



## The Role Of Private Practices Of State Islamic University Of North Sumatera In The Dissemination Of Information In The Time Of The Covid-19 Pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to determine the efforts made by the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera in disseminating information during the Covid-19 pandemic and to find out the strategies and obstacles of the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera in disseminating information during the Covid-19 pandemic. Theories used in this research are information theory, information media theory, Public Relations and dissonance theory. The subjects of this study were the employees of the Head of the Public Relations Division and the Public Relations Executive of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera who managed the dissemination of information. The location of this research was carried out at the Public Relations Bureau of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera starting from July 5, 2021 until its completion. The method used in this research is the Qualitative Method. The analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative. The result of this research is that the role of Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera has carried out its role well. This role was very clear when the State Islamic University of North Sumatera opened registration for new student candidates. This proves that public interest continues to increase with the information provided by Public Relations. Of course, the role of public relations is supported by the communication strategy used by public relations through social media to disseminate information during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 outbreak is a Global Health Organization World pandemic and because of its very fast spread, Covid-19 has become a major topic around the world. The beginning of the spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia was officially announced by President Joko Widodo on March 2, 2020, namely 2 (two) Indonesian citizens (a mother and daughter) who live in Jakarta who were confirmed positive for Covid-19. He confirmed that he had direct contact with foreigners from Japan.

All efforts have been made by the Indonesian government to overcome the spread of the transmission of the Covid-19 virus, one of which is by means of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). Especially in areas where the spread of Covid-19 has been so fast. The application has a significant impact on community activities. Because community mobilization is limited in public spaces so that the chain of transmission of the Covid-19 virus can be resolved.

The case of the spread of Covid-19 in the North Sumatra region is quite high. This figure makes the North Sumatra Provincial Government continue to prohibit its people from doing a lot of activities outside the home. The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted various sectors, be it the economic, social, cultural and educational sectors. Currently, all teaching and learning activities are also transferred using an online system (in the network). Through Circular Number 218 / GTCOVID-19 / VII / 2020 dated March 16, 2020, the Task Force for the Acceleration of Processing of COVID-19 North Sumatra (GTPP) asked the Regent and Mayor of North Sumatra and educational institutions not to conduct face-to-face teaching and learning activities. (Liputan6.com/larangan-learning-teaching-face-to-face, accessed on 15/04/2021 at 14:19 WIB).

The higher education institution, the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) also decided that lecture activities would be diverted by using the online system (on the network) for a while (lockdown). Starting March 18, 2020, the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) will close all campus activities. Where lecture activities are transferred to an online system between students and lecturers. During the lockdown period, students dealing with campus administration can be obtained through the online system. The State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) also makes an electronic mail application, namely the SI-SELMA application or the abbreviation of the Student Electronic Mail Information System. This system can make it easier for students who want to take care of submitting letters, processing letters to letter approval quickly and efficiently.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has led to an increasing public need for information. Public demand for the internet continues to increase from year to year. Based on a survey conducted by APJII (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers), the number of internet users in Indonesia reached 196.71 million in 2019, and in the next survey in 2020 internet users in Indonesia increased by 8.9%. This statistical data is evidence that in the past year, internet users have increased by 73.7 million. Compared to the total population of Indonesia with a total of 266.91 million, we can thus conclude that internet users in Indonesia reach 64.8% or more than half of the population in Indonesia are active internet users. (APJII.or.id/survei/gunakan-social-media/2019-2020, accessed on 15/04/2021 at 15:17 wib).

From this survey, APJII also informed the growth of internet users per province in the Sumatra region in 2019-2020. It turns out that the highest growth of internet users is in North Sumatra. In 2019 internet users reached 5.8 million while in 2020 internet users reached 6.3 million. Internet users in North Sumatra have increased by 0.5 % . (APJII, 2020).

Internet users can access information from various kinds of social media. Social media is an online-based media where users can easily create content, share news and information, participate (including creating social networks, blogs, wikipedia, and virtual world accounts). This is because people can easily access social media anytime, anywhere. During this pandemic, PR

practitioners can also take advantage of the latest phenomena by using social media to disseminate information.

Social media can also form a two-way communication process, so that it can communicate directly instead of face-to-face. One of the things that PR can do is take advantage of social media. This is also the case with Public Relations in Universities such as the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU). This kind of internet-based social media can make it easier for PR practitioners to disseminate information to the public, thus enabling PR practitioners' program activities to be widely known and receive attention and criticism from the public.

Public relations practitioners have an important role in carrying out organizational/institutional activities, starting from providing information to the public, maintaining good internal relations between employees or maintaining good external relations between stakeholders, media, journalists and others. Public relations activities are activities that offer information both internally and externally, which means that public relations is an institution that mediates between subordinates and the public in internal and external public relations leadership (Morissan, 2008, p. 14)

Public Relations can also provide a positive image for organizations or agencies because Public Relations has a very important role for organizations or agencies, where a PR practitioner must be able to attract public attention, change public opinion, change public attitudes towards the information that Public Relations provides to the public so that they get sympathy from the public.

As public relations practitioners, they have the right to understand policy plans, work plans, activity plans, and business plans of institutions/organizations that are in accordance with the wishes of the community. In order for the public to understand what is happening in the institution/organization, it is necessary to carry out publishing activities by PR practitioners. Publishing activity/publication has the meaning as an activity to introduce an organization/institution to the public. This publication/publication can be introduced through images or also through information that is already available to the public.

### **Understanding Information**

According to Hafied Cangara, information is a person's need to achieve all his daily goals, in disseminating information there is always an element of communication and socialization exchange. (Cangara, 2006. P.19) Meanwhile, according to Davis, information is data that has been processed into a meaningful form. (Abdul Kadir, 2003. P.28) And according to Andri Kristanto, information is a collection of data that is processed in a form that is more useful and meaningful for the recipient (Kristanto, 2003. P.6). Thus, it is concluded that information is a message, in the form of speech or expression that is conveyed to the public with data that has been processed to be useful for the public. Nowadays, information has become a necessity for the community, both in rural and urban areas. The need for this information continues to grow because of the increasing number of media today, such as mass media (print and electronic media) and online media (social media).

### **Information Media**

Media is one element of communication, namely as a carrier of information from the communicator to the communicant (Criticos, 1996, p.8). Meanwhile, the understanding of information in general is that information is data that has been processed into other forms that are more useful as knowledge or information conveyed to recipients of information and can be

used as decision making at this time or in the future (Gordon B. Davis, 1990, P. .11). Thus, the notion of information media can be concluded as a channel or tool to convey messages from the communicator to the communicant.

### **Definition of Public Relations**

Public Relations is a management function formed to evaluate public opinion and attitudes, make individual or organizational policies and procedures for the public interest, and plan and carry out various activities in order to gain understanding or support from the public. (Frazier, 2005, p. 6)

Public Relations is a part of Public Relations that can help institutions/organizations and their publics to adapt to each other in a way that is mutually beneficial to both. Public relations is an effort made by an organization/institution to be able to establish cooperation with groups of people.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODE**

This type of research is descriptive qualitative using qualitative description method. using a case study method with a qualitative descriptive research approach. Qualitative descriptive is research that accurately describes individual characteristics, conditions or symptoms of a particular group or to determine the spread of a symptom or to determine whether there is a relationship between a symptom and other symptoms in society.

The location of this research was carried out at Campus II of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, namely at the Bureau of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan, which is located at Jalan. Willièm Iskandar Pasar V, Medan Estate, Percut Sei Tuan District, Deli Serdang Regency, Medan, North Sumatra 20371. This research was carried out starting from July 5, 2021 until completion.

The source of data in this study is the object from which the data was obtained. Sources of data obtained from many subjects that have been designated as objects of research information. The provider of this research is Mrs. Yuni Salma as the Head of Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU).

The selection of informants in this study is also based on the subject who has a lot of quality information with the problems being studied and is willing to provide the data needed by the researcher.

Sugiyono stated that information analysis is a process of searching and compiling information systematically. Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2018: 91) suggest that there are 3 steps in information analysis, namely (1) Data reduction, namely summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, looking for themes and patterns and throw away the unnecessary. The reduced data will provide a clear picture and make it easier for researchers to conduct further data collection; (2) Data Presentation, namely presenting data after being reduced which can be done in the form of: brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories and so on; (3) Withdrawal of Conclusions and Verification, namely the initial conclusions put forward are still temporary, and will change if no strong evidence is found to support the next stage of data collection. However, if the conclusion is indeed supported by valid and consistent evidence when the researcher returns to the field to collect data, then the conclusion put forward is a credible conclusion (can be trusted).

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

#### **Public Relations Efforts at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in Disseminating Information During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra always strives for the best for disseminating information to the public. Public Relations always provides academic-related information that focuses on the Tri Dharma of Higher Education through online media, social media, mass media, and print media, it's just that during the Covid-19 pandemic, Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra puts more emphasis on online media and media. because it can be accepted in all kinds of circles and can be reached anywhere. Public Relations also cooperates with partner media, both online and in print.

Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra changed its method of disseminating information. In the interview that the researcher conducted with Yuni Salma's mother, she said:

“For example, there are things that we can do directly, yes.. but lately we can't do it face-to-face, it certainly doesn't reduce the essence of our own duties and functions, huh. It's just the method that has changed, for example, recently we did socialization, usually we can meet face-to-face with prospective new students, now we do it in online media such as Live on Instagram, Live on Youtube.” (interview with Mrs. Yuni Salma, Head of Sub-Division of UIN, on 25/08/2021 at 11.17)

The presence of social media opens up space for community interaction to be increasingly rapid in cyberspace. Especially during the current pandemic, people's space for activities outside the home is limited. The existence of PPKM makes many people do their activities at home. One of the most widely used examples of social media today is Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. This platform penetrates various ages, not only young people but also parents are now increasingly using it. The Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra took full advantage of this situation to be able to provide information to the public.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, PR continues to provide information to the public even though they work from home or what we know as work from home (WFH). In conveying information to the public, of course, public relations must convey how the information will reach prospective new students and parents of prospective new students. The way PR is providing a tron video about the North Sumatra State Islamic University campus which is shown on the streets and then making banners, flyers which are uploaded to the social media of the North Sumatra State Islamic University.

Thus, children who are still in high school will be interested and interested in studying at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. Not only their children but their parents too. The Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra has tried to provide information to the public through online media and social media. This effort will certainly influence public opinion and will attract public sympathy.

#### **Public Relations Strategy of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in Disseminating Information during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Pearce and Robinson develop public relations communication strategy steps as follows (Renald Kasali, 2000. P. 43):

- a. Determine the mission of the organization/institution.

The mission of the organization is necessary because it involves the ideals and goals to be achieved by the organization/institution.

b. Develop the profile of the organization/institution.

The profile of this organization/institution reflects the internal state of the organization/institution and what capabilities the organization/agency has.

c. Review and Evaluation.

This needs to be done to find out what has been achieved in the short/long term period.

This is a process for controlling and as input or consideration in every decision making.

d. Implementation.

The application of the above can be used with human resources or communication technology.

The above strategy is also applied by the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in disseminating information to the public where Public Relations continues to fully support the progress of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra at this time. We can see that the development of the North Sumatra State Islamic University is getting better and better. The existence of Campus IV Tuntungan provides a social impact related to the advantages of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. This is the goal and aspiration of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra which has a vision to become a center for the development of superior and competitive multidisciplinary Islamic sciences. So that this strategy can be a competitive advantage for campuses in North Sumatra.

This strategy is also chosen so that the main functions and duties of Public Relations continue to run as they should. This was conveyed by the informant, Ibu Yuni Salma, who said that:

“Changing the strategy, we will change our strategy. We can, for example, meet face-to-face with stakeholders, for example, but in this condition we cannot of course do that. For example, when we conveyed a message through writing, we shared the text, we conveyed the message through visuals with videos, we also broadcast it through our social media, for example our own official channel, the YouTube channel, this is a strategy for what we do, so that the main task continues. according to its function, even though the obstacles are still there, they are still maximized through this strategy” (interview with Yuni Salma, Head of Sub-Division of UIN, 25/08/2021 at 11.29)

In carrying out its strategy, the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra also does not forget the principles of communication in an Islamic perspective. What kind of words are categorized as good to use in disseminating information. Public relations practitioners continue to carry out their professional ethics as a public relations officer. What is included in the ethics is not to use harsh and offensive words, not to spread false news, must be in accordance with the facts and reality.

### **Barriers to Public Relations at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in Disseminating Information during the Covid-19 Pandemic.**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, as it is today, there are certainly many obstacles faced by the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. The obstacle to public relations during the Covid-19 pandemic is not being able to do a lot of activities outside the institution. Many annual programs have not been implemented due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, the government stipulates PPKM regulations and this becomes an obstacle for the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in disseminating information. Usually the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra conveys a lot of information using media such as electronic media (radio and television). Like the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, they have established good

cooperation with Kiss FM radio and TVRI. Not only electronic media but other news media such as innews. It was further emphasized by the research informant, Mrs. Yuni Salma as the Head of the Public Relations Subdivision at the Bureau of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra said that:

"Is there a problem, there certainly is. Then how to overcome these obstacles, the first solution is to change the strategy, we change our strategy" (interview with Mrs. Yuni Salma, Head of Sub-Division of UIN, on 25/08/2021 at 11.31)

These obstacles are the problem at the Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, but Public Relations always looks for the best solution in dealing with the obstacles. Public Relations works according to the planned program. Of course, these programs must be able to form a positive image. The indicator of public relations practitioners is to influence public opinion as expected by Public Relations.

These obstacles can be overcome by (1) Technical barriers: increasing the number of competent human resources (Human Resources) who work in the Public Relations Bureau of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra. These human resources are indispensable for mastering techniques and methods in disseminating information. (2) Semantic Barriers: holding seminars or training related to grammar that will be used by public relations practitioners in disseminating information. (3) Behavioral Barriers: must be good at controlling attitudes and behavior when they want to convey information to the public.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the role of Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Public Relations of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra has carried out its role well. This role was very clear when the State Islamic University of North Sumatra opened registration for new student candidates. This proves that public interest continues to increase with the information provided by Public Relations. Of course, the role of public relations is supported by the communication strategy used by public relations through social media to disseminate information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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