

THE ANTI CLIMAX OF THE HUMANITARIAN ACTIVIST (A CASE STUDY TOWARDS HOAX DISTRIBUTION IN FORMING PUBLIC OPINION)

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Abstract

The ease of spreading information by using social media nowadays is one of people's daily activities in the societies. Up dates from every information could get anytime and every time through social media. In the beginning of October 2018, there was tragic news about the famous humanitarian activist in Indonesia. It was told that she was being punched in Husein Sastranegara Airport. It was strengthened by the fact that shows her face full with scar in the photograph. The photograph is easily spread in the social media. But after several days the activist said that the fact is never exist. The news about her is not true.

The aim of this study is to construct the seven point from the impression management theory there are; conformity, excuse, apologies, self-promotion, flattery, favors and association. And also to find the process of the public opinion constructed.

Research method that used in this research is qualitative method by using constructivist paradigm with interpretive technique. Collecting the data was done by observation. Validity of the result was done by triangulation and discussion.

The results of the study are; (1) Conformity was done by the activist by admitting the persecution towards her. (2) Excuse was done by the activist by saying that there wasn't any goal to spreading the hoax. (3) Apologies were done by the activist by asking for apology in press conference. (4) Self Promotion was done by the activist by admitting her fault. (5) Flattery was done by the activist by giving flattery statement to her supporter. (6) Favors that done by the activist was giving the bad image of herself. (7) Association that done by the activist is keeping the good image of her supporter. While the public opinion constructed are (1) the *persecution* issue about the famous humanitarian activist. (2) Double standard was constructed by the society point of view and in social media. (3) The existing of opinion leader that make the hoax is true. (4) Getting the press attention

Suggestions for the further research can be focused on front stage and back stage that play by the humanitarian activist by using dramaturgy theory.

Keyword: Hoax, Impression Management, Social Media, Public Opinion, Society

Preface

Nowadays information is one of the needs by the society, by using any kind of media such as television, newspaper even social media. The ease getting any kind of information in this era now becomes the common thing. Get any kind of information that people want to know the most by using the internet is not taboo anymore. Starting every people are common with the gadget that completed with the internet web inside. Gadget without internet is just the food without spices, uncompleted.

Social media is an application that can be downloaded in every smart phone. The using of social media can make people get closer even in a distance. They can easily send message which typed in purposes or download and forward it to their colleagues. It makes rapid information that constructed in the society. Now it is common if people already know the information that just uploaded. Only by using fingers, people can send and forwarded information that the validity still being questioned. That information then forwarded by the receiver and so does until known by all people.

Social media also has role in making echo chamber effect where the relevant information always appears in smart phone screen. For example, when a user choosing the information about earthquake, so that the information related with earthquake going to be appears in their social media. This fact strengthens the user about the validity of the information. While the information that accept by the user could be right or totally wrong.

In the other hand nowadays the validity of a news seems do not needed, since the news do not need 5W 1H anymore (what, who, when, why, where and how). Only “what” the issue has already become news. Then as time goes the up-date will come over. This assumed make news could be right or not right at all. News can be spread in purpose and accidentally spread. While news which not true at all and can trick people usually spread in social media. Hoax is a plan to deceive someone, such as telling the officer there a terrorist but actually it’s a trick. In Indonesia there was a hoax spreader name Young Lex who sent the picture of him in the bettered face in social media that make people reacted. Several days later he said it was only a prank. What he did is spreading a hoax in purpose.

In the beginning of October 2018, there was shocking news about persecuted of a famous humanitarian activist. She is the most vocal woman activist since 90 eras. She was also a scriptwriter and an actress who play role in famous theater in Indonesia, Taman Ismail Mazuki. One of issue that brought to the theater was a humanitarian issue which came from the death case of labor, Marsinah. Her credibility brought people and national figure feel sorry with what happened to her. It was happened because of the activist’s photograph that shows battered face. That photograph was in a good frame in some of on-line newspaper and social media. Moreover she admit to some famous figure which is they shows their condolence in television and other media.

The news rolls over until moved police officer to investigate. She admitted that she went to Bandung City to present international conference by using airplane that arrived at Hussein Sastranegara Airport. She said that she was beaten up with some people at that airport. Police officers investigate that recognition. They find out the fact that there wasn't any ticket of the activist that used to the airplane. Moreover the officers find out that there weren't any international conference at that date in Bandung City. As the investigation done, fact comes over, until there were a CCTV recorded that shows the activist was in the esthetic plastic surgery in Jakarta. There also bill that written her name.

At the next day, people shocked by her new statement at the press conference. She said that the beating in two days before is a lie. She admitted that she was lying. But unfortunately the news has already spread and people have already thought it was true. The activist also said that she was the best hoax making. So do, the figure who already expressed their condolence through the media makes press conference immediately to make apology to the people about their trust about the hoax.

Research Question

Based on the background above, so that there are some things that related to the hoax that becomes public opinion.

1. How the impression management that done by the activist?
2. How the hoax spreading process those become public opinion?

Theoretical Reviews

As the guide in this article, researchers used two theories there are Impression Management Theory by Erving Goffman and Public Opinion Theory by John Dewey.

Impression Management Theory

This article investigates the impression management that done by humanitarian activist in mass media and social media. Impression management is a conscious of subconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perception of the other people about a person, object or event. They do that by regulating and controlling information in social interaction. At first, the theory was conceptualized by Erving Goffman in 1967 is a theory that investigate self concept, impression management only in face to face communication. But as time passed, this theory also applied on mediated communication.

Self presentation or delivering information about self to others (Littlejohn : 2016). Delivers information about the self influenced by some motives there are: to make an image and to fulfill audience expectations. It is done with conscious as self expression to make perception about them. This could be as defensive or assertive strategy. That strategy considered as the savior of the pride. Self presentation in social interaction done to portray the expectation characters that expect by others.

As Goffman, Robbins and Judge (2007) also said that impression management done by people to control people's point of view about them. It was done to get what they want for sure. As Robbins and Judge (2007) there is some impression management technique that could be done. Starting from construct the image until defend it by involve others.

- a. Conformity of accepting people's point of views in order to get approval.
- b. Excuse or find reasons to save them so that their image still good in people's point of views.
- c. Apologies or asking for apology for a mistake. This is one of the most popular steps in impression management.
- d. Self Promotion or comparing themselves to others.
- e. Flattery or giving compliment to others that make them looks good.
- f. Favors or do some act to people to have acceptance
- g. Association or keep other people image with connecting information about them and other people. (Robbinson and Judge. 2007)

Based on the reviews about impression management theory, this article try to discover the points of impression management that done by the humanitarian activist.

Public Opinion Theory

As Cultip and Center (1987) call opinion is an expression about deeds towards a controversial problem. The opinion appears as a result of discussion about controversial problem that makes different opinion. While the opinion comes from individual's opinion that express by member of the group which is the opinion itself depends on the group influence. The individual opinion called public opinion. Public or a group of people do communicates with an organization, whether in external or internal ways. (Jefkin, 2006:80). Or it could be interpret as an active social unit which including all sides who recognize the search problem solution. So it conclude that public opinion is a group of views towards same issues which related to the direction of the opinion, intensity measurements, stability, information support and social support (Cultip, 1987).

In the other hand in communication science public opinion recognize as the information exchange that form attitude, specify the issues in society. Public opinion as communication about specific issues that brought in special ways to special people will give special effect.

Dewey views that the development of the society has already trough the physical limit of communication. He also believes that some social theory will help to identify public process. Based on Grunig& Repper (1992) public divided into 4 types those are:

1. All issue publics- active in sharing issue
2. Apathetic publics-hasn't consideration towards all issue
3. Single issues publics-active towards one or more limited issues
4. Hot issues publics-just active if all media expose almost all people and issues become social topics that talked in societies.

Those Gruning & Repper's views shows about the type of issues in public. It is support Dewey's point of view about public opinion itself. Dewey said that the systematic possibilities for giving information to public, so the public opinion could be constructive power in society (Littlejohn:2016). He also give empirical prove, although many anecdotes to support his opinion.

Based on Dewey's point of view, Erikson Lutberg and Tendin views there are some process in forming a public opinion. One of the most important things in forming public opinion there has to be an opinion leader. Opinion leader is someone who has good credibility and high esteem in one society. They view four points that construct public opinion there are:

1. Issue existed that relevant to people's needs
2. New issue that make double standard
3. The existing of opinion leader like politician or academic
4. Getting press attention that make reaction towards people

In this article, the issue about humanitarian activist that being beating by people in airport in Bandung was tried to investigate. The issue itself has already spread in several days. People already believe that the issue is true. Moreover some political figure said their condolence about that issue. It made the issue looks truly happened.

Research Method

This article used a methods and procedure to approach research focuses and found the answer of the research questions. A Mulyana (2003) statement, that methodology is general approach to investigate research topic. In this sense the method of this article is qualitative method. Qualitative method itself use to provide complex contextual description of how people experience a given research issue (Denzin & Lincoln:2000). It is also provide some information about "human" side of an issue. It could ne contradictory behavior, opinion, believe, emotion and relationship of individuals. The method also effectives in indentifying intangible factors such as social norms, gender, ethnicity and religion in the issue.

There are some forms in qualitative methods that can be applied in some research. The three most common qualitative methods are participant observation, in-depth interview and focus group. Each form has its own way to interpret a specific data.

1. Participant observation, appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual context.
2. In-depth interviews, appropriate for collecting data on individual's perspectives and experience about the issues.
3. Focused group is effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of group and in generating broad overviews of the issue.
(Denzin & Lincoln.2000)

Based on Denzin & Lincoln point of views about qualitative data collecting, in this sense the article already used Focused Group Discussion. The FGD done with academic, college student and society as the informant. All the data collected trough recorder, videos, notes and

transcripts. The informant chosen by quota sampling, the researcher define how many people in which characteristic as the participant in FGD. Characteristic here including age, gender, class, and profession views the issue. The criteria's allow researcher to focus on people who would know the issue. To deal with this sampling is go to the community and using recruitment appropriates to the location, culture and study population.

Since it was qualitative research, Cresswel. 1998 suggested that there were 10 until 20 informants to be interviewed. The informants chosen by some criteria such as them who access information about the activist, who share the information through social media, who trust the information is true and who has any objection with the information. There researchers done some observation yield a detailed thick description or in the other word interviews capture direct quotations about people's personal perspectives and lived experience, derived from carefully conducted case study. Then contact the people who close to the phenomenon under investigation.

All the informants invited in the discussion in campus, there were 10 informants who attend the event. There were 4 lectures, 4 college student and 2 politicians. The lectures are majoring in political communication and media studies, the college student are activist and the two politicians are from the parliaments. The data collection collected by in-depth interview in the discussion that already explained to the person. The informants already told that all of the identity will be confidential. (this is the information about data collection method)

The case study design is purposeful designs that see events in Indonesia at the beginning of October 2018. The sampling is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization derived from a sample and applied to a population.

Discussion

The discussion was done in this article are about impression management of the activist first. Impression management understands as a conscious or subconscious process in which people attempt to influence the perception of other people about a person, object or event (Litteljohn. 2006). They do that by regulating and controlling information in social interaction (Goffman: 1967). Impression management or self presentation done by people who tried to influence other's perception about them. It could be in face to face communication or mediated communication. In this sense, done by a humanitarian activist. She was admitted the picture that shown her face black and blue because of some people hit her in the airport. After find out the impression management that done by the activist, this discussion would took to the hoax spread process trough public opinion.

A. Impression Management by the Activist

As we know that impression management is people's presentation to be viewed by others. According to Goffman, there were some considerations of impression management to present the self. As Erving Goffman point of view about impression management, in this sense the article would dig deeper by using Robinson and Jugde point of view. There are conformity, excuse, apologies, flattery favor and association. Based on the focused group discussions and

observations, it's founded that the issue fulfilled all the considerations of impression management.

Based on group discussions and observations it's found that first point of impression management done by the activist. Most of the participant, in this sense informant, said that conformity or accepting people's point of view in order to get approval done by the actor. She did not give any argument to admit whether the issue about her war fact or gossip. She was kept silent about the issue. What she done could be show her agreement about the issue. That action shows that she admit about the issue was right. Because she was so famous, it made many celebrities even politicians gave the condolences whether in social media or in television. After the condolences, she wasn't admitted that it was only hoax. So in this case, conformity was done by the activist by admitting the persecution towards her.

Since she was the famous humanitarian activist it made the officer investigate the case. Several days later there were facts from the officer about the real situation at that time. The officer said there were bills by her name in aesthetics surgery clinic by that date. And there were any tickets directed to Husein Sastranegara airport by her name. Then after that she made a press conference to admit that it was a lie. After done the conformity and admitted the issue was only hoax, the activist done press conference immediately. She was accompanied with her lawyer. She said that she never has any goal to spread the issue. She defend by said that the picture only sent to her family. She said that she never sent the image to people than her family. But unfortunately the issue has already spread completed with the title about the persecution and vice versa peoples believed it's true. Excuse was done by the activist by saying that there wasn't any goal to spreading the hoax. The press conference that show she was never intended do that showed the apology that she did. By the observations it shows that the activist fulfills the apology point in impression management.

The step that chosen by the activist to admit her fault, based on discussion is the right choice. Five of the informants said that, "it's better to admit the fault than keep lying". The more she lies the more hoax will be happened. Her recognition about the hoax can show her honesty. People will see her as an honest person, so it can promote herself. According to Robbinson and Judge (2007) "Self Promoting" is one of the aspects in impression management. This point also done by her, promoting her honest side, but unfortunately it made her being suspected and arrested.

After all the drama, she still was flattering all the people who give her condolence. In this sense, eight of ten informants agree that what she done is to make her image keep in high position. Flattery in this sense by said that the supporter never gave the hoax through social media by said, "*saya penyebar*" (I'm the spreader) emphasized that she's the spreader not the supporter.

She gave a favor to have people acceptance, by tell "*saya pembuat hoax terbaik ternyata.*" (I'm the best hoax spreader actually). In this sense, what she admit at first as a deed in order to get people's acceptance about the lie and forgive her. The favor done by the activist was made press conference to make a clearance, unfortunately gave the bad image of her which is being the advantage for the political rival. People accept the recognition but it can't take people sympathy.

The last thing the activist done that she kept other people image with connecting information about them and other people. She didn't bring other people even her family to the issue. Based on her recognition, there were any people's name that told by her. She focused on herself. There was a statement told by her about her fault. She said that, "It was a fiction, which I didn't know there was evil whispering to me, and it spreads just like that. I don't dare to see Mr. Prabowo defended on me. I don't dare to see my best friends defended on me". That statement was said after her recognition of her lie. In this sense it is clear that she tried to do association that connecting information about them. In this sense positive information that her friends and supporter didn't even know she was lying.

B. Public Opinion Constructed

The issue about persecution toward humanitarian activist must be believed easily by people because of the credibility of the victim. Moreover the existing of the opinion leader takes control in empowering the validity of the issue. Because the issues of persecution mostly take people's attention moreover the victim is special person. Based on the observation to social media, on-line newspaper, television channels until people's daily topic they talk about that issue. It means the issue very special, so that everyone knows and talk about it.

Unfortunately some media has their own perception about the issue. There were news about the activist being persecuted, being robbed until some political issues emerged, since it close to the election. Different way of delivering the news and spreading the issues through social media make people being constructed by any point of view. Then double standard was constructed by the society point of view and in social media. Moreover nowadays it's easy to get and share any kind of content through any kind of media especially social media.

One of important thing in making public opinion there has to be a statement from people who has great credibility. In this case, based on observation and discussions founded that there was an existing of opinion leader that make the hoax is looks true. It made people very sure about the issue. Because opinion leader emerge could construct people's opinion.

Kind of opinion could reach people by media. In this sense, the issue of persecution got the press attention, so that all people know about it. Moreover people today's can't get far away from the internet. So the issue can spread easily. The issue of persecution fulfills all things needs in public opinion constructed. First the issue is "hot" enough to share, different type of delivering the issue and some facts make double standard, the emerging of opinion leader that empower the issue and the last the issue got media's attention. Based on discussion and observation it's clear that public opinion happened by the issue.

Conclusion

Based on the research done, the conclusion are the actor of the issue done the items of impression management by Goffman which supported by Robbinson and Judge. There were

conformity by admitting the lies, excuse by saying no goal to spread the issues, apologies by press conference, self-promotion by showed her honesty, flattery by flatter her supporter , favor put the bad image only for herself and association by keep the the good image of her supporter.

While the issue about the famous humanitarian activist. Then double standard was constructed by the society point of view and in social media. Moreover with the existing of opinion leader and the issue got press attention.

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