

Disaster Communication in Reducing the Impact of Regional Losses in Bengkulu City by Local Government

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to find out and explain the forms of communication that are considered effective and efficient by the Bengkulu regional government in the context of overcoming the impact of losses due to this specific disaster. This research uses a post-positivistic paradigm with a case study research method to find out and evaluate the role of the Bengkulu Regional Government in reducing the impact of losses due to disasters. Data collection will be carried out through interviews and FGDs. The results of the study show that disaster communication in reducing the impact of regional losses is carried out effectively through four aspects, namely: (1) Customer Focus, through efforts to build disaster-related information needed by the community through a flow mechanism for delivering disaster information, starting from the Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency (BMKG) info to the Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) and passed on to emergency operation center (Pusdalops) and the media; (2) Leadership Commitment, through the efforts of leaders who are enthusiastic enough to lead disaster resolution in accordance with their main tasks and functions of disasters. In addition, BPBD Leadership elements always go directly to disaster-affected areas; (3) Situational Awareness, through effective communication based on disaster research conducted independently to the results of handling and regional operations (disaster exposure area); (4) Media Partnership, through the involvement of the media in the form of collaborative disaster management such as with state-owned radio station RRI Bengkulu, in addition to using social media accounts such as Instagram and holding press conferences during disasters.

Keywords Bengkulu; Disaster Communication; Local Government; Earthquake; Flood.

Introduction

Bengkulu is one of the disaster-prone areas in Indonesia with identical disaster specifications for tsunami-prone earthquakes and floods, which reached the biggest ever losses in 2019. Earthquake is the most identical because Bengkulu has a history of large earthquakes which had the potential to trigger a tsunami in the past. Several major earthquakes

have occurred in Bengkulu, including an 8.9-magnitude earthquake in 1833, a 7.3-magnitude earthquake in June 2000 which killed 94 people, an 8.5-magnitude earthquake on September 12, 2007 which had the potential for a tsunami, and a 7.9-magnitude earthquake on 13 September 2007. BMKG continues to record earthquakes in Bengkulu every year. Data in the

last five years since 2016 it recorded at least 20 earthquakes in Bengkulu.

Meanwhile, the flood that hit Bengkulu in 2019 is a dark history. Based on infographic data from the Bengkulu Regional BNPB, the 2019 flood which caused a great deal of material losses and claimed many lives was the third largest flood in Bengkulu after the first flood in 1978 and the second flood in 1989, but only the third flood in 2019 which had a serious impact almost on the entire district in Bangalore. The type of specific natural disaster which struck Bengkulu raises the impact of losses, yet the impact is not significant and is a challenge that must be faced by the government every year.

Studies which are related to the impact of disasters such as earthquake and flood in Bengkulu have been carried out by several researchers. The researches include those conducted by Farid (2019) about the impact of disaster on dynamic poverty in Bengkulu and by Kusliana (2017) on the analysis of flood disaster mitigation in Tanjung Agung subdistrict, Bengkulu City. The previous researches have reached the level of exploration and description of the linkages of disasters to poverty, disaster preparedness efforts as well as an explanation of the challenges and obstacles faced by the government in overcoming disasters.

The previous researches on the impact of earthquake and flood that occurred in Bengkulu were not based on a communication perspective which is believed to give a positive contribution to mitigating the impact of disasters in an area. Some previous researches on disaster communication including those carried out by Rudianto (2015) concerning communication in disaster management, still revolve around general descriptions that do not mention specific disasters in an area, as well as by Asteria (2016) concerning optimizing disaster communication in the mass media as disaster management supporters who only see the framing of disasters presented in the mass media.

The ability to study disaster in communication science can become a quite strategic study in the future, especially in disaster studies in Indonesia, particularly Bengkulu Province which has conformity with the research strategic plan at Bengkulu University. As a study as well as a movement, disaster communication studies can ultimately

assist local governments, non-governmental organizations, and communities in building understanding and skills in disaster knowledge, which in turn can become a tool in reducing the risk or impact of losses due to disasters.

The purpose of this research is to find out and explain the forms of communication that are considered effective and interesting by the regional government of Bengkulu to overcome the impact of losses due to this specific disaster. This research will focus on disaster management efforts based on the aspects of customer focus, leadership commitment, situational awareness, and media partnerships which will explain the process of collecting, processing and distributing messages or information conveyed by local governments in an effective and interesting manner regarding earthquake and flood disasters. Bengkulu has made efforts through direct and media communication in order to minimize the impact of losses. Formulation of the problem in this research is what is the form of effective communication seen from various aspects for disaster management in the Bengkulu Region?

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Theoretical Framework

Globally, the level of frequency or occurrence of disasters is increasing every year due to many factors. High carbon dioxide, methane gas and various other greenhouse gases which are dissipated into the atmosphere have caused a number of natural disasters. An increase in the earth's temperature due to global warming triggers a long dry season, heat waves and forest fires. In other parts of the world, floods and earthquakes are becoming more frequent.

The increase in the incidence of natural disasters over the last three decades has reached almost 350%, according to a report by the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED 2009). The trend of disasters will increase due to: (1) increasing population, (2) increasing urbanization, (3) environmental degradation, (4) poverty, and (5) the effects of global climate change. The occurrence of world disasters has increased and the biggest or 76% are hydrometeorological disasters in the form of floods, landslides, tropical cyclones,

droughts. Most of these disasters occur in poor and developing countries (BNPB, 2002).

According to the United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR, 2000), a disaster is a serious disruption to the functioning of society, causing widespread harm to human life in material, economic or environmental terms, and the disturbance exceeds the capacity of the community concerned to cope using the available resources. their own power.

Indonesia is an archipelagic country with the fourth longest coastline in the world along 95,181 km, being a confluence of three major tectonic plates: the Indo-Australian Plate, the Eurasian Plate, and the Pacific Plate and is traversed by two paths or series of volcanoes, namely: the Pacific Circum and the Mediterranean Circum. . This condition causes Indonesia to be vulnerable to natural disasters caused by global warming – climate change.2 Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number. 24/2007 states that a disaster is an "event or series of events that threatens and disrupts people's lives and livelihoods caused by both natural, non-natural and human factors, causing casualties, environmental damage, loss of property and psychological impacts".

Disaster essentially refers to 2 things in it, namely hazard which is a natural event, and vulnerability which refers to human factors, such as social and economic (Tiwari, 2015). Claude Gilbert offered a summary of the concept of disaster (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998) in three paradigms namely. First, disaster is the result or result of an external pressure. Second, as a result of social vulnerability and third as a result of uncertainty (Wardyaningrum, 2016). Some social experts emphasize the understanding of disaster as a social construction. These experts see disasters as the impact of social processes or social consequences that produce danger, or increase the vulnerability of a social system from the impact of a hazard (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998).

Comments on disaster management to reduce the impact of losses are always developing from time to time. The disaster management process is seen as a dynamic process. Disaster management with specific characteristics such as earthquakes and floods in Bengkulu may be different from disaster management in other areas, even though the types of disasters are the same. Disaster is a

joint affair with the main parties responsible for it including the central government and regional governments.

The term communication comes from the Latin word *communicatio* which means exchange notification, the adjective *communis* means general, shared or builds togetherness between two or more people. (Effendy 2003, Wiryanto 2005, Cangara 2013). Direct and mediated communication (indirect) are the concepts of communication strategy (Bungin, 2007). Direct communication is a communication process that is carried out directly or face to face. It's like when we talk to other people without an intermediary or communication media as a messenger or information. In direct communication either between individuals, or individuals with groups, groups with groups, groups with communities, the influence of individual relationships is included in this understanding of communication. Thus, this communication activity is a systematic process and forms a system consisting of system components, such as: communicator context, message context, and idea construction, interaction pattern context, situational context, individual attitude context towards the group and vice versa, as well as the context of tolerance (Maharani, 2019).

Different things with direct communication. Media communication (indirect) is communication conducted by using intermediary media as a carrier of messages or information to reach the communicant or recipient of the message. Media communication is a communication process that is carried out using the media as a channel in its delivery. Moore (2004) says that communications (mediated communication) denotes a technical means of indirect or mediated communication, encompassing media ranging from primitive tribal drums, signals with smoke and stone inscriptions to telegraphy, print, broadcast and film.

The term disaster communication began to be widely studied and become popular in the field of communication and disaster. Disaster communication is communication that is carried out during pre-disaster, emergency response and post-disaster with the aim of minimizing casualties and saving property (Fadillah, 2019).

The ability to communicate messages about disasters to the public, government,

media and opinion leaders can reduce risks, save lives and the impact of disasters (Haddow and Haddow, 2008). According to Haddow and Haddow (2008) there are 4 main foundations in building effective disaster communication, namely: (1) *Customer Focus*, namely understanding what information is needed by customers, in this case the community and volunteers. A communication mechanism must be built to ensure that information is delivered in a timely and accurate manner; (2) *Leadership commitment*, leaders who play a role in emergency response must have a commitment to communicate effectively and be actively involved in the communication process; (3) *Situational awareness*, effective communication based on the collection, analysis and dissemination of controlled information related to disasters. Principles of effective communication such as transparency and reliability are key; (4) *Media partnerships*, media such as television, newspapers, radio, and others are very important media for conveying information appropriately to the public. Collaboration with the media involves agreeing on media needs with a team trained to work with the media to obtain information and disseminate it to the public.



Figure 1. The Venn diagram of integrated disaster management.

Source: Setio (Journal of Aspikom, 2012)

Disaster communication in this study will refer to forms of implementing effective communication directly or through the media carried out by the local government through the role of the Bengkulu Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD). Coppola and Maloney (2009) say that modern disaster management comprehensively includes four functional components, namely: Mitigation

which includes the reduction or elimination of hazard risk components. Second, Preparedness, which includes equipping people who are at risk of being hit by a disaster or preparing to be able to help people in a disaster event with various tools/equipment to increase their ability to survive and minimize financial and other risks. Third, Response includes actions taken to reduce or eliminate the impact of a disaster, and fourth, Recovery, includes repair, reconstruction or recovery of what has been damaged/lost as part of the disaster, as well as anticipating risks from the same chaos in the future.

Materials and Methodology

This research uses qualitative methods through empirical observation, to find/confirm causal laws, which can be used to predict general patterns of certain social phenomena by using qualitative methods. From this research it is hoped that an overview of human behavior and social context in social interaction will be obtained.

The type of research used is a case study. This research is a single instrumental case study conducted to illustrate an issue, namely disaster management in reducing the impact of regional losses by the Regional Government based on the perspective of a disaster communication study conducted in Bengkulu.

Data collection was done through interviews and document review. Data analysis will use Miles and Huberman which focuses on in-depth descriptions. While the validity of the data uses a source triangulation approach and method triangulation.

The initial stage of data was collected through a fact finding process, namely finding a number of facts or events related to losses due to specific disasters faced by the Bengkulu region in the last 2 (two) years through a search process of literature studies in the mass media and social media and via electronic mail (email). to the government element responsible for the disaster, namely the Bengkulu BPBD (Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency). This research was conducted through in-depth direct interviews with the heads and related elements at BPBD Bengkulu to identify communication techniques that were implemented when facing specific disasters faced by each region. In addition, interviews will also be conducted with the Bengkulu city government public relations

team regarding efforts to coordinate and counter issues when facing a crisis situation during the disaster mitigation period.

Result and Discussion

The specific disasters that occurred in Bengkulu City, namely earthquakes and floods, show that the disasters occurred due to natural events which also created vulnerability in certain areas of Bengkulu City as a result of the topography of the area in several flood-prone areas. For example, Tanjung Agung where the characteristics of a community is determined to maintain the view of the ancestors that the flood disaster that is always experienced must be accepted as a routine that brings blessings because when a disaster occurs, social care can be felt more. Therefore, people live in disaster-prone areas do not want to be relocated. This shows that the nature of disasters which refer to hazards which are natural events, and vulnerabilities which refer to human factors, such as social and economics can be considered appropriate as Tiwari's thought (2015: 56). The disaster that occurred in the city of Bengkulu can also be said to have originated from a paradigm caused by social vulnerability as Claude Gilbert (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998) stated that disasters result from social vulnerability (Wardyaningrum, 2016: 42).

Specific disasters that occur are a social construction which experts say that disasters can be seen as the impact of social processes or social consequences that produce danger, or increase the vulnerability of a social system from the impact of a hazard (Porfiriev in Quarantelli, 1998: 46).

Comments on disaster management to reduce the impact of losses are always in progress from time to time. Based on the results of the research, specific disasters in Bengkulu City that have been handled by the Regional Government, in this case the BPBD (Regional Disaster Mitigation Agency) are carried out according to procedures, but are not felt to have too much impact on the community because people in disaster-prone locations such as floods, for example, have a perspective that when there is a disaster, they actually receive additional assistance compared to when there is no disaster.

The ability to communicate messages about disasters to the public has been carried out well by the Regional Government, which at the same time strengthens Haddow and

Haddow's argument (2008) in the 4 aspects that have been studied, namely:

Customer Focus, namely through efforts to build the information needed by the community related to disasters through a flow mechanism for delivering disaster information, namely starting from BMKG information to BPBD and forwarding it to Pusdalops and the media;

Leadership commitment, namely through the efforts of leaders who are enthusiastic enough to lead disaster resolution in accordance with the main tasks and functions of the disaster. The leader has provided information related to weather info, exposure areas and the number of people affected starting from observation, data collection, analyzing and then disseminating information. In addition, elements of the BPBD leadership always go directly to disaster-affected areas;

Situational awareness, namely through effective communication based on disaster research both independently from the results of handling and regional operations (disaster exposure area). So far BPBD has collaborated with Disaster NGOs in Bengkulu City to collect data on KRB (Disaster Prone Areas). Even now it already has an entire RPB (Disaster Mitigation Plan) in it and then data on disaster hazard areas is made;

Media partnership, namely through media involvement in the form of cooperation in disaster mitigation such as with RRI Bengkulu, for example by installing EWS sirens on RRI transmitters at Air Sebakul and providing disaster information at RRI kentongan events as well as by utilizing social media accounts such as Instagram and holding press conferences during disasters.

Thus, what has been done by the Regional Government in this case the collaboration between BPBD, Basarnas and BMKG Bengkulu has also fulfilled the functional components of disaster mitigation from Coppola and Maloney (2009: 53-55), namely: Mitigation which includes the reduction or elimination of hazard risk components. Second, Preparedness, which includes equipping people who are at risk of being hit by a disaster or preparing to be able to help people in a disaster event with various tools/equipment to increase their ability to survive and minimize financial and other risks. Third, Response includes actions taken to reduce or eliminate the impact of a disaster, and

fourth, Recovery, includes repair, reconstruction or recovery of what has been damaged/lost as part of the disaster, as well as anticipating risks from the same chaos in the futur.

Conclusions

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Disaster Communication in reducing the impact of regional losses is carried out through four aspects, namely (1). Customer Focus, through efforts to build the information needed by the community related to disasters through a flow mechanism for delivering disaster information, namely starting from BMKG information to BPBD and forwarding it to PUSDALOPS and the media; (2). Leadership Commitment, through the efforts of leaders who are enthusiastic enough to lead disaster resolution in accordance with the main tasks and functions of the disaster. In addition, elements of the BPBD leadership always go directly to disaster-affected areas; (3). Situational Awareness, namely through effective communication based on disaster research both independently from the results of handling and regional operations (disaster exposure area); (4). Media Partnership, through the involvement of the media in the form of collaborative disaster mitigation such as with RRI Bengkulu, as well as by utilizing social media accounts such as Instagram and holding press conferences during disasters.

Theoretically, it can be suggested that future research is able to examine the process of social construction regarding the meaning of disaster in people who live in disaster-prone locations associated with access to digitalization of communication and information technology.

Practically it is recommended that the BPBD as the main element in disaster mitigation can appoint representatives of opinion leaders who come from elements closest to the community to be able to continue to help socialize about mitigation and the effects of specific disasters in the city of Bengkulu.

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