



## **Public Relations Crisis Communication of Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in Post-Crisis Image Recovery**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In a crisis that occurs in an organization, PR is an important functional organization that bridges communication between the organization and the public. It is the main task and function of Public Relations to be able to overcome a crisis that affects the institution. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods. The results of this study show that in maintaining the image of the crisis issue that occurred, it is divided into four stages. The first is the Denial stage, where the Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic denies by providing the positive information side of the institution/organization so that not only negative information becomes the main statement. Second Evasion of Responsibility by convincing that the organization does not intend to do negative things and fully supports the running of a fair legal process regarding the crisis issue that occurred. Third Reducing Offensiveness, convincing the public that in addition to the negative crisis that occurred, there are still positive actions that have been taken in the past and can be well received by the public. Then the last stage is Corrective Action, which is to ensure that the crisis issues that occur can be handled properly so that it will not become a problem again in the future.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A crisis is briefly described as an unexpected situation or event that disrupts an organisation's operations and can cause a threat to the organisation's reputation (Heide & Simonsson, 2021). The emergence of a crisis should be the focus of an organisation. It then requires quick decision-making and effective communication to minimise the impact of a crisis.

Crisis and crisis communication have a very close relationship and influence each other in organisational management. Crisis communication according to Coombs (2015) is explained as a proactive and reactive process for managing crisis-related information that aims to reduce damage to the organisation's reputation, protect stakeholders, and respond to the situation in a transparent and responsible manner. Through effective crisis communication, organisations can minimise negative impacts, provide clarification, and rebuild trust (Zebua et al., 2021).

In a crisis that occurs in an organisation. Public relations as an important functional organisation that bridges communication between the organisation and the public. Of course, it plays a very important role in designing and implementing crisis

communication strategies that aim to mitigate the negative impact of the crisis on the organisation's reputation. In addition, PR plays a role in rebuilding public trust post-crisis through consistent and continuous communication.

Public Relation has a significant role in every educational institution. The presence of public relations is now increasingly popular in the world of education in Indonesia, this can be observed with the creation of public relations departments, both in profit and non-profit corporations. The Public Relations Department in educational institutions has a role in shaping the good image of educational institutions such as one of them informing the best programmes run, introducing educational institutions to the public, and informing the achievements obtained by these educational institutions to parents of students (Juhji & Kholik, 2020).

Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya is one of the educational institutions in the maritime sector that focuses on developing human resources (HR). Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya, which is in the shipping sector, attracts young people to continue their studies as cadets and cadets with the nautical study programme who are in charge of ships in terms of navigation and shipping safety. In this study programme, cadets or students learn and explore modern navigation techniques, international maritime regulations, and the responsibilities of a ship's officer. Politeknik Surabaya also has a credible engineering study programme to prepare students to become technical officers on ships and learn various aspects of mechanical, electrical, and ship technology. In addition to these two study programmes, the Polytechnic has a marine transportation management study programme that will provide cadets with insights into marine managerial skills to manage marine and port transportation.

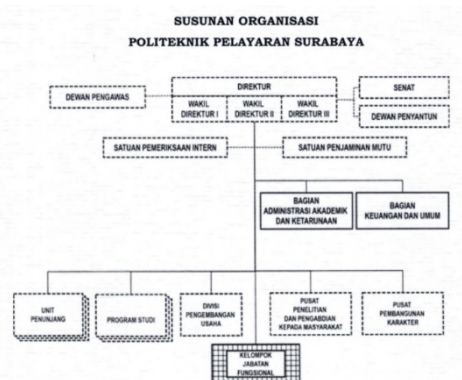


Figure 1. Organisation Structure Politeknik Surabaya

The vision of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic is ‘To become an international standard sea transportation education centre’. The mission of the Shipping Polytechnic is to Carry out Education and Training in the field of Shipping according to National and International Standards, Carry out Scientific Research in the Shipping Industry and Community Service, Carry out Mental Attitude, Moral and Opportunity Development for Learners, Increase the Professionalism of Surabaya Polytechnic Human Resources in Supporting the Implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, Realise

Educational and Training Facilities and Infrastructure in accordance with the Development of Science and Technology, and finally Carry out Transparent and Accountable Financial Management.

On 8 February 2023, a cadet of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic with the initials MRF (19) was declared dead through the Instagram post of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic (@poltekpel\_surabaya). The death of a junior, MRF (19), involved two cadets in a case of assault. The father of the victim suspected violence against his son due to bruises and teeth that were almost loose while the report that the victim's father got, MRF (19) died because he fell in the bathroom. The victim's father suspected abuse from MRF (19)'s senior, so he reported the allegation at Gunung Anyar Police Station. After AJ (19) and DA (19) were named as suspects, of course there was a lot of bad news about Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya in the media. Moreover, CCTV footage of the seconds of MRF (19)'s death was aired on TribunJatim Official's Youtube channel.

On TribunJatim Official's Youtube channel, the victim was carried from the bathroom by his seniors who panicked because the victim was unconscious. The broadcast received 426,000 views and 1,752 comments. 'Fire the perpetrators and imprison ... Don't be indiscriminate... The people will monitor this case... Whose children should be severely punished... Or just disband the school,' said account @dewamadeparmita1764. The comment was replied to by the account @asridahayatiginting2471 saying 'The school must also be responsible for neglecting to keep their students safe'. Politeknik Pelayaran Surabaya is considered to be responsible for the acts of seniority committed by AJ (19) and DA (19) so that it is considered negligent for the safety of its students. In addition, the institution that focuses on human resource development is considered negligent in providing education about the dangers of seniority and bullying. This was expressed by @genthonx in the comments column of the TribunJatim Official video, 'I don't know why this culture of "seniority" still often takes place. Maybe because it has become a 'custom' seniors must show their power to junior siblings. My condolences to the victim'. As a result of the violence committed by AF (19) and DA (19), the Surabaya Seafaring Polytechnic was also affected by the crisis.

The crisis experienced by the Surabaya Seafaring Polytechnic is certainly in the public spotlight. This incident triggered public attention because it concerns an educational institution that is supposed to educate prospective sailors with high discipline, but instead is tarnished by violent incidents. The media reported that the violence allegedly involved senior cadets in a tradition of violence that had not been revealed. This case not only caused deep sorrow for the victim's family, but also tarnished the institutional image of the Surabaya Sailing Polytechnic.

The role of Public relation in image restoration is very important, especially when an organisation or institution faces a crisis that damages its reputation (Fadhilla & Pradana, 2023). In the image restoration process, public relations plays a role in rebuilding public trust through the delivery of accurate information, as well as taking steps to improve public perceptions of related institutions. (Arestu & Purworini, 2023).

The role of public relations in restoring image is closely related to the Image Restoration Theory proposed by William Benoit. This theory explains the various strategies that can be used to repair the reputation of an organisation affected by a crisis. According to this theory, there are several strategies that can be applied by public relations, One commonly used strategy is (*Denial*) where public relations seeks to refute allegations or clarify misinformation. In addition, PR can also use the (*evasion of responsibility*) strategy, by explaining that the incident occurred through no fault of the organisation. Other strategies such as (*reducing offensiveness*) and (*corrective action*) are also often used, where PR focuses on reducing the negative impact and improving the situation through concrete actions that demonstrate the organisation's commitment to change (Benoit, 2015).

Based on the exposure to the background of the problem described, this research uses descriptive qualitative research methods with the intention of being able to describe and understand the Public Relations Crisis Communication of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in Post-Crisis Image Recovery.

## **METHOD**

In the research conducted, researchers used descriptive qualitative methods. According to Sandelowskie (2020) explained that the descriptive qualitative research method is an approach that aims to provide a direct and comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study, so that the results are easy to understand and can be directly applied or taken follow-up.

As explained by Sugiyono (2021), Data in the context of research is divided into two main categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data in this research is in the form of interviews and observations to the public relations of the Surabaya shipping polytechnic, then secondary data in the form of books and journals of previous research related to crisis communication in image restoration.

The research, which focuses on how the Voyage Polytechnic's Public Relations overcame the crisis and restored the agency's image, was conducted by means of in-depth interviews with the Voyage Polytechnic's Public Relations Officer, Rafiq Amalia, who is a data processor and public relations information. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected informants, in the form of structured interviews with a few questions that had been arranged systematically and were flexible during the interview session. To obtain other supporting data and information, researchers used to read materials such as books and journals related to Public Relations Crisis Communication of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in Post-Crisis Image Recovery.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The role Public Relations of Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in crisis communication**

According to Seeger in Wijayanto (2022) Revealed that a crisis is a specific event that generally requires immediate action or response from an organisation or group to

limit and overcome risk or harm. Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in its efforts to deal with the crisis that occurred due to the assault that led to the victim of one of the students of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic, MRF (19) on 8 February 2023, following the determination of AJ (19) and DA (19) as suspects. In this case, the public relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic stated that as a party that was also disadvantaged by the emergence of the crisis, it formed a special team as the only official information that would become a bridge with the community. Rafiqqa Amalia, at Poltekpel apart from being a lecturer, also doubles as a data processor and public relations information, explained;

*'Well, for the communication crisis at that time, thank God it was quite fast if the team in this Prostataya project. So, when the incident happened, the Director at that time instructed a special team to be formed. So, all kinds of information that will come out is made through one team, this one door, this one team. And yes, at that time it was quite effective'* (Amalia R, 2024).

*'And there are several steps from this special team that we have discussed together what steps we will take because the effect is because communication is usually after an incident or there are several steps that we have discussed together and thank God it was not too widespread at that time.'* (Amalia R, 2024)

Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic itself acts as the main information centre of the crisis that occurred. So that information is centred on one informant who holds the spread of information from the crisis issue that occurs. This refers to preventing the spread of crisis issues from becoming wider so that they can still be controlled and resolved.

#### **Public relations crisis communication strategy of Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic.**

##### ***Denial.***

Generally, the Denial strategy is used in politics, where the perpetrator (politician) makes a simple denial which is one of the uses of crisis strategy. In an effort to handle negative news from the media and the public, the Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic tries to continue to bring positive news as a form of Denial of the negative public spotlight on the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic.

*'At that time the effect was more like that, we did it on purpose, so at that time we did it because it was usually hot at the beginning after hearing it. Sometimes the netizens respond more hotly first, so we have to let go, let go in the first few days we received the scorn in the comments column but at that time the leadership instructed us to always in addition to monitoring the development of information on social media or online print media. We are also required to always produce more positive information than before, so as to counteract.'* (Amalia R, 2024).

In handling the crisis issues that occurred, the Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic continued to provide positive information and control the

information flow, where the public relations also received negative news while maintaining credibility.

### **Evasion of Responsibility**

The crisis is not entirely the organisation's fault, but there are two things the organisation can do, namely excuse and justification. In excuse, the organisation tries to reduce its responsibility by convincing itself that it did not intend to do anything negative.

*'After the official assessment where we did, we did not blow ourselves up, there were so many journalists who came to seek information too. Yes enough, what do you call it, yes we issued a statement that was deemed very necessary. So it's not uncertain information.*

*The point is that we convey that we always support the actions taken by the authorities. We fully submit to the authorities for the process of this suspect.*

*Then if the efforts from within ourselves, we have indeed tried to take action in accordance with the applicable rules' (Amalia R, 2024).*

### **Reducing Offensiveness**

This strategy is conditioned as the party who made a mistake deserves to be given leniency. The trick is to cite positive actions that have been taken in the past and can be well received by the public (*Bolstering*). There can also be efforts to reduce negative feelings through persuasion to the public, as well as convincing them that the situation is not as bad as they think, perceive, or appear (*Minimisation*). In the form of handling the crisis that occurred, namely maintaining a positive statement in support of the crisis that occurred and being a middle party (without appearing to take one side) so as to be able to maintain a positive statement from the organisation / institution.;

*'Well, that's the next effort, yes, we do not get bored every day, indeed we have at least three positive information. So we have to look for information to related units about what information can be shared then we also. Creating content that can provide a positive image So indeed digging deeper The effort is harder than usual While we continue to monitor by ... what is the name, monitoring information that must be circulating at that time' (Amalia R, 2024).*

*'But if for example it starts to have a very negative tone, usually our team at that time deletes the comment. So that later it does not cause what further views, yes, the side effects of these comments are sometimes not like that but because many people comment like that, the views will change according to what the majority read. That means at that time the DM and then the comments were that many' (Amalia R, 2024).*

### **Corrective Action**

This strategy is implemented by promising that the wrong actions that occur will be corrected in the future. with convincing promises, it is hoped that the positive image will return again. In handling it, the crisis can be passed with serious efforts in its resolution. The crisis strategy carried out by the Public Relations of the Surabaya

Shipping Polytechnic, as well as by providing an official statement on the case that occurred

“*The image restoration is more about continuing to provide positive information. what is it called more communicative more what is it, there is a lot of content that is in accordance with current trends so that the engagement is also closer and then yes, if evaluated, it seems that content related to Taruna will have more engagement that day than content that is not students.*’ (Amalia R, 2024).

With information under control and crisis issues spreading more widely, public relations practitioners can utilise this opportunity to develop more effective strategies to respond to issues more quickly.

## CONCLUSION

Crisis communication carried out by the Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic in maintaining the company's image over the crisis issues that occurred, divided into four stages. The first is the *Denial* stage, where the Public Relations of the Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic denies by providing the positive information side of the institution/organisation so that not only negative information becomes the main statement.

Second *Evasion of Responsibility* by convincing that the organisation does not intend to do negative things and fully supports the running of a fair legal process regarding the crisis issues that occur. Third *Reducing Offensiveness*, convincing the public that in addition to the negative crisis that occurred, there are still positive actions that have been taken in the past and can be well received by the public. Then the last stage is *Corrective Action*, which is to ensure that the crisis issue that occurs can be handled properly so that it will not become a problem again in the future.

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