

## Police Public Relations Profession in the Digital Communication Era: A Phenomenological Study of the Adaptation of West Java Police Public Relations Personnel in the Era of Digital Communication

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**ABSTRACT:** This study aims to determine the adaptation process carried out by the West Java Regional Police Public Relations in the face of the digital communication era. Alfred Schultz's Phenomenology Theory and Social Construction of Technology from Pinch and Bijkers form the basis of this research reference. This research also uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological approach and constructivist paradigm. This research shows that the West Java Regional Police have no guidance in carrying out public communication activities in the digital era. The absence of these guidelines makes public relations personnel who have limited abilities in the field of public relations carry out public communication activities based on their references and knowledge. PR personnel also make efforts to adapt to technological changes and improve their capabilities. They attended training from internal police and also from outside and read reference books related to public communication. After this research, it is hoped that the West Java Regional Police will have guidance in carrying out communication activities in the digital era, including increasing human resource capabilities

**Keywords** – Adaption, Digital Communication, Public Relation, Technology, West Java Reginal Police

### I. INTRODUCTION

The development of communication and information technology allows the use of various media to convey messages or information to the public. The latest technology makes Public Relations from government agencies, or government public relations, must continue to be introspective. Increasingly sophisticated technology makes the flow of information faster. The public as an object in all government activities can find information about government institutions and the work program that has been rolled out. The variety of information obtained by the public will have an impact on the image of the institution. Government Public Relations must be able to cope with changes in their environment that occur very rapidly amidst the swift flow of information and developments in information technology. Not only sharing information, Government Public Relations must also ensure that the public gets the correct information related to their institution. Robert Leach makes a link between the development of democracy and the demands of an ideal government PR role. Humasa supports the implementation of an ideal democratic government.[1] Technological progress can also be useful for disseminating information to residents from all walks of life, for example using social media.[2] Online PR activities are very important in addition to traditional PR activities, Grunig argues that new media allows PR to be more global, strategic, interactive, dialogical and supports two-way communication.[3]

The Indonesian National Police as part of the government cannot ignore technological developments, especially in the communications and information sector. The facts do show that the level of public confidence in the police's performance is positive. However, this figure does not immediately release criticism of the police's performance. Public expectations are always given to police officers, both the performance of the officers in the field and the policies that have been rolled out related to security and public order. As an institution whose main task is to maintain public order and security, it is imperative for the police to maintain a good image and relationship with the community. This phenomenon then makes the public relations function in the Police clean up to fulfill this need.

Initially, the function of PR in the police was simply to collect documentation of the activities of the leaders in the police and work units in each region. Public relations activities in the police environment were only underestimated by the police colonel himself. Even some leaders such as the Regional Police Chief at the provincial level and also the Resort Police Chief do not really consider public relations activities

important. Currently, Public Relations work is not just carrying out the obligation to store and process documentation of police personnel activities. Public Relations has the responsibility as the main spearhead of forming a positive image of the police institution.

This also happened in the West Java Regional Police (Polda). This was revealed by the Head of West Java Regional Police Public Relations (hereinafter referred to as the Head of Public Relations of the West Java Police) AKBP Trunoyudho. The West Java Regional Police, through the Public Relations Division, realized that the public relations sector could not avoid the development of information and communication technology. It is necessary to develop the capacity of the public relations personnel who oversee it, accompanied by the development of facilities and infrastructure that support these activities.

However, the increasingly important PR work is not supported by leadership policies to assist the public relations sector. Especially for the public relations sector who work in the regional police. Within the Polres area itself, the position of PR is still not recognized as a strategic function. The position of Public Relations in the Polres area is still a sub-division under the operational sub-division.

At the National Police School (SPN) there is no special curriculum that provides knowledge about the function of Public Relations. NCO candidates are completely blind about job descriptions in the division or in the PR department. So when they are placed as Police Public Relations, they do not understand at all what they have to do, the role and function of Public Relations for the police. Public relations personnel themselves still do not understand their position as police public relations.

In addition, there are not many efforts to develop public relations personnel within the police force. Training from the Police Headquarters is held only once a year in the form of vocational education and not all public relations personnel in the foam area participate. Usually those who take part in the vocational education organized by the Education and Training Institute of the National Police Headquarters are officers of the police force who are drawn from the Polres level. Participants were randomly selected from each Polres and the implementation was not routine. Meanwhile, the non-commissioned officer who is actually the backbone of the implementation of PR work rarely gets the opportunity.

From the West Java Regional Police itself, there is technical guidance (bimtek) and technical work meetings (rakernis) which are usually held twice a year. However, according to the admissions of several public relations personnel, the material provided was not in accordance with the needs of the public relations personnel in the field. This phenomenon makes public relations personnel in the Java Regional Police carry out their profession according to their respective references and their respective understandings.

One example of technology used to support public relations activities in the digital era is the use of Intelligence Media Management (IMM), a software (software) to monitor news and publications on the internet. The central police use this media to be able to monitor publications in the online mass media and also social media regarding news related to police activities.[4] The personnel in the Polres area and also at the Polda level still have difficulties in using this technology. IMM, which is actually used to see bad opinions about the police for counter-opinion purposes, cannot be put to good use.

A public relations officer of the government must be able to adapt and find the best model in disseminating good information to the public [5]. From this phenomenon, researchers are interested in exploring the adaptation process of police public relations personnel in the West Java Regional Police in facing the changing role of police public relations in the digital communication era amid all the limitations faced and the experiences gained by personnel when carrying out their activities as personnel public relations in the police agency. This research is expected to be able to help the police institution to be able to develop public communication activities fronted by PR to create a good image in the digital era.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a phenomenological approach with qualitative methods. The qualitative research method is a method for understanding the phenomena that occur in the subject under study, including motivation, action, experiences that are analyzed holistically and then the results of the research are described using words and language in a scientific context.[6] Phenomenology approach is a qualitative research approach which makes experience as a basis for seeing reality [7]. Determination of informants in this study using non-probability purposive sampling method in which informants are determined by predetermined criteria before collecting data [8]. The resource person in this study is a non-commissioned officer who carries out technical activities as a public relations officer in the police and experiences adaptations to changes in public relations activities in the police in the era of digital communication. Researchers also made observations to collect data in this study, namely observing the daily activities of public relations personnel in the West Java Regional Police.

## III. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses the Phenomenology Theory proposed by Alfred Schultz. Phenomenology theory reveals the construction of meaning and also concepts that exist in the world of human intersubjectivity, where

understanding is obtained by interactions with other individuals. The assumption of phenomenology is that individuals actively interpret their experiences and understand the world from those experiences.[9]

Besides using the Social Construction Theory of Technology (SCOT). The basic concept of this theory is that a new technology is a multicultural process in which the background, norms, interests, and social conditions in the user determine the final design of the use of technology. The difference in the determining factors will of course determine the final design which differs from one group to another.[10]

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### Experience of Police Public Relations Personnel

Experience and behavior is a unity and relationship with a phenomenon that cannot be separated from the individual or actor who experiences the phenomenon. Experience is obtained from knowledge acquired by individuals or actors. Meanwhile, knowledge comes from actions or behaviors carried out by individuals. So, later events experienced by this individual are the basis for the formation of individual knowledge. Phenomenology connects scientific knowledge with experience or the everyday world, and from the program from which experience and knowledge originate[11]. In other words, phenomenology bases social action on experience, meaning and consciousness. Seeing this, the researcher concluded that the experience comes from the actions or behaviors carried out by individuals or actors. This research includes actions taken by informants, namely public relations activities carried out by informants so that from these actions will emerge experiences from each informant.

Researchers divide the forms of experience that researchers find from informants into three parts, namely experiences before becoming PR personnel, experiences when they first become PR personnel, and experiences after becoming PR personnel. The experience after becoming a public relations researcher is included in the category of adaptation to public relations activities in the era of digital communication because it relates to how public relations personnel develop their abilities after sitting in a police public relations position.

The experience before joining here depicts the experience of the public relations personnel before joining as a sub-division of public relations personnel. Researchers try to reveal the experiences and skills possessed by public relations personnel related to their duties in the public relations subdivision before joining the PR department.

From the results of in-depth interviews conducted by researchers with informants, researchers found that almost all public relations personnel did not have any skills or experience related to the public relations profession. Only four of the seven informants have experience related to their profession related to their duties in the sub-division of public relations. There are even some informants who know that in the police there is a public relations sub-division.

Based on the informants' statements, the researcher compared them with Schutz's statement about knowledge of common sense and cognition. Giddens & Turner in (Sobur, 2013: 60) expresses Schutz's opinion that the world of everyday life is a world permeated by 'the epic of scientific attitudes'. In the everyday world, there is a suspension of doubt that things may not be what they seem or that past experiences cannot be reliable guides to the present. The informants in this study cannot rely on their past experiences in becoming a professional police public relations officer. This then encourages them to continue to adapt and develop the abilities that will be explained in the adaptation section.

Then in the experience when you first join. The experience when they first joined the sub-division of public relations, the researcher drew from the experience of each personnel who had no background at all in the field of public relations who were given the task to carry out public relations activities. Moreover, they will be faced with a difficult situation, where the demands of a job as police public relations are so great but not accompanied by supporting facilities and leadership policies.

Informants who have different backgrounds also react differently when they first enter the sub-division of public relations. First, informants feel disappointed and upset when they are placed in the PR department. This was revealed by the informant who is still a young non-commissioned officer. They stated that getting into PR was not really an ideal for the police. On average, the young non-commissioned officers who join forces aspire to enter into a work unit that is indeed popular in the police, namely the Traffic Unit (Satlantas and the Detective and Crime Unit (Reskrim). Menjadi seorang Humas di satuan polisi sama sekali tidak terbayang oleh mereka. Second, all informants initially felt confused when they first entered the public relations subdivision. They are confused because they do not know what to do because there are no standard operating procedures (SOP) or technical instructions (juknis) in carrying out tasks in the sub-division of public relations. This was even more difficult because two of the seven informants had entered the PR department at an age that was practically not young anymore.

##### Adaptation of Public Relations Personnel in the Digital Communication era

Various previous studies have been conducted to make it easier for government public relations to communicate with citizens. Research conducted by Nurfurqonah et al explains the use of Twitter Social Media which is a product of technological advances, making it easier for the government to convey tax and financial related policies.[12] Research conducted by Melissa Graham also explains the convenience provided by technological advances to local governments in being able to establish interactions with their citizens.[13]

As explained in the introduction, the West Java Regional Police and the Polres under them are facing changes in public relations performance in the police institution, especially in an era where social media is an effective communication medium. However, the change in work demands was not followed by policies and concerns from the leadership.

The public relations personnel from the initial reaction carried out an adjustment process to feel comfortable with their position as public relations personnel in the police institution. There are several ways of adjustment that the researchers revealed from the informants. First looking for references about the world of public relations and public communication. This was done because some informants did not have sufficient experience or skills to be able to carry out their duties as police public relations.

The two informants often interact with seniors in the public relations subdivision. Apart from being able to provide input, seniors are considered to have already tasted the salty acid job in the public relations subdivision and understand the leadership's wishes. The third is chatting with the people closest to you. Several informants said that they felt disappointed and upset when they found out that they would enter the sub-division of public relations.

Personnel who initially had no idea or could not understand the world of public relations and their activities on social media and other inline media did many ways to improve their abilities to make their work in public relations more effective. First, following training held by the West Java Regional Police in the form of technical work meetings (rakernis) and technical guidance (bimtek). However, the training period was unclear and the material was not sustainable. Many informants then stated that the methods used in the training felt inappropriate and did not provide solutions to problems in the field. The need for capacity renewal, especially in the field of technology, is completely out of reach of the materials provided in the training. The training provided is only about counter-opinion and also content creation which is too theoretical, so it is difficult for the non-commissioned officers to understand technically the role of PR as a communication technician.

The research explains that currently PR will leave the 3.0 era towards the 4.0 era. PR in the 3.0 era is an era in the era of social media. Social media in this era is the era most used to communicate. In this era, citizen journalism began to emerge. Contents in the 3.0 era then produced interactive content where the public or the public could share the story. In the 4.0 era, technology such as artificial intelligence emerged and began to take advantage of big data.[14] The training that is carried out must start targeting this area. The National Police's Public Relations Division as the parent of public relations activities in all police institutions must see these changes so that the provision of materials in technical guidance or work meetings can match the needs of personnel in the field and also keep up with the times.

Second, following training held by outsiders. An informant said that he had attended a writing training held in Jakarta. This is done to further develop their writing skills. The third read various kinds of references. This is done to learn to make language more narrative. Most public relations personnel understand language construction in a rigid police reporting style. Therefore it takes a lot of practice to be able to master a new language style, including making captions on Instagram or other social media. The short, concise and clear captions required on social media are very different from the rigid language of police reports.

Social Construction of Technology theory suggests that the interpretation of technological artifacts for relevant social groups is flexible. Each individual or group will see and interpret a new technology from their previous references. Communities that use the new technology will go through the appropriation process. This stage is the stage where each community group will give a different meaning to the new technology. Giving value and eating is based on the underlying interests of the technology use. Each layer of society or group has their own interpretation so that the use of technology and its meaning becomes multicultural.

When a new breakthrough appears in the field of technology, it is not surprising that members of the community adapt to these changes. This was also experienced by the West Java Regional Police in the era of digital communication. When previously they had absolutely no contact with this technology, suddenly the demands of the later times required them to adapt to this technology. Even in the police institution, public relations and public communication activities are far different from today, where the flow of communication and information is still one-way.

The SCOT theory then gave rise to the relevant term Social Group. This group is a member of society who can adapt to these changes. In addition to the existence of relevant social groups, this concept also results in groups that have not been able to adapt to these changes. Social groups that use new technology will produce meanings and references that are different from one another after talking to users of the same technology [15]. The background conditions of group interactions, such as their main role, the rules that govern their interactions,

and the factors that contribute to their differences in power that affect the usefulness and usefulness of technology for each group. This was also demonstrated by the respective public relations personnel in the West Java Regional Police. Each Polres region has a different interpretation from other regions. Interpretation of the use and usefulness of technology depends on the background capabilities of each personnel.

The West Java Regional Police need to pay attention to one of the phases in the Social Construction Theory of Technology, namely the closing and stabilization phase. As explained in the previous phase, each group or layer of society has its own understanding of the new technology. Different understandings between social groups can lead to chaos or conflict. The confusion due to these differences can be resolved through an interpretive process that is able to make the understanding of each group become similar. This shows that the West Java Regional Police need product operating standards to be able to form the same understanding of public relations personnel in utilizing technology to convey information and communicate with citizens.

## V. CONCLUSION

Almost all of the PR personnel at Polda West Java who are at the forefront of the police public communication process have no background in the field of public relations or public communication. They do not even have the aspiration or even imagine that they will become public relations in the police agency. Public relations personnel do various ways to adapt and adjust their abilities to be able to continue their activities in the digital communication era. However, the solutions they have implemented have not made digital technology in the field of communication well utilized. There are still many obstacles in adapting and utilizing this technology, such as the lack of training that can really help public relations personnel increase their abilities and capacities as public communicators of police agencies. The West Java Regional Police also do not have product operational standards in communication activities carried out by each public relations personnel which makes communication activities only carried out based on the knowledge and also the references of each officer.

## VI. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In utilizing developments and breakthroughs in the field of technology described from the SCOT theory, a closure and stabilization of the technology is needed. This can be realized by making product operational standards that regulate the technical implementation of public communication activities by public relations officials, especially those related to the use of information and communication technology.

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