



## ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY OF ELIM RANTEPAO HOSPITAL IN MAINTAINING HOSPITAL IMAGE IN THE PANDEMI ERA

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** In minimizing anxiety and worries as well as rebuilding consumer confidence so that they are willing to use health services in the midst of the covid-19 pandemic, there is an appropriate communication strategy from management of health services. One of the communication that is considered appropriate in overcoming this unfavorable event is to perform the roles and functions of public relations properly

**Objective:** This study aimed to explain the Strategic Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital in Maintaining the image of the Hospital in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Method:** This type of research used qualitative research methods. Methods collected documentation data and in-depth interviews to obtain information.

**Result:** From the aspect of public relation communicator in providing information to the public through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. Aspects of relationship Public Relations Elim Rantepao Hospital seeks to establish good relationships with the community, for example providing education to the community through social media on how to deal with the Covid situation. And support activities carried out by public relations. Aspects of Good Image Maker Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital as a buider and creator of a positive image of the organization by providing open services to the public where open aservices can be accessed by the public with communication media used by public relations, namely Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube.

**Suggestion:** The public relations strategy of Elim Rantepao Hospital in maintaining the image of the hospital during the pandemic is the educate the public about COVID-19, promote health promotion and hospital marketing, public relations as a mediator also connects the hospital and the community. Public relations needs to hold a family gathering in order to further strengthen the relationship between fellow employees.

## INTRODUCTION

As an institution carrying a social mission, Hospitals need to prioritize their main medical services through *health provider* (doctors, nurses and other health professionals), use medical devices with advanced technology, as well as building facilities, pre-facilities that support the comfort and health needs of patients, especially hospitalization, so that they feel comfortable and affect the patient's recovery.

Guard *image* Hospitals need the role and strategy of Public Relations or what is commonly referred to as *Public Relations*. *Public Relations* or in Indonesian known as public relations (public relations) exists as a field of profession which has one function to establish and maintain *image* positive for an organization, company, or agency. Public Relations at its core is always concerned with creating understanding through knowledge, and through these activities it is hoped that impactful changes will emerge (Jefkins, 2018).

Public Relations helps Hospital organizations in building *image* Hospital organization. *Image* good service will be very profitable for the marketing of hospital services concerned. Hospitals cannot develop without public support, because with public support organizational success is easier to achieve.

A pandemic caused by a virus *COVID-19* currently has an impact on various sectors, especially the health sector. the impact of this

pandemic can be seen in the decrease in the number of health service consumer visits (Indonesian Doctors Association, 2020). The phenomenon of a decrease in the number of visits to health services will ultimately have an impact on the finances of hospitals or other health facilities, because the fewer patients who use health service facilities, the less income the hospital will receive. The decrease in the number of visits could occur because of people's fears of exposure *COVID-19* as well as government appeals to stay at home more (Trisyani, et al, 2016).

In minimizing anxiety and worry as well as rebuilding consumer confidence so they are willing to use health services in the midst of a pandemic *COVID-19*, the existence of an appropriate communication strategy from the management of health services or hospitals. One of the communication strategies that is considered appropriate in overcoming this unfavorable event is to perform roles and functions *Public Relations* well.

The above statement agrees with John, *et all*, (2021) who argues that *Public Relations* is an activity related to the publication of the influence of business organizations that aims to establish a good relationship with the community or deal with unfavorable events. In addition, according to Kusumastuti, 2002 in Yohanes, *et all*, (2021), *Public Relations* has a corrective function or is usually analogous to a "fire extinguisher", the purpose of this analogy is, if a fire has

already burned and spreads, *Public Relations* or public relations is expected to put out the fire. That is, if at any time an organization or company experiences a crisis problem with the public, then *Public Relations* must do their job in overcoming to solving the problem.

Elim Rantepao Hospital is a hospital belonging to the Toraja Church Health Foundation organization designated as a Class C Hospital whose management is under the control of the Regional Government of North Toraja Regency. Based on data obtained by researchers from the hospital, the number of hospital visitors in 2020-2021 decreased in the outpatient clinic, from 20438 visits, decreased to 13172, similarly what happened in the emergency room, 9789 decreased to 8743.

Based on the background above, and looking at data from the Hospital that there has been a decrease in the number of visits from 2020-2021. So researchers are interested in conducting research that aims to determine the strategy *Public Relations* Elim Rantepao Hospital under guard *image* Hospitals in the Pandemic Era *COVID-19*. The specific objective in this research is to be able to find out how strategic *public relations* of dimensions *communicator*, *relationship*, *back up management*, and *good image maker* in keeping *image* Hospital in the pandemic era *COVID-19*.

## METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods with in-depth observation and interviews, which are located at Elim Rantepao Hospital, North Toraja Regency. The informants in this study consisted of the main informants, namely the Director of the Hospital and key informants, the head of the public relations department and supported by other informants, namely staff in the public relations room.

Data collection consisted of two, namely primary data and secondary data, with the main instrument in this research, namely the researchers themselves who acted as key instruments assisted by data collection tools or other instruments, namely in-depth interviews and observation guidelines. Furthermore, the data obtained is processed through recording, typing, and editing, analyzed qualitatively using words.

## RESULTS

### *1. Communicator*

#### **a. Hospital Public Relations Communication with the Community During a Pandemic. The following are statements from ordinary informants.**

During the pandemic, public relations was more active in approaching the community by carrying out health promotions through the mass media, social media, as well as direct outreach to the public and providing education to the community so that

people would not be afraid to go to the hospital. *(Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

If for example there are complaints, we communicate well, usually public relations visit, then we also communicate by way of promotion to the public, then socialize how health protocols are through social media. *(Interview with Public Relations staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

During the pandemic, how did the hospital communicate with the community, either directly or through social media. *(Interview with Public Relations staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The statements from key informants are:

During this time of pandemic, there were more of us, especially at first, we were forbidden to meet in person, so we used social media more, then we were more active on social media, we were also more active in direct communication via WhatsApp or telephone to customers. Public Relations also conducts outreach to areas that are constrained by the network because we happen to be a Toraja church hospital so we have

socialization directly to the church and it is hoped that that is where more comprehensive information will be disseminated. *(Interview with the director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022).*

#### **b. Obstacles faced by public relations during the pandemic and how to handle them.**

During the pandemic, there were several obstacles that public relations often encountered, for example patients or patients' families who complained because they refused medical action. The way to deal with some of the obstacles during a pandemic is for public relations to mediate more with various parties involved, be it the patient's family. themselves, with the police and local government. *(Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

The problem is because of the health protocol, because during Covid most people complained via telephone, via WhatsApp, then if we communicate via telephone or via WhatsApp, customers who convey suggestions or messages don't understand the difference when we meet in person, when we meet understanding directly is faster than via social media, that's the problem, so the

way to deal with the obstacles faced if you get a problem is to provide an understanding to patients about the obstacles that are obtained by means of good communication. *(Interview with Public Relations staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The obstacles faced so far are many patients who are afraid to visit the hospital and how to handle this by convincing the patient to get service at the hospital. *(Interview with Public Relations staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The statement from the key informant said that:

During the pandemic, maybe during the Covid period, right, yes, Covid is a new disease, so there is a protocol that must be followed, so the community also has a different way of accepting it, some accept it when covid and some don't accept it either, so it's possible that the obstacles faced should be better in providing information to eee patients and families and if the handling method is related covid cooperate with the task force covid related, working with the local government, police, military, to be able to deal with obstacles because many are related to security, in general these are common problems in hospitals, this increases communication and cooperation between units. *(Interview with the*

*director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022).*

## **2. Relationship**

### **a. The way for hospital public relations to make internal relations good during a pandemic.**

In terms of maintaining good internal relations during the pandemic, especially at Elim Hospital, of course in this case clear information disclosure to be shared, as well as establishing good relations between all elements in Elim Hospital. *(Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

Providing the best service and maintaining good communication between all units. *(Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022, Informants 2 & 3).*

The statement from the key informant said that:

yes, so during the pandemic for internal self so a lot of attention was also given to staff, nurses, and non-medical at the hospital, for example giving reinforcements both in terms of personal protective equipment, as well as in terms of vitamins, food assistance, and others. And as for those who are exposed, we also facilitate treatment and pay more attention to

them. (Interview with the Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022, Informants 2 & 3).

**b. How public relations works with other divisions during the pandemic.**

In terms of cooperation with other divisions, public relations in this case increases communication with other divisions, for example we have created a whatsapp group with several parties involved in it e.g. the media team, the police, community leaders and several organizations where this is done to make it easier if an important information related to pandemic cases. (Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

Communicate well, work together in order to provide good service and communicate through WhatsApp groups in order to provide information to each other. (Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022, Informants 2 & 3).

The statement from the key informant said that:

For collaboration with other divisions, this is what must be continuously improved, especially during a pandemic so, the method is to have regular meetings held that

don't have too many people, so the related teams meet regularly and discuss problems what was found, then a group was also formed in the whatsapp group so that the communication process could be faster. (Interview with Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022).

**3. Back Up Management**

**a. Management support provided by Elim Rantepao Hospital public relations during the pandemic.**

In this case, hospital public relations is tasked with carrying out elements of public communication and information management, as well as establishing cooperative relationships both internally and externally in order to build reputation and image hospital positive. (Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).

The above statement was supported by two other informants:

Management support is good, when there is information or complaints we are supported in solving existing problems and assisting public relations in carrying out promotional activities. (Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022, Informants 2 & 3).

The statement from the key informant

said that:

So for management support, we always fully support the activities carried out by public relations at the hospital and even the public relations can always coordinate directly with the director regarding the obstacles faced. (*Interview with Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022*).

**b. Can the promotion and marketing activities carried out by Elim hospital public relations be maintained *image* hospital positive.**

Talk about *image* hospital of course the promotion and marketing activities that we do can sustain *image* positive hospital because people will trust the hospital. (*Interview with Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022*).

The above statement was supported by two other informants:

yes, because marketing and promotion activities can provide information to the public about the services provided by the hospital and can grow *image* good in society. (*Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, 23 July 2022*).

with these activities the community can have more trust in the services at the hospital and will improve *image* hospital. (*Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao*

*Hospital, 23 July 2022*).

The statement from the fourth informant said that:

yes, so the activities carried out are not just to defend *image* positive, but increasing *image* Elim Hospital is positive, and that is what we can realize, we will continue to work on it so that it can be realized for improvement *image* positive in hospital. We did an evaluation and Praise God there was an increase in visits after carrying out that strategy so what we evaluated in the 4th month decreased in the 5th month it has started to increase. (*Interview with Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022*).

**4. Good Image Maker**

**a. The strategy carried out by the public relations of the Elim Rantepao hospital in order to maintain the number of visits during the pandemic:**

So during the pandemic, the number of visits actually decreased, so here we communicate a lot with the community to ensure public access to services at the hospital and information about the services provided by the Elim Hospital so that patients can come and not be afraid to seek treatment at the hospital. (*Interview with the Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 3, 2022*).

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

So the strategy carried out by public relations is to register online, we as public relations also conduct socialization with the public about how to register online. *(Interview with Public Relations staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 3, 2022 Informants 2 & 3).*

The statement from the fourth informant as well as the key informant said that:

The number of visits is certain that all hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic will all decrease, so the target during the COVID-19 pandemic is to increase outpatient care first. others, while the opportunities for outpatient care can be increased, so patients will be more willing to seek treatment directly. The strategy we use is making leaflets about education during a pandemic and making talk shows about diseases during a pandemic. Public Relations also cooperates with hotels and airports for antigen services. So, public relations is also focused on increasing the number of outpatient visits and later from there we will start educating patients that it is safe to seek treatment at the hospital so that they want to be hospitalized. *(Interview with Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, September 2, 2022).*

**b. The way of public relations for Elim Hospital in responding to complaints or complaints during the pandemic.**

Yes, so we respond to existing complaints or complaints from both the patient and the patient's family by mediating and explaining the health protocols that apply to the patient or the patient's family. *(Interview with the Head of Public Relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital, July 23, 2022).*

The above statement was reinforced by two other informants:

Responding to a complaint depends on the complaint, so when there is a complaint we will find a solution, then from that solution we convey it to the patient, when there is a serious complaint we convey to superiors how to solve it. *(Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, 23 July 2022).*

By communicating directly or via telephone with patients who submit complaints and find the best solution. *(Interview with Public Relations Staff of Elim Rantepao Hospital, 23 July 2022).*

The statement from the fourth informant said that:

So, complaints that relate to the community itself broadly cooperate with several parties as explained earlier by the police, army and the Covid task force. If the internal one is directly



communicated through the WhatsApp group or direct meetings with the parties involved and after that the best solution is found. (*Interview with Director of Elim Rantepao Hospital, 23 July 2022*).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, the researcher can draw a conclusion that the public relations of Elim Rantepao Hospital are in maintaining *image* positive during a pandemic acted as a liaison between the organization and the community by providing information to the public through social media such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Public Relations also collaborates with internal parties by holding regular meetings to keep coaching *relationship* also seeks to create good relations with the community, for example providing education to the community through social media. Carry out management support or support other activities such as promotion and marketing management to achieve organizational goals. Maintaining the number of visits to the hospital by ensuring access to information from the public to hospital services. As well as conducting socialization directly to areas that have not been reached by the network by cooperating with the church.

## SUGGESTION

From the results of the research obtained, suggestions from researchers were obtained which were divided into 4 aspects, namely aspects *communicator* it is better for public relations practitioners at Elim Rantepao Hospital to build and maintain relationships with media outside the church in connection with new service activities or programs owned by the hospital, from the aspect *relationship* better do the activity *family gathering* in order to maintain familiarity between fellow employees, from the aspect *back up management* it is better for the hospital management to carry out management support by adding human resources in the public relations department and improving infrastructure such as the provision of a special room for public relations, as well as from the aspect of *good image maker* public relations needs to improve excellent service again such as accelerating service so that complaints and complaints from the public can be followed up quickly.

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