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Management of Public Relations for Supporting the Anti-corruption National Program in Indonesia

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Abstract: This research aims to identify the management of government public relations on the socialization of anti-corruption national program in Indonesia. Level of corruption in Indonesia is still high because the corruption perception index still appears below median level. Most of these corrupt agents are government officials in government institutions. The government public relations, who has also a function to maintain the morality and attitudes of the government officials' staffs, is demanded to convey programs that enable those government officials to avoid corruptive behaviour on performing their duty. Online interviews were conducted, through which 50 government public relations practitioners agreed to participate. The research reveals that the high level of corruption and multitude number of corrupted government officials are determined by the function of communication performed by government public relations, which is not yet optimal in implementing regulation mandate related to the openness of information and public communication about corruption.

Keywords: anti-corruption program, democracy, good governance, government public relations, management of communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The research focuses on the roles of government public relations to support the national program of anti-corruption from the Indonesian government. Public relations activity that is done by the government is called government public relations (Lee, Neeley and Stewart, 2012). Corruption is a massive problem in many countries, especially in developing countries (Charoensukmongkol & Moqbel, 2009; Fursova & Simons, 2014; Ghebrekidan, 2003; Iheriohanma, 2011; Salifu, 2008). Not only a financial problem (Dridi, 2014), but corruption also impacts all social aspects of life, both physically and psychologically (Fursova & Simons, 2014), such as value and moral degradation; spiritual integrity; distortion of justice system; commerce or unfair investment practice to gain profit; and exploiting by misusing power (Ghebrekidan, 2003).

It is acceptance that democracy can decrease the level of corruption (Treisman, 2000), since democracy offers transparency of communication and public participation (Montinola & Jackman, 2002). In addition, corruption is also one of the phenomenon of communication (Antoni, 2013) and public relations is management of communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kriyantono, 2014; Lattimore, Baskin, Heinman, & Toth, 2010). However, the level of corruption in Indonesia is still high (Fas, 2017; Ismoyo, 2017). The practitioners in the field of communication, such as mass media, do not give its educative function to prevent corruption (Pratomo & Kriyantono, 2016). Although, in general, the practice of government and business public relations in Indonesia can be categorized as good (Kriyantono, 2017), It still leads to questioning how the government public relations manage their roles to support the national program of anti-corruption since they are the actors who take a responsibility perform the function of management of communication to its public. The research contributes to enrich public relations study regarding the corruption issues in Indonesia.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Some research has proven the impact of corruption. In Africa, corruption collides with calamity, poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment problems (Itheriohanma, 2011), and also the decreasing of medicine, and health socialization, including AIDS (Ghebrekidan, 2003). In Russia, corruption spreads out in governmental and private education institutions which decreases the quality of its human capital and level of education (Fursova & Simons, 2014), and most of the teachers, students, alumni, and parents in education institutions confessed on performing corruption with the modus of restoration and improvement of the schools and universities (Frolova, 2014). Corruption also decreases the rate of public participation to obtain education (Dridi, 2014). In Indonesia, corruption refers to a mental destruction that make Indonesia cannot take advantage of its natural resources (Pratomo & Kriyantono, 2016) and the actors who involve in the corruption cases cooperate in the interlocking strategy so that it is difficult to reveal a corruption case (Antoni, 2013).

Some research described above create also a lot of variation on defining corruption. Corruption is defined as “the abuse of public power for private benefit.” (Didi, 2014, p. 476: Salifu, 2008, p. 275). “The misuse of public office for private gain.” (Treisman, 2000, p. 399). Furthermore, Fursova & Simmons (2014, p. 26) gave some definitions: “...abuse of authority for material gain, a violation of legally established barriers that exit between public office and private interests, as an abuse of authority for private gain, and the exchange of wealth for power, where the power is rooted in the public position. One can conclude that corruption does not exist within private sector activities.” In Indonesia, through The Regulation No. 31/1999, and The Regulation No. 20/2001, corruption is defined as “the act of enrich, benefit oneself or other people or corporation, misusing authority, opportunity, or facility because of the official rank or position which damage financial affairs or economic matters of the nation.”

Regarding the elucidation of corruption, the different interpretations of corruption among the group of academician and people from abroad nations (Fursova, 2014; Salifu, 2008) are also possibly happened to Indonesian people, although definition about corruption has been arranged by the regulations. This has been supported by a fact conveyed by Fursova (2014) that the definition of corruptions have been grouped into two: national non-threatening corruption, where it is still possible to be overcome by political process, and national threatening corruption which is systemically happened in the system or political organization and it affects people expansively.

In addition to the negative impacts which damage all social aspects, as mentioned in the previous paragraphs, corruption has been spread in many countries. According to The International Transparency, a corruption control institution, the corruption perception index (CPI) from 70% of 133 countries in the world are below the average (Salifu, 2008). Because of that, it is needed to make systematic prevention, especially by developing countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, since their level of corruption are high (Prasetyo, 2016; Schroth & Sharma, 2003). The International Transparency also mentioned that 90% of developing countries have a low CPI index (Salifu, 2008). The frequency of corruption in developing countries have been proven by research, that there is a relation of the high or low percentage of CPI index with the economy development, and the more develop the economy, the less the corruption to be happened (Prasetyo, 2016).

Data from Salifu (2008) and Schroth and Sharma (2003) has connection with The International Transparency finding in 2016, that Indonesia's CPI, one of a developing country in Asia, is on the rank of 90 from 176 nations (Fas, 2017; Ismoyo, 2017). Although it is not at the very low level, Indonesia is still below from the median level and the effort to wipe out corruption seems run slowly since the CPI rises only five point from 32 to 37 during 2012-2016, with the interval between 0-100 and the higher score is less corruption (Fas, 2017). This situation needs more attention due to the trend of the number of corruption agents is increasing in the Reformation era, which opens the gateway of democratization in Indonesia since 1998 (Muhtadi, 2015). Moreover, it is the fact that corruption agents mostly come from the government officials (civil servants) of the government institutions (Egi, 2014; Utami, 2015).

On the other hand, Treisman (2000) and Montinola and Jackman (2002) found out that democratic nations have a smaller number of corruptions. Although democracy creates lower chance on practicing corruption, Montinola and Jackman (2002) quotes that the impact of democracy towards corruption will be significant only in a well-consolidated democracy. New democratic country, which is not fully democratized, has a bigger chance on performing corruption than a non-democratic country (totalitarian). This description is related to Muhtadi's (2015) explanation, that in a semi-democratic country, freedom is not balanced with law enforcement and a good government administration so that it gives a chance to perform corruption, whereas totalitarian regime is capable of restraining corruption comprehensively, and limited only to its elites.

The researchers generally accept the argument that democracy can decrease the level of corruption. Democracy offers transparency and public participation (Montinola & Jackman, 2002). This transparency and participation, refers to Charoensukmongkol and Moqbel (2014) and Sirowy and Inkeles (1990), connect to the increasing flow of information between government and society. In the end, democracy also stimulates communication activities with the public who is getting more critical (Kriyantono, Ramadlan & Setiawan, 2015; Kriyantono, 2014; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009). "When citizens have more access to information, they have higher chance to monitor the action of government more closely, making corruption become more risky to commit." (Charoensukmongkol & Moqbel, 2014, p. 51). These communication activities are actually an implication of the character of democracy because, according to Taylor (2000), democracy is a nation building process which requires connection between individual and government through communication campaigns.

Hence, democracy can be said as communication relation processes between the government and the public in a nation-building process (Taylor, 2000) with a transparency of information access (Sirowy &

Inkeles, 1990; Charoensukmongol & Moqbel, 2014). As a result of this, the researchers assert that, although Indonesia is a new democratic country, its democracy is towards a better quality because the emergence of various regulations from the government which make relation processes and information access become more transparent. The Law No. 40/2009 arranges the freedom of the press; the Law No. 14/2008 mandates public service institutions to ensure citizen's right to know; and the Law No. 25/2009 sets the principle of guideline public services: professional, participative, openness, and service accountability of the process, which are dependent on how much the function of communication and information is implemented. In this point, public relations process as the part of management function to manage communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Kriyantono, 2014; Lattimore *et al*, 2010) has its strategic position. It is in accordance with the regulation from the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reformation No. 30/2011: "Public relation institutions are units of organization in government institution which perform the function of management on information and communication to its public".

Therefore, it is acceptable that the development of public relation practices in the world is increasing in accordance with the blooming of democratization and technology (Kriyantono 2014; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009; Waymer, 2013). "Without healthy democracy the ability for public relations to be fully functioning is stüed. Therefore the success of public relations is dependent upon the quality of a democracy." This is confirmed by Hopkins (2015, pg. 3), quoting Gelders and Ihlen (2010, p. 61): "Government public relations can also be considered a part of the democratic process."

Based on communication approach, Indonesia begins to enter a better era of democracy, however, from other aspects, the quality of democracy is still considered as not consolidated yet: law enforcement, and government administration is not well-administered, the CPI index is still lower than median level, and government officers are still dominating the number of corruption. As the realization of the function of management communication, and a part of communication, government public relations has to pay attention toward the problems which are relate to democratization and corruption in Indonesia.

Government public relation, therefore, have a duty to socialize the government program to overcome and prevent corruption which are written in the President Instruction No. 7/2015 and the Government Regulation No. 55/2012, among others are mental revolutions, accountability in employee recruitment, increasing employee's welfare, and also realizing accountable public service, transparent, participative, and professional implementation. Public relations has the role to keep the morality and attitude of the institution (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2011) and it is increasingly important, because corruption is related to morality (Schroth & Sharma, 2003).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research applied online interviews through e-mail with the public relations practitioners from government institutions who are the members of the coordination board of public relations in Indonesia. After deploying for three months, 50 practitioners agreed to participate. The interviews explored some questions, such as how the practitioners define corruption? How the practitioners comprehend the national anti-corruption program? How the practitioners comprehends the functions of public relation and how it is related to public service? How is the implication of transparency era towards main duty and function of public relation when it is related to their institution public relation? How is the role of the practitioners in succeeding national anti-corruption program? What the obstacles have been found so far?

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Public Relations Practitioners' Interpretation against Corruption

There are various definitions about corruption given by the public relations practitioners, although the definition has been regulated in the state regulations. The authors find four categories of practitioners' interpretation against corruption, they are taking the rights of others or harm the state, against the law, misconduct or unlawful, and actions benefiting oneself. The first category, taking the rights of others (harms the state) is exhibited by 37%. Corruption is identified as stealing or using facilities that are not in accordance with the rights and authorities and defined as activity to take what does not belong to him/her. In addition, corruption is perceived as detrimental to the country. Practitioners say that corruption is a moral crime and results in long-term impact and actual crime which is actually worse than cases of other crimes. Corruption is called as selfishness and steals the right of other citizens, to enrich the corruptors.

The second category, against the law, is interpreted by 18.3% practitioners. Corruption is an unlawful act which should become a lesson for the public to not commit such acts due to adverse state finance and betray the perpetrator's position. Corruption also reduces or take away people's right to enjoy life supporting facilities to be provided by the government. The third category, misconduct (Arabic: *haram*), is indicated by 24%. Corruption is a deviant behaviour, destructive and should be shunned, and damaging the nation.

Practitioners who interpret corruption as actions benefiting themselves are 20%. Practitioners in this category define corruption as the misuse of funds for personal purposes that harm the state, abusing power and position in the use of finances for personal or group interests to the detriment of the state or the company and the community. Corruption is also interpreted as an act of a person who acts to enrich themselves or others resulting in state losses and utilizing proprietary institution for personal purposes.

Most practitioners considered that anti-corruption program in Indonesia is far from optimal. This category is represented by 57% practitioners. Practitioners considered that anti-corruption program is still limping due to many law enforcement interventions and politicization. Practitioners consider that anti-corruption programs focus mainly on repression than prevention, the program still fillings, has not involved wider community with still many perpetrators of corruption.

Anti-corruption program is also understood as a comprehensive action (22% of practitioners). That is, anti-corruption program should involve all levels of society from the Eradication Commission for Corruption, the State Auditor, and the Indonesian community largely. Practitioners stated that corruption is seen in two dimensions, the first is corruption mental that is closely related to the value of character, morals, religion and, second is dimension that is linked to the legal aspects and the governance of the country. Understanding about state financial management must be comprehensive and requires legal awareness.

There are 20% practitioners stating that anti-corruption program in Indonesia is good. In this category, practitioners stated that anti-corruption program in Indonesia has been widely carried out, especially in government agencies. They also assess the existing improved understanding of the severity of graft although still need to be improved. In addition to the three categories above, the remaining 2% of practitioners understand anti-corruption program as activities related to the transparent movement and control of a budget financing.

Related to national anti-corruption national program, most practitioners (47%) see that they have not received socialization in institutions where they work. Interestingly, 32% practitioners state that their institution has had its own rules on corruption, transparency and accountability, and the rule is communicated in the company's internal routines. Furthermore, 11% of practitioners state that Instruction and President Regulation has not been fully socialized yet it has not fulfilled the expectation of Anti-Corruption Commission and has not restored as the concept of prevention built. The remaining 4% of practitioners say that they did not understand the contents of the two rules.

4.2. Public services related to anti-corruption program

Related to corruption, what makes a good public service? Some categories of public services, in order to avoid corruption at practitioners, need to be transparency, becomes an indicator implementation of anticorruption program, providing priority to public interest, without extortion, and service is carried out according to the rules. However, 19% of practitioners recognize that public services, as associated with anti-corruption programs, is considered not optimal, that some of these categories have not been fully implemented improvement in the implementation is necessary.

Transparency of public service is defined as transparent and fair activity in the service regardless of social status, cleared of graft, and in accordance with official rules for the respondents considered that the function of the public service is to openness. The importance of free of corruption public service and become agents of anticorruption is also visible from the recognition of most practitioners (40%) that the quality of public services is an indicator of the success of anti-corruption program and vice versa, the anti-corruption program is one of the important support in the maximum public service.

With the absence of corruption, facilities and infrastructure of public services can be provided well. No need for additional costs to be incurred by the public to be able to enjoy public service excellence. Thus, public service can be used as one indicator whether anti -corruption program is working as public service is seen as a potential object for corruption.

4.3. Public Relations practitioners' understanding about public information disclosure

PR practitioners interpret government information disclosure as being owned by everyone to communicate and obtain information about personal development and environment. Information disclosure is also understood as one part of a service of excellence devoted to public to gain public trust, and needs to be performed in accordance with existing procedures.

Practitioners (No 22%) state that the implementation of public disclosure is less than optimal, for example, assume they do half as many, many local governments are still complicate the access to the data and information that should be publicly accessible or webs of bureaucracy to gain access to data and information is made complicated. Interestingly, not many practitioners consider the implementation of public disclosure as a very good program implemented to resolve corrupt practices. In fact there are only 4% practitioners who believe public disclosure in a public institution just started running, it began to walk slowly in the ministries through PPIID. However, practitioners consider it as an obligation of public institutions, i.e, every public legal entities are required to disclose information to the public or to state institutions that 60-100% of its shares are owned by the state public disclosure is mandatory. The benefits

of public disclosure, according to public relations practitioners, are as a means for the public to be able to monitor, provide evaluation, and criticize the implementation of the program in an institution. While most practitioners consider public disclosure has great benefits, some practitioners understand it only as the provision of information to the public (only 2% of practitioners).

4.4. Implication of Openness Era on Public Relations Role

When practitioners are asked how openness era of public information on duties and functions of their public relation work, the authors find that the largest percentage of the practitioners answered “public relations provide and manage information”, by 29%. Practitioners in this category describe that as an agency spokesman, publicist providing information services to the public and provide information about the company’s policies and programs are run. With the disclosure of public information, public relations should be more strategic duties as basically PR is spearheading the management of government information and public servants in the field of communication and information.

However, the practitioners also consider that the era of public disclosure is also a new challenge for public relations. A total of 7% of practitioners said that the implication is that public relations should be proactive and 5% said that public relation is also insightful.

4.5. PR practitioners’ contribution to the national anti-corruption program

Apparently there are a lot of practitioners who claim to have never been conducting anti-corruption together with the Anti-Corruption Commission or other institutions (69% response). Practitioners who claim to have held activities with the Commission or other institutions is 29%, which is a signatory to the pact held the integrity of personnel, dissemination of anti-corruption laws by one of the public relations of government agencies in Singapore and some other provinces in Indonesia.

Indeed, there are some practitioners who claim to have never made communication products for the dissemination of anti-corruption, yet there also are some admitted to participate anti-corruption socialization in their public relation activities. For public relations practitioners who claim to have joined to succeed national anti-corruption program a, most of them explains its participation in the form of publicizing anti-corruption program. Various kinds of methods are used in publication by socializing national program of anti-corruption to the public as a civil servant with earnestly tries to not engage in corruption, creating *agenda setting* for the integrity zone of the Ministry of Health, with education through print media, such as magazines and newsletters internal public relations, announcements through media websites, and direction as well as dissemination to students (for public relations practitioners college).

Informing the program in media publications, assisting in the implementation anti-corruption education in 10 regional higher education in Indonesia, participating in the dissemination of information related to the activities of anti-corruption through social media or privately owned work units, filtering out the negative information that circulated in order to avoid misunderstandings in the information society, and publishing anti-corruption education programs held in schools.

In addition, some practitioners express a commitment of anti-corruption public relations (31%), which starts from oneself in order to be an example for others not to commit corruption. Moreover, to

support national anti-corruption program, some practitioners are also involved with providing services according to the rule (9%) and by applying the transparency of information to the public (7%).

In disseminating anti-corruption program, practitioners who claim to have a program tend to socialize the program/anti-corruption activities by informing to the public and customers that the agency does not take bribes, graft and extortion in providing services. Yet, there is also public relations not directly involved in the dissemination yet has duties in reporting or dissemination of anti-corruption activities undertaken by their institutions.

The practitioners also commit to implement the honesty in public relations activities. Some practitioners of public relations in college state that they have been working with students creating a standard of honesty in academic behaviour. Some public relations governmental agencies claim not pass the activities in the field of public relations that smells of corruption and disseminate information to the public would public services, integrated, and net of fees.

Most public relations practitioners also perform or implement culturally *open gate* with no cover-up to the public and mediated by the media as well. For that, they (2%) thought that they have encouraged institutional leaders to immediately take public information officer and make them effective. However, there are still practitioners (2%) who claim to have had related programs of national anti-corruption program.

4.6. Communication products and targets for the dissemination of anti-corruption

Next, the authors describe the opinions of practitioners, who claim to have programs related to anti-corruption, on communication products they use. Some practitioners never make outdoor communication products such as banners, posters and other outdoor media. Besides, no one has ever made advertising in mass media, uploaded on the website or fan page institutions, sponsorship, magazine, e-newsletter, and press release. It should be noted, that there are still many publicists claimed to have never made communication products for the dissemination of anti-corruption programs (41% of practitioners).

Here are the relevant anti-corruption events; half of all practitioners (52%) state that they have never conducted anti-corruption activities and 37% practitioners hold public relations anticorruption events. Adopting Kriyantono (2015), the events can be categorized as corporate social responsibility programs with the aim to educate community avoiding corruptions because corruptions will challenge national programs to increase social welfare. The examples of some of the *event* are as follows: Women's seminar of anti-corruption; anti-corruption seminar for teacher; workshop on school culture of integrity; mall to mall campaign aimed at increasing public attention to the criminal acts of corruption around them so that the community is aware of and cultivate an attitude of corruption within them.

Target of public relations in the socialization of corruption to be conducted is more focused on the external public (71%). External public include community members, stakeholders, academia, and government officials. This finding reinforces Kriyantono's (2017) study that government public relations practitioners put the external public as the main target of their activities. Internal public gain a percentage of 12%, and the rest with a percentage of 16% said that no specific targets regarding anti-corruption activities undertaken.

4.7. Public Relations program implementation constraints related to corruption

There are some obstacles for conducting anti-corruption socialization. Constraints that exist include a lack of response to socialization, different understandings about corruption, constraints personally, constraints performers, not yet touched the core problem of corruption, administrative constraints, lack of media dissemination of anti-corruption, the absence of the module, the commitment of stakeholders is weak, and the difficulty in working with other institutions.

Lack of response to socialization was because the socialization was carried out in one-way communication and the respondents considered that people tend to be apathy. Moreover, the constraints are different understandings about corruption. Practitioners revealed that as many people still think of this as *'not in my backyard'* they do not care enough to see, monitor, file a complaint or even public service report that indicated corruption. Private constraint means a constraint that comes from self-practitioners, such as difficult to start from oneself.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the research reveals that public relations practitioners have various definitions about corruption, although the definition has been regulated in the state regulations. As the function of communication management in government institution, it is possible that government public relation has program to promote anti-corruption program as a part of public relation's main duty. In addition, the high level of corruption and multitude number of corrupted government officials are determined by the function of communication management performed by government public relations, which is not yet optimal in implementing regulation mandate related to the openness of information and public communication about corruption.

The findings have confirmed that public relations has the role to manage the morality and attitude of the institution to avoid corruptive behaviours therefore government public relations has to pay attention toward the problems which are relate to democratization and corruption in Indonesia. The research contributes to posit public relations activities as main instrument to socialize the government program to overcome and prevent corruption for external and internal public.

For further research, quantitative methods, such as an experimental and a survey research, can be conducted to investigate the significant correlation between the role of public relations and the motive of corruption among the internal public. Those methods can be applied to measure the significant correlation between the strategies and the reality, whether the communication campaigns increase the awareness toward corruptive actions, and the influence of the campaigns towards the public's attitudes and behaviours.

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