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### SHIFTING STRATEGIES FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS TO PUBLIC LEADERSHIP: MAJOR CHALLENGE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS IN INDONESIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study provides an overview of public relations practices in Indonesian businesses and government institutions. Practitioners are concerned about the profession's future prospects. Is it possible for them to return to embrace and adapt to the new technological era, or is this profession history? This study explores and maps the reality of public relations practice using qualitative methods and a case study approach. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative insights from professionals at reputable consulting firms who work with clients from a variety of industries, chairpersons of public relations associations, and senior-level practitioners in some of Indonesia's largest companies. The findings show that public relations practitioners in Indonesia are still stuck in a rut and going through the motions. In responding to current challenges and phenomena, the function of public relations is no longer relevant. Public relations practitioners' competencies are also insufficient to meet the demands of communication strategy needs. Professional communicators must change their strategy to public leadership.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The industrial revolution has disrupted not only the existing order of processes and business models but also various professions within it, one of which is public relations (Breakenridge, 2008; Gregory, 2004). For example, the presence of smartphones has changed the way public relations works and is a

challenge in itself when communicating with the public is currently very complex (Avidar et al, 2013).

In the changing communication landscape both practitioners and academics agree that the social revolution occurring through digital channels will have a profound impact on how people interact with each other and how companies manage their relationships (Lestari et al, 2019).

The rise of influential people on social media presents public relations professionals with both opportunities and challenges (Sanderon et al, 2015). Influencers, key opinion leaders, social justice warriors, buzzers, celebrity Instagram accounts, celebrity tweets, and a host of other players bring fresh hues to the realm of public relations (Gillin, 2008). They have been successful in recruiting a large number of people to transmit specific ideas in an inventive manner, and they have grown into a rather huge movement on social media as well as in the real world. The rivalry for messages reached a fever pitch, and it was easier than ever to divert the attention of the audience. It is possible that the target audience for any and all of the important messages and information that public relations professionals develop and then distribute to the mainstream media and social media will not be reached.

The public is now able to comment and provide rapid reviews of individuals, brands, and organizations in this era of the reputation economy. The members of the general public are in charge of giving fast feedback and ratings based on their personal experiences with the goods or services offered by the business (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The degree of the organization's reputation has evolved into a standard for measuring the economy of the company. It is generally agreed that the content shared on social media platforms is a factor that contributes to reputation (Sugiono, 2020). This has repercussions for potential crises that may arise at any time for many businesses, individuals, and brands. Those who work in public relations have one of the most difficult jobs in the world: preserving their organizations' good names, which must be done constantly (Anani-Bossman, 2021).

According to Agung Laksamana, who is serving as the Head of the Indonesian Public Relations Association (Perhumas Indonesia) for the period of 2014–2022, the current focus of our investigation is on the future prospects of the world of public relations and how public relations can navigate in the digital era. The field of public relations needs to be ready to acknowledge and accommodate the rapid advancement of technology. If practitioners of public relations are unable to adapt, the field of public relations will become irrelevant or maybe vanish altogether (Laksamana, 2018). A number of research findings point to a variety of conclusions. Navarro (2020) observed that public relations practitioners in Latin America and Europe, even if many have utilized social media, do not let go of conventional activities that were previously done. This is the case even though many of them have used social media. Despite the fact that the existence of social media is generally regarded as beneficial for public relations, Valentini's (2015) research found that this was not always the case. Even as recently as 2014, Robert Phillip, who had previously served as the chief executive officer of Edelman, made the prognostication that the public relations

profession will soon become extinct. According to his point of view, public relations does not qualify as a profession. In point of fact, only about one in six people employed in the public relations sector in the United Kingdom adhere to the code of conduct established by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), and an even less percentage participate in ongoing professional development (Phillips, 2014).

The commitment and behavior of practitioners is the only topic covered in the code of ethics published by Perhumas Indonesia; there is no article in the code that discusses infractions and the punishments that may be imposed if a practitioner is found to have violated the code (Perhumas, 2019).

At the time, becoming a public relations practitioner did not require any specific qualifications or examinations; yet, there was a talent, knowledge, and comprehension gap among junior practitioners. In the context of this discussion, the role and function of public relations can be carried out by other professions even if the individuals involved do not have a formal education in public relations or communication science. The purpose of public relations is to earn the public's trust in organizations and businesses by constructing an image for them and developing relationships with the public through a variety of different media. Trust, on the other hand, is not dependent on public relations in any way. Trust is an effect rather than a communication. It is fundamentally behavioral, nuanced, and fragile, and one must work hard each day to earn it through actions rather than words (Phillips, 2015).

A challenge for the existence of public relations and the practice of it is posed by the fact that social media has the potential to upend the conventional model of mass media. The traditional paradigm of public relations is no longer applicable since cultivating relationships with stakeholders not only facilitates communication about the stakeholders' interests, problems, and concerns via mass media channels, but also involves the stakeholders themselves. The vast majority of large and effectively managed firms actively seek out talks with their many stakeholders. Push communication channels, which are an essential component of the public relations paradigm, are incompatible with this type of conversation and so cannot be used (Burns, 2013).

Artificial intelligence presents another difficult obstacle that significantly alters how public relations work is done. The field of public relations has been the subject of a significant number of studies that focus on digitization and disruption. It is anticipated that artificial intelligence will outperform humans in a variety of domains during the next decade (Munandar & Irwansyah, 2020). It is anticipated that developments in artificial intelligence technology will also have an impact on the communication industries, including public relations. Recent publications and news reports in Indonesia have included discourses on topics such as the opportunity to use artificial intelligence in public relations practices and the challenges for public relations practitioners in the industrial era 4.0. These discourses have been found in a number of Indonesian publications. Concern was voiced in a number of publications' leading headlines, including "Dear PR Player, The PR Profession Will Be Eradicated by Artificial Intelligence" (Lukihardianti, 2019) and "The PR Profession Will

Be Eradicated by AI" (Lukihardianti, 2019). Are You Ready for the Disruption That Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Will Cause?" (Isna, 2019), "Research Results: Public Relations Jobs Will Be Replaced by Machines" (E.N.Dewi, 2019), and "Industrial Era 4.0: What Are the Challenges of Public Relations in the Future?" (Isna, 2019) are some recent articles that have been published. (Perhumas, 2018).

This article examines the reality of the practice of public relations in Indonesia at the present time, taking into account the numerous phenomena listed above.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Public Relations*

The transformation of the public relations function cannot be separated from the philosophy and definition of public relations. There are many definitions that explain the role and function of public relations, including defining public relations as the practice of managing the distribution of information between individuals or organizations (such as businesses, governments, agencies, or non-profit organizations) and the public (Grunig, J.E., Hunt, 1984). The definition that is relevant today is the definition from The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), which is "PR is about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say, and what others say about you." CIPR also expands the understanding of public relations, namely "the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behavior." It is a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between the organization and the public " (Arief, 2019).

As a management function, the various roles of public relations include: managing public opinion, attitudes, and issues that might affect the organization's operations and plans; participating in problem and/or issue management; helping management to stay responsive and updated on public opinion; being able to define and emphasize management's responsibility to serve the public interest; and helping management to follow and utilize change effectively in relation to trend anticipation (Cutlip, S. M., Broom, 2009). To carry out this role, Public Relations should use research as well as healthy communication as the main means of implementation (Permatasari, 2021).

Broom and Smith (1979) conceptualize the tasks of public relations practitioners into four specific roles: first, as an expert prescriber, public relations helps management to identify and find solutions to communication problems in the organization; second, as a facilitator of the problem-solving process, and collaborates with others in the organization to identify and resolve problems. The problem-solving facilitator is part of the strategic planning team; the third, as a communication facilitator, who acts as a liaison between the organization and its public, maintains two-way communication, and keeps communication channels open; the fourth, as a communication technician. The job is to focus on technical matters such as writing press releases, making media lists, making leaflets, and not being involved in problem-solving. Most public

relations practitioners fall into this category as communication technicians. They are absent when management defines communication problems and looks for solutions, and sometimes do not fully know what objectives to be achieved (Cutlip & Broom, 2009).

Effective public relations can help manage reputation by communicating and building good relationships with all stakeholders, especially the public. The public has a view of the organization based on how it interacts, whether it is good or bad, as well as the impressions felt from communication between the two parties. This perception ultimately drives the decision-making process, whether the audience will support, continue to cooperate or be interested in buying the company's products and services. The public can also directly provide input, views, comments, and complaints. This interaction will simultaneously create public opinion on the communication activities that have been carried out by the company (Arief, 2019).

### ***Public Leadership***

Leadership is one of the most essential components in the growth of an organization, and it also has an effect on the longevity of the organization. The vision and goals of an organization, the allocation of resources and the motivation of those resources to become more competent, the coordination of change, and the building of intense empowerment with followers are all required of a leader in order to set the organization in the right or best direction (Muallidin, 2014).

Leadership is defined in a variety of ways by various experts, including as a process, having influence, taking place in groups, and involving a common objective. Northouse (2013) defines leadership as the process by which an individual exerts influence over a group of people to bring about the accomplishment of a common objective. The notion of leadership as a process emphasizes the interactions and exchanges that take place between leaders and followers more than it does the qualities or attributes that are possessed by the leader. According to the process, a leader will both influence their followers and be influenced by their followers. This highlights the fact that leadership is not a one-way street but rather a street that goes in both directions. When leadership is understood in this way, it is democratized and made available to everyone. It is not limited to the person who has been formally appointed as the leader of a group.

It is essential in the public sector for leadership to be effective because it is directly related to the level of satisfaction and trust felt by citizens, as well as the reputation of the organization (Vigoda et al, 2005).

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses qualitative methods, with a case study approach to exploring and mapping the reality of public relations practice. Semi-structured interviews have been used for collecting qualitative insights from professionals at reputable consultancy firms in Jakarta who works with clients in various industries, chairpersons of public relations associations in Indonesia, and senior-level

practitioners who specialize in public relations activities including media relations, public relations events, stakeholder engagement, perception management, image and reputation management as well as strategic planning and thinking. A semi-structured interview blends structured and unstructured interviews. The interviewer asks several pre-set but open-ended questions and allows for flexibility. In this method, predetermined questions are asked systematically, and the necessary probe is used to get more valuable insights into the issues which the interviewer is exploring. On average, the time duration of each interview session lasted is about 1 to 2 hours with face-to-face communication.

Secondary data is used to support the primary data collected from the interviews. The data source used in this study is the latest scientific journals, articles, books, company websites, conference speaker presentations, specific discussion forums with public relations practitioners, and specific documents that are relevant to the issues examined.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Public Relations Landscape in Indonesia*

In terms of its historical development, the field of public relations in Indonesia got its start in the 1940s. Before and after the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, public relations efforts in Indonesia were known as information campaigns. These campaigns played a significant role in Indonesia's fight to become an independent nation (Dahlan, 1978). Immediately following the proclamation of independence in 1945, Indonesia established the Ministry of Information, the function of which was to carry out public relations work, convince the populace to defend their independence, initiate infrastructure development, and introduce a new sovereign state to the international community.

Only in the late 1980s, when a number of public relations firms first appeared on the scene, did the public relations industry begin to develop a professional reputation. The establishment of a number of multinational corporations in Indonesia in the 1950s, including PT. Caltex Pacific International, heralded the beginning of a new era in the field of public relations in that country. The concept of public relations, which was first popularized by this company, quickly gained widespread acceptance. A novel approach to the field of public relations, which Alwi Dahlan referred to as the method of planned public relations operations, was also pioneered by the company at the time it made its debut (Putra, 2008)

There has not been much of a shift in the way public relations are practiced in Indonesia, regardless of whether it is in the private sector, the government, a state-owned enterprise, or a non-profit organization; ninety percent of these entities still carry out traditional public relations functions. Public relations professionals working for start-up companies or unicorns, the majority of whose programs and activities are focused on digital technology, are subject to different practices than those working for more established businesses. The

majority of public relations work in Indonesia is still done in Jakarta and is focused on industry.

During the years 1972-1993, Indonesia experienced a period of rapid development in the field of public relations. This time period is notable for the founding of a public relations organization known as the Indonesian Public Relations Association (PERHUMAS), which later evolved into a forum for public relations professionals working in both the private and public sectors. This event served as a landmark for the period. The expansion of business organizations, both privately held and those owned by the government, has contributed to the rise in demand for public relations staff members. The professionals in the field of public relations in Indonesia came together to form PERHUMAS in 1972 with the intention of enhancing their level of professionalism (Putra, 2008). The Association of Public Relations Companies (APPRI) was founded in 1987, the Association of Public Relations for Star Hotels (H3) was founded in 1995, the Communication Forum for Inter-Banking Public Relations (FORKAMAS) was founded in 1996, and the PR Society of Indonesia was founded in 2003. These and other organizations were founded to strengthen the existence of public relations circles in private companies.

Although it is believed that the field of public relations is expanding at a rapid rate in Indonesia, the vast majority of activities related to public relations fall under the purview of relations with the media. A significant amount of effort was put into developing programs for media relations. Public relations work that involves making publications in the mass media, such as distributing press releases, inviting journalists, or holding press conferences, can be made easier by cultivating positive relationships with the media. When compared to the other stakeholder relations function, the percentage of the work presentation devoted to media relations reaches a perfect 100. Only publishing a variety of company information to the general public through various forms of mass media constitutes the primary focus of the activities of Indonesian public relations practitioners.

In general, Jakarta and the various industries are the only places in Indonesia where public relations are allowed to flourish. Outside of Jakarta, the role and function of public relations are less important, and some people do not even carry out the functions of public relations because they believe they are not all that important. Public relations play a more strategic role in multinational corporations, acting as a communication facilitator, communication technician, expert prescriber, and provider of solutions and advice to management. In other words, their job is to advise and assist management. After the President and Director, the Public Relations Director will be the second spokesperson for the company (Rakhmadi, 2020).

When it comes to the government, the role of public relations is primarily limited to that of a communication technician and facilitator, while the officials or representatives of those officials who speak for their respective institutions are known as spokespersons (Soegiarto, 2020). On the other hand, the picture that emerges regarding public relations in the regions is one that continues to raise concerns. The practice of public relations in Indonesia is lacking, despite

the fact that businesses in the country are becoming more developed, sophisticated, and refined in their ability to effectively reduce issues and manage crises. On the other hand, there are still practitioners of public relations who are still operating in the industry. There is still a significant lack of skills and competencies, and the network is restricted. They don't even have the most basic understanding of how public relations work is done. In the field of public relations, the only position held was that of a photographer, and he was also responsible for documentation affairs. Their leaders do not place a high level of trust in public relations, and those leaders are ill-equipped to determine the qualifications necessary for a public relations officer. Because of this, public relations in the regions are rendered ineffective, lack a strategic focus, and have no influence. Even at the provincial level, we see instances of this condition (Wikan, 2021).

There is still a significant gap between the status of public relations as a profession and that of other professions such as lawyers, doctors, and public relations resources. The concept of public relations is still referred to in a variety of different ways across the country of Indonesia. This variety demonstrates your authority, as well as your knowledge of public relations, your skills, and your networks (Wikan, 2021). This is supported by the fact that there is not a personal public relations code of ethics that exists alongside the code of ethics that is currently utilized by the association. Since there is no public relations board, there is nobody to oversee how practitioners conduct themselves. Today there are more people working as spin doctors than ever before, and no one can stop them or control them (Nugroho, 2021).

Because the organization and practice of public relations are typically systematically developed by the head office public relations, the roles and functions have developed more effectively in multinational companies. This is because the head office public relations is responsible for ensuring that all public relations programs, standards, procedures, and strategies tend to be the same. In Indonesia, practitioners simply adhere to what has been programmed from the center and adapt their practices to the specific circumstances that prevail in Indonesia. The work that goes into public relations covers a wide range of topics, from the more technical to the more strategic. The company recently expanded its board of directors to include a new position called the public relations director, who is responsible for reporting to the president director. The size of an organization and the sector it operates in both have an impact on the public relations practices that are utilized by state-owned enterprises (BUMN). The scope of the role of public relations expands in proportion to the size and scope of the organization and the industrial sector. Because there are so many different stakeholders, the function area is also very broad. On the other hand, the role of public relations is reduced the smaller the organization is; frequently, the role is doubled by the highest leadership or by the head of human resources. The working conditions in national private companies are, to a large extent, virtually identical to those in state-owned companies. The position of vice president, which is one level below the board of directors, is considered to be the one with the most responsibility in a state-owned company's public relations department. Practitioners in the field of public relations still come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds.



Although some have a background in communication science and public relations, others have backgrounds that are much more diverse, such as law, international relations, and agriculture. Collaboration in the scientific community is essential, especially in governance. Other types of expertise, in addition to those in communication science, are required in every industry (Soegiarto, 2020).

### ***Public Relations is Associated with Media Relations***

Public relations practitioners in Indonesia still place a primary emphasis on media relations as the most important aspect of their work, and they are unanimous in their belief that it is more credible to disseminate information about a company through traditional media outlets rather than through social media. When information about management profiles, programs, and company activities is broadcast in the mass media, there is a certain amount of pride that is felt by company management as well as government officials. Publication in the mass media is still thought by both groups to provide a high value.

According to Rakhmadi (2020), public relations and media relations are the same thing. He came to this conclusion because 90 percent of the work that goes into public relations involves communicating information to various stakeholders through various forms of mass media. Relationship development with media crews gets a larger portion in comparison to other stakeholders because it is planned in a planned manner and is given priority. The leaders of the company have the impression that the responsibility of public relations is to take care of the company's publications.

Because they are required to make reports, media relations continue to play a significant role in the work of public relations. It is much simpler to understand the performance of public relations if one looks at it from the point of view of the value of public relations. In contrast, the percentage of functions related to media relations in unicorn start-up companies is only fifty percent, while the remaining fifty percent is focused on activities related to social media (Nugroho, 2021).

Public relations practitioners still have to complete their daily routine work, which consists of tasks such as monitoring media coverage, analysing the tone and frame of news, making recommendations on news reports, and following up on these recommendations. Clipping the news by hand is a task that is still primarily performed by government public relations staff at both the central and regional levels. In the meantime, the majority of privately owned media monitoring companies have already implemented online media monitoring. Before the advent of social media, those who worked in public relations looked up to mass media as if it were a god. It is generally agreed that the dissemination of news through mass media platforms like television, radio, and print media is an efficient method of communicating the company's messages. The disruption of traditional mass media that is caused by digitization is becoming less common. The era of mass media is transitioning into its final phase. It is not because people are behaving differently that there is a decrease in public interest in consuming mass media; rather, there is a decrease in public trust in the media.

The public has a greater level of faith in what can be learned from social media than in what can be learned from traditional media (Nugroho, 2021).

The practice of media buying is frequently utilized in public relations work carried out by the government. Because the media is the most important stakeholder in the government, their primary responsibility is to maintain positive relations with the press. The budget allotted for media programs constitutes seventy percent of the total budget for public relations. Officials in the government frequently appear on television because they believe it to be an important medium. The fact that the allocated budget is modest and inadequate presents the employees of government public relations with their primary challenge, as this has an effect on the amount of news coverage received by the general public (Sugiarto, 2020).

### ***The Evaluation of Public Relations Program***

The evaluation of the public relations program continues to be based on the value of public relations, which is determined by counting the number of reports published in the mainstream media. The degree of success achieved in public relations can still be measured by the size of the media impression. Even though these values are not utilized outside of the United States, according to Jojo Nugroho, it is much simpler to evaluate the performance of public relations when using public relations values. Practitioners of public relations consider the amount of money spent to be significant. As a means of providing management with evidence of their responsibility, the value of public relations becomes a standard for measuring the return on investment of the money that has been spent. They place a significant amount of importance on the value of the rupiah (Nugroho, 2021).

Practitioners of public relations do not evaluate the efficacy of the coverage provided by the mass media because they are content with the value that it provides to public relations. Research on the public opinion is hardly ever conducted. They contend that whenever the mass media reports on a problematic issue, they are acting to provide clarity on the matter. It is considered to have reached its conclusion when the topic is no longer discussed in the mainstream media. Public relations practitioners do not research the opinions, attitudes, and behavior of their stakeholders prior to developing strategy and program planning. The company's performance report from the previous year and the process of translating the company's plans and strategies into a public relations strategy and program serve as the foundation for the thinking that goes into developing a public relations strategy and planning.

### ***Media Reputation***

All practitioners stated that the key performance indicators of public relations practitioners were assessed based on media reputation. The indicator of success is seen from how much news about the company is broadcast by the mass media and what the tone of the news is, whether it is positive or negative. The targets achieved from this media impression can form positive public opinion and build public awareness. The impact of positive reporting results can create a positive

image of the organization. A positive image can build public trust and will ultimately affect the corporate reputation.

## DISCUSSION

In the last decade, in general, public relations practitioners in Indonesia have still been practicing conventional public relations even though they are aware of information technology, which is rapidly changing the way they communicate with the public. The main function of public relations in the company is still the same as in the past until now. Most of their roles in the company are as communication facilitators and communication technicians (Permatasari, 2021).

A more strategic role as an expert prescriber and problem solver only occurs in multinational and national private companies. The development of public relations practices in government is slower because public relations is only placed at the level of administrative employees; the work carried out is only technical work. This creates a huge gap in practice, knowledge, and competence among public relations practitioners themselves. The mass media is still the main stakeholder, even though the presentation is decreasing from time to time. In practice, most public relations work focuses on disseminating company or institutional information through the mass media.

The portion of publications produced by public relations is more dominantly broadcast in the mass media. According to data from the Press Council from 2011 to 2021, print-based media consumption decreased by 50 percent, television decreased by 24 percent, and radio decreased by 19 percent. In a recent survey conducted by the Indonesian Press Council, the level of public trust in the media fell below the 60 percent threshold. Such data will have an impact on the effectiveness of publications broadcast by public relations in the mass media. The mass media are no longer the only media forming public opinion. The public today are producers and consumers of information. The public can act as public relations, journalists, and even opinion makers. The presence of the powerful new media poses a challenge of greater proportions to the traditional mass media (Sharma & Krisnaswami, 2020).

The critical point of the argument is that public relations practitioners do not measure the effectiveness of mass media publications, they do not know the exact level of effectiveness of mass media publication activities. Press releases are written and adjusted to the agenda-setting of the media so that public relations writes on the wishes of the media and not the wishes of the public. Public relations performance is still determined based on the value of media clipping (based on AVE) even though the worldwide public relations industry has decided that AVEs are not a valid metric since 2010. The facts on the ground show that the correct measurement and evaluation of public relations programs are not understood by most of the public relations practitioners in Indonesia.

There are various models of public relations evaluation that have been developed by public relations experts. Ideally, the evaluation of public relations focuses on the level of output, outtake, outcome, and impact. At the level of outputs and outcomes evaluate the medium used, the message, and the audience's

understanding of the message. The outcome level is to measure changes in audience attitudes and behavior, while the impact is to evaluate the impact of communication efforts that can contribute to the company's business goals. In general, public relations practitioners in Indonesia still prioritize the reputation of the media.

Many public relations practitioners assume that positive symbolic signals between what the media audience wants and what is said will improve the company's reputation and will have an impact on the company's profitability. The results showed that symbolic management only had a positive effect on symbolic reputation, while behavioral management had a positive effect on performance reputation. A positive reputation in the media does not contribute to the company's profitability, while a positive performance reputation has a significant effect on profitability (Kim et al, 2007).

Public relations focuses on building relationships with the public. The old public relations strategy is designed to direct perceptions and behavior towards a product, service, or brand and to establish a two-way relationship with the public by building mutual understanding and trust and obtaining feedback. Public relations disseminate messages through the media. The output obtained by public relations is public awareness. To gain the trust of the public, it is not enough to just disseminate messages through the media. Although public awareness is vital for effective interaction, awareness alone is not enough to build public trust. Trust is an outcome, not a message. Trust is deeply behavioral, complex and fragile, and hard-won every day by actions, not words, so trust is not a function of public relations (Phillips, 2014).

The digital revolution has significantly changed the communications landscape in the last two decades. Practitioners and experts in the field of public relations have emphasized the importance of public engagement in the context of new technological and social development and the impact this has on reshaping and reconceptualizing public relations (Jelen-Sanchez, 2017).

Social media provides both opportunities and threats for public relations. With the existence of social media, it has returned the meaning of relations with the public, which actually means public relations can interact directly with the public. In the conventional era, public relations only build public perception through mass media and internal media, and is only one-way; there is no dialogue or interaction with the public. The biggest challenge for public relations today is facing influencers and key opinion leaders with public relations messages competing with them. The persuasion strategy that conventional public relations rely on is not enough to compete with their content, which has a strong influence on its followers. Influencers have a large follower base, and the interaction between influencers and followers can be so strong that they can easily influence their followers for various purposes. While public relations is only expanding to social media and there is no significant change in strategy, it can be seen from the content posted on social media that it only displays information. Public relations treat social media the same as mass media. This further undermines its role so that public relations cannot compete

with influencers. Through its messages, conventional public relations seeks to build perceptions and educate the public to improve their cognitive abilities.

In the current era, the target of public relations communication is not only to build public awareness; the focus of the goal is to build the quality of public character. Human competency and character qualities will become much more important in the digital age, such as curiosity, empathy, adaptability, and emotional agility. Such character qualities will create a deeper emotional connection, engage the workforce, and foster autonomy and agile working. With the change in human quality, it is necessary to restyle the way we organize people (PwC, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Seeing the reality of public relations practice in Indonesia today, it can be seen that public relations practitioners in Indonesia are still sitting in place and just carrying out the old routine. The function of public relations is no longer relevant in responding to current challenges and phenomena. The competencies possessed by public relations practitioners are also inadequate for the demands of communication strategy needs.

The disruption of the traditional mass media model by social media is a challenge to the existence of public relations. The push strategy, which is the mainstay of public relations in communicating with its stakeholders, cannot be used for dialogue with the public, so the traditional public relations model is no longer feasible to use.

Public relations needs to improve communication governance and innovate in communication strategies, not just formulating persuasive messages but producing content that can inspire, motivate, and involve public participation. The role of public relations as a facilitator of corporate communication is below that of influencers. Generally, they have a large number of followers, while public relations does not have basic followers and has no influence. Influencers are able to produce messages with a very personal communication style, are more persuasive, are liked by their followers, and are able to influence them to think, behave, and act the way they want. More than that, the followers can join in humming the messages from these influencers. How can public relations compete with influencers if it still places itself as a communication facilitator, placing public relations under the influencers?

Public leadership is required now and in the future to replace public relations. The public interest is prioritized in this concept approach, which is oriented toward and measured by public values. Employees, customers, and other stakeholders contribute more to public value. Communicators must break the habit of managing and controlling their messages. Communication is placed at the end rather than at the beginning in order to create an impression. Organizations that communicate with the public must be honest and transparent, putting the public interest ahead of profit. Communication is a physical act, not a series of words.

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