Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)

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Abstract

The government is an institution that has the authority to create populist policies in dealing with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society. Furthermore, Public Relations is an important part that can communicate the government's policies to the public. This study aims to analyze government policies and the contribution of public relations to the Covid-19 public crisis in Banggai district. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. Informants were selected through a purposive sampling technique where the researcher determined the sample naturally, or in other words, the informant had to be in direct contact with the object of research so that the sample in this study was the Banggai Regent as well as the head of the Covid-19 Task Force and the Head of Public Relations. The data collection technique used is through observation, interviews, documentation, and data analysis techniques used, namely the Miles and Huberman interactive model in the form of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of this study describe local government policies in the form of quick response (quick win), health management, handling of economic impacts and the provision of social safety nets and the contribution of Public Relations in the form of campaigning policies through print media, electronic media, social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), banners and conventional communication patterns (appeals through houses of worship and BPU). The uniqueness of the research lies in the type of media used in campaigning the message. Where Public Relations collaborates between the use of new media and conventional patterns.

Keywords: *Policy, contribution, government, public relations, public crisis*

INTRODUCTION

Policy is the basic instrument of government and the public to establish relationships and unite views (Ekp et al., 2020). The policy in Suharto (2008), is an attitude or alternative action that directly regulates the management and distribution of natural, financial and human resources for public purposes. (Tuwu, 2020). Anderson in Rita (2019), a policy in the form of a description of the actions taken by government institutions and their apparatus for the public interest (Rita P.S, Banga and BB, 2019). According to Jones, public policy is an action that leads to certain problems that are interrelated and affect society (Rita P.S, Banga and BB, 2019).

According to Federick as quoted by Agustino, "Policy is a series of actions initiated by individuals, groups, or the government in a special area where obstacles or problems are found and the possibility of actualizing the policy offer in order to obtain a certain orientation (Nursyariyah, Nur and Meigawati, 2020). Policies usually accommodate the needs of various groups so that they can protect the interests of the public. Policy management efforts illustrate the correlation that occurs between the state and the public. As stated by John Locke and Stuart Mill, the community's contribution to the public policy process is very meaningful because it can provide lessons and understanding in promoting a sense of social responsibility (Ekp et al., 2020).

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

In Indonesia, there are three policy/regulatory steps to support the handling of COVID-19, the first being a government regulation in lieu of law (perpu) number 1 of 2020 concerning state financial policy and financial system stability. The second government regulation (PP) number 21 of 2020 concerning large-scale social restrictions in the context of accelerating the handling of covid 19 and the third presidential decree (kepres) number 11 of 2020 concerning the determination of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

In embodying a government policy, Public Relations is one of the government institutions that plays a very important role. Public Relations is a field of science that is phenomenal in an organization. This institution has a role in establishing relationships with the community in the form of interacting, absorbing aspirations, educating and persuading the public. A PR actor must have leadership skills (Hairunnisa, 2020), examine a problem, develop programs and skills in designing creative and innovative activities to influence the hearts of the audience (Cakra Ningsi, 2019).

Ruslan Rosady stated that the definition of public relations is an institution that conducts research and supports relevant agencies to achieve goals so that companies benefit from full public relations participation (Cakra Ningsi, 2019). There are two types of public relations, namely private and government public relations. Government public relations who carry out the main task of persuading, providing information, publishing so that the public has the same view as a government agency (Kurnia et al., 2020). Government public relations in principle plays a tactical role (medium term) in the form of providing effective news to educate and encourage the public. Furthermore, the strategic (long- term) role is to play a role in determining decisions, providing innovative ideas for the sustainability of government institutions (Frizki et al., 2016).

The functions of government public relations are listed in the general guidelines for government public relations Chapter III article 6, as government spokespersons, providers of information on policies, disseminating policy information, responding to public reports, seeking an atmosphere of harmonization between internal and external publics, dynamic and as intermediaries between agencies and stakeholders (Sidharta et al., 2021).

It started with a burst of information, precisely at the end of 2019 where a mysterious virus similar to SARS had appeared in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province, one of the provinces in China (Ngonso and Chukwu, 2021). The news seems slowly but positive to become a factual reality after the World Health Organization (WHO) gave a notification that the first type of corona virus had arrived in Wuhan and had infected the wider community.

Precisely on January 30, 2020, WHO announced that the world had been positively affected by the new coronavirus cluster pandemic and was finally given the designation as Corona Virus Disease 2019 or Covid-19. Apart from China, there are also a number of new regional epicenters where COVID-19 spreads rapidly with such a large ratio and has resulted in many deaths, as happened in Iran. The spread of Covid-19 then penetrated to the Australian continent, Europe and soon this pandemic across the Atlantic Ocean moved to the Americas and then spread as a new epicenter with the number of sufferers up to tens of thousands of victims, including in the archipelago (Poppy S. Winanti, 2559).

Since the United Nations declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic in March 2019, the Indonesian government has prioritized two urgent cases as a result of the pandemic, namely health and economic problems. This is in line with research conducted by Dewi and Setiyaningsih, (2020), the Covid-19 case is a social phenomenon that has an impact on many aspects including the health and economic aspects of the community (Dewi and Setiyaningsih, 2020).

In Indonesia, the first known positive case came from Depok (Com, 2021). The process of spreading is so fast, only through the entry of splashes of liquid when we communicate with the communicant, be it through the nose, eyes, mouth, or through objects that have been exposed to fluids from people with COVID-19 (Kadarisman and Padjadjaran, 2021). Jakarta is confirmed as the nation's capital which is the epicenter of the spread of COVID-19. Many factors have contributed to

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

the rapid spread of this virus to regions in Indonesia, including the high level of community activity, both between districts, provinces and even internationally, which resulted in direct contact between individuals with one another. Another factor is that people are not used to a clean lifestyle in the form of washing hands, limiting distance, avoiding crowds and using masks at all times.

Especially in Banggai Regency, the development of Covid-19 cases seems to continue to increase. Data shows that as of December 1, 2020, there were 276 confirmed cases consisting of 5 new cases, 81 old cases, 175 recovered and 15 died. The exposed patients came from 6 sub-districts, namely Luwuk, North Luwuk, South Luwuk, Toili, Moilong and Nambo sub-districts. On January 1, 2021, 446 confirmed cases consisted of 10 new cases, 80 old cases, 333 recovered and 23 died. It was confirmed that its spread reached sub-districts that were not previously affected, such as Bunta, Pagimana and Bunta sub-districts (Public Relations and Communications and Information Department). This data shows that the development of the spread of Covid-19 from December 2020 to January 2021 continues to increase. Death cases from 15 cases to 23 cases and their distribution in sub-districts also increased from the previous one.

Previous research on the government's role in handling COVID-19 was carried out by Leo Agustino, Harits Hijrah Wicaksana (2020), Policy Analysis of Handling COVID-19: Experience China, South Korea, Italy, and Indonesia. This study suggests one of the actors who are actively involved in solving the pandemic starting with the highest leadership of a country (government), medical and nursing staff, security agencies, researchers, and so on. (Agustino and Wicaksana, 2020). Sulistyoningsih (2017) in researching public relations strategies and protocols on the publication of DPRD DIY activities. The results showed that the Public Relations of the DIY DPRD and the Protocol had ten strategies in publicizing the activities of the DIY DPRD. These ten strategies include pulpit legitimacy, advertisements/newspapers, mass media mass, supplements (newspapers), interactive dialogue radio, live radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, TV magazines, websites, press conferences and media centers (Sulistyoningsih, 2017).

In this study, the researchers focused on analyzing government policies to tackle COVID-19 and analyzing the contribution of public relations in campaigning for policy messages on handling the COVID-19 pandemic in Banggai Regency. What makes this research unique compared to research conducted by Leo Agustino et al, lies in the actors involved in solving the Covid-19 pandemic. Where the research conducted by Agustino et al., the actors who are actively solving the pandemic consist of the highest leadership, medical staff, and nurses, security agencies, researchers and so on. As for the research that we conducted, there were actors involved other than the government, in this case the Regional Head who was concurrently the Chair of the Covid-19 Task Force, Health Service, Communications and Information Service, and Public Relations who played a role in campaigning policy messages.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Sulistyoningsih (2017) is in the form of research on public relations strategies and protocols for the publication of DIY DPRD activities. Where there are ten strategies carried out in publicizing DPRD activities which include the legitimacy of the pulpit, advertoria / newspapers, mass media, supplements (newspapers), interactive dialogue radio, live radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, tv magazines, websites, press conferences and media centers. Compared to the research we did; it lies in the aspect of campaigning for policy messages. Where Public Relations collaborates between new media (Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp) and conventional communication patterns in the form of appeals through houses of worship and Public Meeting Halls.

LITERATURE REVIEW
PR management planning model
The public relations management process according to Cutlip is divided into four steps, namely: defining the problem (or opportunity). This step includes investigating and monitoring the knowledge of opinions, attitudes and behavior of those who are concerned about and affected by

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

the actions and policies of the organization. This step provides the foundation for all other steps of the troubleshooting process by determining what is currently happening. Make plans and programs. This second step is part of this process of answering "based on the situation we have studied in Step one, what should we change, do and speak. Act, communicate. Jim Lukaszewski suggests that a plan or strategy is the driving force in any business, or organization. Strategy is an intellectual force that helps organize, prioritize and empower power in decision making. Without strategy there is no direction, without strategy there is no momentum, without strategy there is no impact.

The next stage is the implementation of activity and communication designs that have been designed to get certain target objects for each audience in order to achieve program orientation. Finally evaluate the program. The final step of the process includes an assessment of program preparation, implementation, and outcomes. While the program is being implemented adjustments are made based on feedback evaluation of how the program is working or not. The program is continued or stopped after learning, how we are now or then (Scott M. Cutlip, 2011).

Attribution Theory in crisis

This theory was pioneered by Bernard Weiner and Fritz Heider which discusses how individuals draw conclusions about the causes of a behavior, both their own behavior and the behavior of a person (including the organization). Communication behavior is influenced by a person's attribution to himself and the other person. An ineffective communication occurs due to misinterpretation, because attribution is the result of interpretation of certain motives and behaviors (Kriyantono, 2014, p. 171). Heath in Kriyanto, there are several assumptions of attribution theory formulated by Heider and Weiner, namely:

• Individuals tend to want to know the causes of the behavior they see
• Individuals use systematic processes to explain behavior
• Once an attribute is created, it influences subsequent feelings and behavior
• Individuals have reasons to build their impressions of others by a three-stage process; observe behavior, determine whether the behavior is intentional or not, and categorize the behavior as behavior driven by internal and external motivation.
• In the current crisis situation, theory is used to draw conclusions about what factors cause individuals/audiences to tend to disobey a policy. Furthermore, an interpretation will be built on the basis of individual/audience behavior so that this can help the Government and public relations in determining and compiling steps/strategies to be applied in handling a crisis/problem.

Framing

Framing is the process of creating messages by selecting and highlighting certain parts of an issue to be communicated to the public. The message can be a verbal or non-verbal message. The results of framing by public relations practitioners can be disseminated to the public in various ways, namely: organizing terminology or slogans, event management, artifacts and public relations writing products, such as press releases, magazines and brochures. Todd Gitlin quoted by Eriyanto suggests that framing is a strategy for selecting, emphasizing and presenting an event based on a

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

certain point of view. Hallahan said that there are three important processes that occur in framing, namely first, inclusion, namely the process of choosing events, words, pictures or photos to convey to others; the second is exclusion, namely the process of not conveying (ignoring) an event, image or photo; and emphasis (emphasis) which is done to get a high message effect, such as a message that is delivered repeatedly or a photo that is printed in large size, underlining a word (Kriyantono, 2014).

Departing on the basis of the characteristics of the audience, of course this frame is part of the solution, because the frame seeks to construct messages based on the audience's situation by selecting words or sentences, what media is used of course with an orientation for the benefit of the audience itself.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative method. Kriyantono in Cahyani (2020), this type of research has the aim of describing and explaining the reality in the field in a structured and detailed manner (Cahyani, 2020). This method can provide in-depth explanations regarding government policies and the contribution of Public Relations to the Covid-19 public crisis.

This research was conducted in the proud district. There are several factors that underlie this research, first, because the rate of spread of the corona virus in this city continues to increase. Second, the implementation of public health protocols has not been maximized due to the lack of policy socialization. This research was conducted from December 2020-January 2021. This study uses a purposive sampling technique, namely the researcher in determining the informants (samples) naturally, namely informants who are directly related to the object of research. In this study, there were 5 (five) informants. The criteria for informants are the Banggai Regent as well as the Head of the Task Force, Head of the Public Relations Division, Head of Protocol, Head of Leadership Communications Division, Head of Publication and Documentation. In this research, we conducted interviews for each informant, so we counted 5 (five) interviews.

We also conducted interviews offline using the recording method. Meanwhile, the overall location of the interviews was conducted in the offices and homes of each informant. The data collection techniques used through observation, interviews, and documentation as well as data analysis techniques used are the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. Where this model contains elements of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Rahmatunisa and Febriani, 2019).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In an effort to respond to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the people of Banggai Regency, the local government took steps to deal with it by formulating policies that were categorized into four main factors, namely: quick wins (quick wins), health prevention, settlement of economic impacts and provision of safety nets. social. Following are the results of interviews with informants. The results of interviews with informants in this case the Regent of Banggai stated as follows.

> "The policy that we have implemented is in the form of a quick response (quick wins). We formed a task force to accelerate the handling of Covid-19, determine and publish covid-19 regulations/protocols and determine regional disaster conditions, provide Covid-19 education to the public, inventory and check people

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

who come from areas exposed to corona and supervise with health protocol standards. at the entrance at the border between districts."

In the field of health management, according to the informants, the policies are as follows:

"We provide a special COVID-19 privacy room at the Luwuk Hospital and an emergency hospital, power all regional and public capabilities. Together in handling COVID-19, preparing emergency hospital facilities, we have installed 50 hand washing stations and 30 sterilization booths located at the hospital. placed in crowded places in Luwuk, Banggai". *(Interview on 18/01/2021, at 14.40-15.36 WITA).*

One of the factors affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the community's economy. Therefore, the design of government programs is one of the economic problems. To implement the program that has been designed, the following steps are taken by the government. The results of our interviews with informants:

"The goal of dealing with economic impressions is to ensure the availability of basic necessities and regional food security. What we are doing is preventing the consequences of panic buying, providing incentives and stimulus for Small and Medium Enterprises who feel the economic impression."

Furthermore, according to the informant, efforts to implement the fourth aspect are in the form of providing social safety nets. Here are the results of our interview:

"Our provision of social safety nets implements and mobilizes all public energy to the village level and the business world to work hand in hand with local government institutions to work hand in hand to help others and mobilize the community to plant Barito (onion chili tomatoes) and monthly crops such as bananas. This is intended so that people can save on household spending and support them when the food crisis hits." *(Interview on 18/01/2021, at 14.40-15.36 WITA).*

To support the implementation of government programs in the field, Public Relations also plays a role in the campaign. As is the case with the opinion of expert Frank Jefkins who said that public relations in essence are always concerned with the activity of creating understanding through knowledge, and through these activities it is hoped that an impact will emerge, namely positive change (Tendean S. Cristian, 2013). Public relations of the district government are proud of in campaigning for policies through the following steps. The following are the results of interviews with the chief informant (Public Relations Section):

"Our efforts include coordinating with the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, the Health Office, as well as internal coordination with the COVID-19 task force and external public relations for local governments. The next step is to expose leadership policy information through various media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp (social media), radio (electronic media) and also print media (newspapers). We frame the news to be more interesting, with the aim that people do not get bored reading the news/information."

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

> "People who do not use social media, our efforts are not to abandon the old pattern of delivering policies through houses of worship and BPU (public meeting halls). Furthermore, we also convey government policy messages through the installation of banners in villages and sub-district capitals." *(Interview on 15/01/2021, 09.00-10.12 WITA).*

The same thing was said by the Head of Sub-Division in Internal Public Relations. Here are the results of the interview:

> "Head of the Head of Communications Subdivision: We are coordinating with the Covid-19 Task Force, the Health Service and with the Leadership Communication Forum (Forkopimda). Then we also coordinate with the Head of Section, sub-sections to unify concepts for making decisions that are right with the conditions of the community. From the results of these communications, we will then submit our policy to the publication and documentation sub-section" *(interview on 18/01/2021, 20.00-21.28 WITA).*

> "Head of the Protocol Subdivision: in our field apart from coordinating, the focus is on the leadership schedule, implementation of service arrangements, place planning, ceremonial procedures, the aim is to support the leadership in disseminating a policy/information. For example, when the leader, in this case the regent, who is also the head of the task force, visits for policy socialization, we make and prepare a schedule. In practice, in our field there is an advance team who precedes the leadership to prepare preparations in the field, including also ensuring the safety of the leadership" *(Interview on 15/01/2021, 09.00-09.40).*

> "Head of the documentation subdivision: We always coordinate with the communication sub- section of the leadership, the protocol sub-section regarding information on the activities of the leadership/task team including such as the next taskforce meetings, from this information we carry out escorts in the form of documenting activities, covering and releasing news through various existing channels, including social media (facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), print media (newspapers) and electronic media (radio), banners and conventional communications" *(Interview on 20/01/2021, 16.00-16.56 WITA).*

The Banggai Regency government in an effort to handle Covid-19 formulates policies through steps that are in accordance with the attribution theory in the crisis. This theory was pioneered by Bernard Weiner and Fritz Heider which discusses how individuals draw conclusions about the causes of a behavior, both their own behavior and the behavior of a person (including the organization). In this case, the government formulates policies based on the results of the identification, observation of individuals/audiences affected by COVID-19 and draws the conclusion that COVID-19 has an impact on the health and economic aspects of the community. Furthermore, through this theory, it was also found that people tend to ignore health protocols caused by lack of knowledge and lack of policy information received by the community. This has prompted the government to formulate policies in the form of innovations and strategies into four stages, namely as follows:

The first stage is a quick response (quick wins). These efforts are in the form of establishing a task force for the acceleration of handling Covid-19, determining and publishing regulations/covid-19 protocols and determining the status of regional disasters, providing COVID-19 education to the public, taking inventory and recording people who come from areas that have

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

been positively exposed to COVID-19. 19 and supervise with health protocol standards at the entrances at the border between districts.

The second stage is health care. At this stage, the government is providing special COVID-19 independent rooms at Luwuk Hospital and emergency hospitals, driving all regional and community capabilities for handling COVID-19, preparing emergency hospital facilities, we have installed 50 hand washing stations and 30 sterilization booths. placed in the ceramics in the city of Luwuk.

Furthermore, the third stage is in the form of overcoming economic impressions, the goal is to ensure the availability of the basic needs of the community and the strength of the region with innovations that are carried out including avoiding the impact of panic buying, providing incentives and stimulus to Small and Medium Community Business actors who are experiencing economic downturn.

The fourth stage is the preparation of a community protection net. The preparation of the informant community protection net implements and mobilizes all community capabilities up to the village level as well as business actors to join hands with local governments to help each other and encourage people to plant Barito (onion chili tomatoes) and monthly crops such as bananas. This is intended so that people can save on household spending and support them when the food crisis hits.

Public Relations of the Banggai Regency local government in responding to government policies by formulating programs in the form of policy campaigns. This step is also in accordance with the model of the Public Relations management planning model proposed by Cutlip. Where public relations before carrying out publication activities first identify the characteristics of the target audience including the media used by the public in accessing information. This step is the basis of all planning processes that will be taken by public relations. From the identification results then public relations determine plans and programs. After the program and campaign method have been determined, the next step is to communicate/campaign the policy to the public. The final step of this model is evaluating the program. After the program is implemented, public relations evaluates whether the program has an impact on the community or not.

In the process of campaigning the message of public relations policy, it also determines programs that are in accordance with the framing theory. Where framing is the process of creating messages by selecting and highlighting certain parts of an issue to be communicated to the public. The message can be a verbal or non-verbal message. Public relations in conducting policy campaigns by first framing policy messages that are adjusted based on the conditions of the target audience in the hope that the policy message can be accepted by the public.

Therefore, PR in campaigning for government policy messages through the media has been categorized into two main streams, namely new media and conventional communication patterns. Campaigns based on the new media public relations approach tend to use print media (newspapers), electronic media (radio) and social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp) with a target focus on urban communities and the millennial generation. Furthermore, the conventional pattern approach is policies that are published through banners and communication through houses of worship and Public Meeting Halls. With its target focus on rural audiences who are still difficult to access print, electronic and social media. This is caused by the geographical location where the distance between the village and the district capital is quite far and the lagging behind in the development of cellular and electricity network infrastructure in rural areas, making it difficult to receive information through these modern media.

CONCLUSION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The limitation of this research is the scope of Banggai Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. The local government of Banggai Regency in handling the COVID-19 pandemic public crisis by formulating policies in the form of: quick responses (quick wins), health management, handling of economic

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

impacts and the provision of social safety nets. Furthermore, these strategies and innovations are campaigned by Public Relations through print media, electronic media, social media (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), banners and conventional communication patterns (appeals to houses of worship and public meeting halls).

The contribution of Public Relations in the form of policy campaigns is important to do with a local wisdom approach, namely by using the local languages of Banggai, Saluan, Balantak so that the public can more easily understand the message conveyed. Furthermore, the Government must carry out equitable development in the form of rural electricity development and telecommunications networks.

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International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Studies (IJEASS), Vol. 1(1), 71-80
Government Policies and the Contribution of Public Relations to the Public Crisis (Covid-19)
Adrian Kede, Muh. Iqbal Sultan, Sudirman Karnay

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