The Role of Public Relations in Crisis Management in the Social Media Era
(Case Study: Centre Point of Indonesia in Makassar City)

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to understand the public relations activities in the management of the public outcry against the reclamation project known as Centre Point of Indonesian (CPI) and to determine the supporting and inhibiting factors of the Makassar City public relations campaign regarding the management of the crises arising from the reclamation project. This study uses the qualitative descriptive method and the case study approach. The phenomenon was explained, and the research data was sourced through interviews, observation, and documentation. The results showed that the management of the Makassar City public relations crisis regarding the reclamation project involves identification of complaints, processing of public complaints, and adherence to standard operational procedures to improve the image and reputation of the government. This study found that the supporting factors of the public relations campaign include cultural similarity, advanced education, and social media, while the inhibiting factor is the negative perception of the government by the community. In general, this paper contributes to the research on crisis management and is a thought-provoking contribution to the development of communication science and public relations crisis management. In particular, this research is expected to contribute to the public relations management of Makassar City.

Keywords: Crisis management; Public Relations; Reclamation; Social media

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Introduction

The reclamation project known as Centre Point of Indonesian (CPI) has continued to generate polemics since the government of Makassar issued RTRW Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2015. Since then, the community became aware that the provincial government of South Sulawesi is working with the developer (Ciputra Group) to achieve the coastal reclamation of Makassar for property business purposes. Also, through the local regulations, the public was informed that the government is planning to use the sea in the north coast of Makassar City for other business purposes. The absence of discussion on RZWP3K (zoning plan of coastal areas and small islands) greatly emphasize the irregularities in the discussion regarding the reclamation policy of Makassar City (End of year report by WALHI on environmental degradation, 2018).

According to data issued by WALHI South Sulawesi at the end of 2018, the impact of the reclamation not only causes environmental damage but also affects the welfare of coastal communities. The reclamation project around Losari Beach impacted on the fisherman's catch, so fishermen must go far from the coastline to make large catch; WALHI South Sulawesi argues that the reclamation policy by the government impacts on the society and the environment.

Every organization often experiences crisis in everyday operations. Such crisis should be well managed if the organization wishes to remain relevant in today's global era, since every crisis has the potential to influence the image of the organization, especially if the crisis develops into a disaster that has a wide impact on the society. If this happens, the reputation of the organization becomes an object of criticism and injustice in society. As a result, the organization will suffer substantial losses, such as declining level of public confidence in organizational integrity. In general, there are three possible outcomes for an organization in crises: a) The organization is closed, either through acquisition by another organization or by bankruptcy. b) The organization is still in existence but experiences financial losses, loss of public trust, and loss of market share, so it takes time to return to normal. c) The organization can maintain its reputation and can even be better than before the crisis.

Experts of public relations have given numerous definitions regarding a crisis situation in various communication and literacy organizations. Devlin in his book Management Planning & Execution (Devlin, 2007) defines crisis as "an unstable time for an organization, with a distinct possibility for an undesirable outcome"; this can be interpreted as an unstable situation with a variety of possibilities that produce undesirable impacts. From the above definition, it can be concluded that if a crisis occurs in an organization or institution, the normal procedures cannot be sustained, which causes instability. The organization experiences shock. If this situation persists for a long time, it will result in some unexpected negative outcomes (Kriyantono, 2012).

There are two possibilities regarding crisis: first, crises that can be anticipated and, second, crises that cannot be anticipated. Those that can be anticipated are

closely related to the characteristics or areas of activities that an organization is involved in. However, those that cannot be anticipated are external crises that are equally harmful. Organizations need to form a small, permanent crisis management team, so that they can always communicate with the public. In case of a crisis, the team must take the initiative and provide the first response by explaining to the public, lest the team respond as a result of press question. Efforts to cover-up the crisis could be fatal, as the investigative team of the press would increasingly dig deeper into the crisis. The main task of the crisis team is to perform crisis identification and determine the steps to be taken. The team must be able to explain the communication messages that have been agreed upon. The crisis management team should avoid statements that are off the record because they should actually master the problem (Tamher, 2011).

According to (Kreps, 1990), crisis management is a public relations activity to cope with emerging issues in a community, such as the damage suffered by an organization. The crisis can also be a crisis of communication between the public and the organization, which raises the uncertainty of information. Management and public relations are two areas of social science that developed separately. However, due to its development in the late 20th century, management finally increased its role in almost every area of life. As with the relationship between management and other areas, management also is also embedded in public relations. This means that management has contributed greatly to the application of public relations concepts in human life (Kasali, 2014).

Management, in the context of strategy, has a role in helping a company adapt to changes in the business environment. The business environment, as often stated in newspapers, in the last 10 years seems to be a very important determinant of a company's success. The environment is a set of factors that emerge from the outside and cannot easily be controlled, for example, regulatory changes, political activities, economic situation, technological developments, population development, and so on. Environmental changes will certainly affect a company's achievement in gaining profit or contributing to the parties concerned. Public relations play an important role in efforts to streamline organizations by establishing long-term relationships with strategic institutions. Certainly, a public relations practitioner will use management concepts to facilitate the implementation of his/her tasks, such as planning, preparations, actions and communication, and control measures called evaluation.

The term strategic management is often called the strategic plan or long-term plan of the company. In a strategic plan, the company outlines the strategic actions that will be taken within a certain period. The length of time that will be covered varies greatly. In the past, experts recommended a period of about 25 years, but today, it is rare for companies to establish a plan to guide them for the next 25 years. Most companies put together a plan of 5-10 years. The reason is quite obvious; lately, it is very difficult to guess the changes that may occur and their direction. These changes are connected, so the farthest estimate that can be made is very

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limited. To look ahead, the company needs to look back at certain happenings, namely the things that have been accomplished in the past, the targeted achievement, and the perception that arises from its environment. A public relations practitioner is not allowed to ignore the implementation of this long-term plan. He/she needs to actively observe the opinions and expectations of others. Because the process involves many parties, a long-term plan that is successfully unified is often called a "consensus".

This long-term plan is the base from which public relations practitioners formulate the various technical plans and communication steps to be taken daily. To be able to act strategically, public relations activities must be aligned with the vision and mission of the organization, which is the reason the organization or company stays alive. Taking this into consideration, a public relations practitioner can establish his or her objectives and work towards them.

The materials obtained so far will be beneficial to the organization in the process of formulation of long-term plans, which is generally done jointly with other departments of the company. This process raises interaction and gives birth to mutual understanding among the parties concerned. The outcome of this formulation is a thorough and unified plan. All parties will know where the company is at present and where it is heading to for a certain period of time. According to the formulation, a public relations practitioner can determine the steps to be taken as well as the work program to be compiled. With this approach, practical steps taken by a public relations practitioner will be more aligned with the company's direction.

Current technological developments are characterized by the emergence of an era of information freedom. The development of communication in the virtual world creates a virtual public space. This phenomenon provides the opportunity for freedom of speech. For example, the phenomenon of citizen journalism is used in producing, disseminating and consuming information; this phenomenon has revamped the manner of accessing information. The audience is no longer passive in receiving information.

The emergence of the virtual world or cyberspace has changed the position of the audience in the dissemination of information by the media. In the cyberspace, the information is two-way, i.e. the producer of the information and the audience can interact with each other, and the distribution of information is not through traditional media. This gave rise to the concept of liberation technology. In the world today, every organization needs to pay attention and manage issues that develop in the cyberspace about the state of the organization in order to safeguard its image and reputation.

The government of Makassar in carrying out the reclamation project experienced several oppositions from several circles, regarding the various issues that would develop in the community as the consequences of the reclamation project. Some parties stated that if the reclamation project is conducted at the Losari Beach, it would likely result in the occurrence of environmental damage in some areas of

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Makassar Beach. In this situation, public relations help to improve the trust the society has in the government, which is very important for the existence of a government. When the image of a government institution is broken in the eyes of the society, the institution must prepare to face crisis. A government institution that is experiencing such a problem will be negatively impacted.

The government of Makassar City needs to pay attention to the issues that are developing in the society, by disseminating information through the new media and conventional media. The image of an institution depends on how the public relations team handles issues that are developing. Reclamation issues that ruin the environment continue to thrive in the society through various media. Recently, online media continuously report the reclamation project.

The environmental report at the end 2017 by WALHI South Sulawesi firmly stated that the government should be proactive to prevent environmental damage. The attitude of the government to the environment has destroyed it, and the effect on the society and the community territory continues to increase significantly, both for those living in the village and the city. Another cause of concern is the behavior of companies that do not care about the environmental impacts that occur. It is obvious that environmental issues cannot be separated from the actions of leaders. This is the reason why WALHI South Sulawesi strongly advises the community to choose leaders who care about the environment and the people's welfare. An online publication indicated that the People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice called the reclamation action of the government of Makassar City a criminal act against the environment and the people who are affected.

Research Methods

Types of research

This research uses the qualitative descriptive approach, which aims to describe the analysis of public relations function in dealing with the communication crisis (complaint) between the citizens of Makassar and the Makassar City government. This research also uses the case study approach, where researchers investigate a government program carefully.

Research location

The research location is Makassar City, precisely the Makassar City Hall Office located at Jenderal Ahmad Yani street. At the site of this research, the researchers obtained both primary and secondary data.

Data types and sources
This research uses two types of data:
1. Primary data: This refers to data obtained directly by using the technique of deep interviews with public relations agents of Makassar City about the role of Makassar public relations team in handling complaints.

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2. Secondary data: This refers to data obtained from books, magazines, and others written materials related to this research.

Data Collection Techniques

The collection of research data is done directly at the research site. The techniques used in the collection of data are as follows:

1. Observation techniques: In the observation process, among others, the following were observed: Makassar City Hall location, Makassar City Hall facilities, complaint handling facilities, and the activities of citizens of Makassar. The process is done to better understand the condition of Makassar City Hall, which is the location of the research.

2. Deep interview techniques (in-depth interview): In-depth interviews were conducted with all the informants that were selected to capture a variety of data related to the research issues. The interview time was adjusted to suit the informant. The in-depth interviews were conducted using the interview guidelines created based on the informant category, so that the information obtained would be in accordance with the research focus.

3. Documentation: Documentation was done by collecting data and documents related to the research issues and searching for concepts related to the theory used. The search involved books, journals, magazines, newspapers, the internet, and so on. These concepts were used to enhance the study and explain its findings. The documents gathered include the SOP for handling complaints and the profile of Makassar City Hall Office as well as the recap of complaint data from citizens of Makassar.

Data Analysis Technique

Regarding the data analysis technique, the authors used qualitative descriptive analysis. The data obtained in the field were examined and classified by type. Once the data are classified, they are analyzed to get a comprehensive conclusion. The result of the correlation with the theory is then presented in narrative form for easy understanding. Further, the analysis of data in this study used the interactive model data analysis technique of (Miles & Huberman, 1992). They stated that three processes take place interactively:

1. Data Reduction: The data obtained in the field are quite numerous, since they need to be collected in detail. Data reduction means summarizing, choosing the underlying factor, focusing on what matters, looking for themes and patterns, and discarding unnecessary items. Data that have been reduced gives a clear picture, which makes it easier for researchers to analyze.

2. Data Display: After the data is reduced, the next step is to record them. Data display in qualitative research can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and so on. Miles and Michael (1992) state as follow: "The most frequent form of data display for

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qualitative research data in the past has been narrative text". This means that data in qualitative research are most commonly presented with narrative text. In addition to the narrative form, the data display can also be graphic, matrix, or network.

3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: The third step is the withdrawal of conclusions and verification. The initial conclusion is still temporary and will change if no strong evidence is found in its favor at the next data collection stage. However, if the conclusion is supported by valid and consistent evidence when researchers return to the field to collect data, then the conclusion is a credible conclusion (trustworthy). Conclusions in qualitative research may be able to answer the problems formulated at the beginning or may not because problems in qualitative research are also temporary in nature and will develop after the research in the field.

Research Informant

The results of qualitative research are not meant to be generalized. Therefore, in qualitative research, there are no known population and samples. The subjects of the research are informants that provide a variety of information needed during the research process. The subject of a research according to (Arikunto, 2007) is a very important position in a study. The subject of a research should be laid out before researchers are ready to collect data.

In determining the informants of this research, the technique of purposive sampling (sample purpose) was used. Purposive sampling is a sampling technique with certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2011). It is the selection of informants based on the research objectives (Idrus M, 2009). Informants chosen with purposive sampling in this study are those who are directly involved in the coastal reclamation of the Losari City of Makassar and have insights and knowledge on the topic of research; therefore, they can provide complete information. The informants were chosen based on their involvement with the public relations activities of Makassar. The informants chosen are as follows:

1. Head of PR and protocol of Makassar City
2. Head of news and media subsection
3. Head of protocol subsection
4. Head of documentation and publications subsection
5. Implementing public relations and service administration

Result and Discussion

Profile of the research informants

The selected informants were associated with the topic of research, i.e., they were community public relations agents of Makassar who had worked for more than two years:

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Table of Information on public relations officers of Makassar

No	Name	Position
1	Hamid Pagarra	Head of PR section
2	Nuri Tri Hendrayani	Sub-section head of complaints
3	Rezki Amelia Gaffar	Sub-section head of documentation
4	Andi. Reza Nugraha	Sub-section head of announcement
5	Inang	Public Relations Staff

Source: Processed results of primary data, 2019.

Public relations activities in Makassar in the management of the Centre Point of Indonesia

The recapitulation of complaints from the citizens of Makassar from January to October of 2019 indicates that 46 complaints were received, most of which were handled by the unit in charge and were satisfactorily resolved. It is important to know how complaints are handled by the public relations management team of Makassar City. From the in-depth interviews and relevant study of documents, we found that the processes of handling complaints by the public relations management team of Makassar City are as follows:

1. Public complaint identification. The first phase of public relations management is to identify the crisis, i.e., to know what is actually happening on a particular day that influences the image of the government. Crisis identification is meant to facilitate the resolution of the crisis caused by complaints of members of the community/society regarding the reclamation project: Center Point of Indonesia (CPI). The PR team receives complaints directly in the office, through social media (Facebook and Twitter) and through its call center. Information obtained from the in-depth interview with Hamid Pagarra, the head of the PR section of Makassar indicated that the PR section is tasked with collecting information about public complaints against the reclamation project. The complaints are received by the public relations office. Further, information is collected from technical units about the state of reclamation. The purpose of reclamation in addition to the environmental issues in general are explained to the community in non-specific terms. However, the explanation to the provincial government or relevant officials regarding the project is done in specific terms.

2. Processing public complaints. The information gathered in the first phase is used for crisis analysis. This stage is work behind the media. The analysis that is done must be deep and extensive. The analysis involves processing the data that were obtained from the identification of the crisis

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phase. Hamid Pagarra gave a description of the crisis analysis process. He said that the collected complaint data were first analyzed. Then, based on the analysis, the complaints can be addressed and other complaints can be prevented. The analysis takes time to find what has to be done next because the problem is a protracted one and has caused public complaints for long, which has resulted in a crisis. According to Hamid Pagarra, the function of the public relations management team also involves explaining the handling of complaints related to environmental damage. Regarding the city and the environment, it is not the role of the public relations team to deliver information to the society, but the PR team only serves as a bridge between the related unit and the public as well as the government of Makassar.

3. Internal social media instruction. In the process of handling complaints, social media is used. The public relations management team informs the entire staff about the various complaints from the community about reclamation through social media. Social media is used to provide information to communities about the steps taken by technical units to improve the environment. At this stage, the PR team isolates the crisis to prevent further impact. They achieve this by providing answers to emerging issues emanating from the public using social media.

4. Building media posts. Furthermore, in the process of handling complaints about reclamation, the public relations unit cooperates with the media. The cooperation with the mass media is an effort to disseminate information to communities on the environment. Through interviews that are aired by the mass media, information is provided to the public regarding the reclamation project. Also, a control program is used by the PR unit of Makassar City to enlighten the public before the emergence of a crisis caused by complaint about reclamation.

5. Reference to the standard operational procedure (SOP). The mechanism applied by the government of Makassar in handling public complaints is regulated by the SOP (standard operational procedures). The implementation of the SOP is centralized and the PR team follows the standard operational procedure. However, there are complaints that need quick handling outside the standard operational procedure, but in general, the handling of complaints from the public or community by the PR management team is based on the SOP.

The government of Makassar City also has working steps for complaint management technicians, which were established by the public relations unit. The

working steps are as follows:

1. Fill the book, handover the picket.
2. Coordinate with previous implementers regarding the condition of the completed work while going on to the next job plan.
3. Monitor all works related to government.
4. Record to the report book and, if required, log on to White Board all activities relating to public services.
5. Communication, telephone, and social media.
6. Follow up on reports about complaints that must be addressed immediately.
7. For complaint-related information, implement according to the procedure; request permission from the PR head before forwarding the report to the relevant party; monitor the priority state of the information, including forwarding the information to the associated unit. Input a related complaint report, and forward the information to the publication section.
8. Understand the SOP as well as system conditions through the available facilities.
9. Immediately report to the relevant officer if information that could damage the image of the government of Makassar City is received.

Supporting factors of Makassar public relations campaign regarding the reclamation project

An in-depth analysis of the PR management team's handling of the public crisis was conducted. The situational crises communication theory model was used to see how the government of Makassar City anticipates and handles public criticism caused by reclamation. According to the situational crisis communication theory, basically, the public hold certain opinion regarding who a crisis should be attributed to, and such opinion will determine the reputation of the government. Attribution is essentially the public perception of the crisis. The words and actions of the PR management team influence the public's perception of the government and the crises. Furthermore, that perception will constitute an evaluation of the government's reputation. Factors that support the PR campaign of the government are given below.

Supporting factors

Change is not easy to achieve. There are several supporting and limiting factors of change. Similarly, there are several factors affecting the public relations campaign of Makassar City regarding the reclamation project. Cultural similarity can enhance the public relations activities of Makassar City because it simplifies the process of delivery of information to the community. Cultural similarity is an opportunity that can be used by public relations agents of Makassar while approaching members of the community. Cultural similarity between the public relations staff and the coastal community facilitates the delivery of messages

designed by the technical unit. The culture of Bugis Makassar is mostly found in the coastal area of Makassar, and the area should be approached by public relations staff with the same culture. The similarity of culture between the community and the technical unit is expected to facilitate the communication process; also, this allows public relations staff of Makassar to enter easily into the coastal area of Makassar to see directly the public response to the reclamation project.

In the handling of public relations campaign of Makassar City, education is another factor to note. The level of education is a measure of the level of understanding in the community, which determines the message that will be delivered by the PR staff. Messages created by the technical unit of the public relations section have different styles and languages, depending on the level of public education. The message conveyed to coastal communities tends to use the language of the Makassar region, while the message conveyed to communities in the city of Makassar use the formal language. The use of language is adjusted based on the level of education and culture. A high level of education provides certain values to individuals: it provides insights and makes one willing to accept new things and open to new thinking.

The development of social media helps the performance of public information delivery. The PR staff of Makassar City do not only pass information directly to the community but also make use of social media. Social media is designed to safeguard and improve the reputation of an institution as it is an interactive medium. It is utilized by public relations staff of Makassar to be closer to the public. Members of the public can follow social media rhythms, communicate directly, and respond promptly regarding public complaints spread over social media. This helps the dissemination of information to reach a vast majority of the public. Makassar City PR staff balances the use of online media communication with that of direct communication, especially in remote locations.

Inhibitory factor

Based on the situational crisis communication theory, the public is the main object or domain of a government. The government of Makassar City looks for ways to please the public in order to avoid criticism.

Therefore, the government tries to anticipate the complaints that may arise from the reclamation project. Public attribution/perception of who is responsible for a crisis can essentially be grouped into three crisis groups, also called clusters (crisis clusters), namely, cluster of victims (victim clusters), clusters of accidents or unintentional (accidental clusters), and clusters of intentional (intentional clusters). Organizations are categorized into victim clusters if the public believes that the organization is not the cause of the crisis. In other words, organizations are believed to be victims of the crisis.

The crisis that occurred in the city of Makassar cannot be categorized into the cluster of victims because the environmental damage that occurred was not caused by an external government but rather by the reclamation project. Therefore,

only the public or community can be categorized as cluster of victims. The public relations management staff of Makassar City recorded complaints from almost all layers of the society about the reclamation project and logging. Complaints entered the system of centralized complaints and complaint applications through the call center (123), Facebook & Twitter; demonstrations occurred as many as eight times, and complaints from the community also came directly to the Makassar City government office.

Accidental cluster appears when the public believes that the event was not an intentional act of the organization. In other words, the organization has no purposeful intent to cause the crisis. The environmental damage to coastal communities due to the reclamation project is causing the loss of livelihood. The loss of livelihood was indirectly caused by the action of the government.

Intentional clusters occur if the organization intentionally causes the crisis. Organizations are known to intentionally cause a crisis that could harm stakeholders. Regarding the crises that occurred in Makassar, the public or community believe that the government did not give information about the cause of the environmental pollution. The public relations management team of Makassar City provided information related to the reclamation project, but still many people have not received notification regarding the reclamation, considering that it only disseminated the information through the local newspaper and some social media platforms. Also, notices directly related to the reclamation project are places in the government office of Makassar for those who go there. PR management staff have been in cooperation with the customer service, leaders, and other implementing units to inform the public about the reclamation project in the coastal area of Makassar.

Conclusion

This study described the activities of the public relations management team of the government of Makassar City. The team handles the public crisis emanating from the reclamation project by identifying public complaints, processing the report of the general complaint, which is made through the customer service, and then following up the issue in the technical unit.

The public relations team of the government of Makassar City use social media in addition to a media post in an attempt to isolate the crisis that occurred due to the reclamation project. The next action is to create a public crisis management program based on Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) of the PR team of Makassar city. This study found that the supporting factors of the public relations campaign include cultural similarity, a high level of education, and social media, while the inhibiting factor is the negative perception of the government by the community.***

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