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Gaining Public Trust Through Digital Media by Public Relations of the Government of Sleman Yogyakarta

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  	This study intends to describe the efforts of the District Government Public Relations. Sleman in building public trust in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Hoax information results in a decrease in public trust in the government because there is a lot of miss information related to COVID-19 and miss information related to government policies, causing a crisis of trust. Therefore, Government Public Relations has the main task of conveying true information and must be able to build public trust and deal with crisis situations. This type of research is descriptive research with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques were carried out by in-depth interviews with the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman and literature study. The concept of Public Relations (Cutlip & Center) and the Dimensions of Public Trust (Rawlins) help researchers to explain public relations efforts to build public trust during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman has been in building public trust and fighting hoaxes by providing fast information through online media, delivering clear, consistent messages and coordinating efforts to build trust. Nevertheless, the researcher considers the efforts to build public trust carried out by the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman is not yet fully maximized. This is because there is no clear measurement by the Public Relations of the District

Government. Sleman to evaluate performance and efforts to build trust in the community regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The presence of natural and non-natural disasters will always cause a serious impact on the survival of the community. At the end of 2019, the world recorded the presence of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), which is a virus that attacks the respiratory tract with a risk of death. To date, 181 million people have been confirmed positive in the world, and Indonesia has recorded 2.10 million people have tested positive for COVID-19. Based on worldometers, Indonesia ranks second with an additional 21,3442 cases/day with a death rate of 409 cases after India (Makkl, 2021).

The pandemic situation encouraged cultural changes in the communication process in society. Moreover, communication is an important element to do to reduce the number of victims at risk during a disaster (Nurjanah, Ishak, & Sakir, 2019). In the current communication process, people increasingly need the media, especially with the help of internet technology to communicate remotely. It is undeniable that public consumption of information in the media continues to increase during the pandemic, because the need for the latest information about COVID-19 continues to be awaited and monitored globally (Indiyati, et al 2020). However, the rampant activity of disseminating information and communication at the same time poses a challenge to the public in receiving information. This is because the ease of obtaining information is supported by the emergence of information on social media that is overabundance of information, making it difficult to account for its credibility. The nature of social media which has the freedom for users to convey information and communicate freely has resulted in the increasing spread of disinformation and hoaxes for the misuse of social media. Missing information and disinformation in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis has led to the rampant infodemic on the Internet and social media during the unstoppable COVID-19 pandemic. The sad thing is that often the infodemic is believed to be the truth by the public so that the effect is more dangerous than the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. This is because the infodemic has the potential to threaten safety, cause racism, and hatred towards a group (Sushmita, Pawito, & Rahmanto, 2021). This is also supported by a statement in research conducted by Bellantoni, Badr, and Alfonsi who says that disinformation affects countries responses to global pandemics by undermining trust, reinforcing fear, and sometimes leading to dangerous behavior (Bellatoni, Badr, & Alfonsi, 2020).

The Ministry of Communication and Information found that there were 1,670 hoaxes related to COVID-19 in the period from January 23, 2020 to June 25, 2021 (Kunjana, 2021). The results of an analysis from the Reuters Institute that sampled fake content about COVID-19, there was 59% of true information being manipulated, and 38% completely fabricated information (Brennen et al, 2020). Hoaxes related to COVID-19 have implications for the decline of public trust

in the Government due to the rise of false news. Based on the results of a survey conducted by Indonesian Political Indicators in April 2021, 14.2% of the public did not believe it, 26.6% responded normally. The factor of public distrust is higher than the number of indicators of trust which is only at the level of 4.3% (Annur, 2021).

The survey conducted by Kompas shows that the percentage of people who are satisfied with the Jokowi government in the second period has decreased to less than 40% in October 2020 (Halim, 2020). This figure is much lower than in his first term, which has more than 70% public trust. Several issues that greatly affect the decline in public trust include failing to protect the Indonesian people from COVID-19, failing to listen to public concerns, and criminalizing criticism (Permadi, Pasha, & Tingai, 2020).

The issue of hoaxes related to COVID-19 is one of the issues that get the most hoaxes spread. According to the Spokesperson for the Ministry of Communication and Information, Dedei Permadi, special hoaxes related to the COVID-19 vaccine reached 231. The high spread of hoaxes supports the public's reluctance to carry out vaccines and the circulation of news of other diseases due to using COVID-19 products. Based on the results of the CSIS Indonesia survey in the period 13-18 January 2021, there were still around 29.5% of the DIY community who did not believe in the efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine (Dinnata, 2021). The Special Region of Yogyakarta, especially Sleman Regency, has the highest number of COVID-19 cases (20,050 cases), participating in the fight against hoaxes by facilitating hoax fact checks through the corona.sleman.go.id website portal. In the Info hoax column, there is a hoax

recap every month starting from March 2020 to June 2021. Unlike other districts in Yogyakarta that do not have a specific hoax info column as implemented by the District Government Sleman. This form of fighting hoaxes is one of the efforts of the District Government Sleman to build public trust in the prevention of COVID-19 in the fight against hoaxes. In addition, the position of Sleman District in Yogyakarta has a very high number of positive cases of COVID-19.

According to the Head of Pusdatinkom National Disaster Management Agency, Raditya Jati said that communication activities, especially the media, have an important role in building public trust in disaster mitigation including on non natural disasters like COVID-19 Pandemic. As stated by Rawlins that trust is an important capital for the success of public relations practice and has a significant influence (Rawlins, 2007). This is due to the issue of public trust being very important so that the public is not affected by hoaxes (Antara, 2021). Building public trust (surely) must be in line with providing education related to disasters, both by soft power and hard power approaches to reduce disaster risk (Haddow & Kims, 2008). Government Public Relations has the function of providing services, education, informing and building public trust for the success of government policies in handling the COVID-19 disaster. This was also conveyed by Williams, Valero, and Kim (2018) that the driving factor for success in increasing trust was by utilizing social media in the midst of a disaster (Williams, et al., 2018).

In this case, the efforts to combat hoaxes carried out on the corona.sleman.go.id website are part of the main task of Public Relations of the District Government Sleman. The role of

a Public Relations is as a communicator, establishing good relations, and a good image maker so that Public Relations has a responsibility in upholding the image of the organization so as not to cause misunderstandings (Ruslan, 2003). Therefore, the Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government, has the function of providing services to the public regarding information as well as building trust and public participation in the success of government policies by upholding the principle of openness. The Role of District Government Public Relations Sleman is very important to build public trust in times of non-natural disasters COVID-19.

(As stated) Before, during and after the disaster, communication becomes an important thing that must be done, especially from the government to the community (who) affected by the disaster. In this case, at the time of occurrence and post-disaster, the need for accurate information is needed by the community and private institutions that have concern for disaster victims. Communication in disasters is not only needed in a disaster emergency, but is also important during and pre-disaster. As it is said that communication is the best way for successful disaster mitigation, preparation, response, and situation recovery in times of disaster. The ability to communicate messages about disasters to the public, government, media and opinion leaders can reduce the risk, save lives and impacts of disasters (Haddow, et al., 2008).

Based on the problems described in the background above and previous research, this research will give a novelty to show how the Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government build public trust through communication media to reduce the COVID-19 pandemic

hoax as a non-natural disaster. This study focuses on the discussion of Communication Public Relations. This research aims to find out the role of public relations in responding to non-natural disaster hoaxes the COVID-19 pandemic, how the Government Public Relations Sleman Regency efforts to build public trust in the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to manage communication media to produce information that can be trusted by the public regarding non-natural disasters COVID-19.

This research was born (conducted based) from several previous studies that became the research reference. Maria Grazia Busà, Maria Teresa Musacchio, Shane Finan, Cilian Fennel (2015) entitled Trust-building through Social Media Communications in Disaster Management. This study uses the concept of Trust and Authority according to Busà & S. Brugnerotto (2014) which discusses the barriers to building trust in public communication authorities, as well as describes how to compose messages that are acceptable to the public in times of disaster and design a message so that it can be trusted by the public (Busà, et al., 2015). This study has limitations, namely judging only from body language in writing messages. Furthermore, the research written by Williams, Jesus N. Valero, & Kyungwoo Kim (2018) entitled Social Media, Trust and Disaster: Does trust in public and nonprofit organizations explain social media use during a disaster. This study discusses public trust as a driving factor in using social media in the midst of a disaster (Williams et al., 2018). Furthermore, research conducted by Indasari and Anggriani (2020) which examined the communication crisis carried out by WHO related to the spread of COVID-19 through the air. The results of this study

convey that WHO conveys crisis communication using the WHO website and Instagram media as information alignment (Indasari & Anggraini, 2020).

Based on several previous research references, this research has differences (differentiation) in evoking how Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government as a local government contributes to building public trust so that people can trust the information submitted by the Government. This is due to the handling of public trust is the responsibility of the government. Based on the limitations of previous research, this research will contribute to revealing how the local government Public Relations seeks to build public trust of hoax information and the spread of the COVID-19 virus are reduced due to the large amount of infodemic due to the massive amount of information in the media.

METHODOLOGY

This research has a type of descriptive research with a qualitative approach with a case study method. The object of this research is the Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government. This type of research has descriptive research to describe and analyze the existing data based on the theory of Government Public Relations and disaster communication. This research is more directed to the positivistic paradigm due to this paradigm is concerned with the search or discovery of causal laws that can be used in different contexts and times (Creswell, 2012).

The data collection technique uses primary data, namely interviews with related informants who were selected purposively to meet research needs, namely the Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government and the Sleman community who do not trust the COVID-19 Vaccine as to find out the inhibiting factors that lead to public distrust of the government, while secondary data namely using literature study and documentation techniques to confirm and strengthen the data for analysis.

Qualitative data analysis requires researchers to carry out activities simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation and writing research reports (Creswell, 2010). Thus, data analysis is not carried out separately from data collection, but as an activity carried out together. During data collection, the researcher moves interactively in 3 components of analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation and final conclusions or verification (Nugroho & Sulistyorini, 2018). In this case, the data collection was carried out with the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman will be analyzed simultaneously with the interpretation of interview data and then immediately written down and sorting out important points from the results of data collection. Through this method, the results of the study will be able to map disaster communication media and the preparation of appropriate COVID-19 disaster information in order to build public trust related to the information submitted by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman to the people of Sleman.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Discussion on Building Public Trust During the COVID-19 Pandemic Disaster by the Public Relations of the Sleman Regency Government analyzed how Public Relations responded to a problem that was one of the declines in public trust, namely the hoax issue, so that it would discuss the role of public

relations and the main functions of public relations (Cutlip, et al., 2013) and Dimensions of building public trust (Rawlins, 2007) to help analyze the Public Relations efforts of the District Government. Sleman builds public trust during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Role of Public Relations in Responding to Covid-19 Pandemic Hoaxes

Communication in a disaster situation needs to be done with a pre, during, and post-disaster approach (Shaw, et al., 2009). In this case, the COVID-19 disaster which was carried out suddenly, the Government did not anticipate in the form of educational information related to non-natural disasters COVID-19. So the discussion in this study assesses at the level of how Public Relations responds to disaster information at the time of a disaster, as well as post-disaster conditions that cannot be assessed because the COVID-19 pandemic has not subsided. In the event of a disaster, the Public Relations of the District Sleman Government realizes that the pandemic situation presents thousands of hoaxes that make people confused. The Special Region of Yogyakarta, especially Sleman, which has a high potential for natural disasters, especially Merapi and in a pandemic situation has resulted in the presence of hoaxes that exaggerate the situation which also causes a very drastic decline in trust. Therefore, it is the duty of public relations to convey accurate information and provide understanding to the public regarding actual disaster information, especially the COVID-19 disaster. This is in accordance with the concept of public relations that functions internally and externally and becomes a door of information both out to convey policies from the government and in to get input from the community so that

public relations becomes a bridge between the government and its people (Cutlip et al., 2013). In addition, the most basic function of government public relations is to help define and achieve the goals of government programs, increase government responsiveness, and provide the public with sufficient information (Lattimore, 2010).

This was also conveyed by the Head of Public Relations and Protocol of Sleman, Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, MA, who said that in dealing with the hoax, the District Government Public Relations. Sleman is responsive and tries to provide the public with sufficient information. This sufficient information in the fight against hoaxes in the form of news certainty that has been confirmed from the authorized agencies so that information can be trusted and valid is very important. Especially when there are so many hoaxes during the COVID-19 pandemic, so (that) extra efforts are needed to provide clear understanding and information about Covid so that people are not confused and lead to a decrease in public trust.

"*The presence of various digital communication media causes the spread of news very quickly and we as the government are also required to speed up to compensate for valid news quickly so as not to impact hoaxes due to lack of and slow information from the government. So that our flow is to confirm the information circulating to the relevant agencies, in this case Covid, the task force is the Task Force, then as soon as possible confirm or provide information that is faster than the spread of hoaxes or other disinformation.*" (Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, M.A, Head of Public Relations and Protocol Section of Sleman Regency).

In this case, the District Government Public Relations. Sleman in responding to the hoax problem seeks to provide correct communication information so as to create communication that is full of understanding, acceptance and cooperation between organizations and their publics as the main task of Public Relations delivered by Cutlip & Center (Cutlip et al., 2013)

In an effort to maximize the communication process and the delivery of rapid information on the development of digital communication, the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman participated in using new media to convey quickly to match the speed of information so as not to cause prolonged hoaxes. District Government Public Relations. Sleman utilizes digital media such as the Slemankab.go.id website, verified social media Instagram @HumasSleman, and the Sleman Report application to listen to public complaints directly.

The result of analyzing the activities of the District Government Public Relations. Sleman shows the role of Public Relations Online which uses the internet as a communication medium to convey information and policies widely and quickly. Through this media, it will also facilitate PR activities in the role of improving the image and achieving the goals of Government programs (Perasih, et al., 2018).

"*If we specifically look at hoaxes, it is something that needs to be fought, yes. So, besides having a strategy that must convey information quickly, cooperate by confirming in related fields, especially the Communications and Information Technology to cooperate in selecting and educating related hoaxes. Because we are aware that hoaxes will affect the image and impact on how people believe in us as the government. Therefore, we are really trying to fight hoaxes to always grow public trust by using digital communication media.*" (Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, M.A, Head of Public Relations and Protocol Section of Sleman Regency).

Steps taken by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman by using digital communication media is an effort to approach people who now consume a lot of information digitally in order to avoid hoaxes. There are three important approaches in combating the distribution of hoaxes in the community, namely through institutional, technological, and educational (literacy) approaches (Juditha in Kurniati, et al., 2020). So in this case the District Government Public Relations. Sleman has attempted to combat hoaxes with an institutional approach in collaboration with Kominfo Sleman, and combat through technology, namely using digital media technology to convey information quickly and confirm hoaxes, and take an educational approach through media literacy in collaboration with Kominfo.

Government Public Relations Sleman Regency Efforts to Build Public Trust in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Discussing related to building public trust, Public Relations District Government. Sleman has two strategies, namely to always be consistent and cooperate with the right agencies. This has a relationship as conveyed by Rawlins. Rawlins introduces that there is a connection between PR and Trust. There are two levels of linkage between PR and Trust. First, to fulfill the role as an organizational envoy, public relations practitioners must have credibility. Second, trust is very important for the main purpose of public relations to build and maintain relationships with

stakeholders on which the success of the organization depends (Rawlins, 2007).

The initial model of public relations, which Jim Grunig called the publicity/public information stage, emphasized the delivery of messages to stakeholders through the mass media. Message placement is the primary goal and good media relations are the primary means. The role of trust in this model is critical to gaining credibility with the media and, ultimately, the audience they reach.

"*We as messengers to the public need to convey the truth because trust here is very important, so we always try to be consistent. Both consistent to always be open and consistent regarding what we will always convey. This consistency will anticipate confusion in the community and reduce the risk of hoaxes, especially related to the COVID-19 pandemic."* (Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Head of Public Relations and Protocol Section of Sleman Regency).

Public Relations Kab. Sleman (Sleman Regency) also said that consistency is also included in every certain period of time, consistent with openness in conveying information, as well as being consistent in updating the development of the COVID-19 situation in Sleman. And provide balanced information. Consistency emphasized by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman is part of a person who conveys information by upholding Credibility. This is due to Public Relations consistently involving people who take part in discussions that are asked by the public. As in the case of COVID-19, Public Relations conveys information based on data from the District Health Office. Sleman and the COVID-19 Task Force.

Furthermore, the relationship related to trust in relations as the dimensions discussed by Rawlins (2007), Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman realizes that its role is as a liaison between the community, the Government Public Relations in this case to gain trust needs to do something neutral, namely providing information and services equally and equally to maintain good relations with the community. Regarding the explanation above, this was done by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman is an effort to build trust in the community in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic to reduce public suspicion and slanted news about the government in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Public Relations Efforts to Build Public Trust through COVID-19 Disaster Communication Media

Responding to the hoax issue that resulted in a decrease in public trust in the government, Public Relations Officer who have the responsibility to maintain the image and maintain public trust must try to restore public trust even in the state of hoax information that is so boisterously discussed (Stroh & Margaret, 2002). The results obtained with the Government Public Relations of the Sleman Regency, the handling of COVID-19 information is carried out in a special and different technique like other disaster situations.

"*There are different strategies for handling COVID-19 non-natural disasters, communication and information messages are designed centrally, namely from the National COVID-19 Task Force. This is important considering that there was an error at the beginning of dealing with the COVID-19 disaster, namely the amount of confusing information due to not going through one*

door or one command." (Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, M.A, Head of Public Relations and Protocol Section of Sleman Regency).

As communication is part of efforts to build public trust, message design is the main thing that is able to support increasing public trust. The design of the message is considered by the Public Relations of the Government Sleman Regency is not allowed to be delivered in a language that is biased in interpretation, and at risk of causing another panic by residents. Therefore, the delivery of messages must be based on one door in accordance with the authorized command.

"The SOP for submission is adjusted to the central government, however, the spokesperson for delivering updates and information related to COVID-19 is delivered directly by the Head of the Public Relations and Protocol Section of the Regency. Sleman", explained Dra. Shavitri Nurmala Dewi, Head of Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman.

District Government Public Relations. Sleman is prepared to fight hoaxes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is viewed from the facility to combat hoaxes and provide up to date information through the Corona.Slemankab.go.id and Pemkabselaman.go.id websites. In particular, on the corona.slemankab.go.id website there is a *HOAX INFO* column to provide data and confirm hoax and disinformation news from the Central Kominfo with the help of the AIS machine.

Figure 1. Display of Hoax Statements confirmed by Kominfo

Source: Process by the author

One of the efforts to build public trust in addition to fighting hoaxes and providing confirmation of hoaxes, related to the need for up-to-date information, Public Relations is also always conveyed through any media channels, both print and digital.

"For the media for delivering information and policies, we convey massively, through print media, radio, then local television. Moreover, the most important thing to take care of is Instagram, the website because it directly communicates with the community. And the selection of this media is to reach the entire Sleman audience, not only parents through traditional media but also to reach people who use digital media more often", (Dra. Shavitri Kumala Dewi, M.A, Head of Public Relations and Protocol Section of the Government of Sleman Regency).

In addition, the District Government Public Relations. Sleman also facilitates the Sleman Report Application to listen to the community directly and will inform related fields.

"So far, we have expressed our aspirations and communicated smoothly through the Lapor Sleman application. Although confirmation is needed, at least if we make a report, the admin will respond quickly", Subagyo of Cangkringan Community, Sleman.

The purpose of using media in public relations activities include (1) promoting and disseminating information related to government policies (2) establishing continuous communication (3) increasing public trust (4) improving the good image of the organization (Nina, in Yuliana, 2014: 57). Thus in this case the District Government Public Relations. Sleman runs communication media for the purpose of providing information related to government policies regarding health protocols, establishing sustainability, and increasing public trust in the community.

Nevertheless, the researcher considers the efforts to build public trust carried out by the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman (Sleman District Government) is not yet fully maximized. This is due to the measurement not been carried out by the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman to evaluate performance and efforts to build trust in the community regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

When dealing with COVID-19 along with changes in people's culture which increasingly uses the media to communicate, the spread of hoaxes is unavoidable and resulting in the problem of decreasing public trust in the government in dealing with COVID-19. Therefore, Public Relations as it is responsible for delivering information to the public, it is important to make efforts to build trust in the public. The strategy that has been carried out by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman in building public trust, among others, has designed a clear message, commitment,

and mutual coordination with other agencies, as well as building trust through the value of credibility and relations is a form of Public Relations efforts of the District Government. Sleman builds public trust during the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the researcher considers the efforts to build public trust carried out by the Public Relations of the District Government. Sleman is not yet fully maximized. This is considering that the measurement has not been carried out by the District Government Public Relations. Sleman to evaluate performance and efforts to build trust in the community regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Riski Apriliani: Writing-Conceptual Draft, Methodology, Data curation, **Riski Apriliani**: Writing, Data curation, Draft Compilation, Investigation, Methodology, **Riski Apriliani**: Data curation, Supervisions, Reviewing and Editing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

I certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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