THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS OF THE INDONESIAN NATIONAL POLICE CYBER CRIME DIRECTORATE IN HANDLING HOAXES ON SOCIAL MEDIA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses how the Public Relations (PR) of Cyber Crime Police deals with the exposure to hoaxes during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research aims to find out what efforts the Public Relations of Indonesian National Police Cyber Crime in handling hoaxes during the pandemic era. The study employs the qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm in which reality is the result of the construction of a person's thinking ability. The study employs several techniques to collect data, such as observations and in-depth interviews with certain informants. The study uses several concepts, such as the concept of Ronald D. Smith's Public Relations Strategy which has several stages, including formative research, strategy, tactics, and evaluation research. The results of the research reveal that there are two types of hoaxes hitting social media during the Covid-19 pandemic, including the danger of the Covid-19 vaccine, hate speech, and race issues. In dealing with the exposure to hoaxes during the pandemic, the Cyber Crime Public Relations of the Indonesian National Police mostly utilizes the use of social media but still coordinates with the Central Police Cyber Crime Public Relations so that information about hoaxes can be maintained and remains one door, and utilizes communities that have interests in the Cyber Crime Public Relations of the National Police. In the context of handling, there are not many differences both before and during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: communication strategy, Covid-19, hoax, public relations

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Social media is an invention in information technology to facilitate the lives of society. In this case, social media has become part of society. The ease of using it has made it easier for users to access all kinds of information that can be found in the virtual world. However, it is like a double-edged sword; social media can bring good things but at the same time bad things. If we talk about the bad things about social media, we often find the spread of lies in the form of news that has no clear origin the validity of the news. Formally, cases of false news or hoax committed on social media will be handled by the Cybercrime Division of the Indonesian National Police.

The impact of hoax news on social media is very dynamic. This is clearly shown during the Covid-19 pandemic, in which much hoax news is found on social media that can cause unrest in the community. In this case, the task of the police is how to suppress hoax news circulating in the community because hoax news that circulates widely among the community can cause unrests that can generate huge impacts on society, for example, in cases that occur when the Covid-19 pandemic rampantly emerged in Indonesia. At that time, hoax cases are very common and can be easily found on social media, ranging from herbal medicines that can reduce the Covid-19 virus and the issue of vaccines that are very dangerous and disturbing. The hoax news has made some citizens in Indonesia refuse to participate in the vaccine programs promoted by the Indonesian government. Hoaxes about the dangers of vaccines can change the minds of Indonesian people. The results of the investigation by the Special Crimes Directorate of the Jakarta Metropolitan Police Region show that Instagram ranks first among social media platforms that are often used to spread hoaxes and hate speeches from April to early May 2020. The next social media platform that is often used as a means of spreading hoaxes and hate speeches is Facebook. The Head of Public Relations of Jakarta Metropolitan Police Region, Police Senior Commissioner Yusri Yunus states that most of the people who spread hoax news or hate speeches create fake accounts or use other people's names.

In its development, along with the invention of computers as a product of science and technology, there is

a fruitful combination of telecommunication technology, media, and computers to produce a new facility called the Internet. The Internet has given various new things to mankind. According to Juliano in Wahid and Labib (2010: 2), the Internet has made everything easy for everyone, not only to communicate but also to conduct business transactions anytime and anywhere. The Internet has presented a new reality of life to mankind. The Internet has also changed distance and time to become unlimited. Using the Internet, people can carry out various activities that in the real world are difficult to do so because they are separated by distance and time, but it becomes easier now with the presence of the Internet. Using the Internet, a reality that is far from where we are can be presented in front of us in seconds. We can do other activities just like in real life. Technological progress which is the result of human culture, in addition to, has a positive impact, in the sense that it can be utilized for the benefit of mankind and can also harm human development and civilization. The negative impact in question is closely related to crimes. Crimes are closely related and even become part of the results of

culture itself. This means that the higher the level of culture the more modern the country, and the more modern the crime rate in terms of the nature and method of execution (Sahetapy in Abdul Wahid, 2002: 21).

The author intends to focus on crimes that belong to cybercrimes, such as illegal access, distribution of illegal contents, hackings, jailbreaking, gambling, pranks, and hate speeches. This refers to cybercrimes involving hoaxes or fake news. Based on the results of a literature review, it is known that hoaxes containing hate speeches and using social networks have been successfully handled by the Indonesian National Police in the 2015-2016 period with 1,496 cases. There are 1,401 cases involving insults on social media and 95 cases involving inciting or spreading hatred through the media. Based on the results of other literature studies, it is also known that there are forty million sites containing pornographic things; 180,000 social media accounts are used for spreading hate speeches in 2015; and there are more than 86 extreme tolerant contents (Hasyry, 2016). In the discussion section of this article, the author will discuss the efforts of the Indonesian National Police has done in preventing the spread of hoaxes in the community in the context

of communication strategies. In this article, the author will focus on the study of the roles of the police in the function of investigating criminal acts in dealing with hoaxes and what happens in Indonesia.

Success or failure in dealing with hoaxes depends on the efforts made by the National Police Public Relations Division in handling cases and issues that arise. Following the explanation of the problems that have been described, the author is interested in researching Public Relations efforts in dealing with fake news or hoaxes that hit, which is stated in the research entitled "The Communication Strategy of Public Relations Division of Indonesian National Police Cybercrime Directorate in Handling Social Media Hoaxes during Covid-19 Pandemic."

1.2 Problems

Based on the introduction, the problems of the research are what communication strategies the National Police Public Relations Division of Cybercrime Directorate employs in handling hoaxes and how the National Police Public Relations Division handles hoaxes on social media. To be able to provide a better explanation, the author identifies the problems into:

a. types of hoaxes that hit social media;

b. efforts to handle hoaxes carried out by the Cybercrime Police Public Relations.

1.3 Research purposes

The purposes of the research are as follows:

a. to find out the types of hoaxes on social media.

b. to find out the efforts to handle hoaxes by Cybercrime Police Public Relations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hoax

According to https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hoax, a hoax is a noun meaning an act intended to trick or dupe or something accepted or established by fraud or fabrications. Meanwhile, as a verb, the word means to trick into believing or accepting as genuine something false and often preposterous. Another source, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hoax, states that a hoax is a plan to deceive someone, such as telling the police that there is a bomb somewhere when there is not one or a trick. The word has various synonyms, such as bad faith, bilk, blackmail, bluff, hoodwink, racket, snooker,

punk, and many more. Based on Collins dictionary, a hoax is a trick in which someone tells people a lie (https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hoax). The synonyms of the words, among others, are trick, joke, fraud, and con (informal). According to *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, hoax means false news, news that has no sources, or unofficial sources (2020). Silverman (in Febriani et al., 2021) states that a hoax is a series of fake or false news that has been misled and 'is sold' as a tool of truth. Werme (2016) as quoted by Febriani et al., (2021) defines a hoax as fake news that has information aimed at intentionally making people confused as well as a political mission. Fake news not only misleads people but also has no factual base and is made as if it is a series of truths or facts.

Pellegrini (2008) provides MacDougal's definition of a hoax and interprets it as a lie to cover or distort the truth, used for internal or external gain (Silalahi et al., 2017). Hoax aims to generate public opinion, lead public opinion, and create awareness as a fun diversion to test the accuracy and intelligence of internet and social media users (Rahadi, 2017).

Misinformation and disinformation have different meanings from hoaxes. In the Cambridge dictionary, disinformation means false information and is deliberately disseminated to mislead someone. Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia explains that disinformation is the conveying of false information (intentionally) to confuse other people. Meanwhile, misinformation in the Cambridge dictionary has two meanings: (1) wrong information or wrong facts received by someone; and (2) information that is made to deceive. It can be said that misinformation is disinformation that is spread without a specific purpose (Mafindo, 2018). Firstdraft explained that there are seven types of misinformation and disinformation including satire, misleading content, fabricated content, imposter Content, fabricated content, false connection, false context, and manipulated content (Mafiando, 2018).

2.2 Communication strategy

The phrase communication strategy has two words: communication and strategy. According to https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary, communication is a process by which information is exchanged between individuals

through a common system of symbols, signs, or behaviour. The root of the word "communication" in Latin is communicating, which means to share or to make common (Weekley, 1967). Communication is defined as the process of understanding and sharing meaning (Pearson & Nelson, 2000). Meanwhile, https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/what-is-communication states that communication is the act of giving, receiving, and sharing information—in other words, talking or writing, and listening or reading. Good communicators listen carefully, speak or write clearly, and respect different opinions.

Strategy as described by Robbins (1995) is the determination of goals and advice from an institution or long-term organization. The word strategy is derived from the Greek word *stratçgos*; *stratus* (meaning army) and *ago* (meaning leading/moving). Strategy is an action that managers take to attain one or more of the organization's goals. Strategy can also be defined as "a general direction set for the company and its various components to achieve a desired state in the future. Strategy results from the detailed strategic planning process

(https://www.managementstudyguide.com/strategy-definition.htm). According to https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/strategy, strategy is a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as war, politics, business, industry, or sport, or the skill of planning for such situations. Strategy is also (i) the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war; and (ii) the science and art of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/). Strategy is all about integrating organizational activities and utilizing and allocating the scarce resources within the organizational environment to meet the present objectives.

Meanwhile, communication strategy according to Onong Uchyana Effendy has the meaning of planning and management to achieve a goal (in Sucahyo, 2019). Middleton (1980) also explains the definition of communication strategy in Cangara (2014), in which he states that communication strategy is the mixing or merging of all communication elements ranging from

communicators, messages, media, audiences, or communicants so that they can produce optimal effects from what is planned to achieve communication goals. Another source mentions that communication strategy is a business and marketing tool that helps organizations align their communication and produce meaningful, cohesive messages. These strategies may focus on internal or external communications, or specify the communication strategy for a particular project. The strategy typically outlines the plan for delivering a message to a target audience while describing the purpose, how to accomplish the tasks, and the desired business outcomes. Communication strategies may act as a foundational aspect of your organization's marketing and business strategies (https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/communication-strategy-template). Another website, named www.marketing91.com, states that communication strategy is defined as a guide that helps a company to transform its product or service into a brand by meeting communication objectives to accomplish business objectives.

2.3 Public Relations

The word 'public' has the meaning of a group of individuals who have the same interests and concerns for something, and the term relations if interpreted means 'relationships' which means involving many relationships (Yulianita, 2007). Rex Harlow also explains the notion of public relations as a distinctive management function that supports fostering and building mutually beneficial efforts through communication, understanding, acceptance, and good cooperation between the organization and the public to be achieved (Ruslan, 2005). According to Cutlip (2000), public relations is a management function that builds and maintains good and beneficial relationships with both the organization and the public that influence the success or failure of the organization. Meanwhile, according to the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) (Ishaq, 2017), public relations is the entire effort carried out in a structured or planned and sustainable manner in creating and maintaining goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its intended audience.

According to https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/public-relations-pr.asp, public relations, also known as PR can be defined as a set of

techniques and strategies related to managing how information about an individual or company is disseminated to the public, and especially the media. Its primary goals are to disseminate important company news or events, maintain a brand image, and put a positive spin on negative events to minimize their fallout. Public relations may occur in the form of a company press release, news conference, interviews with journalists, social media posting, or other venues. Meanwhile, the Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their public (https://online.maryville.edu/ blog/what-is-pr-a-guide-to-understanding-public-relations/).

3. METHODS

The researcher employs the qualitative research method with a descriptive approach by obtaining data based on the results of interviews described in oral form. The method is used to understand the strategies used in dealing with hoaxes on social media. The researcher uses the constructivism paradigm, where the paradigm is often described as interpretivism according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) (in Creswell, 2014).

The researcher uses source triangulation, namely by comparing the data obtained either through online media, the results of interviews with sources, and the documentation obtained. The data that has been obtained will then be compared and checked again to get valid results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on a library study, various types of hoaxes occur during the Covid-19 pandemic. A lot of hoaxes have an impact on many sectors, including health, business, politics, foreign affairs, and crimes (Bafadhal et al., 2020). Cybercriminal public relations cannot be separated from exposing hoaxes that are rampant today. Several types of hoaxes can be found, including (1) dangerous Covid vaccines; (2) hate speech; and (3) race-related issues. Based on the types of hoaxes described by Firstdraft, there are seven types of hoaxes: satire or parody, wrong connection, misleading content, inappropriate context, wrong content, mock content, manipulated content, and false content (Wardle, 2019).

After checking the facts on the turnbackhoax.id website, several types of hoaxes hit social media. To handle the hoaxes, a public relations PR must be able to establish good communication in achieving the company's or government agency's goals, namely getting citizen support for policies and programs that have

been set by the government as described by Cutlip (in Aziz, 2020). The efforts or strategies carried out by the Public Relations of BPJS Kesehatan Bandung are following the concept of the public relations strategy proposed by Ronald D (in Sucahyo, 2019). This concept will be further divided into several stages, namely formative research, strategy, tactics, and evaluation. The strategy will then be explained by the author as follows:

a. Formative Research—in this analysis stage, the most appropriate phase in handling hoax cases carried out by the cybercrime police public relations is to analyse the situation. In analysing the situation, social media collects all information about bad news that hit social media, where one of the negative reports is a hoax. Collecting information related to exposure to hoaxes was obtained from various communities involved such as media associations and labour unions as well as complaints or direct complaints from the public. Apart from that, the Cyber Crime Police Public Relations is also active in social media monitoring which functions to find all news that contains elements of hoaxes.

b. Strategy—in handling hoaxes, social media has a special team, but in handling hoaxes it can be verified quickly by the Cyber Crime Police Public Relations who are the members of the same group to discuss the exposure to the hoax. Hoax issues that do not reach a national scale will then be followed up by the Cyber Crime Police Public Relations by confirming and clarifying directly to certain audiences or the parties concerned without involving the wider community. If after an analysis of the situation it is found that the hoax that has hit has entered a national scale, the Cyber Crime Police Public Relations will provide an official statement issued by the Central Police Cyber Crime Public Relations through official media which are websites and social media (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). This is done to keep information the same throughout Indonesia to avoid miscommunication or differences in information between branches.

c. Tactics—the tactics referred to in this context are communication tactics that will be used in implementing the previously known strategic plans. Even though at this time Indonesia is still hit by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cyber Crime Public Relations of the Police continue to communicate face-to-face with the public who inquire about the truth of the hoax information received. In disseminating official information or clarification on hoaxes, of course, it will be published in the official media by the direct process of Public

Relations of the Central Police Cybercrime Department. The official media in question include websites, and social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) and contain statements or statements of hope to be sent to the mass media. On the Cybercrime Police Instagram account, there is a highlight containing hoax information marked with the word "HOAX" or it can be called a report. d) Evaluation To find out whether the strategy used by the public relations police in cybercrime has succeeded in overcoming the problem of pranks during the pandemic. Cybercrime Police Public Relations can learn information from participant surveys which are conducted once a year. In addition to participating in the survey conducted, the number of people asking questions directly or through online media has also decreased. Therefore, it can be said that the cybercrime police have been quite successful in overcoming, pressing problems in social networks. Differences in handling before and during a pandemic recognize the importance and benefits of using the Internet in today's communication. Public relations of the National Police must utilize this technology to disseminate information that keeps up with the times so much so that during the Covid-19 pandemic, cybercriminal police public relations do not produce drastic changes in the delivery of information to the public. Cyber Crime Police Public Relations actively uses social media to disseminate clarification regarding exposure to hoaxes.

Based on some interviews with some key personnel of the Public Relations Unit of the National Police, it is revealed that in handling hoaxes disseminated on social media, the roles of public relations are crucial. It helps the National Police communicate with the public and work on developing a positive relationship with society. The public relations division has played a vital role in business today, in the context of handling hoaxes. In the context of business, it is a key aspect of brand management, that can help increase sales, and builds relationships with people who interact with the organization. Public relations can also allow the National Police to mitigate damage from a crisis or take advantage of unexpected opportunities that can benefit the organization. Public relations of all can maximize the effectiveness of the narrative surrounding the organization. No matter what the National Police decides, as a modern organization, it cannot ignore the importance of public relations. It is a demanding field, and, to excel, one needs to have great communication skills, be able to think strategically, and understand how to manage the large and complex relationship

between the public and an organization. It is also revealed that public relations initiatives can influence the communication that the public has with and about the National Police.

On other occasions interviews, most public relations personnel of the National Police states that something that makes their tasks easier to accomplish is communication strategy, which provides a plan to the organization to approach the public in the desired manner. When the organization lacks this communication strategy, it fails to connect properly with the public and achieve its desired objectives in handling hoaxes. In their mindset, the National Police should know that developing a communication strategy is not a waste of time. It helps the organization convey the brand message to the public. However, they sometimes lack professional people who can create new and fresh ideas related to communication strategies. They state that the National Police should know that developing the organization's communication strategy is not a waste of time. It will help the organization to convey the brand message to the public. Furthermore, they add that to develop an effective communication strategy, it is crucial to consider branding and the internet. Here, branding will give an idea about the brand's mission and vision. At the same time, a reliable internet network will help to have a modern strategy.

5. CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the elaborations above, the authors can withdraw the following conclusions:

a. The National Police Cyber Crime Public Relations has handled hoax cases following the standard operating procedures established though it still lacks professionals and a reliable internet network.

b. Cyber Crime Public Relations has actively provided information on hoaxes on various social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube) and websites.

5.2 Implications

Based on the conclusions above, the authors would like to recommend the National Police Cyber Crime Public Relations to:

a. educate more personnel to be able to become experts in information technology as well as to strengthen its Internet network in the context of its capacity and security; and

b. provide more information available to the public on

hoaxes on various social
media platforms.

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