



Implementation of Public Relations Management in Attempt of Improving Community Participation in Lae-Lae Island Reclamation Plan

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze the implementation of public relations to improve community participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan and to examine what factors hinder public relations in improving community participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan. This research is conducted at the Lae-Lae Island reclamation site. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. The informants are selected using a purposive method based on individuals directly involved in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan and public relations management in the South Sulawesi provincial government. Primary data are obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation, while secondary data are obtained through literature reviews such as books, journals, and other sources related to the research topic. The result of this research indicated that (1) the implementation of public relations management, including the strategy planning in which the public relations identify the problem, then designing relevant solutions for the problem and implementing the solutions to the public to be evaluated later resulting effectively and efficiently to improve the public participation in Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan, and (2) the factors that hinder public relations in improving public participation in Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan includes the members of community who object to the reclamation plan due to environmental and social issue. However, the obstacle can be solved by implementing the appropriate communication approach.

Keywords: Implementation, Public Relations Management, Public Participation.

1. Introduction

A nation will always be firmly linked with sustainable development. Sustainable development is fundamental for a country because it significantly impacts achieving the primary goals of government policies related to the welfare of society. Through continuous development, it is hoped that society will grow from undeveloped to advanced [1].

Similar to the sustainable development concept, the South Sulawesi provincial government designed a reclamation plan to balance economic growth with environmental and social responsibility. At its core, the plan recognizes the importance of preserving

the coastal ecosystem, requiring a meticulous ecological impact assessment to safeguard marine life, mangroves, and overall biodiversity for more delicate marine tourism in Makassar. Economic considerations are integrated into the plan, emphasizing job creation, tourism development, and improved infrastructure to stimulate the regional economy. This reclamation will take place on the eastern side of Lae-Lae Island. Given the location and size of the reclamation, this plan will not affect residential areas. Thus, the chance of eviction can be minimized. The reclaimed land, covering an area of 12.11 hectares, will be used for a marine tourism destination. The development of this destination will also involve the residents of Lae-Lae Island.

The success of this initiative hinges on the government's commitment to involve the community. It's crucial that the locals' opinions are considered and the rights of the indigenous communities are respected to foster social coherence between the government and the residents. The plan also focuses on building strong structures that can handle challenging environmental situations, like storms or rising sea levels. This is important for ensuring the project lasts long without causing harm. To ensure everything stays on track, the government must keep a close eye on how things are going and be ready to change plans if needed. This way, they can ensure sustainable development and benefit everyone in the long run.

While the sustainable development plan for Lae Lae Island holds promise, challenges persist. In an attempt to improve public involvement in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan, several factors interfere. The factors occurred due to the ineffective communication between the government and the public and caused uncertainty. This uncertainty creates concern about the adverse side effects of development for the public, which refrains them from fully participating in the development project. In worst cases, the public may even object to the development plan as their trust in the government has been reduced. Therefore, implementing public relations management is necessary to build and maintain a close relationship between the government and the public.

Public relations, a practitioner who brings together government and public interest, plays a critical role in addressing the issues related to communications in an organization. Effective communication is key to gaining public support and addressing concerns in the complex landscape of sustainable development. In this context, the role of public relations in an organization is highly anticipated in maintaining the government's image and engaging with local communities, environmental groups, and indigenous populations [2]. Facilitating transparent and open communication channels can ensure that the community's perspectives are heard, fostering a sense of inclusion and building trust. Therefore, due to the increasing diversity of public interests and needs, every organization is required to implement public relations management in its processes.

Public relations management is a critical facet of organizational success, bridging an entity and its diverse stakeholders. It involves strategic communication and interaction with the public to build and maintain a positive image. One primary function of public relations is to create an open and transparent line of communication. This involves disseminating information about the organization's goals, values, and activities through various channels, such as media releases, social media, and community engagement. By fostering a straightforward and honest narrative, public relations management helps

build trust and credibility, vital for sustaining positive relationships with customers, employees, investors, and the broader community [3].

In addition to communication, public relations is crucial in managing crises. When faced with challenges or controversies, organizations turn to public relations professionals to navigate the complex landscape of public opinion [3]. Effective crisis communication involves acknowledging issues, providing accurate information, and outlining corrective actions. Public relations experts work to minimize reputational damage and rebuild trust after a crisis. Organizations can demonstrate accountability and transparency by developing proactive crisis communication plans, ultimately preserving their public image.

To a more significant extent, public relations management involves strategically shaping and maintaining an organization's positive image in the public's eyes. The primary goal is to build trust, credibility, and goodwill, ensuring that the organization's messages align with its values and resonate with the public. By implementing public relations management, organizations are expected to resolve problems and maintain good relationships with the public. Thus, shared goals can be achieved.

Therefore, based on the above explanation, this research will focus on analyzing the implementation of public relations management to improve public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan and analyze what factors hinder public participation in the reclamation plan. The researcher believes it is necessary to conduct research on the implementation of public relations management in an attempt to enhance public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan.

2. Research Method

This research is conducted using a qualitative approach with a case study design. Qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behaviors [4]. This research is conducted at the Lae-Lae Island reclamation site. Data is collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and literature review techniques. Data analysis techniques include data collection, reduction, presentation, and conclusions or verification. Data validity checks are carried out using credibility tests involving source and technique triangulation. The selection of informants is made with a purposive method based on the predefined characteristics of the informants: government personnel who implement the public relations management in improving public participation in Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan and residents of Lae-Lae Island who object to the reclamation plan.

3. Result and Discussion

Initially, public relations management is a specific field or function required by every organization, especially the government, to convey information from the government to the public in an attempt to change the attitudes, opinions, or behavior of specific

groups of the public [5]. Public relations aims to ensure that the public always understands the organization's good intentions and roles. The main objective of engaging in public relations activities is to enhance the public's understanding of the goals and targets to be achieved.

In the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan, public relations management plays a crucial role in formulating plans, implementation, and evaluation to enhance public participation. This aligns with the definition of public relations management as provided by Ruslan, which defines public relations management as a process that encompasses research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of communication supported by organizations, both on a personal and interpersonal level, related to mass media and public service in addressing management crises in development [6]. Public relations management also plays a role in building and maintaining the public's trust in the government or the agency responsible for the reclamation project. By working transparently, responsively, and consistently in communication, public relations management helps to avoid potential conflicts and skepticism that can hinder public participation. They should also have the skills to handle crises or disputes that may arise throughout the reclamation process. Thus, public relations management plays an integral role in ensuring that the public feels heard, engaged, and confident that their interests are being considered in every step of the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan.

The process of implementing public relations management as an attempt to enhance public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan certainly begins with planning. Effective public relations planning to increase community participation requires strategic steps focused on communication and engagement, which starts with a deep understanding of the local context [3]. This includes identifying the community groups that will be directly impacted or interested in the project and understanding their expectations, concerns, and perceptions of the reclamation plan [7]. Once this understanding is established, the government may formulate strategies appropriate to the existing issues.

Formulating a public relations strategy to improve public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan involves various stakeholders. In this research, the stakeholders are the South Sulawesi Provincial Government and the community of Lae-Lae Island. In planning the development scheme, the South Sulawesi Provincial Government, as the primary stakeholder, is the party responsible for making considerations and decisions. Meanwhile, the community of Lae-Lae Island, as the secondary stakeholder, is in charge of providing advice and input on the prepared programs and aligning perceptions and goals to be achieved in the planned development.

Making a strong plan for how to talk to the public is essential for the success of any designed program [8]. First and foremost, effective communication is essential to ensure that the community is well-informed about the details of the project. A clear and transparent plan presentation, including its objectives, benefits, and potential challenges, helps build understanding and addresses concerns. By encouraging an environment of openness and accessibility, the public relations strategy creates opportunities for the community to voice their opinions, ask questions, and actively participate in the decision-making process.

Moreover, the public relations strategy should focus on building trust between the government and the public. This involves providing accurate information and actively listening to the concerns and feedback from the community. Establishing two-way communication allows constructive dialogue and demonstrates a genuine commitment to incorporating public perspectives.

From the prior explanation, it can be understood that the goal of the public relations planning in this research is to align the perceptions of the stakeholders so that the development that has been designed may proceed without significant adverse effects on the residents living around the reclamation area. Additionally, the planning of this public relations is aimed at enabling the South Sulawesi provincial government to expand the scope of marine tourism, which will boost the region's revenue in the tourism sector.

Following the planning step, implementing the public relations plan to enhance community participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan must be conducted. Implementation involves a series of concrete steps that emphasize open communication and inclusive interaction [6]. The form of implementation taken by the South Sulawesi provincial government in fostering positive relationships with secondary stakeholders involves organizing press conferences that aim to address the concerns of the Lae-Lae Island residents regarding their potential displacement and the risk to their livelihoods due to the reclamation plan in their area. Furthermore, the South Sulawesi provincial government has directly engaged in mediation with representatives of the Lae-Lae Island community regarding this reclamation plan, facilitated by Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (DPRD) South Sulawesi. This mediation seeks to understand the demands and reasons behind the residents' opposition to actively participating in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan.

Based on this finding, it can be understood that the South Sulawesi provincial government is employing principles of public relations to enhance community participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan by effectively communicating, explaining, and listening to the crises faced by the community to gain their support for the proposed development plan.

Moreover, implementing the public relations plan must consider the community's diversity and ensure that various population groups have equal opportunities to participate. This implementation will undoubtedly provide evaluation material to assess the effectiveness of goal achievement. The evaluation functions as an integral component of a system, making necessary adjustments to plans to ensure deviations from the system's objectives are within acceptable limits [9]. This evaluation subsequently serves as a gauge for measuring the success of activity implementation and provides input during post-implementation evaluations. Effendy similarly argues that evaluation is important in assessing the ongoing plan and the after-effects that may come within [10]. The evaluation process thoroughly examines inhibiting factors in both the planning and implementation stages.

The evaluation system for public relations management in this research is conducted by observing and monitoring. Monitoring is a crucial task that public relations must engage in throughout an event to promptly identify any deficiencies [11]. Public Relations, who directly oversee the event, should rectify any issues that arise during the

activity. This monitoring process is considered highly effective in pinpointing the specific areas of weakness in the event. The result of the observation process and interview will be used to carry out the evaluation or improvement related to public relations. As for the input from outside parties, there is none.

Additionally, reclamation aims to transform damaged or unused water areas into new, better, and more beneficial areas [12]. In this context, the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan undoubtedly positively impacts providing more areas for expansion needs, organizing coastal areas, and developing businesses and tourism for the surrounding community. However, alongside the positive effects, reclamation certainly will create ecosystem imbalance due to the damaged mangrove forest ecosystem. The damaged mangrove ecosystem will cause the area to be prone to natural disasters and might as well lead to widespread ecological disasters.

On the social front, the local community believes that traditional fishermen will be displaced from their jobs and livelihood sources. Economically, coastal reclamation can boost the local original revenue for the local government, as the reclaimed land can be used for various businesses and tourist attractions. However, the local community, whose livelihood depends merely on nature, might lose their source of income. Such concerns later triggered the local community to explicitly state their objection through mass protests against what was happening for an extended period.

Again, such a challenge is preventable if the reclamation plan is carried out using public relations principles. With an appropriate communication approach and a thorough study of coastal reclamation involving relevant and competent stakeholders with comprehensive interdisciplinary expertise, the goal of advancing a region without neglecting environmental sustainability can be achieved [13]. This way, the reclamation result will benefit every stakeholder involved. However, such challenges eventually emerged due to a lack of communication between the parties involved. Therefore, in this regard, public relations need to facilitate the community's needs to increase their participation in supporting continuous and sustainable reclamation plans.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the analysis and interviews the researcher has conducted for this study, the following discussions can be drawn:

The implementation of public relations management, including strategy planning in which the public relations identify the problem, then designs relevant solutions for the issue and implements the solutions to the public to be evaluated later, resulting in effective and efficiently improved public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan.

Some factors hinder public relations in improving public participation in the Lae-Lae Island reclamation plan. However, public relations may overcome the obstacle by implementing public relations management and presenting themselves not only as the government's representative but also as a figure that facilitates and encourages the public to contribute to the development program.

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