informants increasingly perceived intelligence personnel as partners committed to protecting community security rather than solely representing state authority. This alignment of objectives created psychological balance that reinforced interpersonal trust. As mutual perceptions became increasingly positive, communication became more open, collaborative, and sustainable, thereby strengthening intelligence effectiveness.

An important consequence of trust identified in this study is its direct influence on the quality of intelligence information. Informants who trusted intelligence personnel were more willing to disclose accurate, detailed, and timely information about potential public order disturbances. Conversely, low levels of trust often led to incomplete disclosure, delayed reporting, or outright reluctance to communicate. These findings suggest that intelligence quality is determined not only by the number of informants available but also by the strength of interpersonal trust characterizing each intelligence relationship. In other words, trust functions as a catalyst, transforming communication into actionable intelligence that supports preventive policing.

These findings are broadly consistent with contemporary intelligence and policing literature. Nunan et al. (2022)³³ demonstrated that rapport-based interviewing enhances intelligence outcomes by encouraging voluntary information disclosure, while Loftus et al. (2022)³⁴ emphasized that ethical treatment and emotional sensitivity are essential for sustaining informant cooperation within complex intelligence environments. Similarly, Dobson et al. (2025)³⁵ found that transparent communication significantly strengthens public trust in policing institutions. The present study extends these contributions by integrating rapport, confidentiality, continuous interaction, and interpersonal trust into a unified analytical framework specifically applicable to intelligence–informant communication. Rather than treating these factors independently, this study demonstrates their interdependence within the broader process of trust development.³⁶

The findings establish trust as the principal mechanism through which interpersonal communication enhances intelligence effectiveness.³⁷ Personal engagement creates the initial relational foundation, confidentiality strengthens perceptions of security and ethical responsibility, continuous communication transforms transactional interactions into enduring partnerships, and accumulated trust ultimately improves the quality and reliability of intelligence information.³⁸ By integrating DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory, Communication Privacy Management Theory, Trust Development Theory, and Balance Theory, this study demonstrates that successful

³² Emma Engdahl and Rolf Lidskog, "Risk, Communication and Trust: Towards an Emotional Understanding of Trust," *Public Understanding of Science* 23, no. 6 (August 19, 2014): 703–17, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662512460953>.

³³ Nunan et al., "Obesity as a Premature Aging Phenotype—Implications for Sarcopenic Obesity."

³⁴ Loftus et al., "Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Decision Support in Nephrology."

³⁵ Dobson, "Act Now to Protect Future Generations' Health."

³⁶ Judith E Glaser, *Conversational Intelligence: How Great Leaders Build Trust and Get Extraordinary Results* (Routledge, 2016).

³⁷ Yugang Li et al., "Developing Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence: Insights from Research on Interpersonal, Human-Automation, and Human-AI Trust," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1382693.

³⁸ Ya Duan et al., "Research on Interaction and Trust Theory Model for Cockpit Human-Machine Fusion Intelligence," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 18 (2024): 1352736.

intelligence communication is fundamentally a trust-centered relational process. This theoretical integration not only advances communication scholarship within intelligence studies but also provides practical guidance for strengthening preventive policing through systematic development of trust-based communication competencies.

Developing a Trust-Based Communication Model for Public Order Prevention

The principal contribution of this study is the development of a Trust-Based Communication Model that explains how interpersonal communication enhances intelligence effectiveness in preventing public order disturbances.³⁹ Unlike previous studies that primarily examined communication techniques, intelligence operations, or trust as separate constructs, this research integrates these elements into a unified conceptual framework. The model is grounded in empirical findings demonstrating that effective intelligence gathering depends on communication processes that systematically cultivate interpersonal trust between Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) personnel and informants. Accordingly, trust is conceptualized not as a secondary outcome of communication but as the central mechanism through which communication influences intelligence quality and preventive policing performance.⁴⁰

The model development begins with the identification of communication barriers encountered during intelligence operations.⁴¹ The findings reveal three dominant obstacles affecting information exchange between intelligence personnel and informants. First, initial distrust often characterizes early interactions because prospective informants have limited knowledge of intelligence officers' credibility and intentions. Second, concerns about personal safety discourage informants from sharing sensitive information, as they fear retaliation from criminal groups or other parties. Third, limited access to information constrains the comprehensiveness of intelligence collected, as individual informants generally possess only partial knowledge concerning specific public security issues. Collectively, these barriers reduce communication effectiveness and ultimately weaken the capacity for preventive intelligence.⁴²

Initial distrust represents the most fundamental communication challenge because intelligence relationships begin in environments characterized by uncertainty and perceived risk. Informants often hesitate to disclose information until they have accumulated sufficient evidence that intelligence personnel are trustworthy, competent, and genuinely committed to protecting their interests. This finding is consistent with Uncertainty Reduction Theory, which argues that individuals seek information and interpersonal cues to reduce ambiguity during initial encounters. In intelligence contexts, uncertainty reduction occurs gradually through repeated interpersonal interactions rather than solely through formal institutional assurances. Consequently, communication strategies must prioritize relationship development before expecting meaningful intelligence disclosure.⁴³

³⁹ Lisbet Fjaeran and Terje Aven, "Creating Conditions for Critical Trust—How an Uncertainty-Based Risk Perspective Relates to Dimensions and Types of Trust," *Safety Science* 133 (2021): 105008.

⁴⁰ Wei Dong, Yijie Wang, and Fei Li, "Rumor Management in Public Health: A System Dynamics Analysis Based on Social Trust," *Frontiers in Public Health* 13 (December 3, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1713731>.

⁴¹ Michael Siegrist and Alexandra Zingg, "The Role of Public Trust During Pandemics," *European Psychologist* 19, no. 1 (January 1, 2014): 23–32, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000169>.

⁴² Roger Reinsch and Lin Xiu, "Revamping the Police: A Trust-Based Approach to Serving the U.S. Community," *Public Integrity*, November 11, 2025, 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2025.2584743>.

⁴³ Miftachul Huda, "Empowering Communication Strategy for Safe Cyberspace: Insights from Trust-Based Quality Information," *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication* 75, no. 3–4 (April 3, 2026): 1129–51, <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-09-2023-0345>.

Security concerns constitute a second critical barrier identified in this study. Informants frequently expressed anxiety regarding the possibility that their identities might be exposed, potentially resulting in intimidation, social exclusion, or physical retaliation from criminal networks. Such concerns significantly influence decisions about when, where, and how information is communicated.⁴⁴ Communication Privacy Management Theory explains this phenomenon by suggesting that individuals disclose sensitive information only when they believe that privacy boundaries will be adequately protected. Therefore, maintaining confidentiality is not merely an operational procedure but a communicative commitment that reinforces psychological security and encourages continued cooperation between intelligence personnel and informants.

A third challenge concerns the limited informational capacity of individual informants. The findings indicate that no single informant possesses complete knowledge of potential public order disturbances, as each individual operates within distinct social environments and has limited observational scope.⁴⁵ Consequently, intelligence personnel must recognize that reliable intelligence emerges from the integration of information obtained from multiple interpersonal relationships rather than from reliance on isolated sources. This finding highlights the importance of developing broad and diverse communication networks supported by sustained trust across numerous informants.

The empirical findings demonstrate that these communication barriers can be substantially mitigated through trust-oriented communication strategies. The first strategy involves adopting personalized interpersonal communication that emphasizes openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality, consistent with DeVito's interpersonal communication theory. Rather than relying on formal investigative approaches, intelligence personnel cultivate trust through respectful dialogue, active listening, and genuine concern for informants' welfare. Such communication reduces interpersonal distance and creates a supportive relational environment in which informants feel comfortable discussing sensitive security issues. This relational orientation transforms intelligence communication from a transactional process into a collaborative partnership.

The second strategy focuses on strengthening communication ethics by rigorously protecting the confidentiality of informants. The findings demonstrate that confidentiality represents the strongest predictor of sustained cooperation because informants evaluate trustworthiness primarily according to the consistency with which intelligence personnel safeguard their identities and personal information. Ethical communication therefore functions simultaneously as a moral obligation and an operational necessity. By consistently respecting privacy boundaries and demonstrating professional integrity and intelligence, personnel reinforce confidence that cooperation will not expose informants to unnecessary risks. In this way, ethical communication becomes an essential component of effective intelligence management rather than merely a procedural requirement.

The third strategy involves maintaining continuous interpersonal communication beyond immediate operational needs. The findings indicate that long-term trust develops through repeated interaction characterized by consistency, reciprocity, and relational commitment. Intelligence personnel who maintain regular contact with informants, even during periods without urgent intelligence requirements, communicate genuine commitment rather than purely instrumental

⁴⁴ Timothy C. Earle, "Trust in Risk Management: A Model-Based Review of Empirical Research," *Risk Analysis* 30, no. 4 (April 12, 2010): 541–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1539-6924.2010.01398.x>.

⁴⁵ Jianxiang Qi et al., "A Hybrid-Trust-Based Emergency Message Dissemination Model for Vehicular Ad Hoc Networks," *Journal of Information Security and Applications* 81 (March 2024): 103699, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jisa.2024.103699>.

interest. This sustained interaction gradually transforms calculative trust into deeper relational trust, consistent with Trust Development Theory proposed by Lewicki and Bunker. Continuous communication, therefore, functions as the mechanism through which interpersonal confidence becomes institutionalized within intelligence relationships.

Based on the synthesis of these empirical findings and theoretical perspectives, this study proposes the Trust-Based Communication Model for Public Order Prevention.⁴⁶ The model begins with three complementary communication channels—face-to-face communication, informal relational interaction, and technology-mediated communication which together facilitate continuous engagement between intelligence personnel and informants. These communication channels operate through the interpersonal communication qualities identified by DeVito, namely openness, empathy, supportiveness, positivity, and equality. These interpersonal qualities subsequently generate and reinforce trust through personalized engagement, confidentiality protection, and continuous interaction. Trust then functions as the mediating mechanism that enhances the credibility, timeliness, and completeness of intelligence information, ultimately strengthening the effectiveness of preventive interventions against potential public order disturbances.

The proposed model contributes theoretically by extending interpersonal communication theory into the field of intelligence and security studies. Previous communication research has generally examined trust within organizational, interpersonal, or public communication contexts, whereas intelligence studies have traditionally emphasized operational procedures, intelligence analysis, or ethical considerations. By integrating DeVito's Interpersonal Communication Theory, Communication Privacy Management Theory, Trust Development Theory, Social Penetration Theory, Uncertainty Reduction Theory, and Balance Theory within a single analytical framework, this study demonstrates that trust serves as the principal explanatory mechanism linking interpersonal communication to intelligence effectiveness. Consequently, the model provides a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of intelligence communication than existing fragmented approaches.

The model also contributes to contemporary intelligence scholarship by reframing intelligence gathering as a fundamentally relational rather than exclusively operational process. Intelligence success depends not only on technological capability, surveillance systems, or institutional authority but also on the communication competencies of intelligence personnel. Effective intelligence officers therefore require sophisticated interpersonal skills, including empathy, ethical sensitivity, relationship management, and strategic communication, in addition to conventional investigative expertise. This broader conceptualization aligns intelligence practice with contemporary communication scholarship that emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, and trust as essential components of effective institutional performance.⁴⁷

From a practical perspective, the proposed Trust-Based Communication Model offers important implications for intelligence management and preventive policing. Intelligence training programs should place greater emphasis on interpersonal communication competencies, ethical management of confidentiality, conflict-sensitive communication, and long-term relationship development with community informants. Furthermore, intelligence organizations should institutionalize trust-building

⁴⁶ Fjaeran and Aven, "Creating Conditions for Critical Trust—How an Uncertainty-Based Risk Perspective Relates to Dimensions and Types of Trust."

⁴⁷ Talal Halabi and Mohammad Zulkernine, "Trust-Based Cooperative Game Model for Secure Collaboration in the Internet of Vehicles," in *ICC 2019 - 2019 IEEE International Conference on Communications (ICC)* (IEEE, 2019), 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICC.2019.8762069>.

practices through communication guidelines that prioritize openness, respect, confidentiality, and continuous engagement. By embedding trust-oriented communication into organizational practice, Security Intelligence Units can improve intelligence quality, strengthen community cooperation, and enhance their capacity to prevent public order disturbances proactively. Accordingly, the Trust-Based Communication Model represents both the major theoretical contribution and the principal practical outcome of this research, offering an integrated framework for advancing intelligence communication in contemporary policing.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that interpersonal communication is the fundamental mechanism by which Security Intelligence Unit (Intelkam) personnel establish effective relationships with informants to prevent public order disturbances. The findings reveal that face-to-face and informal communication are considerably more effective than technology-mediated interaction in fostering openness, empathy, supportiveness, and equality, thereby creating the relational conditions necessary for trust development. Trust is not merely an outcome of communication but the central mechanism that transforms interpersonal interaction into high-quality intelligence. The study further identifies three principal trust-building strategies personalized engagement, strict protection of informant confidentiality, and continuous interpersonal communication which collectively reduce initial distrust, alleviate security concerns, and encourage the voluntary disclosure of reliable and timely intelligence. These findings extend interpersonal communication theory by demonstrating its applicability within confidential intelligence operations, where communication competence is as critical as operational expertise. The major contribution of this study is the development of a Trust-Based Communication Model that integrates communication patterns, interpersonal communication qualities, trust formation, intelligence information quality, and public order prevention into a unified conceptual framework. The model advances existing scholarship by positioning trust as a mediating construct linking interpersonal communication to intelligence effectiveness, thereby bridging communication studies and intelligence research. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that intelligence organizations should strengthen officers' interpersonal communication competencies through training that emphasizes empathy, ethical communication, confidentiality management, and long-term relationship-building with informants. Such trust-oriented communication practices are expected to enhance the quality of intelligence gathering and improve preventive policing outcomes. Future studies are encouraged to empirically validate the proposed model across diverse intelligence organizations and policing contexts, using mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to further examine its generalizability and predictive capacity.

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