

# EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION IN THE CRISIS PERIOD OF COVID-19

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## ABSTRACT

The rapid spread of Covid-19 disease made the whole country move to deal with this problem. Indonesia is also not free from this problem; the spread of the corona virus has reached the country. In order to combine the effectiveness of communication in an organization to achieve conditions consisting of various thoughtful processes and anticipatory steps in a crisis period of covid-19. The need for communication in today's business competition is constantly changing. Advances in information technology and changes in managing organizations have changed the way many organizations in delivering the information. Information technology is a tool to communicate with many different groups of people. Since then the communication process must be managed effectively not all managers and individuals in an organization have good communication skills and there is a clear need for training to ensure that they could choose the most appropriate communication method to convey the message clearly understood by the recipient and on the side otherwise, the recipient must be able to provide feedback.

*Keywords: Message, communication method, communication effectiveness, Covid-19*

## BACKGROUND

Currently many academics, politicians and civic activists are looking for ways in finding an effective ways to communicate with and through an organization to achieve their goals. The organization that consists of various thoughtful processes and steps to anticipate the current crisis of covid-19. Looking at the events that occur, how a leader communicates crisis to the public in achieving these conditions, an organization must also implements management plan that consists of various complex information such processes, steps, or procedures to anticipate the complex nature of the crisis. The communication process, consist of many information for many kinds of audience such as stakeholder assessments, media relations initiatives, and post-crisis evaluations. Such information is given by state-level officials at the ministerial level or the president's special staff which probably has little understanding of communication processes.

In a private or public organization, competency is required to carry out and complete their duties and obligations which include competence in communication skill. Individuals must be trained to be actively responsible for their behaviour, develop and share information about work. Empowerment of employees will greatly determine the success of the organization. Organizations must realize that in a more competitive environment, requires more effective learning, employee empowerment, and greater commitment from everyone in the organization.

In terms of organizational leadership, it takes an ability to influence others to work together as a team to achieve their goals. In addition the leader must be able to distinguish between levels of authority. So that in carrying its leadership influence, a leader must understand which individual belongs to which component in the organization so that comprehends the various aspect of responsibilities to achieve organizational goals. That also should be done without neglecting the organization's culture and environment, as well as the agreement between management and subordinates. Such communications quality that is with an enthusiastic attitude towards all operations, two-way communication between leaders and workers, and sufficient attention in relations with the crisis of covid-19. This has brought many researchers interested in conducting a thorough examination of this organizational processes, especially the the importance of effective communication.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Communication, definition and process

Organizations are strongly influenced by the capabilities and competencies of each individual and the collaboration between team members in an organization. In establishing cooperation to achieve these objectives, an effective communication is needed. Based on the technical implementation, communication could be formulated as an activity where a person conveys a message through certain media to others and after receiving a message and understands the extent of his ability, recipient of the message in delivering responses through certain media to others who convey the message to him. Communication as a process by which a person, group, or organization (sender) sends information (message) to another person, group, or organization (receiver) (Argiris, 1994). The communication process generally follows several stages. The sender of the message sends information to the recipient of information through one or several means of communication. The process continues where the recipient of the message sends feedback or feedback to the original message sender. In the process there are distortions that disrupt the flow of information known as *noise*.

The communication process could be explained through an understanding of the elements of communication that includes the party who initiated the communication, the message being communicated, the channel used to communicate and the interruption during the communication took place, the situation when the communication was carried out, the party receiving the message, the bait and the impact on the sender of the message . The sender or sender is the party that starts a communication process. Before the message is sent, the sender must package the idea or message so that it could be well received and understood by the recipient of the message. The process of packaging this idea is called *encoding*.

The message sent must be informative which contains events, data, facts, and explanations. Messages must be able to entertain, inspire, inform, convince, and encourage to do something. The packaged message is conveyed through the media either through oral media (by delivering it yourself, by telephone, dictation

machine, or videotape), written media (letters, memos, reports, handouts, leaflets, notes, posters, pictures, graphics), as well as electronic media (fax-simile, e-mail, radio, television).

The use of media to convey messages could experience interference (noise) that could hinder or reduce the ability to send and receive messages. Communication disorders could be in the form of personal factors (prejudice, daydreaming, inadequate feelings) and sensory disturbances (sounds that are too loud or weak, strong odor, hot air). The situation could also affect the course of communication because the situation could affect the behaviour of the communicating party so that when communicating with other parties not only must consider the content and manner of delivery, but also the situation when the communication will be delivered.

After the message is delivered, the party receiving the message (receiver) must be able to interpret and translate the message that has been received. Interpretation of messages may be the same or different from the message sender. If the interpretations are the same, then the interpretation and translation of the recipient are correct and the intent of the sender is reached.

### **The great role of a leader**

Through the events that occur, how does a leader communicate the crisis situation to the public? When a crisis situation is announced, it will certainly have an impact on widening panic. This is where the importance of a leader and communication must be built to face the crisis that hit.

"Many conventional public relations tactics that are accepted, do not contribute to managing crises properly. The mindset of the current public crisis must be replaced, one of which is to enable managers to practice public relations." (Marra, 1997)

As a JE Grunig student at the University of Maryland, Marra, positions his theory in the theory of public relations excellence.

"Although the Excellence study does not specifically address crises by PR, many literature studies and findings apply to developing theories in crises."

To be very good, Marra believes that the crisis facing PR must be strategic, have a symmetrical focus on two directions, have the authority to act quickly and senior public relations practitioners must become members of the dominant coalition and report directly to the chief executive officer (Marra, 1998).

Crisis threatens an organization's physical system (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992). In order to combine crisis communication into a more strategic framework, a number of researchers categorized this function as crisis management. One perspective considers it as a systematic effort to avoid organizational crises or to manage crises that occur (Pearson and Clair, 1998). To achieve these conditions, organizations implement a crisis management plan that consists of various thoughtful processes and steps to anticipate the complex nature of the crisis (Caywood & Stocker, 1993).

Included in these steps are the appointment of a crisis team, the communication process, stakeholder assessments, media relations initiatives, and post-crisis evaluations. Leadership is about overcoming change, setting direction, aligning people, motivating and inspiring — keeping people moving in the right direction, even though the main obstacles to change often arise when related to human needs, values, and emotions (Kotter, 1999). For organizations, leadership is often considered the most critical factor in determining overall success or failure (Bass, 1999).

"excellent leaders provide vision and direction for organizations, creating order out of chaos." (Grunig, 1992).

During crisis events, organizational leaders become catalysts of success or failure. Crisis is about uncertainty and fear.

Leadership is about anticipation, vision, flexibility and empowerment (Byrd, 1987). Therefore crisis leadership is the ability of senior managers to provide vision and direction during times of change and uncertainty. Effective leadership during times of crisis such as New York Mayor, Rudy Giuliani strengthens the organization's determination to survive and become stronger: shaken, but firm and determined to shape the future rather than merely adjusting it ("Profile in Leadership" 2001). Effective communication in times of crisis Basic elements of communication should not be seen as planned, delivered, and then completed.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research conducted with a descriptive through a qualitative approach. According to Nazir (1988: 63) Descriptive Method is a method in examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events at the present time. The purpose of this descriptive study is to make a description and describe a reality, explain the processes that occur in it, and explain the various contexts behind the event. So descriptive qualitative is a type of research used to make a description, picture or painting in a systematic, factual and accurate manner about the facts, the characteristics of a situation, condition or phenomenon by using data in the form of written or oral words from people and the object's behavior is observed in its entirety with the aim of not looking for or explaining relationships, nor is it studying hypotheses or making predictions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Role of Communication in the Leadership of a Quality Organization**

Communication created in implementing leadership depends on the level of leadership which includes upper level, middle level, and lower level. At the highest level, the leader's job is to make decisions based on input from various parties, especially subordinates as an input for decision making, at this time the role of communication is very much needed. Three types of communication include: first; communication commands for developing policies, describing, and establishing plans for making decisions, second; ensuring that communication

functions properly, third; evaluating the results of communication, accessing its effectiveness, and making some basic changes for subsequent decisions. Middle level management has two-way responsibility, on one hand it must be loyal to the those in above, achieve success from decision making, plans, and policies for management but on the other hand it must establish good relations through communication by creating trust through openness with the under-level management. All that is needed to be informed and communicated to the superiors. The lower management conveys tasks, policies, strategies, orders, and instructions from superiors. At this level there is more communication in giving instructions and commands (Koester and Olebe, 1988).

There are several approaches used in communication to carry out leadership including: First, the trait approach in which a person's soul of leadership is born in an individual which is evident in the charisma and leadership behavior that is owned and not intentionally formed. Both of these are special characteristics that distinguish a leader from others who influence the quality of leadership. Second, the style approach that classifies leadership style into an authoritarian style that is related to decision making and expressing it to subordinates, and the democratic style that involves subordinates in decision making. Third, the effectiveness vs. efficiency approach that focuses on effectiveness is the effort to achieve the desired results and efficiency, namely producing output from certain inputs. Fourth, contingency approach is that the success of effective leadership style depends on the situation. Fifth, power approach, which includes reward power (power to give rewards), coercive approach (power to provide penalties / sanctions), legitimate power (power gained from positions held), and expert power (power based on knowledge and ability someone). Sixth, the function approach is a number of functions inherent in the leader which includes management of attention, management of meaning, management of trust, and management of self recognizes.

Different leaders sees the role of leadership in an organization includes behavior modification (influencing changes in outside attitudes without changing their attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and opinions) and modification of attitudes (influencing their thoughts and even attitudes, feelings, and opinions). In other words, a leader has a soul to influence which is the result obtained from the existence of quality communications and motivator's soul that requires the ability to understand individual behavior and its constituent components such as perception, attitude, and personality (Dean and Popp, 1990). One thing that must present to achieve the success of the motivation provided is the existence of trust that is built through quality communication between leaders and subordinates

## **The Role of Non Verbal Communication and Persuasion in Organizations: Empirical Evidence**

Graham et al. (1991) conducted a survey to determine the impact of non verbal communication in an organization. In his study he aimed to obtain information about respondents perceptions of the importance of non-verbal feedback and their ability to convey non-verbal cues from subordinates and their managers. Another goal is to compare these findings with knowledge of non-verbal communication and use their findings as a basis for recommending how to improve the effectiveness of non-verbal communication in a business organization. Studies show that the effectiveness of non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, body movements, and voicetone contributes 93% of attitudinal message to recipients. The importance of the effectiveness of non-verbal communication is focused on verbal or non-verbal cues. The study also found that voice tone (negative voice tone) would have a strong impact on the recipient of the message.

From a gender perspective, women have better decoding abilities than men and decoders or encoders are better at non-verbal cues. Women who work in education have higher decoding abilities than other groups. Recommendations given to improve non-verbal abilities include paying more attention to non-verbal cues, especially facial expressions related to eye contact and investigating more information when verbal and nonverbal cues are inappropriate. Managers should care that most workers will feel frustrated and distrust when facing conflict with their supervisors. Managers must also be able to modify their behavior by acting more honestly in communicating their emotions.

In addition to non-verbal communication, in a cooperative relationship between each individual and organization, persuasion is needed. Persuasion is the ability to persuade and gain the trust of others. Persuasion is generally seen as a form of manipulation. Persuasion is formed based on the process of honesty. There are three things that a person must have to be able to persuade or gain the trust of others. These three things are establishing or confirming positions, having supporting arguments followed by "assertive data-based expositions" and using logic, perseverance, and personal enthusiasm to give good ideas. Effective persuasion is a process of learning and negotiation.

## **The Effectiveness of Media Communication on the Covid-19 Pandemic**

When should the government pay more attention to the effectiveness of its communication? To answer this question, one must bring the issue of management of communication during a crisis which consist of four stages known, namely: normal, acute, chronic, and resolution (Coombs & Holladay, 2010). The normal stage begins when there are signs of a crisis. The acute stage is when a crisis is announced, it is the shortest stage. The chronic stage is during a crisis. The resolution stage is the stage where the crisis has subsided.

With all of the four stages, together with the five keys to effective media communication must be fulfilled to achieve control during the Covid-19 pandemic. The five keys to effective media communication in the Covid-19

pandemic according to Matthew Seeger as stated by The Centers for Disease Control Prevention (CDC) requires: credible information sources, honesty and information disclosure, aimed at persuading people to take actions that reduce the danger of contracting, compiled based on the opinions of experts, not amateurs, and consistency (Seeger, 2020).

The credibility of the message source is related to sources that could be trusted and have expertise. While honesty and information disclosure could reduce unnecessary rumors, anxiety and panic. This honesty also needs to be done in communicating what is known and unknown regarding risk factors. In addition, honesty in conveying information must avoid efforts to hide information on the pretext of avoiding panic and offering scenarios that are too optimistic and are forbidden to silence voices expressing concern (Seeger, 2020).

One of the most important notes in information disclosure is that the government must be able to make convincing communication without overdoing it (Sandman, 2004). Media communication carried out by the government in the Covid-19 pandemic, based on observations, is still ineffective.

## **CLOSING**

Communication is an important thing to support the success of the organization both in improving organizational performance and organizational adaptation to any changes in the existing business environment so that the organization could continue to survive and even gain competitive advantage. Through good communication between individuals and parties directly involved in the organization or outside the organization, the organization could obtain the information needed. To develop good communication this requires the active role of managers and subordinates through the application of some of the techniques described in the previous section. Media communication by the government is still not effective because it gives too much confidence and there is no consistency.

For this reason, the Indonesian highest authority which is the Parliament needs to encourage the government to increase the effectiveness of media communications in the Covid-19 pandemic with a focus on the goal of stopping the pandemic. Related to the main obstacle faced, namely the controversy between patient privacy v.s. In the interests of preventing the spread of a pandemic. The Indonesian Parliament should carry out inventory any conflicting provisions in the legislation and harmonize the various provisions. The alignment should consider the culture of the Indonesian during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore it is necessary to study the culture of the community facing the Covid-19 pandemic in order to determine what strategies are most appropriate to be applied in Indonesia.

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