



The Role of the Community in Strengthening the Functions of Witness and Victim Protection Agencies in Indonesia

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Abstract: Active community engagement and participation in witness and victim protection programs in Indonesia remain low due to a lack of understanding of program benefits and difficulties accessing information. This study aims to identify the primary barriers and develop strategies to enhance community participation in the witness and victim protection programs managed by the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK). A descriptive-qualitative research method was employed, utilizing primary data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, along with secondary data from official documents and literature reviews. The findings indicate that reforming communication strategies, utilizing digital platforms, and strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations and higher education institutions can address these barriers. The implications of this research highlight the need for adapting informational materials to local contexts and improving information accessibility to bolster community participation. These recommendations aim to enhance program effectiveness and ensure the benefits are maximized for the community.

Keywords: *Community Participation, Protection Programs, LPSK*

1. Introduction

The Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) has an essential role in the criminal justice system in Indonesia, especially in providing protection to witnesses and victims from threats or intimidation during the legal process (Sunarso, Sh, & Kn, 2022), (Rauf, Hasjad, & Guntur, 2022). The existence of LPSK is designed to ensure that witnesses and victims can provide information without fear, so that justice can be served more effectively. However, the challenges faced by LPSK are not only related to its main tasks, but also include significant operational problems. One of the main obstacles is the geographical limitations of this institution, which only has a head office in Jakarta and two branches in Medan and Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, events that require the role of LPSK are spread across all 38 provinces in Indonesia, creating gaps in the range of protection that can be provided by this institution (Jalal & Rokan, 2021), (Pratama & Simatupang, 2024).

On the other hand, the low level of public awareness and participation in LPSK and the "Friends of Witnesses and Victims" program is also a serious obstacle in implementing the mandate of this institution. The "Friends of Witnesses and Victims" program is designed to involve the community in providing support to witnesses and victims, but there are still many people who do not know about the existence of this program or the important role of LPSK in general. This lack of information means that the community cannot play an active role in supporting the LPSK, which in turn reduces the effectiveness of the protection that can be provided (Negara, 2021). Therefore, increasing public awareness and participation is key in strengthening the function of the LPSK throughout Indonesia (Aprianti & Chairuddin, 2024), (Napitupulu & Sihotang, 2023). In the context of these challenges, this research aims to develop innovative strategies that can optimize the role of the community, volunteers and academics in supporting LPSK. One of the

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main objectives of this research is to design a more effective model of community participation, specifically through increasing public awareness of the "Friends of Witnesses and Victims" program. Apart from that, this research also seeks to overcome the limited geographical reach of LPSK by designing a collaboration mechanism involving universities, especially through synergy with the Sexual Violence Crime Team. This approach is not only expected to expand the reach of LPSK, but also strengthen social networks that support the continued functioning of this institution throughout Indonesia.

Apart from geographical challenges and low public awareness, LPSK is also faced with internal and external problems that hinder the implementation of its mandate. Internally, LPSK often experiences limited human and logistical resources, which contributes to a lack of ability to respond quickly and effectively to threats or intimidation experienced by witnesses and victims in various regions. These limitations are exacerbated by low budget allocations which result in deficiencies in operational support and suboptimal existing protection programs (Widyaningsih & Toyamah, 2023), (Erly Pangestuti, 2022). Externally, low community participation can also be attributed to a lack of socialization regarding LPSK functions and programs. Many people still think that protecting witnesses and victims is the sole responsibility of law enforcement officials, without realizing the critical role that civilians can play in providing psychosocial and moral support. This lack of understanding often leads to distrust or even indifference to the programs offered by LPSK, including the "Friends of Witnesses and Victims" program (Hatta, 2024), (Indah, Saputri, Putri, & Arifin, 2022).

To overcome this problem, a more proactive approach is needed in educating the public about the importance of protecting witnesses and victims and the benefits of their participation (Rivki, Bachtiar, Informatika, Teknik, & Indonesia, 2019). This can be done through a massive and sustainable public campaign, which utilizes various communication channels, including social media, television, radio and other digital platforms. In addition, collaboration with community figures, religious leaders and local influencers can also strengthen the message and reach a wider audience (Khoiroh, Budiman, Khairiyah, Arrahman, & Ritonga, 2024). Furthermore, collaborative strategies involving universities and academics can be key in overcoming the limited geographic reach of LPSK (Shavira, 2022). Universities have great potential to become strategic partners in disseminating information, training volunteers, as well as research and development of witness and victim protection policies. Synergy with the Sexual Violence Crime Team at universities, for example, could be an effective model in expanding LPSK's reach to areas that have been difficult to reach. Through this campus-based approach, LPSK can utilize the extensive network owned by educational institutions to build local protection units that are more responsive to needs in the field (Kurnia, Ridwan, & Januar, 2023).

In addition, the involvement of academics in research and development of the LPSK program can provide new perspectives that are more innovative and evidence-based. Academics can contribute to identifying factors that influence the success or failure of protection programs, as well as in formulating policies that are more effective and responsive to existing social dynamics (Mandasari, 2023). Thus, this research not only serves to map existing problems, but also to formulate solutions that can be implemented in real terms in the operational context of LPSK. This research also seeks to fill gaps in the literature, where studies regarding community contributions and academic collaboration in supporting LPSK are still limited. Most previous research focused more on the legal and institutional aspects of LPSK, without exploring in depth how the role of society and synergy with universities can be optimized (Permana, n.d.). By offering an interdisciplinary and community-based approach, this research makes a significant contribution to the development of witness and victim protection policies in Indonesia. The justification for this research lies not only in the urgent need to strengthen the functions of the LPSK, but also in its potential to increase the effectiveness of legal protection in Indonesia as a whole.

The steps taken by the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) to overcome geographical challenges include opening branch offices in several areas, such as Medan

and Yogyakarta. This effort aims to expand the reach of protection to witnesses and victims outside Jakarta. Apart from that, LPSK also collaborates with regional governments and local law enforcement agencies to increase the effectiveness of coordination in providing protection. However, the effectiveness of these measures is still limited, considering Indonesia's vast territory and limited human resources and budget. These limitations often result in slow response to protection needs in remote areas, so that there are still gaps in LPSK's geographic coverage.

Universities were chosen as strategic partners to expand LPSK's reach because they have an extensive network covering various regions in Indonesia, and have the academic capacity to support research, training and program development. Synergy with universities allows LPSK to utilize the intellectual and academic resources owned by these institutions, including in training volunteers and disseminating information regarding witness and victim protection. Universities also have students who can be involved as volunteers, as well as research teams who can help LPSK in evaluating policies and strategies. Apart from universities, other institutions that have the potential for similar collaboration are civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local figures who have a large influence in the local community. These institutions can also play an important role in expanding the reach of protection and increasing public awareness regarding the importance of protecting witnesses and victims.

2. Materials and Methods

This research uses a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore the challenges and obstacles in increasing community involvement and participation in the LPSK's witness and victim protection program (Azizah, 2020). Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with LPSK employees, volunteers and community members from various regions, as well as focus group discussions to gain an in-depth understanding of the barriers and perceptions related to the protection program. Secondary data was obtained from official documentation and LPSK reports, as well as a review of relevant academic literature. Data collection techniques involve flexible semi-structured interviews, participant observation in the field, and document analysis to assess communication strategies and program effectiveness (Bahagijo et al., 2022). The data collected is analyzed thematically to identify the main themes and problems faced, as well as content to evaluate existing policies and programs. Data triangulation was used to ensure the validity of the findings, by comparing results from various data sources. Based on this analysis, concrete recommendations were developed to improve communication strategies, information accessibility, and partnerships in an effort to strengthen community participation (Haryoko, Bahartiar, & Arwadi, 2020).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Low Public Participation and Awareness of the Function and Role of LPSK*

The level of public awareness regarding the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) and related programs, especially "Friends of Witnesses and Victims," is still relatively low. Data obtained through in-depth interviews with LPSK shows that there are significant deficiencies in the public's understanding of the functions and benefits of this institution. Lack of information conveyed and less effective communication methods are the main factors that hinder the dissemination of knowledge about LPSK among the wider community. Although various outreach media have been used, their reach is still limited, especially in remote areas, thereby contributing to low levels of awareness.

The "Friends of Witnesses and Victims" program is designed to raise awareness and provide support to witnesses and victims through various initiatives, including education regarding their rights and psychosocial support. However, the results of the analysis show that the level of community participation in this program is still less than optimal. Identified barriers include a lack of understanding of the direct benefits of the

program as well as limitations in accessing the information and services provided. This obstacle reflects a significant gap between potential community participation and actual program implementation. Difficulties in participating can be attributed to a lack of clear information regarding program benefits as well as barriers to accessing services.

In addition, the witness and victim protection programs implemented by LPSK provide an important contribution to protection efforts by offering physical protection, emotional and psychosocial support. However, the effectiveness of these programs is highly dependent on the success of community outreach and mobilization strategies. The literature shows that protection models in other countries are often successful when information delivery strategies and partnerships with various parties are implemented in an integrated manner. Limitations in disseminating information regarding the role of LPSK have created a significant gap between policies designed by the government and their implementation in society. Witnesses and victims often feel isolated and unaware of their rights or available support, and are therefore reluctant to report or provide testimony that could strengthen the legal process. This lack of knowledge not only reduces community participation in supporting LPSK, but also poses greater risks to the safety of witnesses and victims, which can ultimately weaken the integrity of the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, this low awareness indicates the need for reform in communication and public education approaches related to the role of LPSK. More comprehensive legal education must be implemented from an early age, both through formal curricula and initiatives from academics, and the need for collaboration between educational institutions and legal entities is very important to create a more informed society, which in turn is crucial in providing effective support to victim (Hartanto et al., 2023). The mass media also plays an important role in disseminating information regarding the rights of witnesses and victims and the procedures that must be followed to obtain protection from the LPSK. Thus, a more effective and inclusive communication strategy is needed to reach all levels of society, including vulnerable and remote groups. Therefore, increasing program effectiveness requires reform in communication strategies by LPSK, including more effective use of local and social media and the organization of more comprehensive information campaigns. Closer collaboration with civil society organizations and universities is also a crucial step to expand the reach and impact of the program.

The contribution of the findings of this research to the theory of legal protection lies in emphasizing the importance of the active role of society in strengthening the function of protection institutions. This research not only strengthens existing theories, but also expands them by highlighting the need for strategies that focus not only on outreach, but also on building stronger partnerships and direct community involvement. Thus, this research provides a new perspective on how the community can become an integral part of legal protection efforts, not only as beneficiaries but also as active contributing partners. To overcome this challenge, collaboration between LPSK, educational institutions, civil society organizations and the media is needed to increase awareness and participation in society as a whole. Developing training programs and targeted media campaigns can help strengthen public understanding of the importance of witness and victim protection, as well as encourage active participation in supporting LPSK. By involving various stakeholders in this effort, it is hoped that the function of LPSK can be strengthened, and legal protection for witnesses and victims can be implemented more effectively throughout Indonesia.

3.2 Barriers to Building Active Community Involvement and Participation

Obstacles in building active community involvement and participation in witness and victim protection programs, such as those implemented by the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), reflect significant challenges in efforts to strengthen the function of legal protection. This research shows that although protection programs, including "Witness and Victim Friends," are designed to increase community support and participation, participation remains low. One of the main obstacles is the lack of in-depth understanding of the benefits of these programs among the community. Many individuals are not fully aware of how such programs can provide real benefits to them and their communities, resulting in low motivation to engage and utilize available services.

Apart from a lack of understanding, difficulties in accessing information and services also play an important role in determining low community participation. Individuals in remote and underserved areas often face obstacles in accessing the resources and support provided by LPSK. The inability of current communications strategies to reach broader and more diverse audiences exacerbates this problem. Information materials are often not adapted to the local context and specific needs of the community, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the outreach and education carried out. To overcome these obstacles, several concrete and strategic steps need to be taken. First, reforms need to be carried out in LPSK's communication strategy. Communication strategies must be designed to be more focused and segmented, utilizing local media such as community radio, notice boards in public places, and door-to-door activities to reach communities in remote areas. The use of digital platforms, such as mobile applications and interactive websites that offer detailed information and online consultation services, can also overcome geographic barriers and increase accessibility (Lee, 2019). Information materials should be developed taking into account local language, culture, and community-specific context to increase understanding and engagement.

Second, efforts need to be made to strengthen partnerships with civil society organizations and higher education institutions. This collaboration can facilitate the implementation of seminars, workshops and information campaigns tailored to local needs. Training programs for local volunteers and partners to disseminate information and provide direct support are also important steps. Involving academics and researchers in designing and evaluating extension strategies can provide a deeper perspective on program effectiveness and impact.

Third, there needs to be regular assessments and adjustments to communication and outreach strategies based on feedback from the community. This evaluation must include collecting data on the level of awareness and participation, as well as identifying obstacles faced by the community. In this way, LPSK can make the necessary adjustments to increase the effectiveness of the protection program and ensure that its benefits can be maximally felt by all levels of society. By implementing these steps, it is hoped that obstacles to building active community involvement and participation can be overcome effectively. Improving communication strategies, information accessibility, and partnerships with various parties will strengthen the role of LPSK in providing optimal protection for witnesses and victims, as well as increasing community participation and support for protection programs.

Overall, efforts to increase community involvement and active participation in LPSK's witness and victim protection programs face various significant challenges. The public's low understanding of the benefits of the program and difficulties in accessing information and services are the main obstacles that need to be overcome. Reforms in communication strategies that are more focused and segmented, developing digital platforms to increase accessibility, as well as strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations and higher education institutions are strategic steps that can improve this situation. It is hoped that the implementation of these recommendations can create a

more inclusive and effective protection system, where all levels of society can benefit from witness and victim protection programs.

It is important to emphasize that the success of these efforts is highly dependent on ongoing evaluation and adjustment of the strategies implemented. Through comprehensive data collection and analysis on community awareness and participation, LPSK can continually adapt its approach to ensure program relevance and effectiveness. With an innovative and responsive approach to community needs, it is hoped that LPSK can increase the level of community involvement and significantly strengthen the function of witness and victim protection, thereby creating a greater impact on the legal protection system in Indonesia.

4. Conclusions

This research has identified and analyzed the main obstacles in increasing community involvement and active participation in the witness and victim protection program by the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK). Findings show that the community's low understanding of the direct benefits of the program as well as difficulties in accessing information and services are significant obstacles that hinder participation. Inadequate communication strategies and a lack of tailoring of information materials to local needs contribute to exacerbating this problem.

To overcome these obstacles, this research recommends reforms in LPSK's communications strategy, including more effective use of local media and digital platforms to reach a wider audience. Developing information materials adapted to the local context and increasing accessibility through digital technology can increase public understanding of the benefits of the program. In addition, strengthening partnerships with civil society organizations and higher education institutions and involving local volunteers in outreach can expand program reach and increase engagement.

Implementation of these recommendations is expected to improve the effectiveness of protection programs, increase community participation, and strengthen the function of LPSK in protecting witnesses and victims. This research suggests the need for ongoing evaluation of implemented strategies to ensure relevance and optimal impact. With a more innovative and responsive approach to community needs, LPSK can create a more inclusive and effective protection system, providing greater benefits for all levels of society.

Socio-cultural differences in various regions of Indonesia can influence the implementation of the proposed strategy to increase community involvement in the witness and victim protection program by LPSK. Indonesia consists of various ethnicities, religions, cultures and languages, which creates unique challenges in conveying messages and information regarding protection programs. In some areas, for example, formal communication approaches may be less effective, while community-based communication that is more personalized and tailored to local customs may be more successful. Some people in rural areas may trust traditional or religious leaders more than information conveyed through official media, so it is important to involve them in LPSK information campaigns.

The recommendations suggested in this research must be adapted to local socio-cultural conditions to ensure their success. In this context, information material disseminated by LPSK needs to be prepared in local languages and delivered in a way that is in accordance with local cultural values. For example, in areas with strong trust in traditional or religious leaders, a community-based approach involving these figures can increase public trust in the LPSK program. The use of local media such as community radio, traditional discussion forums, or religious events can also be a more effective platform than national media which may not suit the habits of people in certain areas.

In addition, the role of local universities and civil society organizations that have a deep understanding of the social and cultural dynamics in the region can be key to adapting strategy implementation to local conditions. Through this collaboration, LPSK can ensure that the approach used in disseminating information and empowering volunteers is relevant to local norms and habits, and takes into account factors such as geographic accessibility and community literacy. It is hoped that this socio-cultural adjustment can strengthen policy relevance and ensure that witness and victim protection programs can be accepted and implemented effectively throughout Indonesia.

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