

An Explanative Study on the Different Perceptions of Journalists toward Media Relations of Governmental and Private Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

The relation of journalist and Public Relations (PR) is mutual symbolism (gives benefit each other), however, the harmony of the two professions does not always happen in reality. This study tries to reveal information on the quality of media relations conducted by PR toward media, and compare media relations conducted by governmental and private PR based on journalists' perceptions. This study used quantitative approach toward 412 journalists as members of PWI in Central Kalimantan using survey method by mean of questionnaire. The media relations was measured on how the public relations' understanding toward characteristic of media and the need of media. The result of data analysis showed that there was insignificant difference between governmental and private PR in understanding the characteristic of media, but there was significant difference in comprehension the need of media. The conclusion revealed that the journalists of PWI members in Central Kalimantan assumed that media relations of governmental PR were better than of private PR.

Keyword: Journalist, Media Relations, governmental Public Relations, Private Public Relations

1. INTRODUCTION

Media relations are important program conducted by PR. The reason will be that PR needed a communication process to make relation that they could obtain their goals to develop, guide, and keep positive image or good reputation. We who live in society of mass communication depend on informational needs of mass media. Therefore, the communicational activities in context of PR take benefit from mass media to communicate with its public in order to get organizational purpose (Iriantana, 2009, p. 9).

Kriyantono (2014b) had conducted survey to study the relation between PRO (Public Relations Officer) and journalists happened in Indonesia. This survey covered content analysis on media news and interviews of 20 persons from PRO and 20 journalists. In general, Kriyantono (2014b) found that negative perception had happened between the two parties, PR and Journalists. Most of PRO (85%) said that the journalist often more focused on bad news of the organization, 65% of PRO assumed that the journalists rarely showed on press release of PRO, and 45% of PRO said that the journalist covered up the objective reality. 70% of PRO thought that media were less equal, and 55% said that the journalist did not make any confirmation before releasing the news. In other hand, most of journalists (55%) stated that PRO did not give open and free communication that the journalists found difficulty in collecting the information. The journalists also found difficulty to access the executive in order to make direct interview (agreed by 80% respondents), and most of them said that informational subsidy, such as press release, was far from their expectation (agreed by 70% respondent); PRO was considered not to share appropriate information and facility

to support the journalists' work (experienced by 50% respondents); PRO was considered to be inactive in giving information though the journalists did not asked them (agreed by 55% respondents) (Kriyantono (2014b).

A research on media relations were conducted by Graeme David Sterne (2010), concerning on media perception on public relations in New Zealand. This study purposed to describe the media perception on PR in New Zealand and to explore the reason behind it that he could identify what points that the officers of PR and Institute PR in New Zealand could do in order to improve perception and build better work relation in line the key characteristic of the relation between PR and media. The research had conducted on 30 persons involved editor, news manager, business editor and senior journalist from various radios in New Zealand, television, printed media and online media. The data collecting method used interview in order to collect perspective of non-mainstream. The result showed that media perception on public relations in New Zealand proved to be mostly negative. The relation between PR and journalists happened in four types of relations, which including: forever enemy, traditional competitor, firm relationship, and in different place (no relation). Antagonism of media practitioners mostly based on their experiences with not only public relations practitioners, but also self identity creator, as well as difference or in harmony of interest. This research revealed that the conflict happened had two faces and did not help at all, however this competition considered to be healthy one. PR practitioners in New Zealand needed to improve their treatment toward media in relational level and learn how to make relation with other cultures more effectively. It is important because the strongest influence on media perception to public relations referred to the attitude of public relations practitioners themselves (Sterne, 2010).

Based on Kriyantono (2014b) and Sterne (2010) researches, it concluded that the relation between PR and journalist appeared like two faces of a coin. In one side, PR considered as people who worked using media to their personal interest or company where they represented. In other side, PR referred to informational source that able to make journalists' work easier and effective, besides able to provide unavailable information (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997, p. 199-200).

Conducting a good media relations activity should be performed by PR practitioners. According to *Excellence* theory of James Grunig, PR practitioners always kept ethical dimension in doing their roles, and it also happened to those who conducted media relations activity. It was as part of PR practice that always forced to keep equality between public and organizational interest in order to make healthy relation of the two, included public interest on informational sufficiency (Kriyantono, 2014a, p. 106). In line with *Agenda Building Information Subsidies* theory from Gandy, public relations had to be proactive in providing information and even giving influence media and public agenda. The purpose would be to broaden their organizational views toward an issue including offer future and progress solution of the organization. The process of providing information (such as write press release and conduct press conference) referred to *information subsidies*. By providing information, it hopefully created harmony media relation because media also needed public relations as informational suppliers (Kriyantono, 2014a, p. 324).

This study explored information on quality of media relations conducted by governmental and private PR that it revealed if there was any quality difference of media relations between governmental and private PR. This research was conducted on journalists covered in one of journalists' organization that was PWI in Central Kalimantan. It considered

that PWI of Central Kalimantan was one of active sections on its organization thus it eased the writer in collecting respondent data.

2. DESIGN AND METHOD

This study used quantitative approach using survey method and data collecting mean of questionnaire. The survey type referred to explanative one. The population taken by the writer covered journalists in Indonesian Journalist Union (PWI) in Central Kalimantan region, with number of active journalists 412 people from printed and electronic media spread in that area. The sampling number of the study based on Slovin Formula, which were 80 people.

The journalists' perception toward media relations operated based on indicator of PR understanding on characteristic and the needs of media adopted from Kriyantono (2012c, p. 79-91), stated in the following table:

Table 2: Media Relations Indicator

| Dimension | Indicator | Descriptor | Statement |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Quality of Media Relations | The understanding on media characteristic | PR should understand the characteristic of media types | 1) PR practitioners have understood the characteristic of media types |
| | | Public Relations should understand redaction policy of the media | 2) PR practitioners have understood on news writing regulation |
| | | | 3) PR practitioners have understood on borders of deadline media (cut of times). |
| | | | 4) PR practitioners have understood delivery and acceptance system of information/news materials. |
| | | Public Relations should understand media distribution system | 5) PR practitioners have understood frequency of publishing and scope of media delivery area being served. |
| | | Public Relations should understand the journalists' characteristic | 6) PR practitioners have understood critical attitude of the journalists. |
| | | | 7) PR practitioners have understood that journalist being non protocol. |
| | | | 8) PR practitioners have understood that journalist is profession without time limitation that they should be ready to serve in any period of time. |
| | | | 9) PR practitioners have understood that the journalists tend to support on "suffered" party that the news values would be negative to the organization. |
| | Understanding on media needs | Public Relations should always give information honestly | 10) PR practitioners should give information honestly and not hide the fact |
| | | Public Relations should always keep their promises | 11) PR practitioners should always keep their promises as source of information. |
| | | Public Relations should always be open to give | 12) PR practitioners should be open and |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | informational clarification | always ready to give informational clarification. |
| | Public Relations should attempt to educate press | 13) Public Relations have sponsored the journalists in journalistic trainings. |
| | Public Relations should serve and support media works | 14) Public Relations have been proactive in their relation with media. |
| | | 15) Public Relations have provided access for journalists to make relation with top management (head of organization/institution). |
| | | 16) PR practitioners always be ready in giving informational supporting materials (image, photo, video, etc.) |
| | | 17) Public Relations have given supporting facility of journalists' work (press room). |
| | Public Relations should behave professionally and honor journalists' profession | 18) Public relations have understood media authority to include or not the information given. |
| | | 19) Public relations behave wise if media issues news that far from their expectation. |
| | | 20) PR practitioners have understood journalistic ethic code kept by the journalists. |
| | Public Relations should make good communicational relation with journalists | 21) PR practitioners have made good interpersonal relation with journalists. |
| | | 22) Public Relations often conducted informal activities with the journalists. (Press tour, media gathering, etc.) |
| | Public Relations should always work together with the media | 23) PR practitioners have worked together with media and placed the public interest in important position. |

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Public Relations practitioners should know more on anything about media (Kriyantono, 2012c, p. 79). The development of media has given a key influence on activities of media relations conducted. The rapid growth of mass media number eased activities of mass media in choosing appropriate media that suitable to its consumers' target. Thus, the PR practitioners needed to keep observing the media development, target, and developing issues in society (Wardhana, 2008, p. 7). Understanding the mass media characteristic became necessary beginning step in effort to know a partner in a work relation of PR practitioners. By understanding characteristic media, it was hopefully that PR practitioners hopefully could give service that appropriate the media needs in order to make a good media relations. The result of comparison analysis of governmental and private PR in understanding media characteristic showed in the following table:

Table 2. The analysis result on comparison of Governmental and Private PR in understanding media characteristic

| Understanding | Media Relation | Average | t-test | Probability |
|---------------|-----------------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Media Types | Governmental PR | 3.86 | 1.579 | 0.118 |
| | Private PR | 3.70 | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|-------|-------|
| Media redaction Policy | Governmental PR | 3.81 | 1.249 | 0.215 |
| | Private PR | 3.71 | | |
| Media Distribution System | Governmental PR | 3.81 | 1.196 | 0.235 |
| | Private PR | 3.68 | | |
| Journalists' Characteristic | Governmental PR | 3.72 | 1.779 | 0.079 |
| | Private PR | 3.59 | | |

Based on research result, in general, governmental and private PR considered being quite good in understanding media characteristic. Even though in point of understanding journalists' characteristic, that journalists tended to help the "suffer" one and the news sometimes gave disadvantages to the institution, the research analysis showed its highest neutral value (governmental PR; N=46,3%, S=27,5%, TS=13,8%, and private PR ; N=41,3%, S=27,5%, TS=22,5%). Based on t-test in understanding media characteristic, there were quality differences between the two; the governmental PR considered being better than private PR, however its differential value was insignificant (probability (0,118) > level of significance ($\alpha=5\%$)). The result of analysis was in line with researcher's interview with Muhammad Yusuf; the senior redactor LKBN ANTARA and Vice Rector II Muhammadiyah University of Palangkaraya. He said that now day the PR practitioners from governmental or private institutions generally have been quite good in their efforts to understand media characteristic. The governmental institution almost every day had news or information on policy or development. It of course became one of news source regular for mass media. Moreover, the governmental institution usually have made contract page in several printed media in effort of socializing information policy and development. It resulted in high intense meeting between media journalist and practitioner, that media characteristic and work pattern of journalist could be understood by governmental PR. Whereas in private institution, though there was low intense of meeting, its PR practitioners have quite understood media characteristic because they had recruited their PR officers who were professional in the field.

The writer have interviewed with Heronika Rahan, he is the Redaction Chief of Kalteng Post. He stated that governmental and private PR had realized of the important role of mass media. Therefore, the effort of understanding media characteristic had been conducted well. Even more, some institutions in government and private ones had recruited officers who had journalist background, and it became their step in making good relation with media.

In making good relation with mass media, after understanding media characteristic, the important thing would be the needs of mass media. Thus, the duty of public relations practitioners in media relations would be understand the media needs and tried to fulfill the needs (Iriantana, 2011, p. 15). The result of comparing governmental and private PR in understanding journalists' needs showed in the following table:

Table 3. The analysis result of comparing governmental and private PR in understanding media needs

| Understanding | Media relations | Average | T-test | Probability |
|---|-----------------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Honesty as informational source | Governmental PR | 3.21 | 2.105 | 0.039 |
| | Private PR | 2.98 | | |
| Realization in keeping promise | Governmental PR | 3.64 | 2.393 | 0.019 |
| | Private PR | 3.39 | | |
| Readiness to clarify information | Governmental PR | 3.71 | 5.167 | 0.000 |
| | Private PR | 3.11 | | |
| Contribution in educating press | Governmental PR | 3.70 | 2.249 | 0.027 |
| | Private PR | 3.46 | | |
| Give service and support (facility) toward media work | Governmental PR | 3.63 | 6.599 | 0.000 |
| | Private PR | 3.14 | | |
| Professional attitude and honor journalistic profession | Governmental PR | 3.19 | 2.771 | 0.007 |
| | Private PR | 2.98 | | |
| Make good interpersonal communication with journalist | Governmental PR | 3.85 | 6.823 | 0.000 |
| | Private PR | 3.04 | | |
| Good relation and place public interest as priority | Governmental PR | 2.89 | 2.819 | 0.006 |
| | Private PR | 2.49 | | |

The result of analysis data on PR practitioners' honesty in giving information/news source showed that negative image had not been better. In part of governmental PR, only about 37.5% respondents agreed, 32% neutral, and 23.8% disagreed that governmental PR had behaved honest as source of news. In other part, only 32.5% respondents agreed, 31.3% neutral, and 27.5% disagreed that private PR had been honest as source of news. Honesty and credibility became one of main principles in developing good relation with media, for by honesty and credibility, the journalists would trust the PRO (Wardhana, 2008, p. 15). Honesty in declared information truly became assessment point toward public relations works. Honest revealed to be important value to obtain credibility for public relations practitioners as sources of information for journalists (Kriyantono: 2012c, p. 83). Honesty also became important point in excellence PR practices, by being honest meaning that PR practitioners had tried to make good relation with the media to fullfill the public right on correct information. Based on t-test on this point, though the two institutions obtained less negative, however, there were significant differences (probability = 0,039 < level of significance ($\alpha=5\%$)) where governmental PR considered being better than private PR.

As the interview result showed, interview with Rahan, he stated that PR practitioners from Government or private tended to be careful in giving information needed by journalists and tended to cover up the reality when the information would give disadvantages to their institutions. The governmental PR sometimes chose to say "I don't know" to the journalists because they felt afraid if they would get sanction from their chief. It also happened to private

PR who often tried to cover up the fact in reality when negative issue happened to their institution.

Next discussion would be the journalists' perception on PR consciousness in keeping their promises. Based on t-test, governmental PR still considered being better than private PR with significant different value (probability (0.019) < *level of significance* ($\alpha=5\%$)). In interview, several news sources had the same opinions on this problem; they thought that PR practitioners from government and private had understood the function of mass media, and they became more watchful on how to behave toward the journalists as media crews and tried to treat them as good as possible including keeping their promises.

The following analysis discussed PR contribution in educating press. The t-test showed governmental PR proved to be better than private PR with significant value (probability (0.027) < *level of significance* ($\alpha=5\%$)). Both institutions obtained quite good assessment from the respondents (55% respondents agreed and 15% very agreed that governmental PR had sponsored journalists in journalistic training. In other hand, 48.8% respondents agreed, but 30% respondents became neutral on private PR had sponsored journalistic training). Based on the fact, the writer had interviewed Sutransyah, he is the head of PWI in Central Kalimantan and had become a journalist for more than 20 years. He stated that in general the governmental institutions in Central Kalimantan had annual budget arranged in specific RAPBD for anything related to the media, such as the needs of informational publication (for example through contract on pages in several media), and specific allocation budget through communication section in effort to develop good relation with media.

Next, in line with serving and support media's work, it concluded that there appeared to be quality difference between governmental and private PR; respondents considered governmental PR was better with significant difference. Based on this result, the writer had conduct investigation by means of interview with Norjani, a senior journalist in Central Kalimantan. He stated that from proactive perspective on relation of media with governmental or private PR seemed to be good, they had tried to contact the journalists whenever there was any information or activity involving the media. However, why governmental PR considered to be better would be because the meeting intensity and relation between media and governmental PR were quite high. It also happened in how the PR provide access for journalists to connect to top management, as well as their effort to provide information support, both institutions proved to be quite good.

In the effort of providing facility supporting for journalists' work, Norjani stated that governmental PR were better than private PR. In some governmental institutions there had been specific room for journalists (press room) with some additional facilities such as computer and internet network. Though some government institutions had no press room, they invited the journalists in human communication room and used the facility. However, to provide specific room, only small number of private PR did it.

The next analysis concerned with professional attitude of PR and how they appreciated journalists' profession. In this case, it appeared question for respondents who answered neutral proved to very high. Such as in the case of how PR attitude in understanding media authority to involve or not information that given (43.8 % respondents said neutral and only 31.3% respondents agreed that governmental PR had understood the media authority to involve or not

information given. In other hand, 47.5% respondents said neutral and 23.8% respondents agreed that private PR had understood the media authority to involve or not information given.

In general, media had different redaction policy, thus the decision to involve the news became their authority. Public relations should be certain that media had proceeded the news objectively based on journalistic principles (Kriyantono, 2012c, p. 86). It also related to wise attitude of practitioners if the news did not fulfill their expectation (41,3% respondents said neutral and only 25% agreed that governmental PR had been wise if the media revealed news that far from their expectation. In other hand, 47,5% respondents said neutral and only 23,8% respondents that private PR had been wise if the media revealed news that far from their expectation). It also happened in analysis of practitioners understanding on journalist ethical code (37,5% respondents said neutral and only 26,3% respondents agreed that governmental PR had understood the journalist' ethical code. In other hand, 46,8% respondents said neutral and only 22,1% respondents agreed that private PR had understood the journalist' ethical code).

However, deep understanding on journalistic ethical code were needed in order the relation between public relations and journalists would not result in controversial (Kriyantono, 2012c, p. 88). The t-test result on professional attitude and appreciation on journalists profession showed that governmental PR proven being better than private PR in significant different value (probability $(0.007) < level\ of\ significance\ (\alpha=5\%)$). Norjani in interview stated that basically most of PR practitioners understood on journalist authority to involve or not information given, however sometimes they could not wisely accept it. They kept asking event complained to the journalist if the information they gave did not appeared or did not meet their expectation. It similar to what Yusuf stated. He believed that the PR practitioners should understood what policy of media redaction are, where the media held absolute authority on its issue of information / news. Thus, how good the news or information were given by the practitioners if the media did not put it or put it but not related to PR expectation, they had to be wise and understood the fact. Most of PR practitioners seemed to be not fully understood on journalistic ethical code. However, the effort of understanding it seemed to be better. The journalistic organization specially PWI often did socialization on journalistic ethical code to practitioners by seminar or brochure. In addition, the recruitment PR officers who had journalistic background also gave positive effect on increasing of understanding journalistic ethical code.

The following discussion covered the analysis of respondents perception on how the PR effort in creating good communicational relation with journalist. The analysis concerned with to what extend the PR effort in creating relationship with journalists. Interpersonal communicational relation between PR practitioners and journalists became important step that should be conducted by practitioners, that the cooperation between the two became easier. In general, journalists reflected of human who had rights to be honor and respected. Therefore, media relations or making relation with media using emphatic and humanism Human Communication and respected each other would make the relation between journalists and PR practitioners and its organization became better (Wardhana, 2008, p. 13). The analysis result showed that 42.5% respondents agreed and 27.5% absolutely agreed that PR practitioners in government had good interpersonal communicational relation with journalists. In other hand, 37.5% respondents said neutral, and 31.5% did not agree that PR practitioners in government had good interpersonal communicational relation with journalists.

The following discussion referred to PR institutions had or had not conducted informal activities with journalists such as press tour, media gathering, and others. In order to make good relation with media, public relations needed to conduct informal activities, such as press tour, media gathering, and others. It became PR effort to introduce more about their institutions to media, and as means of information exchange (Kriyantono, 2012c, p. 89). The analysis result showed that 37.5% respondents agreed and 28.8 respondents absolutely agreed that governmental PR often conducted informal activities with journalist. In other hand, 40% respondents said neutral, and 33.8% agreed that private PR conducted informal activities with journalist.

The t-test analysis on the effort of creating good interpersonal communication with journalists showed significant difference (probability (0.000..) *level of significance* ($\alpha=5\%$)) between governmental and private PR in effort of creating good interpersonal communication with journalist. Governmental PR had higher average values than private PR. The intensity of meeting became the different causes, as stated by Norjani; the communicational relation had often been conducted by governmental PR and journalists, even almost every day. Because the governmental institutions had quite crowded activities agenda and always needed media to publish the activities, indirectly it resulted in interpersonal communication between journalists and governmental PR. The governmental institutions often conducted informal activities with journalists such as media gathering or others. Whereas, the communicational relation between journalists and private PR rarely happened because of situational matter; it happened for example when there were any promotion of certain product, program being socialized or any issues appeared in the institution. The low meeting intensity resulted in less interpersonal between journalists as media worker and private practitioners. Private PR also considered being rarely conducting informal activities with journalists.

The last analysis would be on whether cooperation between PR and journalists were for public interest, by making priority on that interest. The analysis result showed that respondents had negative tendency (36.3% respondents disagreed and 33.8 said neutral on the governmental PR had tried to make good cooperation and put priority on public interest. In other hand, 28.8% respondents quite not agreed and 27.5% said neutral that private PR had tried to make good cooperation and put priority on public interest). Moreover, based on t-test, though the both institutions had got negative perception from the respondents, in term of quality governmental PR still considered being better that private PR with significant different value (probability (0,006) < *level of significance* ($\alpha=5\%$)).

According to Yusuf in interviewing with the writer, cooperation between governmental PR and journalists in giving priority on public interest proven to be better than cooperation between private PR and media, it happened because there were differences on orientation between governmental and private institutions; the governmental orientation on development, policy and public service, while private orientation on business or company benefit. However, in order to put priority of public interest and equal to institutions interest, the both institution proven being far from maximum. Governmental PR considered being better, but often they behaved closed on negative issue or pressure from superior. While private PR with their pure business orientation, often they behaved closed and dishonest in giving information to media if they thought it did not give any benefit or give disadvantage to the company. The cooperation

with media often was conducted only if there were any introduction of product or program for good image of the company.

4. CONCLUSION

1. Media Relations of Governmental PR considered better than Media Relations of Private PR.

This study purposed to find out quality of media relations conducted by governmental PR and private PR, then if there appeared or not the different quality of media relations built by the two institutions. The result of analysis showed that, for category of PR practitioners' understanding on media characteristic, there appeared quality difference between the two though it proven insignificant. Although in average value of governmental PR were better than private PR, both institutions considered being good enough, on understanding of media types, redaction policy, distributive system and characteristic of journalists. This positive result revealed as result of the increasing consciousness on the important of relation with media, therefore some institutions of governmental or private had conducted improvement of their PR staff's Human Recourses, such as conducting recruitment new officers who had journalistic experience and giving knowledge improvement for old officers by seminars or journalistic training.

From quality of PR practitioners understanding on media needs, the analysis showed that there appeared different quality between governmental and private PR that proven being significant, where governmental PR seemed to be better than private PR. However, some points showed that both institutions (governmental and private PR) received negative perception from the respondents. Such journalists assessment on PR honesty in giving information (as news sources) and in cooperation quality constructed with media and put priority on public interest. Both governmental and private PR got negative perception from the journalists, though the governmental PR proven being little better.

2. Governmental and Private PR considered being not applying "*Excellence Public Relations*".

After viewing the results of analyses especially on how the quality of PR practitioners in understanding media needs on some points, it concluded that the negative perception of journalists kept going, meaning that work quality of PR practitioners from governmental and private institutions proven being not maximum. Two important points obtaining negative opinions placed on ethics that were honesty in giving information and giving a priority of public interest that equal to their institutions. Thus, it concluded that PR practitioners had not conducted practice of excellence public relations. In this model, the public relations place a priority on ethical factor and public interest in working his duty, they applied two roles together; one step in management, and the other in public" with spirit obtaining compromise and benefit in return. Meaning, public relations facilitated information spreading to public directly and fight for public voice to management. In other words, public relations attempted to involve the public "voice" in decision making. Of course, the final decision still on became organizational right, but it followed processes of hearing from other parties' inputs. Communication had functions as means of negotiation and compromise in problem solving with "win-win solutions" principle (Kriyantono, 2014a, p. 98).

5. SUGGESTION AND ACKNOWLEDGE

The findings in this study were not aimed to make general description about relation of Media and Public Relations portraits in Indonesia. Therefore, it needed other deeply discussions in other places and demography as well as broader scope that could answer phenomenon universally. However, this result hopefully could give additional views for practitioners in order to improve their working quality especially in conducting media relations. For academic, this result would add scientific literature and variety of findings that interesting to other researchers to conduct following research to find out detail science of public relations.

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