

## Developing a Culturally-Relevant Public Relations Theory for Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

The article views public relations study and practice from an Indonesian perspective. As an applied communication science, public relations has been dominated by Western perspective. However, the idea of the need to study communication from the Eastern (including Indonesian) perspective has emerged recently. Some public relations theories from a Western perspective may need to be applied differently because of the difference of societal systems and philosophical backgrounds. There are Indonesian philosophical beliefs that should underpin public relations in Indonesia. On the other hand, there is no single theory comes from Indonesian perspective due to lack of local wisdoms exploration as a basic to build communication theories relevant with Indonesian contexts. The aim of the article is to stimulate the development of public relations theories by adopting Indonesian local wisdom, Indonesia-West theoretical collaboration, and critical reflection on Western theory. The authors has explored some Indonesian's proverbs that represent Indonesian local wisdoms to search for similarities and differences between Western and Indonesian perspectives. The authors present a normative Indonesian perspective as a basis for future public relations theory building in Indonesian context. The cultures, traditions, and moral norms of a country can be maintained even though the country may be undergoing rapid transformation towards a more Western economy and lifestyle.

**Keywords:** *Asian perspective, communication, East-West Theory, Indonesia, public relations theory.*

### INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC RELATIONS IS A NEW SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE IN THE FIELD OF COMMUNICATION  
Public relations practice, it is argued, is as old as human civilization because of the need to persuade people (Kriyantono, 2014; Newsom, Scott, & Turk, 1993). It is certainly a ubiquitous activity (Horsley, 2009), since "the tenets of public relations business have been known, studied, and practiced for many centuries." (Leahigh, 1993, p. 24). Many persuasion strategies that public relations practitioners do nowadays have been applied for thousands of years (Newsom et al., 1993). However, because development in public relations practice does not always develop simultaneously with theoretical aspects (Johansson, 2007; Wehmeier, 2009), the absence of contemporaneous applied theories directly affects professionalization because there is no framework for practitioners' guidance (Cornelissen, 2000). The academic study of public relations quite often focuses more on practical activities which is known as public relations as a practice or as a tool (Ardianto, 2004; Skerlep, 2001).

According to Edward Bernays and Edward Robinson, public relations should be both a social and applied behaviour science because it integrates theoretical and practical elements (Culbertson, Jeffers, Stone, & Terrell, 1993; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). However, as a scientific discipline, public relations is relatively new and developing rapidly (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Ihlen & Ruler, 2009; Johansson, 2007; Skerlep, 2001), characterised by little theoretical and practical based research (Botan & Hazleton, 1989), and so is perceived as lacking theory (Greenwood, 2010; Wehmeier, 2009) or theoretical lateness (Johansson, 2007).

Nonetheless, public relations has developed and evolved into a strong applied communication discipline over the past 25 years, i.e. a corporate communication practice and theoretically grounded and research based area (Botan & Hazleton, 2009; Ihlen & Ruler, 2007, 2009). Because the field of public relations has borrowed or adapted many of its theories from other disciplines (Botan & Hazleton, 2009; Greenwood, 2010; Mackey, 2003), it is also defined as relationship management (Ledingham, 2003; Mackey, 2003; Wehmeier, 2009; Wu, 2005) and communication management (J. E. Grunig & Dozier, 1995; J. E. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 1992; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; L. A. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Ihlen & Ruler, 2007, 2009; Wehmeier, 2009) both of which Everett (2009) calls ecological paradigm; corporate communication and public affairs (Hutton, 1999); and modernist organizational context (Holtzhausen, 2002). However, it cannot mature unless it builds original theories from the borrowed concepts (J. E. Grunig, 1989). This theoretical development will come from academicians and practitioners (Johansson, 2007; Wehmeier, 2009). Some literature, such as Botan & Hazleton (1989); Greenwood (2010); Grunig & Hunt (1984); Grunig (1989); Hallahan (1999); Ihlen & van Ruler (2007, 2009); and Sisco, Collin, & Zoch (2011), stated that public relations is multidisciplinary social science.

The need for public relations to be a science, not just a profession, began since in the middle of the 1970s (Sisco et al., 2011). This is evident from the articles that appeared in *Public Relations Review* in 1975 involved research and findings, not merely articles about the profession. Further evidence that public relations is a science can be found from the study of Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzura, & Jones (2003), who found that the articles about public relations in *Public Relations Review*, *Public Relations Research Annual* and *Journal of Public Relations Research* are not only about 'practice or application' but also 'introspectively' considering public relations functions and education themes and 'theory development'. They also found that the number of 'theory development' articles had increased twofold in the 2001-2003 editions compared with 1984-2000 editions.

#### DOMINATION OF WESTERN PERSPECTIVE

Despite the fact that public relations, as an applied communication study, has been developing, "the growth of this knowledge has been very lopsided because the focus of theory building has been confined predominantly to the United States and a few Western European countries." (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003a, : xxv). Although some models, such as the European Model Of Public Relations and the Excellent Model, aim to apply both local and global public relations practices, the models are still Western in origin and orientation (Halff & Gregory, 2014). Dissanayake's study (1988) in South East Asian countries revealed that 71 percent of the material used in teaching courses of communication theory was American in origin. In another study in South Asia, Dissanayake (1988) found a higher percentage, which is 78 percent. In addition, no Asian scientist was in the list when Rogers (1997) wrote the history of communication study: all came from the United States and Europe. The fact

remains that Western communication theories have been applied globally as universal norms for communication activities for many decades (Ayish, 2003).

The idea that we also need to study communication from the Eastern (Asian) perspective has emerged recently (Dissayanake, 1988; Gunaratne, 2009; Kriyantono, 2014; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Raharjo, 2013) and “in recent years, this approach has been challenged on the basis of obfuscating the cultural peculiarities of non-Western societies as significant components of communication theorisation.” (Ayish, 2003, p. 79). As a part of communication study, there are few non-Western public relations publications. Although there are numerous articles discussing public relations in Asian cultures in the last ten years (Wu, 2005), very few use empirical evidence about public relations practices in other regions of the world (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003a). Among the 27 theories of public relations, originated and borrowed theories, none of them are Eastern or Indonesian perspectives (Kriyantono, 2014).

A growing body of literature, such as Ayish (2003); Dissayanake (2003); Gunaratne (2009); Raharjo (2013), have found that some Asian countries have created communication theories from their own perspective, such as Chinese Communication Theory, Indian Communication Theory, Chinese Harmony Theory, Confucian Communication Theory, Japanese Kuuki Theory, and Taoist Communication Theory. Furthermore, Gunaratne (2009) classified various Asian theories based on Robert Craig’s Western seven traditions of communication theories field, such as Chinese rhetoric and semiotics, Indian rhetoric and semiotics, Buddhist philosophy on socio-psychological tradition and Daoist philosophy on sociocultural tradition. Asian Communication Theories are derived from folk dramas, classical treatises, and other models of traditional communication and communication behaviour in Asian countries (Dissayanake, 1988; Gunaratne, 2009). Asian countries have also created great civilizations, and it would seem highly improbable that such civilization could arise without a sophisticated system of communication (Dissayanake, 2003) because communication is the core of culture (Carey, 2009), without which, the culture will die (Fiske, 2002; Gudykunst & Lee, 2002).

Asian theory incorporates the great philosophies of India and China and the cultures of the region between them (Gunaratne, 2009), including Middle East Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia, and Eastern Russia. Although Indonesia, geographically, is an Asian country, there is no single theory emerging from an Indonesian perspective in Dissayanake’s (1988), Gunaratne’s (2009), and Wu’s (2005) work. In addition, Western scientists have found it difficult to obtain Indonesian scientific work about communication phenomena in Indonesia contexts (Hobart, 2006), including public relations. Compounding this problem, not many Indonesian scientists explore local wisdoms as a basis to build communication theories relevant with Indonesia contexts (Raharjo, 2013). Following Dissayanake’s (1988), Gunaratne’s (2009) and Raharjo’s (2013) work, this current article offers to describe public relations theory from Indonesian perspective (local wisdom).

Although some Western Public Relations Theories still rest on universal and generic norms (McQuail, 2000), they have been adjusted or applied to the different cultural contexts and circumstances of their origins (Huang-Horowitz, 2012; Kriyantono, 2015; Wu, 2005). For example, Excellent Theory, which is declared as generic and normative principles of public relations (L. A. Grunig et al., 2002; Khamis & Toth, 2009; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003b), suggests that public relations practitioners should be part of dominant coalition as a group of organizational decision making (J. E. Grunig & Dozier, 1995; J. E. Grunig et al., 1992;

L. A. Grunig et al., 2002), however, public relations in China, India and South Korea, countries with high power distance culture, find it difficult to apply generic principles of public relations, including being involved in such coalitions (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003b). In addition, Ayish (2003) proved that Arab-Islamic cultures have their own communication patterns than Western, such as formalistic, indirect, hyperbolic, asymmetrical, metaphysical and orally biased. Akoje and Rahim (2014) found that socio-cultural, religions, and political milieu of the countries determine the effort to formulate code of conduct for communication practice.

The different perspective provided by non-Western can produce more comprehensive theory and greater insight to the public relations discipline: "If we are to widen our field of inquiry productively and to secure greater insights, we need to pay more attention to concepts of communication formulated by non-Western societies as well" (Dissayanake, 1988, p. 1). The theoretical development of public relations must be able to broadly define public relations to reflect its wide range of actual applications and cultural contexts and not just privilege Western (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). For example, a basic principle of public relations in Western perspective is to tell the truth (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). This concept can be universal as a moral basis for the public relations profession. However, the application of this principle needs to be adjusted for different cultural contexts (Gudykunst & Lee, 2002; Mulyana, 2010; Rogers, 1997) such as high and low context cultures. As a result, the meaning of telling the truth will be different in Indonesian as a high context culture.

Consequently, it must be acknowledged that the application of theory may often be different in different national and ethnic cultures, and incorporate the ideology embedded in the language of any culture (Van Dijk, 1998). Although Asian communities have various cultures and local wisdoms, in general, they have common characteristics that cannot be easily tested within a Western framework. The characteristics are described in Table 1 (Galtung & Vincent, 1992; Kincaid, 1987). Therefore, this article aims to stimulate the development of public relations theories by presenting a normative Indonesian perspective as a basis for future public relations theory building in Indonesian context. Adopting Oso and Akhagba's (2014, p. 178) statement, this article is an effort to express "a counter-hegemony discourse."

In general, Indonesia has the same characteristics as Asian cultures identified in Table 1. Indonesia has many ethnics. To reveal this similarity, the authors describe two examples from Indonesian local wisdom. First, Indonesian emphasizes harmony in the macrocosmos (Indonesian calls *jagad gedhe*) and microcosmos (*jagad cilik*) to place faith in following the path of righteousness. Religion is a channel to reach that harmony, i.e. *agama ageming aji* (religion is a channel to reach true happiness). From this philosophical thought, the harmony means that human must walk in the good way, a balanced status: as God's creature and as an independent creature. This is called *loro-loroning atunggal* or monodualism (Purwadi, 2011). In this context, most Indonesian believe that the soul and the body cannot be separated just as individuals cannot be separated from the family (blood relationships). Second, most Indonesian usually answer *pangestu* (meaning: because you pray for me) when someone else asks "*kumaha damang?*" (meaning: how are you?). The word *pangestu* means that someone's feeling about a certain situation cannot be separated from their interaction with others; at least he/she perceives that other people pray for him/her. In other words, communication is viewed as an unified process and

interdependency between people and nature, therefore, communication behaviours that have the potential to disturb the harmony should be avoided.

Nowadays, Western world is still epicentrum central of public relations study in Indonesia (Kriyantono, 2014; Raharjo, 2013). Indonesian researchers often use a single lens to study public relations phenomena even in an Indonesian context. This domination of Western perspective has been caused by five factors. First, the lateness of an indigenous Indonesia education due to colonization for centuries (about 350 years) has had a deep colonizing effect. This colonization has affected the patterns of thinking by imposing a Western framework on those going on to research (Achmad, 2012). Second, the authoritarian political system under the first regime of President Soekarno (1945-1966) and the second regime of President Soeharto (1966-1998) restrained the freedom of speech. Although the reformation era -beginning in May 1998- gave freedom of speech to express diverse opinions (Siryuvasak, 2005), this is a relatively recent phenomenon or transition era of democracy in Indonesia (Rasul, Rahim, & Salman, 2015). Third, very few international publication study public relations from an Indonesian perspective (Hobart, 2006; Kriyantono, 2014; Raharjo, 2013), and, as a consequence, there is no common foundation. Fourth, because English is the dominant language of communication research, an Anglophone orientation has dominated the research. Finally, because many Indonesian scholars have studied in Western countries, such as Australia, United States, England, France or Germany they have been inducted into a Western perspectives. From reviewing literature, Yusoff and Hanafiah (2015) stated that Western perspective has influenced the local perspective through education, entertainment, and communication technology.

#### LOCAL WISDOM IS EMPIRIC AND PRAGMATIC

Local wisdom is the local thoughts and ideas of wisdom and goodness values that are internalized among generations within a given society (Radmilla, 2011). The values are taken for granted as the true morals that society obeys as the basis of harmony. These traditional values remain useful for people in contemporary society because they deeply relate to their way of lives. Local wisdom developed from a communal consciousness that emerged from social interactions that accumulated and crystallized into morality doctrines (code of ethics). These doctrines are usually disseminated through various traditional communication channels, such as legends, fairy tales, folktales, word of mouth communication (Indonesian: *gethok tular*), traditional dramas, songs, and proverbs. If these local wisdoms are well guided and promoted, they can be a very good source of guidelines for quality of life development for people.

Local wisdoms have become tradition to guide people's lives because they were constructed from integration of values and culture of society, theistic belief systems, and geographic aspects (Kriyantono, 2014). For instance: Minangkabau, another Indonesia ethnic, local wisdom suggests that male members of society should wander to reach success. This behaviour is encouraged by a matrilineal culture and system of belief about doing good things that are meaningful for one's society. The system of belief is represented by the proverb *Iduik bajaso, mati bapusako* (meaning: live for rendering a service, die for having a heirloom). In public relations activities, this local wisdom should be a basis for developing corporate social responsibility and social marketing activities, as activities have done good things and meaningful for the society.

In daily life, a local wisdom materializes in the form of a local culture, such as artifacts, myths, belief system, social activities or norms. For example: Indonesian has a local wisdom *mangan gak mangan sing penting ngumpul* (it is important to be together although there is not enough food to eat). The local wisdom teaches members to focus on togetherness rather than individuality. Then, it appears on some social activities, such as *selamatan* (praying and thanking God for everything in order to gain safety), *arisan* (a regular social gathering whose members contribute to and take turns at winning an aggregate sum of money. The members are able to discuss current issues, such as neighbourhood sanitation, education, organization, or other national programs from the government), *yasinan* (group of people reading *Yasin* verses in the Islam Holy book to pray for the ancestors), or *gotong royong* (community self-help) (Kriyantono, 2011). From this local wisdom, it can be said that the organization should be built as a basis of togetherness and cooperation with closeness of relationship among the members.

From this, it can be concluded that Indonesian local wisdom is a guide for communication and interaction in Indonesian society. Because it was constructed from belief systems, cultural values and the geography of local community, the local wisdom is an empiric and pragmatic guide to solve problems. Failing to incorporate indigenous local wisdom and practice in the theory and practice of Indonesian public relations will simply mean that such theory and practice will be relatively ineffectual because of its irrelevance. Worse, where Western based theory and practice is effective, the result would be a further erosion of indigenous culture and the increasing hegemony of Western culture, practices, belief systems, and ideology.

#### METHOD

This article is a theoretical paper about producing a culturally-relevant public relations theory for Indonesia. The authors has explored some Indonesian's proverbs that represent Indonesian local wisdoms. The authors search for similarities and differences between Western and Indonesian perspectives. In other words, the authors integrate Indonesian-Western theory with the aim to explore the practice of public relations, that may be accepted in an international or cross-cultural context, and also create critical reflections on Western theories. The comparative method has been applied by Wu (2005) to evaluate American public relations assumptions and theories in global context.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Emerging from the Indonesian local wisdoms, five themes became evident. They are pre-existing concepts that became local wisdoms for centuries, therefore, they should be promoted to develop a culturally-relevant public relations theory for Indonesia.

##### a. *Musyawaharah mufakat* as Indonesian decision making

It appears that Indonesian local wisdoms are consistent with the two-way symmetric model. This model, as described in the Excellent Model of Public Relations (J. E. Grunig, 1989, 2008; J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and Dialogic Public Relations Theory (Kent & Taylor, 2002), propose that public relations plays two roles simultaneously: one at management's side, another at the public's side with the spirit to build compromise. Public relations facilitates the information dissemination to the public directly and speaks to management about the public's needs. Communication functions as a negotiation and compromise tool to create mutually satisfactory solutions. Such a model sits well with the Indonesian perspective of

*musyawarah mufakat/rembugan*, decision making by having dialog. However, it should be a negotiated-compromise communication which the parties are ready to sacrifice their interests for reaching a solution. According to the *Pancasila*, the five basic philosophies principles incorporated into the Indonesian constitution, *musyawarah mufakat*, is the main strategy to make decisions rather than voting.

This decision making process should avoid a voting by conducting *musyawarah mufakat* which consists of some principles. First, *wani ngalah, luhur wekasane* (to give way sometimes is better for the sake of many people). The two-way model similarly proposes that public relations should not focus only on fulfilling its goal but should provide an opportunity to hear the voices of other people. The important thing is to reach harmonious relationship with the public by increasing social sensitivity (social care). Second, the organization in an Indonesian context should be prepared to face any bad risk when the root of problems can be eliminated. Therefore, before decision making, the organization should provide detailed information in order to gain comprehensive understanding. In this situation, public relations should believe that *teppettu maoompennge, teppolo massellomoe* (the slack will not break off, flexible thing will not be broken). This local wisdom means that public relations should be wise and tolerant in facing a problem in order to create solution without giving pressure to other parties. The third is Indonesian's *caina herang laukna beunang* (the water is still clear when catching the fish). It means that communication should be conducted by negotiation to look for both parties' benefit. Public relations should avoid a negotiating process that is based on reaching self-benefit that is inflicted on the public. When the organization faces a crisis situation, for example, the negotiating process should not cause negative impact on the public, as Indonesian wisdom says *gindi pikir belang bayah* (not having sincerity, always want to suffer others). This local wisdom guides public relations process to be honest in exploring the root of problem holistically without the tendency on only one view of organization.

Negotiation by *musyawarah mufakat (rembug)* is Indonesian character. It is the opposite of majority rule that occurs in many, but certainly not all, Western perspectives where this form of democratic process is valorised over representing a range of opinions. Thus, in Java, a decision (such as in community or local government) is usually not based on the majority but based on the agreement. The ancestors taught *yen ana rembug dirembug, nanging olehe ngrembug kanthi ati sing sareh*, solve the problem through dialog calmly, patiently, and thinking clearly (dialog = *rembug* or *musyawarah*).

b. *Maintain mutual relationships based on harmony in system*

As a part of a social system, the public relations process must direct an organization to reach harmony in the system in which it operates. This harmony known as *runtut raut sauyunan*, i.e. live in harmony and peace together; *rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah, guyub rukun*, i.e., if we live in peace and harmony we will be prosperous, if we live in quarrel we will suffer. The organization should be *rampa' naong beringin korong* leafy and shady, i.e. the organization protects the public as if it is a Banyan tree to make harmonious life, solidarity, and stimulate community self-help (*gotong royong*).

The organization should be positive in its attitude towards the public, including competitors and pressure groups regardless of whether they are supportive of or opposed to the organisation. They must be perceived as friends and partners. Harmony in the system happens if the elements of the system help and support in togetherness (*gotong*

*royong*/voluntary help). Harmony can be built by practitioners through some simple and spontaneous activities, such as greetings, *arisan* and sharing food. This concept of togetherness is mirrored in another local wisdom *manunggaling kawula gusti* (all people in community, leader and members, are unity), which means that the public and the organization unite for one goal to reach a comfortable. In the firm, for example, the concept will lead public relations manager not only give an order but also together do the works with the staff.

A communication strategy that deals with the public from Indonesian perspective can be done by applying the maxim of *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh* (teach, love, and care of each other). Generally, the strategy places the organization as harmonic stimulator. Public relations activities must be directed to build knowledge, favourable attitudes, and care for each other. *Silih asah* means that the parties share information and teach knowledge. From a Western perspective this might be seen as ensuring that the public must be informed, the opposite of the public must be damned (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), so that there are no communication barriers, such as lack of or overloaded information and unclear sources of information. *Silih asah* results in providing information regularly through two way reciprocal channels of communication. The information consists of any efforts to educate and motivate the public to support the organization. However, before disseminating information, public relations must explore the public's need by doing research. That is why, *silih asah* stimulates public relations to do rational-scientific based activities: research and dialog so that public relations is "based on facts" (Newsom et al., 1993).

*Silih asih* means love in the sense of taking care, giving attention, and fulfilling other needs sincerely. Applied to public relations this would involve building an empathic strategy through a dialogic process of "walking in the shoes of their public" (Kent & Taylor, 2002 : 27), i.e. having the ability to understand the public's feeling or difficulties. "*Silih asih*" is a form of social interaction based on divine and human values. While humans must not feel that they are in equal position with the God because only God is the highest, humans must not feel lower than others, because they are equal as God's creatures. Indonesian says *ojo adigang, adigung, adiguna/ Aja dumeh wong gedhe* (do not rely on your power, grandeur, nobleness, and cleverness that make you be arrogant). By adopting this principle egalitarian communication takes place in relationships that are respectful because the organization is not perceived as superior.

Egalitarian communication will stimulate *musyawarah mufakat* (hold dialog to reach a mutual agreement), cooperation, and fairness. According to Indonesian, justice means *ajak mapoloi olona tauwe* (do not take other's right way), when applied to public relations mean that the organization's activities must not lead to public suffering in order to gain profit. Within an Asian context where nonverbal aspects are important, the principle of egalitarian communication should be based on Indonesian the principle of *unggah-ungguhing boso, kasar alusing rasa* (respectful feeling to each other). Thus public relations communication shows respect to the public by showing modesty (*andap asor*). Ultimately this will lead to respect from the public for the organisation. As a *andap asor communicator*, Public relations speaks gracefully, with a smile, and respectfully. *Unggah-ungguhing boso* shows that Public relations tends to listen carefully before giving respons wisely. Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, & Toth (2007) said that listening to the public is one of important strategies to persuade others.

Furthermore, *Silih Asuh* can be understood as caring, protecting, guiding, and educating feelings towards each other. Public relations practices should synchronize the

interest of both parties. A public relations practitioner is a social agent who keeps the synchronization by monitoring the environment and giving advice by anticipating issues, identifying problems, and offering options. They observe an organization's activities to avoid disrupting harmony. If a policy has potency to disrupt harmony, then public relations practitioners should give advice wisely. *Silih asuh* is the manifestation God's moral injunction to guide and keep his creatures in godly ways. *Silih asuh* can be said *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, i.e. communication processes aim to keep and remind each other to build good relationships and goodness.

c. *Indonesian Perspective for Declaration of Principle (Tell the Truth)*

Tell the truth principle is a basic in public relations practice to build trust (J. E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Lattimore et al., 2007). The Indonesian perspective says *ajining diri dumunung ana ing lathi* and *basa iku busananing bangsa*, i.e. personal honor is on someone's words. By providing open, truthful information, an organization will be able to fulfill the public's need for information and to gain the public's trust which will stimulate the public's support and cooperation.

The importance of telling the truth is represented in *jeung leweh mah mending waleh* (it is better to tell something frankly rather than keep the word because it is not brave enough to tell). From this perspective, public relations practitioners should not be afraid of getting fired as a result of trying to do their functions properly. If organization does a wrong doing, then public relations would give advice based on the attitude of *ulah unggut kalinduan*, *ulah gedag kaanginan*, meaning that there should be consistency in the truth and conformity between the inner-self and rationality. The keys are the ability to communicate and using the right words to persuade management and the public without causing humiliation. Truth and honesty are very important as the life foundation because from an Indonesian perspective, God's character guides behaviour: *ing donya iki ana rong warna sing diarani bener, yakuwi bener mungguhing Pangeran lan bener saka kang lagi kuwasa* (there are two kinds of the truth in the world: God's truth and man's truth). This means that public relations should not act as management's will only but also as God's will that is represented within the inner-self. Providing appropriate leadership is important: *Aju malurue'mi riala parewa bola* (only upright wood can be used to make a house) implies that a leader protects their people. Therefore, only honest people can be elected to be a leader with the aim of conducting the functions well. In addition, honesty is important because public relations is organisation's representative through boundary-spanning activity, in which public relations must deliver public's opinions to management.

The Indonesian view is that telling the truth must be in line with harmony. As previously stated, the Indonesian belief in *loro-loroning atunggal* or the monodualism principle (Purwadi, 2011) presumes that the soul and the body cannot be separated. This local wisdom also appears in public relations practice. For example, when the Air Asia flight 8501 from Surabaya in Indonesia to Singapore crashed into the Java Sea with killing 162 people in 28 December 2014, journalists sought detailed information about the passengers' bodies as they were being retrieved. However, the police spokesperson said that he could not relay detail information to respect passengers' families. It can be said that this refusal to publicly provide detail about the condition of passengers' corpses respected most families' beliefs that the individual cannot be separated from the family (blood relationships) because of principles of wholeness and unity.

d. *Blusukan* as tool of communication facilitator

Western theories of the halo effect and the primacy effect have parallels with Indonesian beliefs. The halo effect means that our perception toward an object or person is influenced by physical performance of the object, while the primacy effect means that our perception is greatly influenced by first image of the object or person. In this sense, the behaviour of all organization's members contribute to communicate the public image of the organization. Therefore, everybody is a public relations and you are public relations on yourself. According to Kriyantono (2014), the Indonesian perspective offers a similar explanation through *ajining raga ana ing busana* (Physically, personal honor can be seen by the way of dressing up). The perspective shows that how one dress will influence the public's image. The sum is that members' behaviours are the dress of the organization. *Bapa kesolah anak polah* and *anak polah bapak kepradah* (If the parents have get troublesome, the son will also be affected; conversely, if the son does wrongdoing, the parents will also be impacted). As a system, the interdependence and interactions between departments in an organization are similar to a human body. If one employee does wrong, then management and the organization will be impacted and vice versa. This assumption requires managing integrated public relations that involves all department in image building efforts.

The public relations of an organisation is a living presentation of the employees in daily activities including the way of dressing, behaving with integrity and adopting a work ethos. Thus an important function of public relations is to maintain good morality and manners within an organisation. This situation is also represented in Indonesian perspective: *Ing ngarsa sung tuladha, ing madya mangun karsa, tut wuri handayani* (when public relations is in front, he/she should give good examples; when he/she is in the middle, he/she should motivate to do good work; when he/she in the back, he/she should support the employee to express their ability bravely). Such an organisational structure places public relations into a central organizational role with direct access to senior management. .

As a communication facilitator, it is important that public relations be perceived as being involved in the daily interaction among employees to talk and hear complaints and opinions. It is expected that this activity can open two-way internal communication that is able to provide information about the employees' interaction with the public. Employees' interaction with the public is based on the concept of *blusukan*, i.e. face to face communication directly with the public. Such communication aims to avoid interpersonal divergences so *sambung roso* communication will emerge, where *sambung roso* means from heart to heart that consists of strong empathy. *Blusukan* communication also represents the principle of togetherness devoid of status differentials (*manunggaling kawula gusti*). *Blusukan* is similar to the Western concept of managing by walking around because their function is *gethok tular*; however the Indonesian perspective focuses more on emotional aspect, such as *sambung roso*, to build relationships.

By doing *blusukan*, public relations is able to generate *gethok tular* (word of mouth communication) directly to spread information from management in order to minimize misperceptions. Internally, public relations is well placed to stop inaccurate rumours that spread quickly by word of mouth within an organisation. Public relations monitors the environment adopting an issue management role to anticipate crises by asking what's going on. The Indonesian perspective says *Jaga pagarra dibi'ja' parlo ajaga pagarra oreng laen* (keep your own gate, do not keep other), i.e. if crisis happens, the organization should not blame other parties.

For employees, *sambung rasa* communication can be understood as organizational *nguwongke*, i.e. it posits that employees are not only economic factors in the context of rational profit-loss work relations but also posits them as inseparable partners. The Indonesian perspective teaches *curiga manjing warangka, warangka manjing curiga*, a leader should understand the members' aspiration, know well the members' conditions and help to solve their problems. Understood in anthropomorphic terms, an organization is like a family that gives attention, builds trust, and takes care of each other. Every member of an organization should remind each other in order not to do wrong or break the rules that might lead to negative impacts on the whole organization. The effort to remind each other involves the activity to share, accommodate complaints, and to solve problems. It is expected that any problems can be solved among the members and will not be reported to mass media. The members should maintain the organization reputation, that is *ja' metta' buri' etengnga lorong*, do not show the organization's wrongdoing but keep the secret while try to solve the internal problem.

In terms of public perception, journalists have a positive perception toward public relations adopting a *blusukan* strategy through intense meeting regularly with media journalist (Syahri, Kriyantono, & Nasution, 2015). Wu's (2005) study of Asian public relations in China and India, shows that organisations have to cultivate a good interpersonal relationships with employees internally and externally with the public to obtain public support and media coverage. Wu (2005) also found that, whereas organisational information is generally provided through mass media in the United States, many Asian countries use personal channels to conduct public relations. The two studies reinforced the characteristic of Asian culture that focuses on wholeness and unity (see Table 1).

#### LOCAL PERSPECTIVES TOWARD TWO BASIC PROPOSITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations has two propositions: (1) Public relations as management function; (2) Public relations takes responsibility to manage relation between the organization and the public. It is known as an ecological paradigm because these propositions require adaptation, selection, and adjustment (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Everett, 2009). Cutlip (1952, cited in Cutlip et al., 2006; Everett, 2009; Greenwood, 2010) had used the concept of ecology when he defined public relations as interdependence (adjust & adapt) between the organization and its environment. Adaptation and adjustment, generally, are basic thinking of Indonesian society which are internalized as philosophical characters of the society.

As described in Table 1, Indonesia has Asian characteristics emphasizing reciprocal responsibility between the individual and society, harmony with the environment, and assuming that the world is interconnected and interdependent as a whole. For centuries, a lot of Indonesian local wisdoms have been based on the importance of adaptation and adjustment, such as *jip kang sui suan, jip koi sui nyak*, (If you enter the river for swimming or shipping, you must follow the curves, entering the village follow the customs; *sai bumi ruwa jurai* (one earth for two different communities); *teposliro* (feeling empathy); *dima nagari diunyi, disitu adat dipakai* (wherever you live, you must follow the customs). Collectively, these local wisdoms mean that individuals must respect the local cultures without losing her/his own cultures in order to successfully adapt and adjust with the environment.

The organization should develop *teposliro* (attitude to feel the public's feeling). The principle of *teposliro* is represented in the proverb *ojo rumongso biso, kudu biso rumongso* (Do not feel that you can, but you must be able to feel). The proverb consists of

respectfulness and self-reflection. The organization will not be selfish by ignoring others' interests. For instance, if an organization with significant financial capital intends to expand its operations to outlying villages that could lead small businesses to bankruptcy, then it would have a responsibility to reconsider its effect on that local environment.

#### CONCLUSION

It has been shown that public relations in an Indonesian context can be conducted according to local wisdoms. Thus it does not need to adopt the whole of Western principles into its theory or practice. This paper therefore contributes to the growth of an Eastern, particularly an Indonesian theory of public relations. In this way, the cultures and traditions, and moral norms of a country can be maintained even though the country may be undergoing rapid transformation towards a more Western economy and lifestyle. By limiting the hegemonic processes of Western theory and practice, a more diverse and respectful global order may be possible.

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Table 1. The differences of perspectives

Elements	Perspectives	
	Western	Asian (Eastern)
Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes individualism. People is considered actively achieving personal's goals.</li> <li>- Subordinates humans to a supreme being.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasizes the reciprocal responsibility between individual and society.</li> <li>- Views result of communication as unplanned and as a natural consequence from the event.</li> <li>- Places faith in following the path of righteousness –<i>dharma</i> in Buddhism and Hinduism, <i>yi</i> in Confusionism, the nondivine supreme reality in Daoism, and <i>loro-loronng atunggal</i> (monodualism) in Javanese.</li> </ul>
Nature	Emphasizes control of nature.	Emphasizes harmony with nature.
Space & time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looks at a world divided into center (West), periphery (West's allies), and outer periphery (all the rest).</li> <li>- Focuses on measuring parts and does not integrate them into unified process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Looks at the world and universe as a single unit (an interconnected and interdependent whole).</li> <li>- Focuses on wholeness and unity.</li> </ul>
Space & time	Sees bounded time	Sees infinite time
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge is atomism and deductivism (uses these fragments to engender contradiction-free theoretical frameworks following Newtonian science)</li> <li>- Language domination.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge is related to systems theory such as that axiology (values), epistemology (knowledge), and ontology (metaphysics) all become essential parts of theorizing.</li> <li>- Pays more attention to nonverbal symbols rather than verbal symbols, and sceptical views on verbal symbols.</li> </ul>
Personal relations	Relation between two or more individuals.	Relation is more complicated because it involves social position about roles, status and power.

Sources: Galtung & Vincent (1992) & Kincaid (1987).