

THE ROLE OF HULU SUNGAI SELATAN'S GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS IN EDUCATING THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE DANGERS OF COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Public Relations (PR) has a strategic function as a mediator of information from the government to the community. Public relation is an important support in achieving the goals set by an organization's management. Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency is one of the government agencies that use public relations as a means to inform the development of COVID-19. This study aims to find out how the role of the HULU SUNGAI SELATAN Regency Government Public Relations in educating the public about the dangers of Covid-19. The research method used is that the researcher uses qualitative research because he wants to emphasize the quality of the data, not the quantity of data. The results of the study indicate that the Hulu Sungai Selatan government through Public Relations has made efforts to educate the public regarding the current conditions of distribution, the number of Positive, PDP, and ODP in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency. Also contains policies, activities, appeals such as other important appeals, as well as activating Regional Apparatus Organizations to obtain information that will be published to the public.

Keywords: public relation, pandemic, Covid-19.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of Public Relations from time to time shows positive indicators. The power of public relations in the harmonization of relations between organizations or companies with the public or society places public relations as a very important function (Gussman & Kurniadi, 2018). Every agency, both private and government, has a special section in charge of this public relations section, which is

supported by the development of increasingly rapid communication and information technology (Hairunnisa, 2020).

An institution cannot stand alone to adapt in the public interest. Organizational reputation management, in this case, that reputation is an important part of an organization (Purwindra, 2016; Annisawati, 2019; Refika, 2016). So, for every institution or agency, the role of public relations is very important for the progress or decline of the

agency or institution, depending on the performance of the public relations institution.

Efforts to maximize the role of public relations are very important and are an urgent demand in today's communication, this must also be carried out in all government agencies scattered throughout Indonesia, as a strategic step to change the order of the role of public relations that can synergize effectively with the public and society. Public relations of the government are always demanded its capabilities in facing various challenges in dealing with very fast environmental changes.

In an organization, especially in the scope of local government, public relations play a very strategic role. The existence of local government public relations also aims to bridge information and communicate as needed by the community, so that public relations must carry out their functions and roles in dealing with changes that occur. In addition, as a communication activity, public relations also function as a bridge to build a conducive atmosphere in terms of providing 'win-win solutions', between various organizational stakeholders, both internal and external to build the image or image of the government organization itself.

The purpose of being a publicist regardless of level and type of government are: providing constituent information about the activities of government agencies, ensuring active cooperation in the program government (Astuty et al, 2018)

The success of a Regional or Regency Government is not only determined by the

achievement of the implementation of the program that has been determined but also determined by how far the community knows the development and implementation of the tasks of the Regional or Regency Government. In a pandemic, the crucial information for the public to know is how far the transmission of the virus has progressed and what steps the community must take to protect the environment so that it does not become a source of transmission.

The implementation of the role and function of public relations in the Hulu Sungai Selatan regency government has been going well, but there are still technical problems and obstacles in the field, including the not yet optimal human resources, so that both planning and implementation of public relations programs have not been maximized.

The results of previous research found that some Hulu Sungai Selatan regency people did not understand the Hulu Sungai Selatan Government's Public Relations activities in handling Covid-19 cases. This is caused by the lack of socialization about public relations activities to the community.

In terms of disseminating information about the Covid-19 Virus, it is also still limited to only agencies or institutions in the Hulu Sungai Selatan regency and focuses on people living in urban areas, it has not been evenly distributed to rural communities.

How in detail the Hulu Sungai Selatan public relations in the process of educating the public regarding the dangers of covid-19, is what will be discussed in this research.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this research is qualitative research. Qualitative research is a type of research that is used to examine the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument in research (Sugiyono, 2017).

Researchers use qualitative research because they want to emphasize the quality of the data, not the quantity of data. The method used is the descriptive qualitative method. A descriptive method is a method of researching a group of people, an object, a condition, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present. In taking the sample, this research uses informants who are considered competent people to provide the data needed to answer the problems in the research (Noor, Hairunnisa, Ghufro, 2019).

The selection of information sources is based on the most relevant research subjects in providing information related to the problems studied and willing to provide the data needed by researchers. The data was obtained through the sources by conducting direct interviews by asking questions that are by the research focus prepared by the researchers for the informants.

The data sources are the key informant, the Head of the Public Relations Division of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, and employees of the Public Relations Division of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency as supporting information.

Secondary data used in this study is data obtained through information sources, including documents, archives, and reports from the government of Hulu Sungai Selatan

Regency and several supporting reference books.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Communicator, Communication Liaison Between Organization and Community

The role of public relations as a liaison between an agency or organization with the public/society is one of the roles in which public relations connect the organization it represents with the public. This is realized through the communication process. Message delivery activities involve several aspects, namely communicator, message, media, communication, and feedback. Based on the results of the interview with Mr. TS said that:

“During today's pandemic, the information submitted is Public Information or all information produced, which relates to the current condition of the spread, the number of Positive, PDP and ODP in our regency. This information also contains policies, activities, appeals for example to maintain health, not to leave the house if there is no urgent need, always implementing health protocols, and using masks and other information deemed important to reach the wider community in Hulu Sungai Selatan regency" (*Interview, 20 May 2020*).

This statement can be interpreted that public relations in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government has a role as a communicator, namely the party who carries messages, information, or information from the organization to the community or vice versa from the community to the organization.

The message conveyed by the organization related to the dangers of Covid-

19 to the public through public relations is Public Information or all information produced, which relates to the current condition of the spread, the number of Positive, PDP, and ODP in Hulu Sungai Selatan. Also contains policies, activities, appeals such as other important appeals.

Regarding disaster emergency information and if the public is not clear about the information published by public relations, the public can go directly to the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government. The public will be directed to directly come to the public relations department to get more information. Furthermore, in an interview by Mr. MM, he explained that:

“The public can submit any complaints, questions, information, or suggestions/suggestions. This public complaint is information received by public relations to be submitted to the sections in the OPD (Regional Apparatus Organization) by the problems that come from the community. An example of today's conditions, if the public wants to get detailed information regarding the epicenter point of the Corona spread in the Hulu Sungai Selatan and information on referral hospitals and the Covid-19 Task Force, Public Relations is willing to explain” (Interview, 20 May 2020).

Based on the results of interviews and documentation, it can be seen that public relations act as a communication liaison between the organization and the community. This can be seen from the delivery of the latest information regarding the development of the spread and prevention of Covid-19 in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency.

The activity of conveying information to the public requires skills so that the message conveyed by the communicator can be well received by the communicant so that there is no error in receiving the message.

Builder of Internal and External Cooperative Relationships

Fostering the relationship between the organization and the community, Public Relations of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government is always sought to be well established. Based on the results of the interview with Mr. TS stated:

“The Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government always coordinates with other work units (Health Office) to be able to obtain the latest information regarding the increase and spread of the coronavirus in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, which can be taken into consideration to be conveyed to the public, as well as media partners. The Regency Government of Hulu Sungai Selatan seeks to build good relations with the media, such as regularly announcing various information for media coverage, holding press conferences, sending press releases, or through informal means such as visiting journalists or editors to talk casually. This method makes media people as equal partners” (Interview, 20 May 2020).

From this statement, it can be seen that in fostering cooperative relations, the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government involves internal and external parties, which are realized such as to obtain information, public relations coordinates with internal parties, namely Regional Apparatus Organizations. Information from Regional Apparatus Organizations will be provided to media

partners so that media associates can do coverage.

In addition to fostering relationships with internal parties, the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government also fosters good cooperative relationships with external parties which are realized such as holding press conferences if media colleagues want to find out more information on Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government activities, sending press releases to journalists so that information can be spread to the public easier. Hulu Sungai Selatan Government in disseminating information.

The Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government in establishing relations with media colleagues is to go to journalists/editors to chat about the Hulu Sungai Selatan Government. Further interview by Mr. MM said:

“We once held a journalistic writing training for Regional Apparatus Organizations related to its objectives with our hope that the limited public relations staff should cover information related to COVID-19 at the RT / RW level, right from public relations staff. But we are limited in manpower, so we train people from sub-regency, sub-regencies or other Regional Apparatus Organization’s to become journalists in the hope that they can write about any activity in their area and after that their results are written and then sent to us later, we will publish it on the website, if it is in the IT field there is a network training but at our place, it was once”
(Interview, 20 May 2020).

Based on this explanation, it can be seen that PR has established cooperative relationships with internal and external parties by carrying out activities in the form of

journalist training and IT (Information Technology) training aimed at Regional Apparatus Organizations and the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency community.

Back-up Management and Organization Supporting Function

Public Relations as a supporter of the organization's management function seeks to support the success of existing management in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Government. The role of public relations as a supporter of the organization's management function is certainly inseparable from the management function in its activities, manifested by a process consisting of fact-finding, planning, communicating, and evaluating. Based on the interview with Mr. AM that:

"Public Relations in formulating work programs during a pandemic like this goes as usual, but still plays a role in capturing information in the community or mass media for later consideration of work programs that are by today's conditions, such as organizational policies/activities"
(Interview, 20 May 2020).

The results of the interview show that carrying out public relations activities there are no planning and evaluation activities. Public Relations plays a role as a supporter of the organization's management function (Back-Up Management) only doing fact-finding which can be seen from the input of information gathered from the public or the mass media regarding activities that can help achieve organizational goals. In addition, the process of communicating (communicating) can be seen from public relations activities which submit the results of fact-finding to the

leadership for consideration of work programs such as policies or organizational activities.

Discussion

The role of public relations as a liaison between the organization and the community (communicator) is one of the roles in which public relations becomes a liaison between the organization and those it represents. The implementation of the role of public relations as a liaison between the organization and the public is realized by the communication process, in the communication process activity of delivering messages. This communication message involves several aspects including the communicator, the message, the communication media used, the communicant, and feedback. The Public Relations of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government plays an important role in supporting the organization's activities in providing public information to the public. Public Relations every day is tasked with providing information about the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government and has a position as the mouthpiece of the organization in facilitating the flow of information. Based on the research results, the role of public relations as a communication liaison between organizations and the community (communicator) is realized by delivering information on policies, activities, financial reports, appeals, achievements, or achievements, as well as disaster emergency information addressed to the community.

Public Relations provides information through the media to disseminate to the public. In addition to disseminating information about

the Hulu Sungai Selatan District Government, public relations also receive complaints and complaints from the public. In this case, Public Relations is not an executor but an intermediary between the community and the organization, so that if there are complaints and complaints, the PR will convey them to the sections that directly handle problems from the community.

According to Ruslan (2010: 26), explaining that the role of public relations as a liaison between organizations and the community (communicator) means that public relations act as representatives of the organization in carrying out two-way reciprocal communication with the internal and external public. Another opinion according to Nova (2009: 58) says that the role of public relations as a communication technician means that public relations play a role in providing technical communication services. Public relations in providing information to the public cannot be separated from the preparation of information materials to be published so that the information to be conveyed is more organized.

Preparation of public relations information in coordination with Regional Apparatus Organizations, analyses from the media, and thorough coverage of the activities of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government in handling and educating related to Covid-19. Local Apparatus Organizations which have good work programs sometimes do not provide this information to public relations for publication so that if someone asks about the program the public relations

party cannot provide further information to the public.

The use of public relations media has various benefits for the success of public relations programs. Public relations media as a tool or communication channel will be easily accepted by people who are scattered in various places and have a wide reach. The use of effective media to influence the community can produce high publications in a relatively short and concurrent time. The explanation above, it can be seen that in conveying information as a manifestation of the role of public relations as a communication liaison between the organization and the community it goes quite well, as can be seen from the delivery of information submitted to the public. Public relations in the delivery of information still does not utilize a variety of communication media. Public relations should be able to take advantage of other communication media so that people who know the information can be thorough.

The role of public relations as a builder of cooperative relations between the organization and internal and external parties. Fostering good relations and cooperation with the community and parties in need is very important to maintain the existence of the organization. Given that an agency cannot stand alone without supporting parties who can cooperate in the success of the activities held by the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government.

Based on the research results, the role of public relations in fostering good relations and cooperation (Relationship), is realized by

cooperating with both internal and external parties. Fostering good relations with internal parties can be seen from public relations activities which always coordinate with Regional Apparatus Organizations to obtain information that will be published to the public. In addition to fostering relationships with internal parties, the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government also fosters good relations with external parties, namely by holding press conferences if media colleagues want to find out more information on Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government activities, sending press releases to journalists so that information can be spread to the public easier. Hulu Sungai Selatan District Government in disseminating information.

The Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government in establishing relations with media colleagues is to go to journalists/editors to chat about the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government. Rosady Ruslan (2010: 26) explains that the role of public relations as a relationship means that public relations seek to establish positive and mutually beneficial relationships with the public. Agreeing with Rosady Ruslan (2010), Nova (2009: 58) said the role of public relations as a communication facilitator means that public relations have a role to help the management with the public. Based on the discussion of the research above, it can be seen that the role of public relations as a builder of relationships has been going well. It can be seen from the activities carried out by public relations at the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government as an effort to

foster good relations and cooperation with internal and external parties.

The efforts made by public relations in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government are expected to be mutually beneficial for the organization and the community.

The role of public relations as a supporter in the management function of the organization makes public relations activities very attached to the management function. According to Nova (2009: 51), the public relations process consists of finding facts (finding facts), planning (planning), communicating (communicating), and evaluating (evaluating). These four are processes contained in two-way communication activities that are used to support activities carried out by the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government. Public Relations at the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government in carrying out its activities carry out a fact-finding process that is carried out from information input collected from the public or the mass media. After the discovery of these facts, public relations carried out a communication process, namely conveying the results of information to the leadership to be used as material for consideration of the policies of the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government.

Planning (planning) such as formulating existing programs in public relations organizations has not yet performed its role as a supporter in the organization's management functions, that public relations have not been involved in evaluating the organization.

Based on this explanation, it can be seen that the role of public relations in the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government is running quite well. It can be seen that public relations are involved in the process of organizational management functions, namely the process of finding facts (finding facts) and communicating (communicating). However, public relations have not been involved in the process of organizational management functions, namely planning and evaluating.

CONCLUSIONS

As a communication liaison between the organization and the community, namely the delivery of policy information from the Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency Government, the message conveyed by the organization regarding the dangers of Covid-19 to the public through public relations is Public Information or all information produced. As a builder of relations between the organizations represented, it is carried out in collaboration with Regional Apparatus Organizations to obtain information that will be published to the public

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