

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF HEALTH PROGRAMS AND HOSPITAL SERVICES

Sylvia Sumitro

Airlangga University Surabaya, Indonesia

Email : sumitrosylvia@gmail.com

*Correspondence

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ABSTRACT

Introducing health programs and services hospitals provide is essential in meeting the community's health needs. This study aims to analyze the role of public relations in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services. This research uses qualitative research methods. The data collection technique was carried out by literature study by reviewing the literature relevant to the research. The data that has been collected is then analyzed in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that public relations is essential in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services. Public relations plays a role in increasing public awareness in various ways, including by delivering information and education about health, building public trust in health programs and hospital services, increasing public understanding of the benefits of health programs and hospital services, and encouraging the community to get involved in health programs and hospital services.



Introduction

Health is a crucial aspect of the quality of life of individuals and communities. As health institutions, hospitals are essential in providing health services and programs to improve public health (Hasrillah et al., 2021). However, public awareness of health programs and services offered by hospitals is often a determining factor in successfully implementing such programs. One element that plays a significant role in raising this awareness is the Public Relations Division within the hospital (Kholisoh & Yenita, 2015).

Public relations, or can be referred to as public relations, is a communication practice carried out by organizations or companies to interact with the public. As mentioned in the book *Management Public Relations* (1994) by Rhenald Kasali, public relations is a part of the management function that focuses on assessing the attitudes held by the public and identifying the policies and procedures used by individuals or companies in dealing with their public. In addition, the central role of a public relations practitioner is to design and implement communication programs to build understanding and support from the public (Mesya, 2022).

Although PR's role in raising public awareness has been recognized, various challenges are still faced. Changes in communication trends, the development of information technology, and the dynamic media environment are increasingly changing the way of communication and interaction with the community, especially in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services.

A wellness program is a set of activities or initiatives designed to improve an individual's or population's health. Health programs aim to prevent disease, promote healthy behaviors, improve access to health services, or manage specific health problems (Hendrawan, 2020). Hospital services refer to various health services hospital health facilities provide to patients who need them. This service covers several aspects of medical care and services aimed at diagnosing, treating, and supporting the recovery of patients.

Public awareness of health programs allows them to understand the importance of disease prevention better and reduce preventable diseases by encouraging healthy behaviors, such as vaccinations, balanced diets, and active lifestyles. In addition, when people understand the services available at the hospital, they tend to be more active in accessing those services when needed; this can help in the early treatment of health conditions they may experience (Paramita, Utami, & Sari, 2019).

Previous research (Pradita & Herawati, 2015) examined the role of public relations in Surakarta mental hospitals to improve service quality; the results showed that programs and activities at RSJD Surakarta showed the role of public relations at RSJD Surakarta saw that there was always an increase in the percentage of patients or families of patients expressing satisfaction with the services at RSJD Surakarta. This has been tested based on a customer satisfaction survey conducted by the public relations of RSJD Surakarta to make internal parties aware at RSJD Surakarta that good service will create satisfaction for customers or related parties. So, a quality improvement that produces customer satisfaction is crucial in running a company or government agency.

Another study (2017) examined health promotion strategies to increase awareness of healthy living at Dr. Regional Mental Hospital. Soedjarwadi Central Java Province, the results showed that the PKRS team of Dr.RM. Soedjarwadi of Central Java Province implemented health promotion strategies, first from political lobbying, seminars and presentations, and advocacy media (Emilia & Prabandari, 2019). Second social support, where this strategy is referred to as building an atmosphere or fostering a conducive atmosphere. This atmosphere building is divided into three forms: building an individual atmosphere, a group atmosphere, and a public atmosphere. Third is community empowerment, continuously providing information to groups, families, and individuals. The health promotion strategy will help hospitals realize and increase health awareness in people's lives. The absence of research examining the role of public relations in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services is a novelty in this research. This study aims to analyze the role of public relations in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services.

Research Methods

This study used qualitative research methods. According to (2018), qualitative research methods are based on philosophy used to research in scientific conditions (experiments) where researchers use instruments, data collection techniques, and

qualitative analysis to emphasize meaning. Data collection techniques are carried out by literature study by reviewing literature that is relevant to research. This study did not observe hospitals directly but collected data from various hospitals in previous studies. The data that has been collected is then analyzed in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Health is inseparable from human life because health is critical in carrying out various activities. Without human health, it will experience obstacles and experience a decline in physical condition. According to Health Law No. 23 of 1992, health is a state of body, soul, and social well-being that allows everyone to live socially and economically productive lives. This health includes four aspects: physical (body), mental (soul), social, and economic. The importance of health is felt by most humans (Setyabudi, 2017). This means that health has physical, mental, and social dimensions and includes economic dimensions. Thus, a person is physically, mentally, and socially declared healthy but not economically or socially productive; the person cannot be declared healthy. Economically, productivity is measured by work and social activities related to improving the quality of life of self, others, or society (Notoatmojo, 2008). Thus, the importance of public awareness of the importance of health programs and hospital services so that people always have good health.

There are four most important factors, according to (Subekti, Mulyadi, Mulyana, & Priana, 2021), that must be considered in health, which are as follows.

1. healthy food,
2. Drink plenty of water,
3. Get enough sleep,
4. and always on.

The role of public relations in an organization is vital, including in health institutions. In research on public relations activities, two significant roles consistently appear in public relations activities, namely the role of technicians and management. The technician's role represents the art of public relations, such as writing, editing, taking photos, handling communication production, creating memorable events, and making telephone contact with the media. The role of a manager focuses on activities that assist the organization in identifying and solving PR-related problems. PR managers perform three roles: first, as an explainer, a person who works as a consultant to define problems, suggest options, and monitor policy implementation. Second, a communication facilitator is a person on the boundary between the organization and its environment who keeps two-way communication going. Third, as a problem-solving facilitator, i.e., a person who partners with senior managers to identify and solve problems (Lubis, 2012).

Public relations also play a role in growing and developing good relations between institutions or organizations and their internal and external public. Hospital Public Relations is an intermediary for communication from the Hospital to employees,

patients, and the community and parties who work and relate to the Hospital (Adhiani & Wirman, 2017). Public relations in its activities is to assist hospital organizations in creating images. A positive image will be perfect for marketing-related hospital services. Therefore, public relations will support hospitals to win rivalries with other hospitals. Hospitals that become health institutions, where health service problems will always get complaints or complaints from patients or the community. Hospitals that become healthcare organizations must provide quality services for the community. Thus, hospitals have to develop the quality of their services. The government has formulated policies related to quality improvement that hospitals must implement. The policy is stated in Law No. 44 of 2009 concerning hospitals, where in article 40, there is that efforts to improve the quality of hospital services must be carried out accreditation in a sustainable way, at least once every three years (Tumanggor & Alfikri, 2022).

Public relations also have a role in conveying information and good relations. Public relations management cannot be separated from public services. Public relations is part of an agency that has the task of understanding and evaluating various public opinions and public issues contained in the agency. The purpose and function of public relations are to invite and influence the public. Here, public relations must build a positive reputation and eliminate a negative image in an agency (Lubis, 2012). There are five public relations functions, according to Cutlip and Center, namely

1. Fact collection, meaning that a public relations person must be able to determine or collect existing problems and overcome public opinion against an agency.
2. The definition of the problem means that a public relations person must be able and able to understand the public's wishes optimally based on the collection of facts based on data in the field. The problem is the patient's complaint about the service during treatment because poor service will make the patient uncomfortable.
3. Planning and programs, meaning that planning strategies and programs carried out by a public relations person must be profitable for agencies and later can be for the benefit of improving agencies and the public.
4. Action and communication, meaning that a publicist must be able to communicate to his public in order to create a positive image. A public relations person can communicate directly and indirectly to the public, and
5. Evaluation means that a public relations person must be able to review the internal and external public desires and interests to develop a public relations program.

According to (Soyusiawaty, 2017), the role of public relations in general is as follows.

1. Technician communication

Communications technicians are hired to write and edit employee newsletters, write news releases and features, develop web content, and handle media contacts. Practitioners who perform this role are usually absent when management defines problems and selects solutions. They join to communicate and implement the program, sometimes without knowing the motivation or expected goals.

2. Expert Prescriber communication

Top management leaves public relations in the hands of experts, and management usually takes a passive role only. Practitioners who operate as expert practitioners are tasked with defining problems, developing programs, and taking full responsibility for their implementation.

3. Communication facilitator

The role of a communication facilitator for a practitioner is as a sensitive listener and broker of communication. Communication facilitators act as liaisons, interpreters, and mediators between the organization and its public. They maintain two-way communication and facilitate conversation by removing relationship obstacles and keeping communication channels open. The goal is to provide information management, and the public must make decisions in the common interest.

4. Problem-Solving Facilitator

Collaboration and deliberation begin with the first issue and the final program evaluation. Problem solvers help other managers and organizations apply public relations in a phased management process also used to solve other organizational problems.

The role of public relations in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services is as follows.

1. Delivering information and education about Health
2. Building public trust in health programs and hospital services
3. Increase public understanding of the benefits of health programs and hospital services
4. Encourage the community to get involved in health programs and hospital services

Thus, the study results show that public relations are essential in increasing public awareness of health programs and hospital services. Public relations plays a role in increasing public awareness through various ways, including by conveying information and education about health, building public trust in health programs and hospital services, increasing public understanding of the benefits of health programs and hospital services, and encouraging people to be involved in health programs and hospital services.

Conclusion

Public relations are essential in increasing public awareness of health programs and services provided by hospitals. In this context, PR acts as a critical link between hospitals and communities, and they carry out this role through various practical approaches. One of their primary roles is to convey accurate and relevant information about health to the public. Public relations also focuses on education, ensuring people understand the importance of health programs and services and their benefits to individuals and communities. In addition, Public Relations also has a role in building public trust in health programs and hospitals, which is an essential factor in motivating community participation. In this way, the study's results confirm that Public Relations

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has a significant impact on increasing public awareness and involvement in health efforts organized by hospitals.

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